

**‘WHITE SLAVERY’: ROMANTIC WRITERS AND
INDUSTRIAL WORKERS, 1790-1840**

Julia Edwina Saunders

Wolfson College
University of Oxford

DPhil. English Literature
Hilary Term 2000



CERTIFICATE

I, Julia Edwina Saunders, certify that the thesis entitled ““White Slavery””: Romantic Writers and Industrial Workers, 1790-1840’ is my own work and is 98 905 words in length, excluding the bibliography.

[Signature removed from online
version of thesis]

Signed...	(J Saunders)
Date.....	

ABSTRACT

Julia Saunders
Wolfson College

DPhil in English
Hilary Term 2000

In this thesis, I argue the case for putting the industrial revolution back into literary accounts of the Romantic period. Writers of fiction played an important part in disseminating knowledge about the changes to technology and society, as well as helping to form the image of the newest social class: that of the industrial workers. Literature aspired to educate and integrate this class, as well as to influence the parallel process of educating the upper classes about the advent of the new manufacturing order. I have taken as the governing metaphor for industrialization that of 'white slavery', drawing the contrast to the contemporary movement to abolish black slavery. To illustrate the thesis, I have chosen six writers: three Romantic poets - Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth - and three women educationalists - Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth and Harriet Martineau, each of whom represents a significant philosophical approach to a manufacturing society and who each made an important contribution to imaginative literature. Whilst the Romantic poets analysed industrialization as a divisive and demoralizing phenomenon and looked to the past for solutions, the educationalists responded to the challenge presented by the factory system by suggesting new visions of social relationships which bound moral and economic behaviour together. The thesis aspires to restore the voices of neglected women writers in the industrial debate with the aim of promoting a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the Romantic period and a fuller comprehension of its creative expression.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have encouraged me by their interest in my subject or by giving comments upon my work. In particular, I would like to mention Fiona Stafford, Roy Park, Lucy Newlyn, Juliet Dusinberre, Michael Eberle-Sinatra, Kaz Oishi, Timothy Webb, and Elizabeth Clark. I would also like to thank Marilyn Butler, who has guided me through this thesis from its inception as an MPhil. dissertation to completion, and the British Academy for funding my graduate research.

This dissertation is dedicated to Lucy (my MPhil. baby), Edward (my DPhil. baby) and to Joss.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
 Section I: Two Educators: Coleridge and Hannah More	
Chapter One: Coleridge and the liberation of the factory slaves	30
Chapter Two: Hannah and her sisters teach the poor	62
 Section II: Two Interpreters: Robert Southey and Maria Edgeworth	
Chapter Three: Robert Southey and the interpretation of industrial society	113
Chapter Four: Maria Edgeworth: <i>Practical Education</i> for an industrializing economy	160
 Section III: Two Legacies for Victorians: Wordsworth and Harriet Martineau	
Chapter Five: William Wordsworth and the shadow of industry	200
Chapter Six: Harriet Martineau: Economics for All	233
 Conclusion	 257
Bibliography	261

‘White Slavery’: Romantic Writers and Industrial Workers, 1790-1840

Introduction

Why does the industrial revolution not figure in most literary criticism of the Romantic period? The philosophical and political revolutions of the period have held centre-stage in the seminal critical accounts of Romanticism;¹ the industrial revolution, recognized by the majority of literary critics only in its Victorian incarnation of large factory towns, has not been identified as a factor equally influential on the creative writers of this earlier era. The decades spanning the turn of the nineteenth century, denominated ‘Romantic’ in literary studies, are also commonly called ‘the early industrial revolution’ by historians in recognition that these years saw unprecedented economic growth,² rapid technological and scientific progress, and great social change.³ Whilst political revolutions periodically stole the headlines, they were received by most British social and political commentators as an additional factor brought into a home context dominated by economic change.

Economists and social theoreticians interpreted the change brought by an expanding, industrializing economy in many ways; yet one basic division was that between optimists and pessimists. Sharing an Enlightenment faith in progress, Adam Smith,

¹ A representative sample would be M. H. Abrams’ *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York: 1953) which tells the history of the period through changing aesthetic attitudes of the major Romantic poets; Harold Bloom’s *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry* (London, 1962) which also concentrates on the poets, seeing them in relation to their literary predecessors. Reacting against the lack of historical contextualization in these readings, Marilyn Butler’s *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries* (Oxford, 1981) greatly expands the contexts in which the literature was seen but has tantalizingly few direct references to the industrial revolution; and Jerome J. McGann’s *The Romantic Ideology* (Chicago, 1983) whose account of Romanticism is caught up in the history of literary critical constructs of the period.

² Patrick O’Brien, ‘Modern conceptions of the Industrial Revolution’, eds. Patrick O’Brien and Roland Quinault, *The Industrial Revolution and British Society* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 2.

³ John Rule notes that the industrial revolution is accompanied by a number of other changes justifying the label ‘revolution’. The infrastructure was changing to meet growing demands, generating new turnpike roads, canals and railway which can be seen together as ‘the “transport revolution”’ and, after 1740 ‘there began a sustained rise which took a 1700 population of around 5 million (England and Wales) to almost 18 million by 1851’ - dubbed the “demographic revolution”, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England, 1750-1850* (Harlow, 1986), p. 1.

Jeremy Bentham, William Godwin, and the Unitarians, Joseph Priestley and Richard Price, concurred to a certain degree in seeing their age as ‘a busy age...in which knowledge is rapidly advancing towards perfection’.⁴ Smith’s political economy, for example, was driven by an understanding of commercial society as wealth-creating. Without ignoring the social problems arising out of industrialization - and recommending steps to mitigate the suffering caused - he put no limit on the human capacity to progress.

A similar belief in progress ruled the vibrant intellectual life of the new industrial areas of the mid to late eighteenth century, most famously seen in the Lunar Society, called by its biographer ‘a brilliant microcosm of that scattered community of provincial manufacturers and professional men who found England a rural society and left it urban and industrial’.⁵ Amongst its members were those at the cutting edge of manufacturing technology (Wedgwood, Watt and Boulton), scientists (Priestley and Erasmus Darwin), and a progressive educationalist, R. L. Edgeworth, the father of Maria Edgeworth. London too had its centres of progress. The Royal Society under the long chairmanship of Sir Joseph Banks encouraged scientific exploration both in the laboratory and through the voyages of Captain Cook and other seafarers. Spanning almost the whole period of this study, from 1801 the laboratories of the Royal Institution were the venue for the ‘chemical revolution’ due to the discoveries of Humphry Davy and Michael Faraday. The sponsors of their work were manufacturers and landowners who hoped for technological advances applicable to agriculture and industry which would maintain Britain’s competitive edge. In this British context of confident commercial expansion, the political influence of the radical ideas of the French revolutionaries is thrown into the shade. Schofield notes that ‘[b]efore 1760 the influence of manufacturers was negligible, after 1830 it was so pervasive as to be unremarkable’.⁶ By 1840, the Westminster parliament had undergone a seismic power-shift, partly brought about by those representing manufacturing interests. They greatly

⁴ Jeremy Bentham, *A Fragment on Government* (London, 1776), p. i.

⁵ Robert E. Schofield, *The Lunar Society of Birmingham: A Social History of Provincial Science and Industry in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1963), p. 3.

⁶ *The Lunar Society of Birmingham*, p. 6.

weakened the hold of the landed aristocracy who had been dominant for centuries, giving justification to the 'revolutionary' label attached to industrialization in this period.

Whilst optimists had the upper-hand for a time in the discussion of social change in the late-eighteenth century, the balance shifted in 1798 with the publication of T. R. Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population*. Malthus' contention that population growth would always tend to outstrip increases in food production was, as he admitted himself, a blow to ideas of social progress put forward by Godwin, Condorcet and even Smith, the source for his own economic model. Malthus wrote that '[i]t is, undoubtedly, a most disheartening reflection that the great obstacle in the way to any extraordinary improvement in society is of a nature that we can never hope to overcome'.⁷ He added a new - potentially cataclysmic - twist to the debate on the poor arising directly out of his understanding of the direction taken by the industrializing economy:

The increasing wealth of the nation has little or no tendency to better the condition of the labouring poor. They have not, I believe, a greater command of the necessaries and conveniences of life, and a much greater proportion of them than at the period of the Revolution is employed in manufacturers and crowded together in close and unwholesome rooms.⁸

A manufacturing economy which attracted labourers away from agriculture (and thus away from food production) into the factory speeded up the population cycle of booms and busts predicted in his model. The 'wealth of nations' entailed the eventual destruction of the poorest.

Whilst Malthus' contribution was original in its gloomy implications, the debate on the poor into which he entered was not of recent origin. At the beginning of the century, Bernard Mandeville, an heir to Hobbes' philosophy of state, rejected Lord Shaftesbury's concept of a benevolent society, and wrote provocatively, in *The Fable*

⁷ T. R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), ed. Antony Flew (Harmondsworth, 1982), pp. 198-199.

⁸ p. 186.

of the Bees (1714, 1723), that society thrived on personal acquisitiveness. For some to flourish, others had to be content to suffer. This entailed keeping the poor in ignorance: 'To make the Society happy and People easy under the meanest Circumstances, it is requisite that great Numbers of them should be Ignorant as well as Poor'.⁹ After Mandeville, the problem of the poor gathered urgency during the course of the eighteenth century as changing sensibilities, coupled with population growth, put to question presumptions about the maintenance of social order on Mandevillian lines. Crime appeared ever on the increase as the enclosure movement criminalized behaviour which had previously been part of a customary culture and growing towns presented new challenges to law and order.¹⁰ The uncertainty about what to do about the poor came to a head at the end of the century. Despite Adam Smith's prediction that a manufacturing economy would bring an increase in general prosperity,¹¹ poverty showed no sign of abating, but rather, as Malthus suggested, appeared to some to be getting worse.

How was the problem to be tackled? Mandeville's cynical answer to this question elicited a number of antagonistic responses from writers of the Scottish and English Enlightenment, including criticism from David Hume, Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith - the latter devoting a section in his 1759 *Theory of Moral Sentiments* to a refutation of Mandeville's system. Yet Smith did not jettison Mandeville in entirety: his *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) took as its lynch-pin the universal human appetite for acquisition as expressed in the phenomenon of supply and demand. Smith's political economy made plain that the co-operation of the poor as providers of labour was essential to the running of the economic system, particularly an industrializing economy where labour was no longer mediated through traditional structures but bought and sold in a labour market as a commodity. In

⁹ Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Public Benefits* (2 vols), ed. F. B. Kaye (Indianapolis, 1988), i.287-288.

¹⁰ Deborah Valenze, *The First Industrial Woman* (New York and Oxford, 1995), pp. 30-39.

¹¹ Whether or not this was the case has been hotly debated by historians. John Rule, surveying the statistical arguments on working class consumption and standard of living, concludes that any improvement before 1850 was in fact very slight, see *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England 1750-1850*, p. 49.

Smith's economic model, through their labour, the lower classes gain social status as productive members of society.¹²

In *Wealth of Nations*, Smith considered the poor not only for their labour value; he also proposed educating them for citizenship. Gertrude Himmelfarb aptly describes Smith's blend of political economy with social responsibility as 'a new kind of moral economy'.¹³ As I will discuss in my chapters on Edgeworth and Martineau, it provided the basis for the social vision of some influential writers of the early nineteenth century. Central to Smith's description of a modern economy is the division of labour which confines workers to repetitive tasks. Whilst praising the economic advantage of this arrangement, Smith also made clear that it comes at a grave human cost. He used exceptionally strong language to describe the state to which the worker is reduced - 'as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become', 'torpor of his mind', 'mutilated and deformed'.¹⁴ He proposed a vigorous counter-action in the provision of national education to dispel the cloud of ignorance that settles on the lower ranks when condemned to earn their bread in this manner. He backed national education in the belief that it achieved two linked goals: the lower classes were thereby treated as members of the country's constituent body, but as they were then also less likely to be fractious or prey to ignorant superstitions, education assisted

¹² Many discussions of the Poor Law in the 1790s shifted their ground from Smith's distinction between 'productive' and 'unproductive' labour to that of the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor, adding a moral value to the economics of work. Edmund Burke, in *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1797), for example, tried to resist the term, 'labouring poor': '[t]his puling jargon', he comments, 'is not as innocent as it is foolish....Hitherto the name of the poor (in the sense in which it is used to excite compassion) has not been used for those who can, but for those who cannot, labour...; but when we affect to pity, as poor, those who must labour or the world cannot exist, we are trifling with the condition of mankind' (*The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke* (Oxford, 1991), vol. ix, ed. R. B. McDowell, p. 355).

¹³ Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age* (London, 1984, 1985), p. 48.

¹⁴ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (2 vols), eds. R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner, (Oxford, 1976), ii. 782, 788.

social stability.¹⁵

As the differing visions of social stability and disintegration offered by Smith and Malthus recognize, industrialization threw the debate on the poor into a new crisis. The factory system emerged on the British scene at the same time that political revolutions abroad were putting 'dangerous' new ideas in circulation. Following the lead given in the economic works of Smith, Malthus and Burke, a number of writers identified the industrial worker as the test case because he was seen as a symptom of the new society. As the man whose capital is that of his own labour, he was attached to society only by the cash nexus. He was weak as an individual, but dauntingly powerful in union, adrift from traditional hierarchies fashioned by an agrarian society. Literature, in a period in which communication was dominated by the printed word, provided the rhetorical construction by which the debate on the poor of the manufacturing system was mediated. The writers in this study transmitted in their fiction versions of industrial change which were recognized by contemporaries. As polished materials - in contrast to the notionally 'raw' materials of economic statistics - these fictions would have failed to command an accepted place in literature if they were not approved by some - if not all - their contemporaries. When attempting to reconstruct part of a debate from times past, this contemporary approval or disapproval is a sign of the authority of the literary material in question.

A complete account of the way literature entered industrial history (and vice versa) is well beyond the scope of my thesis. Instead, I have chosen six writers: three of the first generation Romantic poets - Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey; and three women educationalists - Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth and Harriet Martineau. My thesis will argue that the analysis of industrialization, and the rhetorical structures in

¹⁵ All of the writers in this many-sided debate were put through a process of simplification, both by contemporary disciples and critics. Thus the writers that form the main focus of my thesis can be detected as often reacting to a caricatured version of Adam Smith or Malthus etc. For example, the Romantic poets exaggerated their differences from Malthus and failed to recognize that they had more common ground with him in the 1810s and 1820s than when they first began their attacks on him at the turn of the century. The poets were in turn caricatured by their political opponents, a strategy which obscured the complexity of their debts and their differences from these political economists. For a useful discussion of Adam Smith, his disciples and their attitude to the poor, see *The Idea of Poverty*, Pt. I.

which this analysis is conveyed by the poets, when contrasted with that of the educationalists, captures an important moment in the on-going debate about the nature of society under the new stresses introduced by the industrial process. Their work links the relatively optimistic portrayal of the 'industrious' poor found in Thomson's 'Autumn' and Dyer's 'The Fleece' with the much darker visions of workers in the industrial towns of the nineteenth century novels of Dickens and Gaskell. These six writers were not the only voices to be heard in the five decades, but they represent significant philosophical positions (*laissez faire* and interventionist, free-thinking liberalism and Christian conservatism, utilitarian and 'romantic') and are also unique in their contribution to imaginative literature.¹⁶

As argued above, literary critics have not identified industrialization to be a major theme in the writings of the Romantic period - an intriguing blindness which is partially explained by the fact that most pursue an industrial model drawn from the Victorian novel. On a much larger historical canvas than the fifty-year period under discussion, Raymond Williams in *The Country and The City* painted an influential literary picture of the changing relationship between literature and society. When coming to Romantic writers, he identifies urban life as an evolving theme, but not one unambiguously linked to industrialization. Though finding in Wordsworth's *The Prelude* an 'historically liberating insight' into the exhilaration coupled with fear of living surrounded by myriads of strangers, a sign itself of a booming urban economy, he adds that this was specific to London: 'the industrial cities were different again', a conclusion also echoed by more recent critics.¹⁷ He gives the role of the first interpreter of the industrial city to Charles Dickens and thus follows the orthodox route in passing

¹⁶ I use these labels in the awareness that they cover a multitude of sins, particularly challenging being the definitions of 'conservative' and 'radical'. Conservative, for example, would seem now to encompass Hannah More and the poets in later life; 'radical' could be taken to describe the poets in the 1790s and Harriet Martineau's 'philosophical radicalism'. The roots of these writers' respective 'conservatisms' and 'radicalisms' are very different and should be read as valid only as descriptions for a specific historical context, not as suggesting a necessary coincidence of opinions.

¹⁷ Raymond Williams, *The Country and The City* (London, 1973), pp. 151-152. See Max Byrd, *London Transformed: Images of the City in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven and London, 1978) which also deals with Wordsworth's portrait of London, and not with the new industrial cities of the north which feature in *The Excursion*. See also Peter J. Manning *Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts* (Oxford, 1990), p. 303.

by the Romantic period, reserving the merit of the first serious literary treatment of industrialization for Dickens and his contemporaries.

The debate on the Victorian social novel of the mid-century is dominated by this assumption. 'To talk of the industrial tradition [in English fiction] is to mean a handful of novels written primarily in the fourth and fifth decades of the nineteenth century', writes P. J. Keating in his study, *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*.¹⁸ Looking for a genesis for this meagre collection of works, *Hard Times*, *Mary Barton*, *North and South*, and a number of minor novels, he alights on Harriet Martineau's 'A Manchester Strike' (1832). Thus for Keating fiction on an industrial theme begins some decades after the process of industrialization had become an inescapable part of British life and landscape.¹⁹ Keating is correct to assert that the early period of industrial change did not produce a full blown novel on the subject comparable to *Hard Times* - but then, how could it? Conditions in the centres of industry, as well as in the literary marketplace, were at a different developmental stage from that confronting Dickens. It is wrong to imply, however, that literary works on the theme of industrialization and its associated social change did not exist before 1832. Martineau, Dickens, Gaskell, and the other industrial novelists that Keating identifies, were not ploughing virgin territory with their writing, but rather carrying forward an existing debate that had been shifting between other fiction genres: poetry, children's writing, ballads, tracts.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find that it is a Marxist critic who gives the most serious attention to finding literature dealing with industrialization prior to Martineau.

¹⁸ P. J. Keating *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction* (London, 1971), p. 6. The industrial novels he identifies have been used as evidence of how the Victorians perceived industrialization as both a moral and a social change. See, for example, *The Idea of Poverty*: Pt IV. Himmelfarb, as others before her have done, concentrates on the novels of the 1840s and 50s. See also ed. Kate Flint *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change* (London, 1987) which compares non-fictional extracts with Victorian fiction.

¹⁹ Josephine M. Guy argues in *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel* (London, 1996), the industrial tradition Keating refers to was a concept dreamt up in the 1950s, reflecting a controversy between historicists and other literary critics, and was not a Victorian notion (p. 5). The creation of a separate genre suggests an exclusive identity for these novels which was not perceived by nineteenth century readers or writers. Critics have since conflated the 'industrial novel' with other groupings, including the 'social-problem novel' or simply the 'social novel', telling us more about our changing definitions of what constitutes industrialization or a social problem than it does about nineteenth century understandings of both these terms.

Ivanka Kovacevic in her study *Fact into Fiction: English Literature and the Industrial Scene, 1750-1850*, suggests a heterogeneous collection of works, ranging from Dyer's poem, 'The Fleece' (1757), to Hannah More's tract, 'The Lancashire Collier Girl' (1795), as illustrations of an industrial tradition long pre-dating Keating's chosen point of departure. However, Kovacevic is dissatisfied not to find any dialectical materialists amongst the English writers of the period: 'It is, perhaps, somewhat disappointing to discover that so few authors focus their attention directly on the process of industrialization....But it is understandable that the age itself should largely ignore the issue'.²⁰ She fails to draw out the analytical threads contained in her material, assuming her inability to find a line of social criticism equates with the ignorance of the period itself struggling to come to terms with a new phenomenon. Thus Kovacevic, though she establishes a lineage for industrial fiction, excuses the attitude of critics such as Keating: if no considered literary treatment is given to industrialization before Martineau, why look before 1832?

If we do look before that date, however, we not only find works deeply engaged with the social change brought by an earlier stage of industrialization, we also find our traditional concept of the literary canon shaken. Examining the educationalists, More, Edgeworth and Martineau, under the rarely considered subject of industrialization produces an interesting result: marginal figures become mainstream; canonical figures, such as Coleridge and Wordsworth, find their significance changed. The male poets have to be read in company with their female contemporaries to be viewed in context. Thus far, we have only listened to one side of the conversation.

Our partial deafness may be in part due to the unfashionable values propounded by More, Edgeworth and Martineau. Evangelical Christianity, cautious progressivism and utilitarianism have not been as sympathetically treated as radicalism, or even the conservative paternalism that marked the Romantic poets later years. Hannah More, for example, is often dismissed as a writer of patronizingly didactic works, happy to preach liberation for slaves abroad whilst doling out quietist propaganda at home. The

²⁰ Ivanka Kovacevic *Fact into Fiction: English Literature and the Industrial Scene* (Leicester, 1975), p. 15.

hostility she now attracts from some quarters shows a continuity with attacks made on other members of the Clapham Sect - the Evangelical pressure group headed by Wilberforce - by antipathetic commentators in the nineteenth century. Benjamin Disraeli, in his days as an aspiring Tory politician and novelist, was one of those out of sympathy with the Evangelical social missionaries. Though most leading figures of the Sect had died by the end of the 1830s, they left a legacy of Christian social action to others, thus keeping the issue of religiously motivated reform on the political agenda. Disraeli fell back on an old accusation to undermine his opponents. In an emotionally charged passage in his novel of the Two Nations, *Sybil* (1845), he writes that the plight of girls working in English coalmines seems 'to have escaped the notice of the Society for the Abolition of Negro Slavery. Those worthy gentlemen too appear to have been singularly unconscious of the sufferings of the little trappers, which was remarkable, as many of them were in their own employ'.²¹ In his charge of hypocrisy, he redeploys an argument used by Richard Oastler in the 1830s, when he was frustrated by the failure to pass an effective Factory Bill through a parliament that was prepared to emancipate slaves,²² and by William Cobbett in the 1820s.

Cobbett had been one of the first to pitch concern for 'black' slavery against 'white' - meaning Negro enslavement abroad versus the condition of British workers at home. His attack on Wilberforce in *Political Register* No. XLVII is characteristically intemperate. First painting a picture of a country of starving labourers, he continues: 'This being the case, then; and it being equally notorious that no Black slave ever suffered for want of food, will not the care, will not the anxiety of a really humane Englishman be directed towards the Whites, instead of towards the Blacks, until at any rate, the situation of the former be made to be as *good* as that of the latter'. Ignoring the conscientious work of the Clapham Sect to ground their arguments in well researched facts, he accuses Wilberforce of wilfully undermining the cause of the poor at home for a fantasy of wrongs abroad: 'Never do you utter a syllable against any of the measures by which the suffering of the labouring classes has been produced...; and you do all the mischief which it is on your power to do, by endeavouring to draw

²¹ Benjamin Disraeli *Sybil* (Oxford, 1981) p. 140.

²² See J. T. Ward *The Factory Movement 1830-1855* (London, 1962), pp. 108-109.

public attention away from the real sufferings of the people at home to the imaginary sufferings of the Blacks. In many respects, your charges against the West India planters and Assemblies are false; and the whole of what you say about them is a tissue of disfigurings and misrepresentings'.²³ Comparing his rhetoric to historical records, Cobbett is the one weaving the 'tissue of disfigurings and misrepresentings' of Wilberforce's record in parliament: Wilberforce and other members of the Clapham Sect campaigned on behalf of many causes affecting the poor at home, including the abolition of the press gang, relief for chimney sweeps and regulation of factory conditions - as Cobbett would have known full well.²⁴ Cobbett's hostile image of Evangelical abolitionists, however, refused to go away, and was immortalized thirty years later by Dickens in *Bleak House* (1852-53) in the character of Mrs. Jellaby concerned for the natives of Borrioboola-gha at the expense of her long suffering family.

Accusations that the abolitionists were hardhearted towards sufferings brought by the industrialization of work at home are not confined to the nineteenth century. Recent commentators have given this line of argumentation new currency, presenting the Evangelical abolitionists as hypocrites who voiced anti-slavery sentiments for populations abroad whilst acting as slave masters to British workers.²⁵ Historians suspicious of Evangelical formulas of social reform, such as Leslie Stephen, the Hammonds, Eric Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson and Harold Perkin, have extended Disraeli's concept of the exploitative employer to include other aspects of religious activity, particularly education of the poor. Thompson berates Methodists and Anglican Evangelicals (as Disraeli did) for their 'complicity' in the system of child labour. He interprets their educational work as indoctrination of the poor in the duty of submission, thus weakening the natural solidarity of the working class. His

²³ *The Opinions of William Cobbett*, eds. G. D. H. and Margaret Cole (London, 1944) pp.136-137.

²⁴ Ernest Marshall Howse *Saints in Politics* (London, first published 1953, this edition 1971) p. 131.

²⁵ In contrast to the sympathetic accounts of Wilberforce by Howse, Lean and Cropper, Ford K. Brown offers one such cynical version of the Evangelicals' involvement in abolition in his influential study *Fathers of the Victorians: The Age of Wilberforce* (Cambridge, 1961).

accusations go further: he holds them responsible for a form of mass brain-washing, churning out victims to slot unproblematically into the disciplined, dehumanizing conditions of the factory. He writes of Methodism: '[t]he box-like, blackening chapels stood in the industrial districts like great traps for the human psyche'.²⁶ Thus in his account of the making of the English working class, the ebullient culture of the workers largely survives *despite* the influence of religion in urban society. Missionizing Christianity is the oppressive 'trap' to be avoided by the torch carriers of working class consciousness. Roger Sales follows Thompson in dismissing More and her fellow activists as an arm of the forces of repression. Elie Halevy had famously described the Evangelicals as the decisive influence which prevented England from descending into revolutionary violence.²⁷ What appears as a merit to Halevy is put in less temperate language by Sales: 'Evangelical Christianity was aiding and abetting the counter-revolution....The British inquisition attempted to track down republicans and levellers and then stop them from talking by stuffing tracts down their throats'.²⁸ This latter-day Cobbett, both in style and sentiment, fails to see the radical and innovatory agenda behind these despised tracts which was to encourage literacy and self-determination.²⁹

A more sympathetic faction amongst historians, however, have questioned the view of Evangelicalism as 'regressive and repressive'.³⁰ Geoffrey Best rejects the label of political conservatism for later Victorian Evangelicalism, regarding the charitable work

²⁶ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1963, 1968), p. 404.

²⁷ Elie Halevy, *A History of the English Speaking People in the Nineteenth Century: England in 1815*, trans. E. I. Watkin and D. A. Barker (London, 1960), p. 425. For a recent review of the Halevy debate, see David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland. From Glorious Revolution to the decline of empire* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 31-38.

²⁸ Roger Sales, *English Literature in History 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics* (London, 1983), p. 22. See also Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880* (London, 1969), p. 283 and p. 356. For further discussion of the view of Methodism expressed by Stephen, the Hammonds, Hobsbawm and Thompson, see Bernard Semmel, *The Methodist Revolution* (London, 1973), p. 3 *et passim*.

²⁹ Sales demonstrates only a cursory acquaintance with More's writing, quoting solely from *Village Politics* and 'The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain', but from these he reaches the conclusion that More sponsored an image of a rural idyll (p. 28), missing the fact that More was anything but a sentimentalist about rural life. See also R. W. Harris *Romanticism and the Social Order 1780-1830* (London, 1969), p. 139.

³⁰ *The Methodist Revolution*, p.3.

of the Evangelicals as having the tendency to 'ally' rather than 'antagonize' classes.³¹ Placing this allying tendency in an earlier period, John Wolffe describes More and Wilberforce as diverting the attention of the religious away from Protestantism's socially divisive anti-Catholic stance into the campaigns to abolish slavery and for moral reform, suggesting that their brand of Evangelicalism can be read as a more socially uniting force than that which went before or came after.³² David Hempton observes this tendency in Evangelicalism throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century, suggesting it forged 'a rough harmony between the pragmatic and moralistic middle class and the skilled and respectable sections of the English working class'.³³ Himmelfarb argues that in a society where church and chapel going was a natural activity, '[w]hat was invidious was not being preached to, not having access to the kinds of moral, religious, and communal experiences that were the normal part of life for those not so poor as to be deprived of them'.³⁴ From a feminist perspective, Valenze argues that for women workers 'Methodist sectarianism reaffirmed essential familial and neighborly cooperation'.³⁵ Taking a more radical route than these readings of Evangelicalism above which lay stress on its socially constructive role, W. R. Ward notes that, far from propping up the Establishment, Methodism undermined it as a result of an eventually successful battle to defend the non-conformists' basic rights of prayer and preaching.³⁶ G. Newman gives further emphasis to this revision of Evangelicalism in his description of its 'determined effort to strike down many of the fundamental traditions of the country'.³⁷ Whilst More would have been shocked to have found herself described in terms usually associated with Tom Paine, it is true that in some lights the Evangelicals' religious imperative to moral reform led them to attack

³¹ Geoffrey Best, 'Evangelicalism and the Victorians', *The Victorian Crisis of Faith*, ed. Anthony Symondson (London, 1970), p. 52. His work also contains a helpful definition of the three strands of Evangelicalism in this period: Methodist, Anglican and Protestant dissenters.

³² John Wolffe *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain 1829-1860* (Oxford, 1991), p. 16.

³³ *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*, p. 32.

³⁴ *The Idea of Poverty*, p. 33.

³⁵ *The First Industrial Woman*, p. 126.

³⁶ W. R. Ward *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850* (London, 1972), p. 53.

³⁷ G. Newman 'Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century: suggestions toward a general interpretation', *Victorian Studies*, 18 (1975), p. 401.

successfully many ingrained habits and practices, particularly those associated with the aristocracy, breaking the hold of traditions that the upper classes had been able to defend against previous threats from political reformers. The picture emerging from these readings is that we should see More's Evangelicalism as in spirit 'antithetically mixt', similar to the Evangelical Methodism identified by Bernard Semmel. He suggests that the negative perception of Methodism is the result of 'the failure to see the [Methodist] Revival as both a spiritual Revolution of a progressive and liberal character and as a counter to revolutionary violence'.³⁸ Both visions need to be held in balance when reading More.

In my thesis, I will argue that we should preserve a similar balance towards Edgeworth's cautious progressivism and Martineau's Philosophical Radicalism, looking to identify in their work different kinds of liberal positions from those which dominate the literary portrait of industrialization formed in the 1840s and 50s. Both writers have been used as negative examples against which to read canonical writers such as Wordsworth and Dickens. Whilst specialists on Edgeworth, notably Mitzi Myers and Marilyn Butler,³⁹ have sensitively described the progressive possibilities of her educational theory, this work has not affected the argumentation of recent British scholarship on Victorian children's fiction. J. S. Bratton, for example, sees Edgeworth as entrapping the child 'in the toils of utilitarian materialism'; Carpenter and Prichard describe her as too obviously moralistic; and Peter Hunt, whilst he grants her 'at least some understanding' of children, classes her work amongst the children's literature that was 'a bastion of conservatism' in revolutionary times.⁴⁰ Read against her contemporary Romantic poets, Edgeworth has been the subject of some very

³⁸ *The Methodist Revolution*, pp. 4-5.

³⁹ See Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth* (Oxford, 1972) and Mitzi Myers, 'Romancing the Moral Tale. Maria Edgeworth and the Problematics of Pedagogy', eds. James Holt McGavran *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (Athens, Ge., 1991), 'De-Romanticizing the Subject: Maria Edgeworth's "The Bracelets", Mythologies of Origin, and the Daughter's Coming to Writing', eds. Paula R. Feldman and Theresa M. Kelley, *Romantic Women Writers* (Hanover and London, 1995), pp. 88-110.

⁴⁰ J. S. Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction* (London, 1981), p. 43; eds. Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* (Oxford, 1984, 1987), p. 163; Peter Hunt *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 46-47.

misguided comments. Gary Harrison describes R. L. and Maria Edgeworth as 'Evangelical reformers' who, along with Hannah More, 'blatantly and tendentiously' display their paternalism, a line of argumentation echoing that taken by Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace.⁴¹ Edgeworth is typecast, while the purposes and methods of Enlightenment education are misunderstood.

Martineau has fared little better. Her reputation has been inextricably linked to that of utilitarian political economy - a distaste for the latter leading to a lack of sympathy for her work which champions it. Leslie Stephen's entry on Martineau for the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1893) established an image of her work which has persisted to the present. He wrote that her *Illustrations of Political Economy* were 'an unreadable mixture of fiction, founded on rapid cramming, with raw masses of the dismal science'.⁴² Louis Cazamian disseminated this reputation further in his influential discussion of the Victorian novel, calling *Illustrations* a 'sharp, chilling response of dogmatic learning to popular aspirations'.⁴³ More recently, Keating found her doctrines at odds with her intended audience for, as with most other writers of 'industrial' fiction of the period, the writer's own class viewpoint 'becomes transparently clear', causing the artistic value of the work to suffer.⁴⁴ Sheila Smith takes the view that Martineau's tales are 'a dry thesis or ephemeral propaganda', 'mere illustrations of her Utilitarian theories', so not worthy of further consideration.⁴⁵ Alan Richardson provides the final nail in the coffin of Martineau's literary reputation when he concludes that her major contribution in *Illustrations* was to demonstrate 'exhaustively how *not* to produce

⁴¹ Gary Harrison, *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse: Poetry, Poverty and Power* (Detroit, 1994), p. 30 and Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Father's Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (New York and Oxford, 1991).

⁴² Quoted by Bette Polkinghorn and Dorothy Lampen Thomson in *Adam Smith's Daughters. Eight Prominent Women Economists from the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (Cheltenham, 1998), p. 25.

⁴³ Louis Cazamian *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850*, first published 1903 in French, trans. Martin Fido (London, 1973), p. 50.

⁴⁴ *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, p.4.

⁴⁵ Sheila M. Smith *The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s* (Oxford, 1980), p. 9.

popular fiction'.⁴⁶

Dissenting from these negative views, I will contend that a more balanced reading would recognize that the educationalists strove for a constructive rather than a repressive relationship with their audience. They retained a belief in moral values in new economic conditions, in contrast to the Romantic poets who portray the relationships of the emerging industrial system as hostile to values other than monetary ones. As Himmelfarb notes, the anti-Malthusians - amongst whom Coleridge and Southey were counted - helped bring about the demoralized society they feared 'by depriving political economy, and thus capitalism itself, of the moral and social roots Smith had given it - and by the same token, depriving the poor of the moral and social status Smith had given them'.⁴⁷ Educationalists, on the other hand, at least to some degree, tried to prevent the social degeneration encouraged by such pessimism, by taking the counter-action of spreading 'moral roots' into the factory system through literature, and integrating the industrial economy with ethical behaviour.⁴⁸

The new interest of social historians, as well as literary critics, in the wider cultural milieu of literature is establishing the grounds on which the reputation of hitherto unregarded women writers can be comprehensively revalued. Just as the tendency until recently was to construct our concept of literature around definitions biased towards genres dominated by male writers, an historical appreciation of the industrial revolution suffered from blindness to the perspective of women in the workplace. Deborah Valenze in her study *The First Industrial Woman* notes how skill itself 'is often gendered as male', whereas women's work is 'usually construed as unskilled and of little monetary value'. The whiggish accounts of the history of technology, such as David Landes' *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial*

⁴⁶ Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge, 1994), p.231.

⁴⁷ *The Idea of Poverty*, p. 131.

⁴⁸ Elaine Freedgood makes a comparable argument for the reconciliatory role of Martineau's political economy, making the unendurable 'bearable'. She devalues Martineau's work, however, by comparing *Illustrations* to 'short-acting drugs', palatable only to the middle classes. 'Banishing Panic: Harriet Martineau and the Popularization of Political Economy', *Victorian Studies*, 39/1 (1995), pp. 33-53.

Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present (1969), which celebrate the arrival of innovations which replace women's work (notably the spinning jenny), also assume the lost income to be of marginal importance as it is regarded as subsidiary, rather than essential, to a household. Thus '[t]he celebrated story of the factory's beginnings, highlighted by the subsequent meteoric rise of industry in England, has obscured the disadvantageous position of women in these early years' of the industrial revolution.⁴⁹ In response, feminist historians have added to the competing historical models of the industrial revolution accounts which value the experience of women, offering an example that should illuminate feminist critics' readings of the industrial debate.⁵⁰

Whilst I have reflected in my discussion above the views of historians who find the term 'industrial revolution' an apt description for a period of fundamental social and political change, it should be noted that the phrase was not used during the period covered in this study. 'Industrial revolution' was a coinage of Victorian commentators (notably Friedrich Engels and the historian, Arnold Toynbee, the latter supplying the 'capital letters' for the term). In an academic debate analogous to the literary debate on the existence of Romanticism/romanticisms, historians have since debated whether or not the process of social and economic change was indeed revolutionary in character. O'Brien notes the recent fashion for 'pointillism' in historical studies, whereby local and industry-specific studies deconstruct the concept of an industrial revolution by blurring 'all distinctions between old and new, continuity and discontinuity'.⁵¹ The closer one gets to the picture, all one can see are disconnected dots. Taking an alternative route, the anti-Whig school, represented by J. C. D. Clark and J. V. Beckett, have blurred the edges in another way, emphasizing industrial change as a 'process of stable but civilized change', part of the larger story of the transition from

⁴⁹ *The First Industrial Woman*, p. 8, p. 79, p. 84, p. 94.

⁵⁰ Ivy Pinchbeck published a pioneering work on women workers, concentrating on empirical data, in 1930 entitled *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*. The last thirty years have seen a renewed interest in the subject. In addition to Valenze, see Bridget Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1989) and Judy Lowy *Women and Industrialization: Gender at Work in Nineteenth-Century England* (Minneapolis: 1990).

⁵¹ 'Modern conceptions of the Industrial Revolution', p. 5.

feudalism to capitalism.⁵² The two historical approaches identified by O'Brien offer further parallels to literary critical readings that have undervalued the presence of the industrial revolution in Romantic literature. The educationalists and poets have tended to be considered as dots on the portrait of literature, disconnected from each other due to the different literary status accorded the genres of poetry and educational writing. Conversely, the two groups of writers have also been read as being part of literary traditions on a larger historical canvas - the development of English poetry or the history of education - and rarely considered as part of the same literary culture.

My thesis will argue that when the two literary groups are reconnected to a shared literary milieu it becomes apparent that Romantic literature did not ignore industrialization, rather it talked about and analysed it at great length in texts which tend to lie away from the now fashionable paths mapping out the Romantic period for the modern reader. Whilst economic historians have highlighted one of the decisive factors of the beginning of the nineteenth century as being the application of water and steam power to manufacturing, literary critics have seen the same years as dominated by the Romantic poets, whose power is the imagination. They have substituted the industrial revolution for one that is 'all in the mind'. Taking their cue from the bias of the canonical writers now most studied, critics have written the industrial revolution out of literary history by privileging the element of nostalgia and pastoral to be found in the poetry of the period - a practice that distorts the complex historical context in which the literature was written and one that needs to be challenged. One challenge has already been made: Igor Webb in *From Custom to Capital: The English Novel and the Industrial Revolution* did so on the grounds 'that any novel written between roughly 1780 and 1850s is necessarily an expression of a response to events we have come to call, somewhat narrowly, the Industrial Revolution'.⁵³ His definition is too broad to be helpful to my argument, as over-compensating for the absence of the industrial revolution by making it ubiquitous does not distinguish the texts most concerned in the

⁵² p. 6. See also Donald Winch's discussion in the prologue to *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1834* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁵³ Igor Webb, *From Custom to Capital: The English Novel and the Industrial Revolution* (Ithaca and London, 1981), p. 9.

specifics of the contemporary debate. My thesis will instead examine literary materials which deal more explicitly with the social and technological change associated with industrialization, situating these works in the wider social debate of the period.

When unearthing opinions and experience from fictional forms ranging from poetry to educational writings, we should not lose sight of the fact that they were crafted to achieve a certain response, influenced by their genre, and thus cannot be read naively as social journalism. The writers participate in the process of moulding the contemporary reader's concept of the world described. Their literary strategies are perhaps even more telling than the details conveyed, revealing anxieties and aspirations that may otherwise escape notice. The strategies are carried over from fiction into the factual world. Patrick Brantlinger highlights the interaction between fictional and factual literature in his article, 'Bluebooks, the Social Organism, and the Victorian Novel', commenting that 'Victorian fiction aspires to the condition of bluebooks - and vice versa, for bluebooks were very often treated like novels'.⁵⁴ Not only did the novelists raid the bluebooks for their material, but the writers of the bluebooks and other statistical works began to shape their material in the image of the 'other' nation presented by the novelists. Thus art acts as an interpreter, choosing from the infinite possible versions of life, one which will fix a certain kind of reality in the mind of the audience for that art.⁵⁵

In the case of industrialization and the population that depended on the new technology to earn its living, fiction of the Romantic period played its part in bringing both the process and the people into focus for the literate world. In the early period of industrialization, the literary metaphor that had most influence on the shape of the political debate was the image of 'white slavery' - referring both to the parallel debate on black slavery and to the philosophical discussion of individual freedom. The

⁵⁴ Patrick Brantlinger 'Bluebooks, the Social Organism, and the Victorian Novel', *Criticism*, vol XIV, No 4, 1972, p. 331.

⁵⁵ See Joseph W. Childers *Novel Possibilities: Fiction and the Formation of Early Victorian Culture* (Philadelphia, 1995), p. 4. See also David Kaufmann *The Business of Common Life: Novels and Classical Economics between Revolution and Reform* (Baltimore, 1995), p. 26. Kaufmann later remarks that novels, classical economics and political theory shared the aim 'to describe and define the limits and possibilities for the happiness that the new order promised as its horizon' (p. 63), suggesting an interesting link between literary discourse and the discourses of economics and politics.

campaign to abolish black slavery took many years to achieve results. Initially Wilberforce had to be content with winning small victories in the 1790s regarding the conditions of slave transportation. The parliamentary majority continued to block so radical a step as ending the British slave trade, let alone countenancing full emancipation of slaves in the British Empire. After decades of campaigning, Wilberforce succeeded in his motion to end the trade in 1807. The plantation owners, however, kept their rights to their existing slaves, having persuaded parliament that emancipation would destabilize the West Indies and bring commercial ruin. It took another twenty-eight years to achieve emancipation and even then the planters won the argument to be compensated for their 'loss'. The campaign to improve factory conditions was even more protracted with some similar arguments being deployed to defend the employer's interests. The various attempts to regulate the cotton industry in 1802, 1819, 1825, 1831 and 1833 met with fierce opposition as the mill-owners argued that interference in their affairs would bring commercial ruin. The factory acts that were passed did little to improve working conditions and were hard to enforce; it was not until the Coal Mines Act of 1842 and the Factory Act of 1844, coming after the Ten-Hours Movement of the 1830s, that legislation began to bite.⁵⁶

Whilst the two campaigns on behalf of the slaves and the factory workers followed different legislative paths, they were seen as linked by, amongst others, Coleridge and Southey, as well as by later writers, such as Caroline Bowles and Caroline Norton.⁵⁷ Both issues were regarded as 'moral' battles on behalf of the poor and oppressed against vested interests which defended their commercial right to function free from legislative interference by appealing to economic principles of *laissez faire*. So prevalent was the comparison in the media of the day between the black slaves in the West Indies and British factory workers, everyone writing on the industrial classes had to address the issue. Were the changes overtaking the traditional social patterns producing a new under-class enslaved by their economic position? Adam Smith had linked the progress of civil liberty in Britain to the development of a commercial and

⁵⁶ For further details, see *The Factory Movement 1830-1855*.

⁵⁷ See, in particular, Bowles' *Tales of the Factories* (1833) and Caroline Norton's *A Voice from the Factories* (1836).

manufacturing economy. By contrast, Malthus wondered if this development had been at the expense of investment in agriculture and entailed a diversion of labour from the fields into an unhealthy and morally deleterious environment of the city. Were the workers thus better or worse off than black slaves? Did support for emancipation of slaves abroad get in the way of concern for the unfortunate at home? These were some of the defining questions of the debate on factory workers.

When discussing the nature of industrial work, writers turned to another image of slavery to make their case, asking whether the industrial classes were being turned into slaves of the machines, put to unremitting labour like the demons of Hell who were forced by their Master to feed the furnace flames? Images from Dante or from the classical myths are the common currency of social observers in this period. Coming from the quiet of their middle and upper class homes, the glowing pits of the north and the deafening whirr of the looms seemed like a piece of Hell - or Vulcan's workshop - brought to life in a British landscape. This discourse, with its erudite references, is the province of the intelligentsia, schooled in these works, and it betrays the readership's distance from the subject. The language of Dante and classical legends painted the process of industrialization as frightening, but it was a fear made thrilling and exotic. The day-to-day reality experienced by those employed in the factories or down the mines was separated by an enormous cultural gap from this discourse. The educated world may have reached for the *Inferno* for a language in which to describe the workers, but this was impractical imagery in which to communicate with the unschooled industrial working classes.

A number of the writers, most notably the educationalists, aspired to offer fictional models to this audience. Starting with the relatively simplified characterizations of More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*, portraits of the working classes increase in complexity, culminating (in this thesis at least) in the cast of working characters in Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy*. More, Edgeworth and Martineau deliberately turned their back on the sensational imagery that appealed to an upper class audience, hoping that by providing something more familiar they would be giving the

lower ranks of society attractive patterns by which to shape their behaviour and guide their interpretation of the social changes in which they were involved. As society moved from the era of the French Revolution to that of the Great Reform Act, the conception held by women writers of their lower class audience grew more sophisticated, causing them to make the pattern offered correspondingly more complex, a process that can be seen in the contrast between More's Patient Joe and Martineau's William Allen.⁵⁸

Fiction had an important role in shaping the perception of industrial change, but how important was the industrial theme to literature itself? In an echo of Igor Webb's argument, Catherine Gallagher in *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction, 1832-1867*, claims that 'narrative fiction, especially the novel, underwent basic changes whenever it became a part of the discourse over industrialism'.⁵⁹ She substantiates this argument by characterizing the industrial novels of the 1840s as exploring the tension between free will and determinism, and those of the 1850s as highlighting the unstable relationship between the public and private realms - both themes inspired by the changes brought by industrialization. Though other influences contributed to bringing to the fore questions of freedom and the roles of the public and private spheres, her basic contention is persuasive. The literature of the early period of industrialization falls outside the scope of Gallagher's study, but this too is shaped by industrial change to an extent that has not yet been acknowledged. The influence is apparent on a number of levels. Thematically, change confronted writers with such questions as individual freedom, dislocation and disintegration of social structures, the place of morality in an immoral environment. The creeping urban sprawl and the black smoke of the factory wafting over the green fields is the shadow world of Romantic nature poetry - industrialization is experienced as a silent negative, driving the poet (in particular

⁵⁸ See R. K. Webb's discussion of the two phases of treatment of the working classes, the first 'defensive' phase ending after the post-war crises. His division significantly coincides with the end of More's career and the beginning of Martineau's. *The British Working Class Reader 1790-1848. Literary and Social Tension* (London, 1955), p. 158. My argument that these writers did attempt to portray the working classes contrasts with George Orwell's thesis in *Inside the Whale and other Essays* (London, 1940) that if you look for the working classes in fiction, 'all you will find is a hole' (p. 11).

⁵⁹ Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction, 1832-1867*, (Chicago and London, 1985), p. xi. See also her discussion of the 'white slavery' debate (pp.3-35).

Wordsworth) into an attempt to define his positive relationship to the threatened natural world.

Industrial processes not only changed what was written about but also changed how, and for whom, the author composed his work. The audience grew as the need for a literate workforce in the factories encouraged the spread of schools. Technological improvements in the printing trade, culminating in the steam printing-press, enabled the appetite of the new audience to be satisfied with material priced within their means.⁶⁰ Gradually, writers began to take the lower classes into consideration when producing their works. Hannah More stands at the beginning of a tradition of fiction tailored by the elite for the masses, leading to the tracts and cheap periodical publications of the Victorian era. Maria Edgeworth, Harriet Martineau and Robert Southey also aspired in their different ways to reach an audience beyond the circle of polite society; even Wordsworth toyed with the idea that his poetry could be useful in some way to the demoralized crowds swarming in British cities, though he resisted attempts in his lifetime to produce cheap editions of his work.⁶¹ Whilst remaining mindful of social distinctions between classes, and apt to think that they had the right to prescribe behaviour to their 'inferiors', the practice of writing for an anonymous mass audience forced writers into a new relationship with their readers, one in which they responded to popular taste. Whilst trying to form and reform the masses, these writers were reshaped by the masses themselves.⁶²

When discussing the representation of the industrial classes of the Romantic period, one immediately comes up against the problem of definition. Contemporary writers experienced the same difficulty. The Marxist terminology of the working class did not

⁶⁰ Lee Erikson in *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the Industrialization of Publishing, 1800-1850* (Baltimore, 1996) describes this phenomenon in depth. Clifford Siskin explores the impact the proliferation of the print culture had on the career of the professional author in *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830* (Baltimore, 1998).

⁶¹ See the discussion of the nineteenth century publishing history of Wordsworth in Stephen Gill's *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford, 1998). In 1836, John Wordsworth urged his father to change to a publisher who wooed 'the patronage of the masses' rather than stay with the middle class Moxon. Wordsworth refused (p. 84).

⁶² See Sonia Hofkosh *Sexual Politics and the Romantic Author* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 7.

yet exist, nor were the concepts on which this version of class society is based part of their world view. Each writer used their own term to indicate this sector of society, usually classing them together with the rural poor and those unable to work, bracketing them in the same deprived economic category. Wordsworth in *The Excursion* calls them part of 'the humbler Classes of Society' (Argument, Book Eighth). For Southey, they are 'the Poor', 'the labouring classes' or simply 'the People'.⁶³ Hannah More addresses them in public as 'Mechanics, journey men and day labourers' but in private calls them 'the most vulgar class of readers'.⁶⁴ Maria Edgeworth most commonly refers to them as 'the poor' of the manufacturing towns.⁶⁵ Harriet Martineau, writing at a later period, refers to them idiosyncratically as people 'of worky life'.⁶⁶ Coleridge, ever alert to semantic values, notes in *A Lay Sermon* that terminology has been changing: 'the laboring classes' have now become 'the Laboring Poor' - an alteration he calls 'an ominous but too appropriate a change'.⁶⁷ This variety of collective nouns exemplifies the evolving nature of images of the urban masses. Taken together, they constitute a sign that the phenomenon the writers were trying to delineate does not fit neatly into our retrospective imposition of class categories.

Historians continue to debate whether or not the early period of the industrial revolution is the origin of 'horizontal' class identities. In *The Making of the English Working Class*, E. P. Thompson traced an emerging consciousness of a shared working class identity, a phenomenon he defines loosely as a body of people with 'a *disposition* to *behave* as a class'.⁶⁸ Whilst my study does not engage with the issue of the perception

⁶³ Robert Southey, *Essays, Moral and Political* (2 vols) (London, 1832), see titles of Essays V and IX and p. 231.

⁶⁴ Hannah More, *Village Politics (1793) with The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain (c. 1820)*, ed. J. Wordsworth (Oxford, 1995), see the full title to *Village Politics*. See also *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More* (4 vols), ed. William Roberts (London, 1834), ii. 345.

⁶⁵ Maria, Edgeworth, 'On the Education of the Poor', Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e. 1461.

⁶⁶ From a letter to Reeve, 14 March 1859, in a private collection, quoted by Valerie Sanders in *Reason over Passion* (Sussex, 1986), p. 19. Martineau was one of the first to note the arrival of the language of class, commenting in the 1840s that 'working-class' was being used in place of 'lower classes', a move that she regretted as being 'less precise and conveying false notions', *The Idea of Poverty*, p. 291.

⁶⁷ S. T. C. Coleridge, *Lay Sermons*, ed. R. J. White (London, 1972), p. 207.

⁶⁸ *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 939.

of identity from within the working class itself,⁶⁹ but rather with the work of middle class writers contemplating that identity from outside, it is important to pause to consider the assumptions about class on which historical readings of the period are based. The six writers in my thesis at least as often appeal to *shared* identities with their lower class readers - race, gender, political persuasions, religion - as they do to stratified distinctions from them. Perhaps Thompson's class structure places too much emphasis on the latter at the expense of the former? Harold Perkin suggests a different model through which to view the same period: one in which the classless hierarchy of traditional society is gradually replaced by a viable class society which emerges in response to industrialization.⁷⁰ Working class consciousness results from the rejection of traditional responsibilities by those in positions of power - an interpretation that echoes the concerns expressed by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and Carlyle that the masters had reneged on their responsibility to care for those in their employ.⁷¹ In the light of Perkin's reading, the appeal by writers to shared identities could be seen as the lingering presence of traditional society as the new class society comes into being.

Interpretations challenging Thompson and Perkin question whether the model of a class society squares with recorded experience. If Perkin's traditional society was really superseded in the period by a class based society, one would expect the language of shared identity to wither away. On the contrary, Craig Calhoun and Patrick Joyce both identify a continuing appeal to a community-based or populist identity for the masses which long out-lives the early period of industrialization, suggesting horizontal class

⁶⁹ For literary evidence that has a bearing on the issue of identity as perceived by the working classes, see Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse* (London, 1974), ed. John Burnett, *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London, 1974, 1994) and for an analytical discussion of the construction of a working class identity in the nineteenth century through literature, see Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge, 1998) and Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, revolutionaries and Pornographers In London, 1795-1840* (Oxford, 1993).

⁷⁰ Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (London, 1969), see esp. chs 6-9. See also John W. Osbourne, *The Silent Revolution: The Industrial Revolution in England as a Source of Cultural Change* (New York, 1970), p. 141.

⁷¹ For a discussion of the creation of a literary myth of the master in this period, see Ivan Melada, *The Captain of Industry in English Fiction 1821-1871* (Albuquerque, 1970).

identities came much later.⁷² Himmelfarb points out that the language of 'working class' was not as nearly so prevalent as that of 'working classes', suggesting a complex rather than simple notion of what working people had in common. She notes that '[e]ven by the middle of the nineteenth century, the language of individuals - "workmen," "workers," "labourers," "labouring people" - was more common than the language of class. And throughout the period "the poor" remained the constant of social discourse, for all parties and classes'.⁷³ In this analysis, 'class' is a much weaker frame of reference than assumed in the work of Thompson and Perkin.

Where does that leave a reader trying to make sense of the social relationships of the early industrial revolution? The choice seems to be between regarding class as 'a deadweight...denying us sight of these other visions of the social order'⁷⁴ or, as Eric Hobsbawm and John Rule have suggested, acknowledging it as 'an analytical construct, hardly recognised by contemporaries, but which allows historians to make sense of a complex of otherwise inexplicable facts and insights'.⁷⁵ In the spirit of the latter option, I have found it impossible to abandon the language of class whilst being simultaneously aware of its shortcomings. Class, if not understood as such by contemporaries, conveys a useful description of economic relationships peculiarly suited to an industrial economy. The terminology can no longer be used without qualification. I have attempted to reflect this by examining how writers appealed to 'other visions of the social order' in their attempt to provide a unifying model of society. Whilst the Romantic poets analysed industrialization as a divisive and demoralizing phenomenon and looked to the past for solutions, the educationalists responded to the challenge presented by the factory system by suggesting new visions

⁷² C. Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1982) pp. xi-xii, and Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the question of class, 1840-1914* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 5. See also Patrick Joyce, 'Work', in ed. F. M. L. Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950 Vol. 2, People and their Environment* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 188 and Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition, ch. I. In answer to Calhoun, see R. S. Neale, *History and Class. Essential Readings in Theory and Class* (Oxford, 1983), pp.286-91.

⁷³ *The Idea of Poverty*, p. 15. See also Ch. XIII 'The Language of Class', pp. 288-304.

⁷⁴ *Visions of the People*, p. 1. See also Patrick Joyce *Democratic Subjects: The self and the social in nineteenth century England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 17.

⁷⁵ *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England, 1750-1850*, p. 384.

of social relationships which bound moral and economic behaviour together. As their educational work reached deep into early nineteenth century society through schools and working men's associations, it perhaps helps to explain why the language of populism identified by Joyce in the culture of the factory remained far stronger than that of class throughout the century.

In Section I, I examine the contrasting role of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Hannah More as educators of the new industrial society. Coleridge responded defensively to industrialization. As a young Radical, he attempted to fly from it into the project of Pantisocracy, advocating a rejection of factory work patterns. Later, fearing the demoralization of the urban crowd, he looked to education as a means to instil moral values and thus he gave his support to Dr. Bell's monitorial system of schools as meeting the urgent requirement for mass education. Whilst deeply engaged as a spokesman on behalf of the 'white slaves' of British society, Coleridge's writings move increasingly to a more elitist stance, coping with the changing world of the early nineteenth century by creaming off an elite to direct and interpret change for the others. His project to establish a 'clerisy' emphasizes the division between the educated classes and the masses. By contrast, in the *Cheap Repository Tracts*, Hannah More appeals to a Christian identity shared with her readership which cuts across horizontal notions of class. Taking innovative educational practices first tried out on the rich, More brings conversational and drama-based learning models to the poor. This chapter argues that she made an important contribution to the political awareness of the lower classes by including them in the debate on the slave trade and on radical politics, seeking to find common ground with them as fellow abolitionists and anti-revolutionaries.

In Section II, I analyse the work of two writers who tried to bridge the gap between the privileged classes and the industrial workers. Robert Southey searched throughout his life for a role as a commentator on the changes in society, challenging the growing utilitarian constituency in politics with his imperative to put the man before the system. Interested in popular culture, he brought high and low together on the page, aiming at a prose style that eased the exchange. His view of the factory system, however,

deprived it of a place in any moral economy; the solutions he and Coleridge favoured appealed to the social relationships of an irretrievable past. Maria Edgeworth, as one of the leading educational writers of her era, performed a comparable interpretative task by explaining to both the industrial working classes and the industrialists of the future the benefits of the new society that was being created. Greeting new technology and working practices as a potential boon, her optimism contrasts with the pessimism of the first generation Romantic poets, demonstrating that literature of the Romantic era does not only contain nostalgia for a disappearing pastoral world, but also reflects the desire to go forward into the new world of opportunity.

In Section III, I look at the legacy left by Romantic poets and women educationalists to the succeeding generations writing on industrialization. Wordsworth's *The Excursion* (1814) set the agenda for later commentators on factory conditions; even those who disagreed with his warnings had to address the charges he made. His verse concerning the plight of the industrial worker also served to emphasize the difference between that class and the privileged readers of poetry, establishing a division which re-emerges in the Two Nations debate of the 1840s and 1850s. In contrast to the conservative paternalism of Wordsworth, Harriet Martineau represents the advocates of political economy. Having sided with the critique of industrialization put forward by Wordsworth and Dickens, literary critics have tended to find the version of industrial society offered by the Philosophical Radicals morally wanting. A more sympathetic reading of Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-34) reveals how she attempted to use political economy to unite society. She described all economic players - workers, employers and capitalists - as partners in a single 'moral' economy, potentially sharing the same goal of prosperity if only they could recognize their mutual interest. Thus, by allowing the socially optimistic voices of women educationalists to be heard, my thesis aspires to restore a balance to our understanding of literary interventions in the industrial debate at the end of the Romantic period, preparing the way for the next stage in the discussion: the Victorian industrial novel.

SECTION I
TWO EDUCATORS: COLERIDGE AND HANNAH MORE

Chapter One: Coleridge and the liberation of the factory slaves

Most recent historical models, used to debate the origin of 'horizontal' class identities in the nineteenth century, look for it primarily in the experience of the working classes as being the new element on the social scene. Harold Perkin's suggestion, however, that 'working class' identity emerges in response to a changed perception of role by the higher classes is particularly telling when one considers that all the models recognize that social distinctions between classes, orders or ranks were made long before the factory system made a significant impact on workers' lives. One of the most important factors influencing these discriminations, made by the higher classes about themselves and those they perceived as being of a lower social status, was education. In his capacity as spokesman for an intellectual elite in the early industrial period, education goes to the heart of Coleridge's attitude to industrialization and the industrial classes. It provides the grounds for his elitist stance which may be detected running through both his early radicalism and later Tory paternalism, demonstrating the continuity in his social vision with a pre-industrial age.

In his influential treatise, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693), John Locke recommended that, amongst the various ranks of society, most care should be taken of the education of the gentleman, '[f]or if those of that Rank are by their Education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into order'.¹ Locke's emphasis on the importance of a gentleman's education - though not his accompanying concept of utility - constituted educational orthodoxy during the eighteenth century; even innovators, such as the scientist and social reformer, Joseph Priestley, usually began their experiments in education on the basis that the pupil was destined to fill a high position in society and be a leader of men and was thus from boyhood culturally separate from the lower orders.²

¹ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. James L. Axtell (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 112-113.

² Priestley writes, for example, in *An Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life* (London, 1768), that he is addressing the educational needs of those 'who are within the influence of an honourable ambition to appear in the character of magistrates and legislators in the state, or of standing near the helm of affairs, and guiding the secret springs of government' (p.9).

Priority was given to educating the affluent. Public and grammar schools, whose founders established them to teach the poor of the surrounding area, became dedicated to teaching the sons of the privileged. Not only were these schools elitist, they were moribund: the parlous standard of the classical education they offered, combined with its increasing irrelevance to the needs of the nation's expanding economy, meant that the education offered in schools in England was falling far behind that of Scotland and Continental countries. When the Charity Commission, which was set up in 1818 to look into the state of the country's grammar schools, investigated the fulfilment of the schools' charitable responsibilities, it came across many glaring abuses, such as the school in Berkhamstead whose revenue of £3 000 a year was divided between a clergyman and his son, neither of whom had done any teaching for a year, the son no longer even living in the vicinity.³ With Oxford and Cambridge reflecting at the university level many of the weaknesses of the public and grammar schools, educational institutions in England were in need of a serious overhaul. What relevance had a schooling in the dead languages of Greece and Rome to solving the problems of the late eighteenth century? In an upsurge of interest in natural science and mechanics, particularly amongst the dissenters, traditional subjects were being questioned on utilitarian grounds. These critics represented a return to the Baconian tradition that had been obscured for over a century in favour of less contentious methodologies. The Baconian educational approach was characterized by a call for science to be separated from religion and for schools to be run on a more humane basis.⁴ Joseph Priestley, who amongst his many activities lectured at the progressive Warrington Academy, voices the eighteenth century expression of the Baconian tradition in his *An Essay on a Course of Liberal Education* (1768):

³ Brian Simon, *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870* (London, 1974), p.95.

⁴ *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure*, p. 26. Simons suggests that the ideas of progressive educationalists, particularly those writing during the English Revolution, took a blow at the restoration: 'While scientists found new support and scope for their work in the Royal Society, established in 1662, the plans of educational reformers had been too closely associated with puritan and republican policies to survive' (p. 27). Reformers were sent out into the cold and their ideas were not rehabilitated until the period just prior to the French Revolution.

We are obliged to the learned labours of our forefathers for searching into all the remains of antiquity, and illustrating valuable ancient authors; but their maxims of life will not suit the world as it is at present....The subjects of modern history, policy, arts manufactures, commerce, &c. are the general topics of all sensible conversation.⁵

Priestley's own syllabus for a course of history lectures accompanying the essay gives a comprehensive survey of the modern world, including scientific knowledge and political economy. He was preparing his pupils for the international world of commerce and industry, not for the university cloister and clerical bands. His lead was followed by other educational innovators, most notably the Edgeworths, whose works for the nursery cover a wide spectrum of contemporary knowledge calculated to equip children to be *au fait* with the subjects of 'all sensible conversation' as described by Priestley. The 'Educational Spring' of the end of the eighteenth century was relatively short as the backlash from the French Revolution set a freeze on institutional experiments, forcing the Warrington Academy's successor, Hackney College, to close in 1796. The Edgeworths' treatise, *Practical Education* (1798), was therefore quite late on the scene and can be read as a privatization of educational innovation as reformers sought less controversial channels for their ideas.

The mixed reception given to new ideas about educational practice demonstrates that the social change brought by the industrial revolution and the accompanying need for a relevant education were already contentious topics when Samuel Taylor Coleridge began his own career as a journalist and social commentator. Despite his involvement in radical politics in the 1790s, Coleridge retained a bias towards elitism in an increasingly pluralistic industrial age; in particular, as discussed below, he carried forward the Lockean notion that the education of the gentleman set the tone for all the rest. He was himself a product of Christ's Hospital, receiving in the classroom the kind of classical education that Priestley criticized.⁶ The intellectual breadth he later

⁵ *An Essay on a Course of Liberal Education*, pp. 22-23.

⁶ Christ's Hospital was amongst the more advanced grammar schools, offering lessons in mathematics and navigation. Whilst Coleridge's memories of his education in *Biographia Literaria* rest on his exposure to classical and English literature, he was fortunate to come into the ambit of William Wales FRS - his mathematics teacher - who introduced him to Newton's *Principia* (see Ian Wylie, *Young Coleridge and the Philosophers of Nature*, Oxford, 1989, p. 32).

attained, including familiarity with current scientific and economic issues, was due to his own efforts, not to his formal education, but he still placed great value on the traditional route of a classical training for a gentleman. Coleridge's attitude to the classical languages followed the example of German, rather than British, educational innovators, notably Schelling, who described, in *The System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), the learning of languages as akin to reading the language of nature:

To be able to do this [to recognize the living spirit of a dead language] is no different from what the natural philosopher does when he addresses himself to nature. Nature is like some very ancient author whose message is written in hieroglyphics on colossal pages, as the Artist says in Goethe's poem.⁷

Like Schelling, Coleridge placed philosophy at the heart of education, including the teaching of scientific method; reading classical authors trained the pupil in scientific practice as empirical investigation cannot meaningfully proceed without first learning method. Thus he reconciles Platonic ideals and Baconian experimentation with the notion that 'an experiment is an idea realized'.⁸ With this approach, he found a role in modern scientific training for the traditional subjects taught at English universities. His was not the bias of the man of letters alone; Humphry Davy, Priestley's successor as Britain's pre-eminent chemist, likewise believed that the best preparation for scientific research was a sound liberal education at Oxbridge, followed by a training in science.⁹

Though Coleridge was pursuing a different agenda to most British proponents of a scientific 'modern' education for the higher classes (by 1812, his interest in science was predominantly in German *Naturphilosophie*, a scientific approach regarded with suspicion by Davy and other scientists at the Royal Institution), he shared their allied

⁷ Quoted by Elinor Shaffer in 'Romantic Philosophy and the organization of the disciplines: the founding of the Humbolt University of Berlin,' *Romanticism and the Sciences*, eds. Andrew Cunningham and Nicholas Jardine (Cambridge, 1990), p.43.

⁸ *The Friend*, ed. Barbara Rooke (London, 1969), vol. i. 489. See also Trevor H. Levere's *Poetry realized in nature - Samuel Taylor Coleridge and early nineteenth-century science* (Cambridge, 1981).

⁹ Davy described himself as a self-made man who ironically benefited from being left in idleness at grammar school: 'I perhaps owe to these circumstances the little talents that I have, and their peculiar application. What I am I have made myself' (*The Collected Works of Sir Humphry Davy*, 9 vols., ed. John Davy (London, 1839), vol. i. 4). See also David Knight, *Humphry Davy: Science and Power* (Oxford, 1992), p. 180.

concern that the changing society was failing to meet the educational needs of the lower classes. The industrial revolution brought about a radically new kind of working environment with workers placed in factory conditions to accomplish an efficient division of labour. Adam Smith in *Wealth of Nations* sets out the grounds for the debate on education in which Coleridge and other writers took part. Smith describes how, in the division of labour, the worker's 'dexterity at his own particular trade seems...to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues'. He compares this to 'barbarous societies' where 'the varied occupations of every man oblige every man to exert his capacity, and to invent expedients for removing the difficulties which are continually occurring. Invention is kept alive, and the mind is not suffered to fall into that drowsy stupidity, which, in civilized society, seems to benumb the understanding of almost all the inferior ranks of people'.¹⁰ Adam Smith, taken by many to be the apologist of the economic system of the industrial age,¹¹ foresaw the social problems it would entail and advocated public expenditure to remedy the fault:

But though the common people cannot, in any civilized society, be so well instructed as people of some rank and fortune, the most essential parts of education, however, to read, write, and account, can be acquired at so early a period of life, that the greater part even of those who are to be bred to the lowest occupations, have time to acquire them before they can be employed in those occupations. For a very small expense the public can facilitate, can encourage, and can even impose upon almost the whole body of the people, the necessity of acquiring the most essential parts of education.¹²

Like many later commentators, Smith describes education as a benefit, not only to the individual, but to the whole nation: '[t]he more they are instructed, the less liable they

¹⁰ *The Wealth of Nations*, ii.782-783. Smith's concept of the numbing of the mind by repetition contrasts with that of the medical man, Thomas Beddoes, who, in an extension of Hartley's association theory, saw repetitive tasks as having a physical effect on the brain, opening the door for rebellious thoughts: 'The uniform operations of ingenious artisans sometimes wear a track in the brain, along which the torrent of imagination rushes with destructive violence' (*Hygeia*, Bristol, 1802, vol iii. Essay X. 79). The artisan in this description is close to the state that Beddoes defines as insanity. Beddoes also suggests the benefits of an education which turns the mind from fixed thoughts and restores mental balance.

¹¹ Southey may well have been the first to ascribe Smith the role of apologist for the commercial system, writing in his 1812 essay 'On the State of the Poor' that 'Adam Smith's book is the code, or confession of faith, of this system; a tedious and hard-hearted book....This book considers man as a manufacturing animal...' (*Essays*, i. 111-112). See also *Riches and Poverty*, p. 323.

¹² *The Wealth of Nations*, ii. 785.

are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which, among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders'.¹³ With some change of emphasis, Smith's description of education as intellectually animating and socially cohesive dominates the arguments of all the writers in this thesis and forms an important strand in the 'white slavery' debate.¹⁴ Workers, shorn of their traditional roles of craftsmen and village elders, are reduced to the lowest level of humanity - that of the slave - unless lifted out of this state by education.

Coleridge, black slaves and British workers

Coleridge was amongst the first commentators to highlight the affinity between the black slave and the British industrial worker. His first major contribution to the 'white slavery' debate came at the very beginning of his public life during his 1795 lectures in Bristol. Collaborating with Southey, and drawing on the arguments of the abolitionists, Thomas Clarkson, Benezet and Wadstrom, Coleridge chose to beard the lion in his den and give a lecture in the slave-trade port on the evils of the commerce in human misery. He was not alone in bringing the subject to the attention of Bristol society - the city had an established anti-slavery movement consisting of Quakers, Evangelicals and other sympathisers¹⁵ - but he also used the lecture as a vehicle to attack the government of the day, many members of which, including the Prime Minister, claimed to support the abolitionists' cause.

The lecture fetters together white worker and black slave. Coleridge's strategy is to bring an exotic subject home to his audience by comparing the distant troubles of black slaves to the familiar sufferings on British streets. A second aim is to attack the government on two charges of inhumanity: its failure to end the slave trade and the suppression of the personal freedom of British workers. Coleridge begins by

¹³ ii. 788.

¹⁴ Smith's influence was not restricted to Britain; his ideas, mediated via Condorcet, also played an important part in the debate on national education in France. See Emma Rothschild, 'Condorcet and Adam Smith on Education and Instruction', pp.209-226, in *Philosophers on Education*, ed. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (London and New York, 1998).

¹⁵ See chapters two and three below on Hannah More and Southey - both notable abolitionists from Bristol.

comparing the work of slaves and British workers, bracketing them together with the all-encompassing term 'the poor':

...in this Trade as in most others, the poor with unceasing toil first raise and then are deprived of the comforts which they absolutely want in order to procure Luxuries which they never hope to enjoy - If the Trade had never existed, no one human being would have been less comfortably cloathed, housed or nourished -¹⁶

Coleridge's argument carries echoes of a number of commentators in the eighteenth century debate on luxury, in particular, Rousseau's *Discourse on Inequality* (1755), which posited luxury and idleness as enervating principles at work in civilized society, giving rise to inequality between rich and poor; and Godwin's more recent *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), which analyzed luxury expenditure as condemning the poor to a state of slavery. These works themselves were in dialogue with theories, such as those expressed by Samuel Johnson and Adam Smith, that a vital circulation of wealth resulted from luxury spending, the benefits of which eventually trickled down to the poor. (Luxury itself was defined by all commentators as the product of a manufacturing, therefore an industrializing, economy). Coleridge sees no 'trickle down' effect: the slave trade and the work of the poor in Britain does not benefit those doing the labour but goes to create the surplus wealth of the rich - wealth which is then spent on luxuries rather than essentials. He protests that a society is out of joint if the work is done by the many but the profits are concentrated in the hands of the few.

Behind Coleridge's argument is his own alternative to an industrial economy in the shape of a 'Pantisocratic' community in the New World where such inequalities would be ironed out. He and Southey were dreaming of a Godwinian post-economic world where all would labour for a few hours each day to produce life's essentials and then spend the rest of the time enjoying intellectual rather than material riches which could be gathered at no cost to others. Pantisocracy was in retreat from the 'immoral' economy of the industrial revolution. The two poets' vision of harmonious social relationships depended on the rejection of the commercial system, recasting society in a hybrid form

¹⁶ S. T. C. Coleridge, *Lectures 1795 On Politics and Religion*, eds. Lewis Patton and Peter Mann (London, 1971), p. 237.

of an intellectual agrarian commune. By rejecting the work patterns of the factory, Southey and Coleridge were choosing the model of Adam Smith's 'barbarous' society as the one offering the most civilized life-style.

The idea of their American commune haunts the argument against the slave trade. Coleridge's lyrical image in the lecture of the home life of Africans before being taken into slavery perhaps owes its presence in the piece as much to his preoccupation with Pantisocracy as it does to its most obvious source in Wadstrom. Wadstrom in turn had clearly taken his inspiration from Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, Lord Kames and Adam Smith. Coleridge writes that

The Africans, who are situated beyond the contagion of European vice - are innocent and happy - the peaceful inhabitants of a fertile soil, they cultivate their fields in common and reap the crop as the common property of all. Each family like the peasants in some parts of Europe, spins weaves, sews, hunts, fishes and makes basket fishing tackle and the implements of agriculture, and this variety of employment gives an acuteness of intellect to the negro which the mechanic whom the division of Labour condemns to one simple operation is precluded from attaining.¹⁷

Coleridge and Southey hoped that they and their families would, like the African and the European peasant, 'cultivate their fields in common' and maintain 'an acuteness of intellect' through a stimulating combination of skilled and physical labour. This vision of a life in natural balance is contrasted, not with the forced labour of a slave on a plantation (though this is there by implication), but rather with the work of 'the mechanic' - the British factory worker - who is 'condemned' to an unvarying, repetitive

¹⁷ p. 240. This passage is a digest of Wadstrom's *An Essay on Colonization* (London, 1794), pp. 15-18. A passage in the middle of these pages which Coleridge does not use in his argument makes the Africans' village-life sound an ideal model for Pantisocracy. Common property, Wadstrom writes,

in Europe would generate endless disputes; but among this simple people, is the best bond of good neighbourhood. Such indeed is the amiable simplicity of manners which reigns in the villages remote from the slave-trade, that European visitors are ready to imagine themselves carried into a new world, governed by the purest maxims of patriarchal innocence. (p. 17).

Planning to create his own community based on 'the purest maxims', Coleridge may have recognized aspects of his project in this striking image of 'a new world'.

task. The source of the comparison is also to be found in Wadstrom, who acknowledges his debt for the analogy to Lord Kames' *Sketches of the History of Man* (1774). Wadstrom pushes the image of the free African versus the enslaved mechanic even further than Kames or Coleridge, claiming the industrial worker 'becomes...a kind of live machine, in the hands of some monied man, to contribute to the pride and luxury of drones, who possess no other talent than that of turning to their own account the activity of their poor brethren of mankind'.¹⁸ Wadstrom's radical critique of contemporary society is also part of a colonial discourse as he wishes to change 'the new world' he has just praised. Coleridge leaves the description of his tribal village as an ideal; his colonial plan of Pantisocracy pictured the Susquehannah community as a fresh start in a landscape empty of other cultures. Wadstrom's colonial location is more complex as he recognizes the inevitable clash of European and African cultures. Unlike Coleridge's Godwinian stance on luxury, Wadstrom follows the English (and Scottish) paradox in favour of luxury.¹⁹ He suggests that the Africans can be 'raised' in European standards by becoming part of a consumer-driven economy: 'New objects must be presented to them, which will excite new desires, and call forth those faculties which have hitherto...lain dormant, merely for want of exercise'.²⁰ In contrast to Wadstrom's assumption of European cultural superiority, Coleridge's contention that the African community is more civilized comes as a rude shock to his listeners' complacency and differentiates his position from Wadstrom in the anti-slavery debate.

Black slaves and British workers are linked in Coleridge's writings, not only by their exploited position at the bottom of the queue for the distribution of rewards, but by their chains. These chains, ironically forged by these same poor workers in the industrial towns of England, are literal in the case of the slaves, metaphorical in the case of the labouring classes. Coleridge connects the continuing failure of parliament to abolish the slave trade with its contrasting swiftness to impose punitive laws affecting the freedoms of the poor:

¹⁸ p.18.

¹⁹ This 'paradoxical' preference is associated with Mandeville and Samuel Johnson, and was later adopted with qualifications by key figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, notably David Hume and Adam Smith. See *Riches and Poverty*, chapter 3.

²⁰ *An Essay on Colonization*, p. 20.

...to unloose the fetters from the limbs of their Brethren was an employment perfectly new to our Representatives and we must not wonder, if they were slow, awkward and finally unsuccessful in it - but to fasten them on was an old job and difficult as it might appear to the inexperienced, they did it with an ease and rapidity which might have astonished the oldest Turnkey in Newgate!²¹

Coleridge goes on from this passage to doubt Pitt's commitment to abolish the slave trade. How could the man responsible for the suspension of *habeas corpus* - the fundamental protection of personal freedom - be taken seriously as a champion of the liberty of black slaves?

The young Coleridge of 1795 was outspoken in his criticism of the authorities of his day; the older man muted his criticism, believing it was his role in a turbulent time to warn and advise, but not to undermine the authorities. The main lines of his 1795 lecture, however, can be traced through his later work. In 1795, he was arguing that black slaves and British workers were linked by the denial of their individual freedom; both groups were victims of an unfair society. At the mid-point of his career in *Lay Sermons* (1816, 1817) and at the end in *On the Constitution of the Church and State* (1830), he was still arguing against slavery and the exploitation of the poor on these grounds. A notebook entry of 1808 spells out his central disagreement with the contemporary treatment of both slaves and the poor. He describes how

...the Demagogues address the lower orders* as if each individual were an *inseparable* part of the order - always to remain nolens volens, poor and ignorant - How opposite to Christianity... *as if they were Negroes.²²

He believed the so-called 'friends of the people' - the Cobbetts and Hunts of the day - were false friends, using the masses like despotic masters for their own ends. In an echo of *The Fable of the Bees*, their power depended on the perpetuation of a class of 'poor and ignorant' people just as the running of a slave plantation depended on the continuation of slavery. What did Coleridge have to offer in place of this treatment?

²¹ *Lectures 1795 On Politics and Religion*, p. 246.

²² *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Kathleen Coburn (London, 1973), iii. 3317.

He succinctly states his own ideal approach to the population at large in *A Lay Sermon* (1817): 'Men, I still think, ought to be weighed not counted. Their worth ought to be the final estimate of their value'.²³ Writing the sermon at a time of post-war depression and popular disaffection, he may well have thought that his 1808 notebook entry on the action of demagogues had come to life on the streets of London. The Spa-Fields Riot in December 1816 had proved the ability of popular orators to mobilize an angry mob. If the numerical strength of these crowds could produce mayhem in London, Coleridge's answer was to concentrate on the individual rather than the class. Educate the individual, expose the exploitation of the rabble-rousers for what it was and the mass identity of the crowd would - as Adam Smith had suggested - be broken down into individually responsible persons.

This argument of 1817 still held true for Coleridge in 1830. From being an answer in a particular time of crisis, he elevated it to the principle under-pinning constitutional arrangements. That people are not 'things...constitutes the whole ground of the difference between subject and serf, between a commonwealth and a slave-plantation'.²⁴ The slave appears as the negative of all that is desirable for the British worker. The common man was saved from remaining a serf (the mediaeval slave) thanks to the fortuitous history of Britain. The same feudal system that established serfdom also set up a constitutional series of checks and balances. The interests of the king, landed proprietors, the nationality (church property held in common) and mercantile wealth were held in equilibrium so that none could oppress the others. The feudal system alone, however, was not enough to ensure freedom for the person of no wealth: '[t]o the feudal system we owe the *forms*, to the church the *substance*, of our liberty'.²⁵ 'The church alone relaxed the iron fate by which feudal dependency, primogeniture, and entail would otherwise have predestined every native of the realm to be lord or vassal'.²⁶ The church allowed the talented poor man to quit his station and

²³ *Lay Sermons*, p.211.

²⁴ S.T.C. Coleridge, *On the Constitution of the Church and State*, ed. John Colmer (London, 1976), p. 15.

²⁵ p. 72.

²⁶ p. 72.

rise in rank within the church hierarchy. Thus the church gave expression to the freedom of an Englishman to rise to a position suiting his abilities as an individual, breaking 'the iron fate' that would have condemned him as a class to a state of slavery. The church also held land in trust for the relief of the deserving poor. As this land was in a sense held on behalf of these unfortunate individuals, the charity they received was their due; theirs was not an humiliating state of dependency, but the right of a subject living in a Christian society.²⁷

The reading public - a threat to be contained

Coleridge's assertion of the value of the individual carries forward into the nineteenth century the Enlightenment ideal of an inclusive state but Coleridge modulates the ideal through a Burkean lens by placing it in the context of traditional hierarchies. He speaks of subjects rather than citizens. His optimistic picture of a society built up of educated subjects consenting to the rule of law is, however, counter-balanced in his later prose writings by his fear of the power of the mob. In *The Statesman's Manual* (1816) he regrets that knowledge should have disseminated beyond the circles of the educated elite and laments that 'among other odd burs and kecksies, the misgrowth of our luxuriant activity, we now have a READING PUBLIC'.²⁸ Echoing church litany, he adds: 'From a popular philosophy and a philosophic populace, Good Sense deliver us!'²⁹ He assumes that if the public is reading, it must be drawing the wrong conclusions and following dangerous philosophies, as did the French populace in 1789. After having admitted his horror of a reading public, he continues: '[h]ere as in so many other cases, the inconveniences that have arisen from a thing's having become too general, are best removed by making it universal'.³⁰ If only a few of the lower classes have the advantage of education, they are able to mislead the others. As the

²⁷ Coleridge emphasized that he was describing an idea of the constitutional arrangements of the past rather than a description of how they were implemented. See Robert Sayre and Michael Lowy, 'Figures of Romantic Anticapitalism', *Spirits of Fire. English Romantic Writers and Contemporary Historical Methods*, eds. G. A. Rosso and Daniel P. Watkins (London, 1990), p. 34.

²⁸ *Lay Sermons*, p. 36.

²⁹ p. 38.

³⁰ p. 40.

example of France had taught, 'a vicious and ignorant population was a magazine of combustibles left roofless, while madmen and incendiaries were letting off their new invented blue lights and fire-rockets in every direction'.³¹ Extending his metaphor, Coleridge concludes that by roofing over the combustibles with a sound education in right principles, no amount of fireworks could set fire to the magazine.

Coleridge's caution was not purely a product of his conservative later years; signs of his intellectual elitism are present even in the radical Bristol lectures of 1795. Though the tone is different, and the proclaimed end is equality, he already divides society up into the thinkers and the masses. The 'over-worked labourer, skulking into an Alehouse'³² has not much time for high-flown notions of truth, according to Coleridge. Teaching him his religious duties was the efficient answer for 'Religion will cheer his gloom with her promises'.³³ One could argue that Coleridge was recognizing that in a time of war and scarcity the common people did not want to be perplexed with abstruse questions which produced no increase in their weekly wage - a view that his contemporary, Thomas Paine, would have wanted to challenge. Coleridge's statement shows the same tendency which grew more pronounced in later life to look at the labourer as a class, rather than as an individual with his own aspirations: an approach which seems to contradict his *Lay Sermon* concept of basing human values on the individual's worth rather than his numerical importance as a member of a social class. Coleridge's brand of 1790s radicalism pragmatically divided society up into those who thought and those who were governed by custom.

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, his concept of what form education for the common man should take is modest. His is no levelling plan: it is enough for the labouring man to have sufficient knowledge of the scriptures 'for a right performance of his duty as a man and a christian'.³⁴ His concern during these troubled times is

³¹ p. 165.

³² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Conciones ad Populum* (1795), ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Oxford and New York, 1992), p. 26.

³³ p. 28.

³⁴ *Lay Sermons*, p. 7.

primarily to avert the danger posed by the unrestrained, literate masses. He favoured the writing of suitable materials to counteract the input of the radicals. In this, as this study will show, he followed the lead of earlier educationalists. In the 1790s, Hannah More produced literature in this spirit; at least two million of her *Cheap Repository Tracts* had been distributed to the lower classes as a moral counter-blast to radical publications, in particular, the works of Tom Paine.³⁵ They were enjoying a revival in the post-war period, with the aged More coming out of retirement to add a few more works to her collection of tracts.

Coleridge's concern to limit the educational freedom for the lower classes makes him representative of all the writers in this study, indeed of all writers on education coming from the higher classes at this time. In their later life, Southey and Wordsworth shared his desire to control the education of the poor to produce a prescribed kind of loyal subject. Hannah More and her Evangelical brethren likewise had a clear image of the desirable end product of their tracts and Sunday schools. Jeremy Bentham, Henry Brougham, Harriet Martineau and fellow Philosophical Radicals, though ostensibly more tolerant as they were numbered among the free-thinkers, were as single-minded about what constituted 'the truth' as the Evangelicals. Bentham had great faith in the power of reason, writing in *A Fragment on Government* (1776), '[m]en, let them but once clearly understand one another, will not be long ere they agree'.³⁶ The grounds for agreement, he suggests, should be 'the principle of UTILITY'.³⁷ A later disciple, Harriet Martineau believed that her stories would convict the reader of her economic doctrines - to draw another conclusion from the tales was evidence that the educational project had failed - the lost sheep had not returned to the fold of the good political economist.

Yet in the context of the debate on the education of the poor, all these political and

³⁵ The figure of two million, which has become a staple statistic in criticism of the tracts, appears to have been first suggested by Henry Thornton in his 1795 end of year report on the *Cheap Repository*. See *Cheap Repository Tracts Published During the Year 1795* (London: J. Marshall, 1796), appendix p. 1.

³⁶ Jeremy Bentham *A Fragment on Government* (London, 1776), p. 174.

³⁷ p. 170.

literary figures were read as progressive by their own era. They did not shrink from recognizing the enormous changes in the level of general literacy in Britain. At the beginning of Coleridge's life, in 1780, around 40% of the labouring poor, 75% of the rural middle classes and 85% of the urban middle classes could write their names; by 1840 these figures had risen to 60%, 95% and 95% respectively.³⁸ Imprecise as an indication of the level of literacy that accompanied this skill, the statistics show that some kind of basic education was filtering down to the humblest level of society. Political revolutions on the Continent may have caught the headlines, but it was this quiet revolution at home which was to have the most profound effect on British society. Unlike the advocates of education mentioned above, a significant section of the middle and upper classes wanted to try to turn the clock back. Some took Mandeville's line that education was socially disruptive. Coleridge mocked this excessive conservatism in his Swiftian *Courier* letter on factory reform (1818), writing:

Give [the factory children] but the notion that they are under the protection of the laws, and instead of quietly piecing together the yarn, and of cleaning the machinery during dinner, their little hearts will be beating high for radical reform, annual Parliaments, and universal suffrage.³⁹

He intends by exaggeration to make such sentiments ridiculous, but his irony is not far from views expressed by opponents of education. There were still a significant constituency who believed that an ignorant poor was the best guarantee of social stability. By contrast, Coleridge recognized that the tide could not be turned and that these newly planted 'notions' should be used for the advantage of society.

Tory paternalism and the Factory Bill

The reformist aspect of Coleridge's later writing career is often obscured by his reputation (puffed by Hazlitt) as a turn-coat, abandoning his early principles and donning the mantle of Tory politics. A Tory reformer may seem a contradiction in

³⁸ *Literature, Education and Romanticism*, p. 45.

³⁹ S. T. C. Coleridge, *Essays on His Times* (3 vols.), ed. David V. Erdman (London, 1978), vol. ii. 488.

terms, but his humanitarianism was not an aberration from his conservative principles, rather these principles stemmed from the paternalism at the heart of his political credo.⁴⁰ It is no contradiction, then, but a peculiarity characteristic of Coleridge's era that the paternalism which inspired Tories to curb the freedom of the masses also led them to try to improve their lot as the Tories battled to confront what they saw as the demoralizing tendency of the new industrial society. Coleridge, who had criticized Pitt for a seeming contradiction in his position on *habeas corpus* and abolition, was in later life following an equally paradoxical path.

Coleridge's Tory humanitarianism was most in evidence in the extraordinary spurt of activity he showed in 1818 to support Sir Robert Peel's Bill to regulate children's working conditions in cotton factories. A recent biographer highlights this when he describes how the normally indolent Coleridge left his comfortable lodgings in Highgate to stay with the surgeon, T. J. Pettigrew, in order to be nearer to Westminster.⁴¹ There followed a flurry of pamphlet writing, journalism and letter writing, all with the aim of helping the Bill pass through its parliamentary readings. A watered-down version of the Bill was eventually passed in 1819. Coleridge should be given credit for the contribution he made to the public pressure for regulation, though how effective his work was as one voice amongst many others is difficult to weigh, nor can one count his converts. What is clear is that it was an issue that concerned Coleridge sufficiently for him to go to great personal lengths to promote the cause. His compassion for the plight of child industrial workers was not dilettantism but a serious

⁴⁰ Coleridge's politics have attracted much critical attention this century, ranging from early studies, for example, Crane Brinton's *The Political Ideas of the English Romanticists* (Oxford, 1926) and Alfred Cobban's *Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1929), John Colmer's *Coleridge, Critic of Society* (Oxford, 1959), David P. Calleo's *Coleridge and the Idea of the Modern State* (New Haven, 1966) to more recent works, such as Nicholas Roe's *Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years* (Oxford, 1988), Deirdre Coleman's *Coleridge and 'The Friend' 1809-1810* (Oxford, 1988), and John Morrow's *Coleridge's Political Thought: Property Morality and the Limits of Traditional Discourse* (London, 1990). Whilst there is not space here to engage with all of these works, I would note that Calleo's description of Coleridge's brand of conservatism in later life has been particularly helpful to this thesis. He describes Coleridge's conservatism as 'not immediately tied to the interests of any one class - although it does, perhaps, point to an alliance of the aristocracy with the lower classes. It is conservatism with a strong radical impulse, for Coleridge was greatly dissatisfied with the status quo' (p.4) - a good description of the Tory reformer.

⁴¹ Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections* (London, 1998), pp. 474-478.

concern, central to his role as a critic of contemporary society.

The first of the two pamphlets he wrote at the height of the parliamentary debate on the Bill shows that the views of the 1795 lecturer and the lay sermonizer of the previous year continued to provide his framework. Black slave and British worker remain fettered together. Exploding *laissez-faire* economic tenets, he challenges the idea that British labourers are free to take their capital (their labour) to a new market if they wish, responding scornfully that, if this were so, the contract with the employer 'would approach, on the one side, too near to suicide, on the other to manslaughter'.⁴² The only explanation for the ruinous conditions under which the poor agree to work must be that they have no choice: they are enslaved in the system.⁴³ Having established that the factory workers are no better than economic slaves, he naturally turns to the campaign to abolish slavery to make his argument for regulation. He notes 'the singular coincidence...in the order and progress of the arguments adopted by the opponents'⁴⁴ of abolition and of Peel's Bill. In answer to those who contend that the masters should be left to mind their own business, he writes:

...up to this very hour the asserted increase of humane feeling and enlightened self-interest has produced no such effects as are here so confidently promised, have exerted no adequate counteraction to the keen stimulants of immediate profit, and the benumbing influences of custom and example....The age has been complimented with the epithets of enlightened humane, etc., years before the abolition of the Slave Trade. And was that Trade abolished at last by the increasing humanity, the enlightened self-interest, of the slave owners?⁴⁵

Contrary to the optimism of Utilitarians and other disciples of the Enlightenment,

⁴² Lucy E. Watson *Coleridge at Highgate* (London, 1925), p. 175.

⁴³ Coleridge makes a related point in *A Lay Sermon* (1817) when attacking the notion that 'all things find their level', writing '[a]fter a hard and calamitous season, during which the thousand Wheels of some vast manufactory had remained silent as a frozen water-fall, be it that plenty has returned and the Trade has once more become brisk and stirring: go, ask the overseer, and question the parish doctor, whether the workman's health and temperance with the staid and respectful Manners best taught by the inward dignity of conscious self-support, have found *their level* again!' (*Lay Sermons*, p. 206-207). Treating the worker as so much factory fodder in an economic equation ignored the individual cost of economic fluctuations.

⁴⁴ *Coleridge at Highgate*, p. 178.

⁴⁵ p. 178.

Coleridge has no faith in the perfectibility of man. His faith and his own sense of personal failure taught him to regard man as an inveterate sinner, far more likely to succumb to evil influences than act on good impulses, an opinion confirmed by the struggle made by commercial interests to protect the slave trade. Factory owners had to be forced to be humane, else they would remain hard task-masters, driving children to work beyond their capabilities in order to wring the last farthing of profit out of them.

He expands this point in the concluding paragraph, detailing the progress of arguments made in the defence of the slave trade:

The defence of the Slave Trade, exactly as the attempted defence of the system of the Cotton Factories, *began* with the bold declaration that the Negro Slaves were happy and contented; nay, that they were far *better off* in every respect than the labouring poor and the peasantry in England.⁴⁶

Coleridge in his factory reform *Courier* letter of 1818, written to back up his parliamentary work, mocked just such an assertion by assuming a Swiftian ironic persona.⁴⁷ Using the jargon of political economy and pretending to represent the voice of a defender of the factory system, he wrote an 'angry' letter to the Editor. The silence of the children proves that they are happy and contented with their lot:

Undoubtedly they are free agents; and as they have neither individually, not collectively, petitioned Parliament to step forward for their protection, we have a right fairly to conclude, that they are well satisfied with their present condition, and that this is an act to which they have not given their sanction or concurrence.⁴⁸

The over-bold 'undoubtedly' invites doubt on this very fact. It is ridiculous, of course, to expect children to petition parliament, just as it was absurd to expect slaves to campaign for their own rights. Silence in these circumstances is more likely to

⁴⁶ Coleridge at Highgate, pp. 178-179.

⁴⁷ David V. Erdman, editor of the three volume *Essays on His Times*, attributes this letter to Coleridge, claiming that the style is 'unmistakably C' (vol ii. 483). Erdman's case is all the stronger because the mock arguments in the piece can be read as a clever inversion of Coleridge's first pamphlet. By ironically voicing the extreme hostility to the Bill, Coleridge is able to discredit his opponents by characterizing their views as too fanatical for rational assent.

⁴⁸ *Essays on His Times*, vol ii. 487.

represent voicelessness than assent. Back in his pamphlet, Coleridge claims that parents of factory children number amongst those supporting the Bill: those closest to the children are acting as their voice even though this may mean a loss of family earnings.⁴⁹ Concluding his pamphlet, he argues that the case of the slave trade demonstrated that those who use this kind of argument to defend the indefensible may find it rebounds upon them in unexpected ways:

This, however, was found to be too strong a dose.... It was, indeed, fully equivalent to the assertion that the peasantry, and the labouring classes of Great Britain i.e., the majority of its inhabitants, were worse off than Negro Slaves, a position suited only to the sowers of sedition and the advocates for insurrection.⁵⁰

By defending their interests in one quarter, merchants found they were giving ammunition to radicals at home. Bearing in mind that one corner of the lucrative triangular trade rested in British manufactured goods, this argument did not suit their case. They were forced to move to other grounds for their defence:

This having been abandoned, the defenders rested their argument on the impropriety and inefficiency of all legislative interference with the freedom of Commerce....So strong, indeed, was [this objection], that little less than the united power of all the governments of the Christian World was and is requisite to remove it. But praise be to God, who never fails to supply what is wanting to us, as long as we are in earnest in doing *our* best, the Powers of the Christian World *have* united. But let it not be forgotten that this union never could have taken place had the British Legislative yielded to apprehension.⁵¹

Far from apologizing that government interference was necessary to end the slave trade, Coleridge seizes on it as a useful precedent for factory reform. Law-makers in the English Common Law system were reluctant to set precedents, but in the case of Peel's Bill, Coleridge argues, they need have no qualms because no new ground was being broken: 'the argument founded on the danger of establishing a precedent for other claims is so far realised, that we, in the present instance, are appealing to a precedent

⁴⁹ Coleridge at Highgate, p. 175.

⁵⁰ p. 179.

⁵¹ p. 179.

instead of making one'.⁵² Ten years after abolition, Coleridge appeals to the slave trade precedent as a cause attracting the support of the 'moral majority' of his era. The line between right and wrong had been established and accepted by society at large on slavery; now reformers needed to do the same for the factory question. Coleridge realized that his biggest challenge was to achieve the 'admission' that the factory system was cruel and unjust: from that point all the rest should flow. His next pamphlet set out to give the friends of the Bill in parliament the ammunition they would need to break down the defence of the system by commercial interests.

In his second pamphlet, Coleridge contrasts the impartial medical evidence given by local practitioners with that given by master spinners and their dependents. The emphasis he places on the impartiality of his witnesses is deliberate: one of the strongest arguments against regulation was that the evidence gathered by its advocates was unreliable, a biased dramatization of the horrors of factory conditions written to provoke unwarranted sympathy for the children. Known as a poet, Coleridge had to be particularly careful to offer no such excuse for his opponents to dismiss his case. The pamphlet skilfully circumvents this problem by turning the tables on the cotton masters. Coleridge takes a psychological line to explain the discrepancy between the accounts of the health of factory workers between those for and against the Bill, but he does so without accusing the opponents of bare-faced lying:

...there is a wide difference between the *sensation* of *positiveness* which is the ordinary growth of passion from prejudice and imagined self-interest, and the *sense* of *certainly* which is the result and reward of tranquil and disinterested examination.⁵³

The cotton masters are not liars, they are suffering from delusions brought on by prejudice and self-interest. Using the skills of psychological analysis honed on Shakespearian criticism, Coleridge undermines the foundation of his opponents' defence. They think they know best because they work day and night in the factories in question, but this experience, he argues, is more likely to blind them to the truth than reveal it. He demonstrates this by analysing the way in which statistics on health had

⁵² pp. 179-180.

⁵³ p. 184.

been manipulated to represent a false picture of a healthy workforce. For example, the data only counted the sick amongst those presently employed, taking no notice of those who had been discharged for ill-health caused by the conditions of work.

Coleridge sprung into action on his pamphlets when he learnt on 17 April that the Commons had recommitted the Bill for debate before letting it go on to the committee stage. He managed to have them both finished by the debate on 27 April. Looking back through parliamentary records of proceedings prior to this date, Coleridge's pamphlets cover much of the same ground as had already been argued by Sir Robert Peel, William Smith and other proponents of the Bill. The Bill proposed to reduce the working hours in cotton factories of children under sixteen to twelve and a half hours (including one and a half hours for meals). The same clause also established nine as the minimum age for employment. Coleridge evidently draws on the reports of the parliamentary debates to frame his pamphlets. Taking his cue from the Bill's supporters, he picks out the key objections of its opponents as protection of the principle of free labour and the denial that any health problem existed to be corrected. He could be said to be following Peel's lead when he criticizes the arguments of supporters of *laissez faire*: the baronet had already argued on 23 February that '[h]e could not think that little children, who had not a will of their own, could be called free labourers'.⁵⁴ Peel may also have given him the idea for his psychological criticism of the partiality of manufacturers which forms the main theme of Coleridge's second pamphlet: Peel had argued on introducing the preliminary petition for the Bill on 10 February that

Those immediately concerned in the cotton trade did not perhaps perceive the injury to health which their workmen suffered, as they were in the habit of seeing them every day; but that injury was obvious to every stranger.⁵⁵

Thus the claim to be made for Coleridge's pamphlets is not that they are original, rather that they were a timely summary of the arguments so far for use by the Bill's well-

⁵⁴ *The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time (Hansard)* (London, 1818), vol. xxxvii.581.

⁵⁵ xxxvii. 265

wishers.

And did they use them? There is rather more evidence to the contrary. The emphasis in Coleridge's pamphlets that the abolition of the slave trade provides a useful precedent is not reflected in the debate of 27 April. The precedent Peel and his friends appeal to is that of the recently passed legislation on the employment of minors as chimney sweeps. Only one speaker refers directly to the parallel with abolition - not as a precedent but as proof that controversial legislation can come to be accepted over time.⁵⁶ The only member to use the slave trade as an argument in the Coleridgean sense made his intervention in a debate on 19 February, well before Coleridge was moved to write his pamphlets. Sir John Jackson told the session that 'as the House had given their attention to the amelioration of the situation of slaves abroad, that they could not in reason neglect their fellow-subjects at home'.⁵⁷ His speech may have even provided Coleridge with the germ of his ideas.

So did Coleridge's briefing papers lie unread on a number of parliamentary desks? Possibly, but it is equally likely that his approach was rejected because it did not suit the tactics of the pro-Bill faction. At the same time as the Bill, the House was also debating on 22 April a motion moved by Wilberforce respecting 'the Condition and Treatment of Slaves in the Colonies'. To link the two issues may have been seen as counter-productive. Wilberforce himself did not speak in the debate on 27 April and confined his previous interventions on the Cotton Factory Bill to a plea for a further enquiry on 19 February. The great abolitionist did not risk his campaign for emancipation of slaves in the British Empire by linking its fortunes with a contentious factory reform act.

If his parliamentary work was of questionable influence, Coleridge may have exerted more pressure as a journalist. The *Courier* ran a pro-reform campaign dating back to the initial discussion of factory conditions in 1816. The editor of Coleridge's *Essays on His Times*, David V. Erdman, conjectures that Coleridge at least had a hand in

⁵⁶ xxxviii.370.

⁵⁷ xxxvii.565.

altering, perhaps rewriting, a number of letters printed by the paper which chime in with the stance of the editorial team in support of legislation.⁵⁸ The ironic letter taking an anti-reform position appeared in the same edition as one of these letters on 31 March 1818. The interest taken by the press and public was used by Sir Robert Peel's supporters to persuade their colleagues that something had to be done. On the 17 April, one M.P. argued that delay would play into the hands of those 'out of doors' (beyond the confines of parliament), giving them an excuse to cause trouble.⁵⁹ The publicity the newspapers, such as the *Courier*, gave to the issue was fuelling this interest and speculation. The fact that parliament eventually passed the Act (albeit in a toothless form) the following year is perhaps indicative of their desire to give a sop to this constituency.

Educating the elite

Coleridge was in his element addressing the men in power in his pamphlets on the question of the lower classes. He felt most at home with this kind of audience, those he called 'the Learned and Reflecting of all Ranks and Professions, especially among the Higher Class'.⁶⁰ He took seriously his role as social teacher, introducing his ideas about the labouring classes to the upper classes in even the most unlikely settings. Indeed, he went so far as to interpolate a special unscheduled lecture on popular education in his 1808 lectures in the Principles of Poetry given at the Royal Institution, so carried away was he by his enthusiasm for Dr Andrew Bell's *The Madras System, or Elements of Tuition* (1808) which he had just read. Henry Crabb Robinson's letter to Mrs Clarkson (7 May 1808) records that Coleridge 'kept his audience on the rack of pleasure and offence two whole hours and 10 minutes, and few went away during the lecture'.⁶¹ (An image of the Ancient Mariner perhaps?) It was an unorthodox lecture programme, but it reveals the sense of urgency with which Coleridge considered the

⁵⁸ See *Essays on His Times*, vol. iii. The letters are dated 3 October 1816, 26 and 31 March 1818.

⁵⁹ *Hansard*, xxxviii.172.

⁶⁰ *A Statesman's Manual*, n.3.

⁶¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge *Lectures 1808-1819 On Literature*, ed. R A Foakes (London, 1987), vol i. 105.

subject. He digressed to the Bell-Lancaster controversy again in his lectures of 1810-11.

The same urgent desire to raise the issue of popular education is found in his writings at this period. In 1809, he began publishing *The Friend*. Ruminating on the purpose of this work, he identified 'Education in its widest Sense, private and national'⁶² as one of his chief topics. But why was this an acute problem? He provides the answer in Appendix A to issue No 6, September 21 1809. Reflection has come into the world and is now to be found in the cottages as well as in the academies. There was no going back:

The Powers that awaken and foster the Spirit of Curiosity and Investigation, are to be found in every Village; Books are in every Cottage. The Infant's cries are hushed with *picture-books*; and the Child sheds his first bitter Tears over the Pages which will render it impossible for him, when a Man, to be treated or governed like a Child. The Cause of our disquietude must be the means of our Tranquillity: only by the Fire, which has burnt us, can we be enlightened to avoid a repetition of the Calamity.⁶³

Coleridge greets the new industrial age of an increasingly literate population with trepidation. Education which teaches the man not to be treated like a child is a cause of 'disquietude', a singeing fire to be handled with care. Yet his response to his fears is to look for the potential gain: fire can be used not only to burn, but to enlighten.

Coleridge differs from other writers in this study in that he did not aspire to fulfil the role of popular educationalist himself. It is his opinions, rather than his practice, which primarily make him of interest to this study. He also serves as a contrast to those who took part in a shift in literature towards addressing a popular audience. More, Southey, Edgeworth, Wordsworth and Martineau each in their different ways placed great importance on stylistic simplicity and colloquialism as modes of communication with a wider audience than was usually thought of as the intended recipients of literature; Coleridge carefully distinguished himself from these aspirations in *Biographia Literaria*

⁶² Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Friend* (2 vols), ed. Barbara E Rooke (London, 1969), vol ii. 18.

⁶³ p. 86.

(see chapter three below). This did not mean that during his radical days of the 1790s, he had not flirted with the idea of speaking to the masses in 'Religious Musings'. His convoluted allegorical style makes this at first sight an unlikely vehicle to speak to the common man until one places it in the context of the language of dissenting preaching (Coleridge seriously considered taking this up as his profession). In fact, the images would have been familiar rather than exotic, drawing on the discourse of Revelation and the Old Testament prophets. E. P. Thompson, looking at similar images in the work of Blake, argues that this style belonged to the poor, going back at least to the Commonwealthmen of 1649.⁶⁴ Coleridge's imagery, however, mixes familiar biblical terms, such as 'the Moloch Priest', the 'Elect', 'Lamb of God', with exotic additions of his own, such as the simoom wind, which he may have picked up from Southey's oriental reading or from Erasmus Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*. The poem is thus a hybrid of the familiar and the outlandish, allowing readers of varying abilities different levels of access. One level is universally accessible: the discourse of the Bible. He uses this when he imagines an audience amongst the poor in his address the 'Children of Wretchedness':

The hour is nigh
And lo! the Great, the Rich, the Mighty Men,
The Kings and the Chief Captains of the World,
With all that fixed on high like stars of Heaven
Shot baleful influence, shall be cast to earth
(1.308-312)⁶⁵

- mixing the breaking of the seals from Revelation with the Magnificat. This may only be a rhetorical flourish, but for that moment at least the poem reaches out to entreat the poor to listen.⁶⁶ And perhaps they did. Though 'Religious Musings' was to appear in the expensive form of a volume of poetry (1796), it was written at a time when

⁶⁴ *The Making of the English Working Class*, ch 2 'Christian and Apollyon.'

⁶⁵ All references to Coleridge's poetry are taken from *The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Coleridge, Ernest Hartley (London, 1912, rpt. 1940).

⁶⁶ By contrast, Ian Wylie stresses the elitist nature of the imagined audience for 'Religious Musings' in *Young Coleridge and the Philosophers of Nature*. He interprets the poem as written 'for these young radicals who Coleridge believed were to be the country's future leaders' (p. 60). These readings can be reconciled by seeing the poem as working on two levels: gesturing to a wider audience, whilst saving its more complex message for an educated band of the elect.

Coleridge was preaching and lecturing and he may have used the poem, like other works, to enliven his sermons with poetry. The pulpit style, also to be found in 'The Destiny of Nations', was to remain an undercurrent in Coleridge's writing, though the apocalyptic tones of the chapel modulate into the more sober formulations of the churchman.

Coleridge in later life was no longer concerned with addressing the poor directly. He saw his task as educating the higher classes who are entrusted - in his paternalistic vision of society - with the role of thinking further and deeper for the majority. A man of worth from the higher classes was marked by 'an earnest *endeavour* to walk in the light of [his] own knowledge, and not, as the mass of mankind, by laying hold on the skirts of Custom'.⁶⁷ A similar train of thought led Coleridge in the 1820s to argue for a clerisy of the educated in every community.⁶⁸ The idea of the masses learning to think was something to be responded to with a damage limitation exercise. An education in duties ('the skirts of Custom') was sufficient.

He left it to others to tell directly the population at large what these duties were. The fact that he never wrote his third Lay Sermon, due to be addressed to the lower classes, indicates that this was not a role into which he felt inspired to invest his time. In all likelihood, he would have made a poor pedagogue. The influence of the educational works of Hannah More, for example, depends on the transmission of an unambiguous moral lesson. In Coleridge's writings, the reader has to disentangle the message from the collage of writings he left to posterity; his prose is not suited to a mass audience and appealed to few of his contemporaries. Only as a journalist and pamphleteer does Coleridge's prose approach clarity.

His poetry potentially had a wider appeal for he, like Wordsworth and Southey, was

⁶⁷ *Lay Sermons*, p 121

⁶⁸ The origin of the term lies in Kant's idea of 'a band of secular intellectuals who within the church of reason would be analogous to the clergy within the established churches' ('Romantic Philosophy and the organization of disciplines', *Romanticism and the Sciences*, p. 40). For a discussion of the role of the clerisy as interpreters for a mass audience, see Jon Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Wisconsin, 1987), pp. 164-170, 173-174.

part of the poetic movement in the 1790s experimenting with popular forms. Yet his poetry of this period reveals that he did not travel as far in this direction as either of his friends. They all experimented with the ballad form, but only Southey and Wordsworth went on to attempt the more risky folk tradition of 'vulgar' (both in the sense of 'crude' and of 'belonging to the people') tales, for example, Southey's 'The Grandmother's Tale' and 'The Cross Roads' or Wordsworth's 'The Idiot Boy', 'The Thorn' and 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill'. Amongst Coleridge's verse, only 'To a Young Ass' (1794) employs a vulgar subject, with the poet venturing the potentially ridiculous sentiment 'I hail thee *Brother* - spite of fool's scorn!' (l.26), identifying himself with the ass. The political critique underlying the poem, however, is a sophisticated one; the plebian nature of the subject is a deliberate posture akin to the Whigs' adoption of the blue and buff dress code in the American War of Independence and is not vulgar in the same sense as Southey's and Wordsworth's tales (though the political implications were comparable). Most reviewers, notably those writing for the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Anti-Jacobin*, mocked the low tone of Wordsworth's and Southey's tales which include a grisly description of the murder of an old woman who wormed dogs ('The Grandmother's Tale') and of an idiot boy who did little but 'burr'. Whilst happy to embrace the ballad as a literary mode, reviewers blenched at the indelicacy of other forms of vulgar writing. On the grounds of both taste and political outlook, they were not ready for miscegenation of high and low culture. Coleridge's later publishing career no longer ran into conflict with this view as his works were firmly orientated to an elite class of readers.

The Romantic poet and the moral steam-engine

An acceptance of a separation of high and low cultures emerges in Coleridge's attitude to education and helps to explain his idea of a nation divided into the select group of inheritors of education in its widest sense and the rest who should be drilled in their duties, characterized consecutively as the free-spirited Romantic educational project - as set out in 'Frost at Midnight' (1798) - and Coleridge's support for Bell's Madras system. In 'Frost at Midnight', Coleridge wishes on the infant Hartley a freer

education than the one he received in the city 'pent 'mid cloisters dim' (l. 52). His child is to 'wander like a breeze' and in nature observe

that eternal language, which thy God
Utters, who from eternity doth teach
Himself in all, and all things in himself.
Great universal Teacher! he shall mould
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.
(l. 60-64)

Coleridge projects onto Hartley the kind of upbringing that Wordsworth is to describe the next year in the two-part *Prelude*. They share the premise that nature, or God in nature, teaches the boy an instinctive love of the natural world, awakens the conscience (as in the boat stealing episode of *The Prelude*) and forms the whole individual, not the stunted soul of artificial society. Coleridge uses terms that draw on the image of the noble savage: the boy is to move freely, in tune with the nature that has been present from the moment of birth. Elements of this form of education recall Rousseau's *Emile* (1762) whom the tutor leaves to imbibe lessons from the world around him, rather than inculcate them in a class-room. Emile is raised so as to realize his full physical potential: '[i]nstead of letting him stagnate in the stale air of a room, let him be taken daily to the middle of a field'.⁶⁹ His formal book education only comes in his teenage years after the virtuous lessons of nature are well rooted. Coleridge makes Hartley's education even freer: Emile had been over-seen at all times by the omnipresent tutor; the eye of God alone is to be on Hartley.

Far different from the world of the Lake District was Dr. Bell's system. Bell first introduced it at the Military Male Orphan Asylum in Madras in 1795 - home to the half-cast abandoned children of British soldiers and Indian women. These potentially disruptive, dispossessed boys were taught self-respect, self-tuition and self-reliance. Punishments were allotted by the boys themselves. The system had the advantage of being cheap as tuition was spread through the school by a system of monitors necessitating only one teacher for a class of hundreds. It is not hard to see why

⁶⁹ Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (Harmondsworth, 1991), Book II. 78

Coleridge approved of the scheme as a basis for national education: it was inexpensive, effective and promised to school the masses into being law-abiding citizens. The scheme also perpetuated an oral tradition of learning, something which may have attracted Coleridge who had once been interested in ballads and the transmission of culture amongst the common people.

So promising did he find the scheme that he was prepared to take up cudgels in Bell's defence against his rival educationalist, Joseph Lancaster. Familiar with Bell's work but claiming the concept of self-tuition for himself, Lancaster proposed a similar monitorial scheme and gathered an impressive list of sponsors. His system differed in two important respects from Bell's: supported by Quakers, he proposed a non-denominational approach to education; in place of Bell's discipline meted out by a jury of peers, he proposed a series of humiliations, ranging from having one's face slapped by a member of the opposite sex to being suspended in a cage or tied in a blanket and left overnight in the schoolroom. Robert Southey, who also entered publicly into the debate on the competing claims of the Bell and Lancaster systems, comments that 'Mr. Lancaster's principle of punishment is abominable, and the instruments he makes use of as play-things for himself, are of such a nature, that if he were training boys for the Guinea trade, or for slave-drivers, no better means could possibly be adopted'. In comparison to these innovations, the punishments of the past seem civilized:

'[h]owever objectionable the rod may be, (and we should be among the first to advise its total disuse,) it becomes a wise and humane engine of punishment when compared with the yokes and shackles, the cords, and fetters, and cages of Mr. Lancaster'.⁷⁰

Neither Southey nor Coleridge approved of a scheme where the brutalized poor were further damaged by their experiences at school: education was supposed to lift them out of mental slavery, not make them fit to perpetuate such a system. In contrast, Southey describes the discipline system of Bell's Madras school as that of an ideal republic.

The boys were seldom in need of judgement from their peers 'for the effect of this whole beautiful system is that the boys feel the justice, and perceive the utility of all that

⁷⁰ Robert Southey, *The Origin, Nature, and Object, of the New System of Education* (London, 1812), p. 191 and p. 94.

is done to them, for them, and by them'.⁷¹ The supporters of Bell quickly saw that the benefits of enlightened teaching practice in the case of the alienated anglo-indians of Madras could equally be extended to the uprooted industrial populations: giving them practice in good citizenship in schools would - it was hoped - mould them into a law-abiding population and reattach them to the institutions of their country. As a development of this argument, Southey and Coleridge both criticized Lancaster primarily for his religious nonconformism, for what Southey called teaching the children '*indifference to the establishment*'.⁷² As the purpose of national education for both poets was to preserve the bonds of society, established religion had an integral part to play.⁷³

The Madras system seemed to promise a repeatable pattern with an assured outcome of socially responsible adults: it was education 'reduced to a science'.⁷⁴ In tune with the industrial age, Bell had found a way to harness the raw energy of the dispossessed and use it creatively. This is why Southey called 'self-tuition...the main-spring, the heart and life of the system, the moral steam-engine, the principle and the power'.⁷⁵ In contrast with this channelling of life into the 'moral steam-engine', the imaginative energy of the child Hartley is left free to flow in the open air. Only the privileged few could be risked in the unmonitored educational experiment of the Romantic poet in the natural world. The long training of Rousseau's Emile and Coleridge's Hartley is premised on the freedom from the requirement to labour from an early age for a factory

⁷¹ p. 53.

⁷² p. 108.

⁷³ From supporter of an idea, Coleridge progressed to being friends with the thinker. Bell appears amongst the subscribers to *The Friend* and is said to have 'paid up' in person. Bell was also known to Coleridge's family and friends, having visited Wordsworth in the Lakes in 1811 whilst staying with Southey. He took the local schoolmaster with him when he left to run one of his London schools. Wordsworth began teaching in the local school 2 or 3 hours a day - a fact which speaks for itself as to the importance he, like Coleridge, placed on education. Wordsworth not only saw Bell's system as useful for the masses; its emphasis on the development of personal skills in his view could have application for the children of the higher classes (see Andrew Bell, *Elements of Tuition Part III*, London, 1815). Practising what he preached, he chose to send his son, William, to Charterhouse because it used the Madras system.

⁷⁴ *The Origin, Nature, and Object*, p. 195.

⁷⁵ pp. 151-152.

wage; each child is a unique work of art, not a reliable mass product - a time-consuming luxury and not an answer to an urgent social problem. Thus, in Coleridge's system, the artist and the artisan are separated even before they reach the school gates and sent on different paths.

By the end of Coleridge's life, his understanding of the labouring classes and the education suitable for them was being outstripped by events. From being a progressive thinker, Coleridge was left trailing behind as an education that went beyond a training in duties and morals was reaching the lower classes through Mechanics' Institutes, the press and increased provision of schooling, sometimes provided by the working classes themselves, for example in the progressive schools of the Owenite co-operative movement and William Lovett's 'Knowledge Chartism'. The working class had picked up the baton of the middle class reformers - of Priestley, the Edgeworths, Owen, Bentham and Mill - as one historian writes:

If the middle class begins by advancing radical ideas, it is the workers who take these to their logical conclusion after 1832. Working-class leaders now take over and develop the heritage of eighteenth-century materialism and nineteenth-century political economy to develop a new view of society.⁷⁶

Coleridge's idea of an educated clerisy and a training for the masses in morals and religion may have appealed to the more cautious amongst the higher classes, but it would not do for an articulate, increasingly self-conscious working class whose political experience was rapidly growing. Coleridge found little of value in the modern manufacturing economy and turned to the past for his solutions; industrial workers were part of that system for better or worse and sought an education which would address their present needs. As the People's Charter was to show, the lower classes could - to use Coleridge's 1809 words - 'no longer be treated or governed as a Child' and would try to turn their newfound knowledge into power. Education, even when designed to subdue and control, in the end transformed the recipients so that they were no longer content with their lot and gave them their own voice to express their views. The educated working man and woman, just like the Romantic genius, would strive to

⁷⁶ *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure*, p. 14.

burst the limits imposed on them.

Chapter Two - Hannah and her sisters teach the poor.

The prominent place given to the works of Coleridge in modern criticism of Romantic literature may lead the student to assume that his intellectual elitism was representative of the period. In fact, though he spoke to a minority of the intelligentsia, his publications are not characteristic of an age that saw an explosion of educational literature aimed at a wide audience. Many of the writers of this material were women. Literary critics have not been kind to the 'conservative' women educationalists of the 1790s and early nineteenth century. As discussed in the introduction, the moral didacticism of the leading writer of this school, Hannah More, is often treated by critics of educational literature as self-evidently unattractive, something a child of the period had to be forced to read, unlike the delightful fairy tales and fantasies concocted by later Victorian writers.¹ Not all critics take such an extreme position, but a majority verdict appears to have been reached on the way Hannah More should be read, namely as a foil to her more radical contemporaries. Is it not time we reassessed this interpretation and considered how her writings can be seen as socially uniting in a turbulent era? A reading of More's work for her 'opinions' misses out on the message conveyed by her stylistic choices. In the context of the 1790s, More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* were recognized as innovatory by friends and enemies alike, particularly in the way that they addressed themselves to the labouring classes of the new industrial economy. In the vibrant written culture of the decade following the French Revolution, literary approaches carried political implications - a fact that has long been acknowledged in the study of radical poets and novelists. Why do we not perceive More's tracts in this light?

The main obstacles now encountered to a progressive reading of Hannah More's tracts are our own dominant cultural assumptions, which tend to be secular, liberal and - until very recently - masculine. If we do not take these into account, we are in danger of patronizing More in the very same breath as we accuse her of patronizing the lower classes. It should give us pause for thought that Hannah More's work was favourably

¹ See Mitzi Myers, 'Romancing the Moral Tale', pp. 96-128.

reviewed by a number of radical publications of the day, including the *Critical Review* and the *Analytical Review* - the journal that published articles by Wollstonecraft.² The similarity of More's moral codes to those of Wollstonecraft's own educational stories, as well as to those of other women educationalists, Maria Edgeworth and Harriet Martineau, indicates that there is no easy answer to the question of how her works were perceived by the lower classes she was addressing.

It is understandable that we identify with those writers in the period who come closest to a modern notion of politics - both constitutional and sexual. Many feel more comfortable with the radicals, Wollstonecraft and Paine, because they seem to articulate accepted concepts about human liberty and the dignity of each individual regardless of class, creed or sex, in contrast to the voices whose values were submission, loyalty and gratitude - the latter being attitudes which have been identified as antagonistic to a boisterous 'popular' culture.³ Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace recognizes the dilemma,⁴ but tackles it by interpreting More as one of a number of '*case studies in complicity*' with the patriarchal system,⁵ perpetuating (whilst ostensibly revising) the image of More as the bad fairy at the christening of modern feminism. Her approach is in part due to what she sees as the castigation of feminine energies in More's works. We should ask, however, what kind of feminine power is More criticizing? In place of a weak reliance on others, More offers a strong rational femininity that enlightens and sets free from crippling fear and ignorance. More does not offer us the revolutionary feminism of her contemporaries, Wollstonecraft or Mary Hays, yet, as Gary Kelly notes in *Women, Writing and Revolution, 1790-1827*, 'even this model could have

² See the notes to Mitzi Myers' excellent essay, 'Hannah More's Tracts for the Times: Social Fiction and Female Ideology' in *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, eds. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens, Ohio, 1986).

³ E. P. Thomson, *Customs in Common* (Harmondsworth, 1993) reconstructs eighteenth century popular culture on these lines, emphasizing the resistance of plebians to the values of the patrician class, for example in the rioting crowd's demand for common rights and customs, exercising rough justice in 'rough music', and countenancing the 'wife sale' as the poor man's divorce.

⁴ *Their Father's Daughters*, pp. 5-6.

⁵ p. 12.

feminist and revolutionary potential'.⁶

Work has already begun to question the way we read educational writers. Kathryn Sutherland has argued that More's brand of Evangelical 'muscular philanthropy' provides a foundation on which More is able to realize 'a dream of female power'. In this reading, More finds her power in gender difference: '...in More's analysis, it is the very particularity of women's assigned vision which is able to generate in times of crisis those precise social understandings which elude the unwieldy masculine universalising tendency'.⁷ Taking a similarly empowered approach, Mitzi Myers has championed a gynocentric interpretation of Hannah More's tracts and Wollstonecraft's Mrs Mason of *Original Stories*. Instead of trying to imagine what the 'child' would have thought - and she points out that this concept of 'child' is usually constructed by critics as possessing a male Romantic sensibility - the stories should be read for what they are saying about the woman who teaches and the girl who learns. 'From the ideological materials at hand, didactic women like More shaped a new ideal of educated womanhood', writes Myers. 'Through female influence and moral power, this cultural myth's new woman would educate the young and illiterate, succor the unfortunate, amend the debased popular culture of the lower orders, reorient worldly men of every class, and set the national house in order'.⁸ This is a huge expansion of the scope for women's activity: if a woman should exert her influence at home, then the whole nation was now seen as one large 'house'.

Sutherland's and Myers' readings of More challenge the over-simplified view of the end of the eighteenth century as the period in which society becomes divided into a masculine, bourgeois public sphere and feminine domestic sphere - an interpretation

⁶ Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution 1790-1827* (Oxford, 1993), p. 21. See also Kathryn Sutherland's article, 'Hannah More's counter-revolutionary feminism' in *Revolution in Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution*, ed. Kelvin Everest (Milton Keynes, 1991) which describes More's feminism as finding its power 'in the middle route, between rulers and ruled, impl[ying] something like gender liberation' (p. 51).

⁷ *ibid*, p. 61, p. 45.

⁸ 'Hannah More's Tracts for the Times', pp. 265-266. For a similar argument on Wollstonecraft, see Myers' essay 'Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books' in *Children's Literature* 14 (New Haven, 1986) pp. 31-59.

which has informed some influential feminist literary and historical readings of the era. Joan B. Landes, for example, responding to Habermas's *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, reads the public sphere as 'essentially, not just contingently, masculinist' and highlights the problematic character of the new feminist discourse that was 'engendered in and through that sphere'⁹ - a concept which suggests the 'unnatural' image of the language constructing feminine identity being born from the womb of the *father*. Sutherland's and Myers' versions of the public domain, however, come closer to Anne K. Mellor's view, as it is expressed in her article 'Joanna Baillie and the Counter-Public Sphere', than to Landes. Mellor describes her interpretation as a development of Rita Felski's thesis in *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics*, which posits the presence of a counter-public sphere, particularly in literature, in which female concerns predominated.¹⁰ These three critics, however, are differentiated by their treatment of the gender implications of the public power of women. Mellor retains the framework of a gendered division with male and female spheres running counter to each other; Sutherland slips More's feminism in between the gap between the power-holding males and those they rule; Myers suggests that 'male' and 'female' can co-exist in the public sphere because the female sphere has bloomed to encompass the nation. My own reading of More's tracts, in particular those based on her experience of the Mendip Sunday schools, interprets them as a description of a *local* public scene in which the sexes co-operate to influence their community. Habermas' division of society into masculine public and feminine private spheres is perhaps even unhelpful as an approach to More's work because it fails in its simplified form to account for gradations between the family and the nation which she describes. Her work stems from the complex particularities of lived experience - rather than from a schematized abstraction - an experience which encountered circles of local power where families were political players and where men and women moved easily from the kitchen to the market-place. People had identities as members of particular churches,

⁹ Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, 1988), p. 7, p. 205.

¹⁰ Anne K. Mellor, 'Joanna Baillie and the Counter-Public Sphere', *Studies in Romanticism*, 33, pp. 559-567.

trades, families, age-groups, which cut across identities based on gender or class.¹¹

An example of the way in which More's tracts defeat an over-simplified schematization on gender or class lines is provided by 'The Cottage Cook' (1797), later relabelled 'A Cure for Melancholy' to give greater emphasis to the beneficial effects of public works on the female psyche.¹² Mrs. Jones' first solidarity is with the local clergyman who persuades her to put aside her self-indulgent sadness and act as a force for good in her village. She sets about closing down the alehouse, reforming the character of the local girls - and by extension their families - and correcting cheating tradesmen. In exposing the tradesman's fraud, Mrs Jones aligns herself with the interests of a second group in the community: the housewife who manages the family budget. Attempting to close the alehouse, however, has been cited as a typical example of upper class contempt for lower class culture: a hostile middle class take-over of popular leisure patterns.¹³ Such criticism would be fair if popular culture was experienced equally by all members of lower class society in the simple schematized view of class that these readings suggest, but it was not. Looking at it from the woman's point of view (women were largely excluded from the drinking club that met at the alehouse fireside), alehouses drained away the scanty family finances and promoted drunkenness with its associated violence in the home. Whilst defending the culture of the underdog in eighteenth century society, we are in danger of thinking of the lower classes as being represented by the more vocal adult men and dwell too much on the admirable resistance of their culture to attempts to impose foreign values. It is possible, however, that More articulates a

¹¹ Robert B. Shoemaker, in *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (London, 1998) emphasizes that 'the spheres were never truly separate, certainly not physically' (p. 318) and suggests that the 'accentuation' of the idea of separate spheres in the nineteenth century 'may have been a response to, and an attempt to constrain, this growth in opportunities for women' (p. 317).

¹² This relabelling occurred when More re-classified her tracts for her collected works into 'Stories for Persons of the Middle Ranks' and 'Tales for the Common People', suggesting that she came to see 'The Cottage Cook' as having a new, particular relevance to women in the middle classes.

¹³ Susan Pederson supports this reading in her article, 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), pp. 84-113. See also Gary Kelly, 'Revolution, Reaction, and the Expropriation of Popular Culture: Hannah More's *Cheap Repository*', *Man and Nature*, 6 (1987), pp. 147-59

view, albeit from her privileged perspective, that would have found favour with the women and children whose interests were subordinate in some aspects of popular culture to a man's right to drink in company, introducing a new solidarity based on shared religious views and gender into the picture. Interpreting More as a defender of the Christian family, her recipe for lower class socializing (domestic and sober) reads, not as a curb on pleasure, but as a suggestion that male readers should pursue less destructive forms of recreation for the sake of their dependents and their own soul.

The resistance of More's works to readings such as those by Pederson, Kelly and Kowaleski-Wallace, which over-simplify her social background, is demonstrated by the complex transactions between gender and class. The status of women in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century aligns them in some respects with the lower classes as both groups shared a subservient position in law to upper class power-holding men. Taking this model, Kowaleski-Wallace concludes that moderate advances for middle class Evangelical women writers (such as More) came at the expense of the lower classes: 'if Evangelicalism afforded middle-class women an opportunity for self-definition and self-advancement, that advancement also exacted its price: the perpetuation of an unequal class system'.¹⁴ Kowaleski-Wallace implies that the middle class ideal of self-help was a deeply divisive message to preach to those in abject poverty as they were unable to raise themselves to take the first step on the ladder of self-improvement. Counter-balancing Kowaleski-Wallace's argument is the possibility that More's type of cautious progressivism eroded traditional social divisions through the spread of education, introducing new alignments through a shared interest in education and religious instruction. More's implementation of education for the poorest through her schools in the Mendips and her provision of cheap literary materials provided practical assistance to the poor with the result that some were empowered to take greater charge of their own lives. Thus, whilst from a modern perspective self-help is an ideology associated with the middle class,¹⁵ this in

¹⁴ *Their Fathers' Daughters* p. 86. Anne K. Mellor also suggests that the activity of middle class women comes at the expense of the lower classes in 'Joanna Baillie and the Counter-Public Sphere', p. 560. See also *The First Industrial Woman*, pp. 148-152.

¹⁵ Kelly, for example, dubs the imposition of middle class culture by More's tracts 'the *embourgeoisement* of rural society', *Women, Writing and Revolution*, p. 157.

itself does not invalidate the contemporary belief of More and many other writers that it was a lesson relevant to all classes and both sexes, if those already on the ladder were prepared to help those below them. Criticism of More has travelled too far in the direction of accusing her of imposing her values on others. Susan Pederson, for example, reads the tracts as launching an all out attack on popular culture. Whilst acknowledging that her argument is a plausible description of More's conscious rewriting of ballads and folk stories, we should remind ourselves that More did not promote her values by force. Her enthusiasm for her standards was that of a determined proselytiser seeking to convert the individual by appealing to what she hoped would become a shared set of religious and social beliefs; but it remained in the power of the individual to accept or reject, buy or pass over her message. Popular culture was not homogeneous: it contained a sizeable religious constituency who also held pious views, and there were no doubt some who had a taste for aspirational literature which suggested they may join the middle ranks by adopting their values and work ethic.

Many of these arguments applied to More will be revisited in a different context in later chapters on Edgeworth and Martineau, and I will argue that to understand their relation to their contemporary world, we should not read women educationalists only on the already over-emphasized lines of class or sex (though I by no means wish to discard these characteristics, rather carry them into a more complex picture). Equally influential on More's writing in the 1790s - perhaps more influential - than her sex or social standing was her identity as a religious person. In the case of Edgeworth and Martineau, both conceived of their relationship to others as primarily bound up in a network of socio-economic ties; they both resisted identities based on horizontal class associations - such as trade unionism or strike-action - emphasizing the Smithian solidarity of interest between classes that came from being part of one economic system.¹⁶ Thus their work constitutes an attempt to build a bridge, so far largely unrecognized, between the lower and upper classes in a period of great social upheaval. And no insubstantial bridge at that: they were all 'best sellers' in their day. Over two

¹⁶ *Adam Smith's Daughters*, p. 19.

million copies of More's tracts are estimated to have been sold or distributed by March 1796, not counting the bound volumes for the more affluent purchaser.¹⁷ The tracts appeared in such numbers that, according to Henry Thompson writing five years after More's death in 1833, they still 'formed a principal part of the English cottagers' library' - though it should be noted that he was a partisan commentator.¹⁸ Kelly has cast doubt on whether the labouring orders actually bought the tracts for themselves, suggesting that they were merely passive recipients of middle class distributions. His approach, however, does not explain why More's first London publisher for the tracts, John Marshall, carried on producing them in the same format after More and her sponsors withdrew. Marshall evidently saw the tracts as a viable business proposition.¹⁹ Nor does it account for the fact that More appears to have persuaded hawkers to carry her productions as these salemen expected to sell them, not hand them out for free. Whilst allowing for a significant element of upper class subsidizing and distribution, the two considerations above suggest there was a market for the tracts amongst the labouring classes.²⁰

Edgeworth was not backed by the impressive distribution network of the Evangelical movement, but her fame for her educational work undertaken with her father was widespread and not confined merely to the nurseries of the elite. The religious neutrality of her texts was both a boon and a hindrance to their post-publication history. Whilst they were deemed suitable for use by progressive educational establishments, such as Owen's New Lanark school, and were reissued throughout the nineteenth

¹⁷ For details of the circulation of the tracts in the context of other bestsellers, see Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago, 1957), p. 76 and Amy Cruse, *The Englishman and His Books in the early Nineteenth Century* (London, 1930), chs. III, IV and IX.

¹⁸ M. G. Jones, *Hannah More* (Cambridge, 1952), p. 145.

¹⁹ For a list of Marshall's tracts published without More's sanction see G. H. Spinney's 'Cheap Repository Tracts: Hazard and Marshall Edition', *The Library*, 4th series, XX, pp.295-340.

²⁰ Pederson analyses in more detail the evidence that a market for the tracts existed in 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon', p. 112. Spinney notes that subscriptions to float the publishing scheme seem to have been discontinued after the first year, suggesting the tracts were making a profit ('Cheap Repository Tracts: Hazard and Marshall Edition', p. 291).

century, Edgeworth's reputation was damaged in the 1820s by charges of irreligion.²¹ Until this backlash, she had received predominantly favourable treatment by reviewers. An article on 'Intellectual Education' in Rees' *The Cyclopaedia or Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, a respected scientific reference work in the early nineteenth century, devotes most of its space to an examination of Edgeworth's system for training young minds, granting her serious academic attention - in fact, treating her like a man of science. The *Cyclopaedia* was not alone in giving her a long intellectual review: Jeffrey, Croker, Scott and Sydney Smith did likewise.

Harriet Martineau's success with *Illustrations of Political Economy* was both an intellectual and a popular one. Whilst, predictably, the Tory *Quarterly Review* disliked her theories of population, inveighing against this maiden '*female Malthusian*' who dare criticize marriage and large families, her work received plaudits from leading politicians and theorists, including Brougham and Malthus. Even John Stuart Mill, though he was opposed to her views, praised it as a successful attempt to interpret economic ideas.²² The *Illustrations* also found favour with the public.²³ Thus, in the context of their times, the educational writings of these three women were as familiar to the reading public as Scott and Byron, and more frequently read than Shelley and Keats. This begs the question - why we pay them scant attention now?

One reason for our lack of interest is the didactic nature of these works. Didacticism is deeply unfashionable. The history of children's literature is usually described as a flight from moralizing works into the wonderful realms of fantasy (a bias traceable to Wordsworth's influence with his elevation of childhood into a time of unstructured exposure to nature). This version neglects the ongoing importance of writing that seeks to teach by entertaining, and to do so in a 'naturalistic' setting, as opposed to Fairyland or Arabia. More and Edgeworth were joined by an acknowledged radical, Mary Wollstonecraft, in writing in a tradition of moral tales that had been exploited during the

²¹ See Marilyn Butler's forthcoming article 'Irish Culture and Scottish Enlightenment: Edgeworth's Histories of the Future'.

²² *Adam Smith's Daughters*, p. 25.

²³ 'The Idea of Poverty', p. 169.

eighteenth century by progressives as well as conservatives. Thomas Percival, for example, friend of Diderot and Voltaire, founder of the Manchester 'Lit. & Phil.' (a group similar to the Midlands Lunar Society frequented by R. L. Edgeworth), produced *A Father's Instructions* (1775) for his children in the format of moral tales, convinced that 'nothing can operate more forcibly, than striking pictures of the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice; which at once convince the judgment, and leave a lasting impression on the imagination'.²⁴ His description of the subject matter of a moral tale associates it with 'manners and mores', thus going beyond the narrow definition of a cautionary tale. Percival's publisher - J. Johnson - also published Maria Edgeworth and Wollstonecraft. Contemporary readers, seeing this cluster of works coming from a radical publishing house, would have understood that moral tales were at the forefront of the attempt by progressive thinkers to educate their readers into judging for themselves, shaking off the shackles of received opinion or superstition. From this evidence I would suggest that it is an historically incorrect reading to equate the didacticism of More, Edgeworth and Martineau simply with dictating behaviour.

Once the moral tale is accepted as a potentially progressive form, other aspects of their work can be re-examined in a sympathetic light. The first point that should be recovered is that these three educationalists held a radical, new assumption in common: the lower classes were an audience worth addressing. This assumption entails an acceptance of education, even if a qualified one in the case of Hannah More. More wrote to one correspondent:

My plan for instructing the poor is very limited and strict. They learn weekdays such coarse works as may fit them for servants. I allow of no writing. My object has not been to teach dogmas and opinions, but to form the lower class to habits of industry and virtue.²⁵

Emphasis has been given to her decision to omit writing from the curriculum, but less attention has been paid to More's rejection of dogma and opinions, concentrating on forming 'habits of industry and virtue', which puts her tracts in line with Percival's

²⁴ Thomas Percival, *A Father's Instructions* (London, 5th edition 1781) pp. xi-xii.

²⁵ Hannah More, p. 152.

description of the way a moral tale should work. On the issue of writing, however, it should be remembered that More had to defend her actions against reactionary critics. This passage is less progressive than the series of tracts she presided over. In one of the tracts in the *Cheap Repository*, Charles Jones, a footman, explicitly recommends that the lower classes learn to write in their spare time so that they can rise in the world. He takes his own advice and from being the most menial servant becomes the bailiff of his master's estate and a tenant farmer.

In the early days of the industrial revolution, many respectable people considered education anything other than desirable. Hannah More experienced this attitude at first hand as she was not only a writer, but a pioneering founder of a network of schools for the poor in the Mendips. Her attempts to forward the moral education of the poor by teaching them to read improving works repeatedly ran across powerful local opposition. Of one scheme to establish a school she writes in 1797, '[t]he principal adversary is a farmer of £1000 a-year, who says, the lower class are *fated* to be wicked and ignorant, and that, as wise as I am, I cannot alter what is *decreed*'.²⁶ She dramatized this kind of opposition in her tract 'The Sunday-School'. The farmer here tries to dismiss Mrs Jones when she asks him to subscribe to the new school with the words, '[o]f all the foolish inventions, and new-fangled devices to ruin the country, that of teaching the poor to read is the very worst'.²⁷ The improvements brought by the school to the local girls eventually win over the farmer and he promises half a sheep for the first May-day feast. In reality, More's experience was less optimistic than her tale and she was forced on a number of occasions to shut down schools due to ill-feeling towards them amongst the most influential figures in the community. The characteristics of Hannah More as an educator of the poor, particularly her conservatism as to what they should be taught, are frequently measured by critics and found wanting; it is worth noting as a corrective to this negative image that More was

²⁶ *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More* (4 vols), second edition, ed. William Roberts (London, 1834), vol. ii. 51.

²⁷ 'The Sunday School' (London, 1797, c. rpt. 1815), p. 10.

criticized by some contemporaries for her enthusiasm and radicalism as a teacher.²⁸

In another important respect, her practice illustrates how her work was a radical departure. It is not enough just to wish to educate the poor: the materials must be within their reach to have any effect. The format chosen by Hannah More was designed to reach the widest possible audience, and she should be credited with the first systematic attempt by an educational writer to provide affordable literature. Her tracts were produced as cheap chap-books - the staple fare of the hawkers and pedlars - and priced at a penny or half-penny, a price within reach of most pockets.²⁹ She used travelling salesmen and sympathetic contacts amongst the privileged classes to distribute her wares, understanding that most poor people would not dream of stepping into a bookshop.

More went further than may have been expected of her because she immersed herself in the literary culture of the poor, the chapbooks and broadsheets peddled by hawkers for a penny, collecting an impressive library of such materials. Her common sense told her that 'it is vain to write what people will not read'.³⁰ She had plenty of failures in front of her from which to learn. As Victor E. Neuburg writes in *Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England*, 'at a time when society was changing, well-intentioned men of religion provided a large number of cheap publications which were almost entirely hortatory, and neglected the popular imagination which had been nourished in a pre-literate society by oral culture and the communal ceremonies and customs connected with the agrarian cycle of the year'.³¹ It took a woman of religion to realize the shortcomings of this approach. To get her message across, she decided to do it on the

²⁸ Criticism of More went into print, inspiring some of her friends to defend her in an exchange which became known as the 'Blagdon' controversy. The dispute centred on More's Mendip schools. In her literary biography, *The World of Hannah More* (Kentucky, 1996), Patricia Demers supports an interpretation of More's tracts as 'a counterinsurgent strategy', but she too notes the radical potential of More's teaching practice to her contemporaries (p. 118).

²⁹ Pederson compares More's tracts with eighteenth century chapbooks in 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon', pp. 84-113.

³⁰ *Hannah More*, p. 139.

³¹ Victor E. Neuburg, *Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Woburn Press, 1971), pp. 137-138.

terms with which the popular imagination was already familiar. She chose an instantly recognizable format to convey her message, complete with woodcut to attract the eye. Her friends and family who also contributed to the series were instructed to write in a like manner. Whilst in contrast to the unruly world of 'Jack the Giant Killer' and 'Mother Bunch' More's tracts may strike the reader as anodyne, they were a vast improvement on the lack-lustre publications that had gone before from religious societies.

Edgeworth's marketing strategy was aimed at a more elite readership - even *Popular Tales* came out in three volumes at a price far above most capacities. She clearly expected, however, that some of her work would trickle down to a poor readership, possibly through low-cost editions or gifts to local schools. The first instalments of the *Harry and Lucy* stories, for example, are aimed at the most basic reading ability. They are grounded in modest, rural everyday life: a world equally recognizable to rich and poor. Half of Edgeworth's tales in *The Parent's Assistant* (first edition, 1796, expanded 1801), such as 'Simple Susan' and 'The Basket Woman', share the rural setting and place poor children as their heroes. Drafted in collaboration with her father, Edgeworth explains her approach in the preface to the series:

The following tales have been divided into two parts, as they were designed for different classes of children. The question, whether society could subsist without the distinction of ranks, is a question involving a variety of complicated discussions, which we leave to the politician and legislator. At present it is necessary that the education of different ranks should, in some respects, be different; they have few ideas, few habits, in common; their peculiar vices and virtues do not arise from the same causes, and their ambition is to be directed to different objects. But justice, truth, and humanity, are confined to no particular rank, and should be enforced with equal care and energy upon the minds of young people of every station: and it is hoped that these principles have never been forgotten in the following pages.³²

The preface is sly, raising in the second sentence the question of social inequality by claiming she is not going to address this point. The damage, however, has been done, and the reader is alerted to the issue from the outset. The reassuring assertion of the

³² Maria Edgeworth, *The Parent's Assistant* (London, this edition 1822) p. vii.

status quo to be respected 'at present' in the third sentence softens the undisguised democratic sentiment of the final part. This passage prepares the intelligent reader for a text which, for all its innocuous appearance, has more radical under-tones.

One aspect of the subversive message of the tales is their juxtaposition to one another. As part of Edgeworth's educational practice was to work with what was already familiar to the child, the stories set in poor families indicate that these were the ones she destined for her lower class of reader. The stories about upper class schoolrooms and nursery politics were conversely aimed at her affluent readers. By putting both kinds of stories side-by-side in the same series, however, she offered a glimpse across the class divide at the world inhabited by other people. Indeed, the world of the poor seems of far more consequence than that of the rich children: the poor children earn their livelihood and change whole communities by their actions; the rich children, such as those in 'The Bracelets', learn small-scale moral lessons whilst remaining in the schoolroom, a point I shall develop in chapter four.

Harriet Martineau was publishing in a different market from these turn-of-the-century works. By her day, working men's associations and lending libraries were widespread, bringing books within the reach of many of the lower class autodidacts. Her decision to publish by instalments favoured the pockets of those who had no large stocks of money to draw on. Her preface addressed to all classes demonstrates that she expected the *Illustrations* to be in reach of most readers, and her subsequent correspondence with various workers' organizations who wrote to her about her work demonstrates that this expectation was not ill-founded.

In addition to putting themselves forward as educators of the lower classes, More, Edgeworth and Martineau educated the rich about the plight of the unknown Lazaruses on the streets of British towns and cities. More, though setting out to write only for the working classes in her *Cheap Repository Tracts*, soon found that they were highly popular in affluent circles. She wrote to Zachary Macaulay on 6th January, 1796, registering surprise that the tracts 'were bought by the gentry and middling classes full

as much as by the common people'.³³ To cater for the refined audience, Marshall brought out expensive bound copies of the tracts. Like More, Edgeworth was already established as an educational writer for the upper classes when she decided to extend her repertoire by writing the stories published as *Popular Tales*. Her father's preface makes her intentions clear: '[t]he title of *Popular Tales* has been chosen, not as a presumptuous and premature claim to popularity, but from the wish that they may be current beyond circles which are sometimes exclusively considered as polite'.³⁴ The assumption in the preface is that the tales, which include one with a Cornish miner as its hero, will stray beyond normal reading circles to be read by a new audience drawn from the lower classes. Harriet Martineau, by contrast, always saw her project to educate the population in the principles of political economy as one directed at all classes alike. She wrote in the preface to her first tale, 'Life in the Wilds', firmly putting all her readers on a par: '[w]e do not dedicate our series to any particular class of society, because we are sure that all classes bear an equal relation to the science, and we much fear that it is as little familiar to the bulk of one as of another'.³⁵ Her tone lacks the apologetic manner of R. L. Edgeworth in excusing the promiscuity of *Popular Tales*. Martineau is unconcerned that upper class readers may be offended to find their ignorance jumbled in with the 'bulk' of other classes. It is no accident that this democratic language comes in the year of the Great Reform Act which psychologically acted as a leveller, if not in political fact.

Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*: taking politics to the people

Hannah More's introduction of anti-slavery material into the *Cheap Repository Tracts* highlights another solidarity (in the form of the shared identity of the abolition movement), crossing class and gender divides, which she hoped to cultivate with her work. As a citizen of Bristol and Bath, Hannah More had direct experience of the

³³ Hannah More, p.144

³⁴ Maria Edgeworth, *Popular Tales* (London, 1893), p. vi.

³⁵ Harriet Martineau, *Illustrations of Political Economy* (9 vols) (London, 1834), vol. i. xiv.

British end of the slave trade.³⁶ Whilst the trade was on the decline in the port, a large amount of local money was tied up in West Indies' investments.³⁷ The majority of Bristol's citizens condemned the morality of the trade, but defended it on pragmatic grounds. Not every resident of Bristol fell into this category. Thomas Clarkson was hosted during his stay in the city by those long standing opponents of the trade: the Quakers. Other prominent persons were also involved: the first meeting of the city's abolitionists was called by no less a person than the mayor and was attended by the Deans of Bristol and Gloucester. Literary personalities added their voice to the campaign: the young Robert Southey wrote a number of poems on the slave trade, as did Ann Yearsley. The most prominent literary intervention, however, came from another Bristol writer, Hannah More, who took the abolitionists' message to the common people.

As noted in the introduction, More's abolitionist sentiments and Evangelical Christianity brought her into collision with the Establishment - which was comprised in part of vested commercial interests in the House of Commons and tepid Church of England Bishops in the Lords - and aligned her with a wide range of anti-slavery opinion. As G. Newman has observed, in following through the Evangelical programme of social reform, she 'did much more ...to subvert the established order than to uphold it'.³⁸ Reform was not easily achieved. Though in their attempts to end the slave trade, abolitionists attracted support from prominent politicians - notably both Fox and Pitt - not even this was enough to push through the abolition of the slave trade until 1807 - some twenty years after the first parliamentary campaign. The reputation of Evangelicalism as a conservative force, most influentially argued by Elie Halevy in 1913,³⁹ has ironed out these nuances. Undoubtedly, More valued stability and an

³⁶ For details of the Bristol trade, see C. M. MacInnes, *Bristol and the Slave Trade* (Bristol, 1963). See also Ellen Gibson Wilson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography* (London, 1989), p. 30 *et passim*.

³⁷ Joan Baum reveals how ubiquitous links to the slave trade were in her examination of the backgrounds of the Romantic poets in *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: Slavery and the English Romantic Poets* (Connecticut, 1994).

³⁸ 'Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century', 385-418, p. 400.

³⁹ *England in 1815*, p. 425 and Pt III, ch. 1.

ordered social hierarchy, but she also joined in what Newman calls 'a determined effort to strike down many of the fundamental traditions of the country - not just the "nominal Christianity" but also the localism, the eliticism, the structures of traditional deference, the sophisticated literary culture, the manners and morals and amusements customary to Britain's ancien regime' and, for all her political loyalism, she should be regarded as 'a moral and social' revolutionary.⁴⁰ So whilst in her tract, *Village Politics* (1793), she preaches an anti-Painite message to 'all the Mechanics, journey men and day labourers in Great Britain', and concludes that each should mind his own business in the station providence has allotted him, we should also be aware of a subversive message contained in the same material. She advises political loyalism, but what exactly did she mean by one's own 'business'? Her definition of the business of the lower classes offers a surprisingly large field of activity.

The historical importance of the Anti-Slave Trade Movement of which More was a part goes beyond its contribution to the eventual abolition of slavery in the Western world. It was also the beginning of political campaigning as we now know it: a deliberate attempt to mobilize popular support in favour of a single issue. Its methods are now familiar propaganda tools used by political parties and pressure groups of all persuasions: petitions, flyers, popular songs, merchandize - all generated by the London and local committees to create media interest and inform the public of the movement's aims. Wedgwood's cameo of the kneeling black slave, inscribed with 'Am I not a man and a brother?', became so closely identified with the movement - its mascot - that Maria Edgeworth was able to refer to it in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* (1825) with no gloss as to its signification. J. R. Oldfield, in *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, argues that the experience of the abolition campaign played an important part in politicizing the disenfranchised middle class - teaching them campaigning techniques that were to be repeated for other issues, notably the 1832 Reform Bill. It was not just the voteless male middle class who benefited from the campaign: as slavery could be seen as a moral issue and therefore part of the 'feminine' sphere of influence, women of all classes, such as More, Barbauld and Yearsley, were

⁴⁰ 'Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century', p. 401.

enabled to enter the debate.⁴¹ Even children were involved as abolition was a theme which was thought suitable for books aimed specifically at them, such as Thomas Day's *Sandford and Merton* (1783-9) and Barbauld's *Hymns in Prose for Children* (1781). Thus, through literature and campaigning, the abolition movement created a shared identity that cut across other cultural barriers. I will argue that More extended this identity to the lower classes.

More first entered the field as an anti-slavery writer with a poem. The grounds on which she based her intervention were carefully chosen as appropriate for a female writer. Having already appeared before the public as an authority on manners, conduct and morality, she adopted these criteria for her abolition poem, 'Slavery' (1788). More continued to work on the poem after its initial publication, making significant changes to both its content and title. She added another sixty-two lines (mainly to reinforce the Christian message contained in the poem) and a footnote referring to the events of 1800 when she published it as 'The Slave Trade' in her collected works of 1801. Thereafter, this text (with minor variations) was the one published in later editions of her work. In 1816, she retitled it 'The Black Slave Trade', coupling it with an essay redubbed for the purpose as 'The White Slave Trade' (the essay was first published in 1805 as 'Hints towards forming a Bill for the Abolition of the White Female Slave Trade, in the Cities of London and Westminster'). Though the two themes (black slavery and slavish adherence to fashion) are not obvious bedfellows - a difference heightened by the treatment given each subject (earnest rhetoric followed by arch satire) - the association made by the retitling indicates that More viewed both conditions as united by their sinfulness as products of a supposedly Christian nation. By 1816, of course, the British slave trade had been abolished, whilst women's adherence to fashion presumably remained unchanged. The argument of the poem, however, continued to be pertinent to the new stage in the slavery debate: the campaign to emancipate slaves. Her piece on 'The White Slave Trade' also focuses on the need for emancipation - in this case from the fetters of vanity and social expectations.

⁴¹ For details of the activity of women in the abolition movement, see Clare Midgley's *Women against Slavery: The British Campaign 1780-1870* (London, 1992).

In 'Slavery', More uses her gender as a writer as a source of strength, complimenting the previous literary models of the male tradition. The rigour of the straight gaze of the female moralist is contrasted with the fanciful treatment of black slavery by male predecessors. Making no mention of Aphra Behn as the original source for the legend, More invokes Southerne's *The Tragedy of Oroonoko* as the touchstone for writers dealing with the subject of slavery. Though she lauds Southerne's achievement in moving the reader to sympathize with his African Prince, she finds it dead as an inspiration for her own work. Under the praise lurks distrust of the ornate treatment he has given to a serious subject. She finds repugnant the sympathy he inspires for the sufferings of one fictional character compared to the enormity of the crimes committed against millions of living Africans and this quenches her attempts to emulate him:

Here Art wou'd weave her gayest flow'rs in vain,
 For Truth the bright invention wou'd disdain.
 For no fictitious ills these numbers flow,
 But living anguish, and substantial woe;
 No individual griefs my bosom melt,
 For millions feel what Oronoko felt[.]
 (ll.51-56)

Proudly she takes her inspiration from stern 'Truth', leaving artificial 'Fancy' to the 'sweet Bard' of the masculine tradition, and thus reverses the gender pattern which commonly attributes the public sphere of fact to the male and the interior world of Romance to the female.⁴²

The main argument of her poem begins by establishing the moral principle that the black man has the same soul given by God as the white - 'Does then th' immortal

⁴² My reading of More's poem challenges the thesis of Anne K. Mellor's essay ' "Am I not a Woman, and a Sister?" : Slavery, Romanticism, and Gender' in *Romanticism, Race and Imperial Culture 1780-1834*, eds. Alan Richardson and Sonia Hofkosh (Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1996). Using this poem and a number of works by female abolitionists, Mellor claims that the male abolitionists concentrated on slavery as a violation of natural law and human rights; women concentrated on how it violated the domestic affections (p. 315). This argument puts an artificial gender construction onto a debate where male and female writers use many different strategies. More concentrates on slavery as destructive of both rights and affections - though in place of human rights, she would probably have preferred a term indicating that slavery was a violation of Christian ethics. Male writers, such as the Rev. James Ramsay and Thomas Clarkson, do not fight shy of reiterating the details of the harm done to domestic life by slavery.

principle within/ Change with the casual colour of a skin?' (ll.63-64). She then goes further, claiming that not only do they have souls, but that they have noble ones. The black races are made from 'That self-same stuff which erst proud empires sway'd' (l.79) - it is those of 'illiberal thought' who would 'debase/ The native genius of the sable race' (ll. 59-60) to appearing as any less worthy of respect than the white. Once equality is accepted, the remainder of her case is simply made. It is the white man's Christian duty to 'Respect *his* sacred image which they [black people] bear' (l.136) - invoking Genesis which states that all of humanity was made in the image of God. If the slave trader refuses to acknowledge his responsibility to his black brethren, it is he who is debased into a 'WHITE SAVAGE' (l.211), not his victims. (Possibly the best known abolition poem of this period, Cowper's 'The Negro's Complaint', argues a similar point). Instead of slave ships bearing iron chains and fetters, European nations should be sending missionaries with Bibles. The greed for the profits of slavery is standing in the way of the spread of the Gospel for Africans will not accept the message of salvation from the mouths of those who wish to enslave them.⁴³

Though the poem presents the writer as a nonpartisan moral authority, More was acutely aware of the political context for which she was writing. Whilst composing the poem in 1788, she wrote to her sister that 'good or bad, if it does not come out at the particular moment when the discussion comes on in parliament, it will not be worth a straw'.⁴⁴ She was fast learning the trade of political spin doctor managing the media coverage of a campaign, recognizing that timing is an even greater consideration than content in poetry that aspires to be part of a political discourse.

In 1788, More was coming to grips with her own role as a female in politics; by the mid-1790s, she was inviting the lower classes into the debate. The Clapham Sect and their associates, by nature men of conservative instincts, began their work through conventional constitutional means. After discovering that vested interests in Parliament

⁴³ A point made also by Mrs. Opie in 'The Negro Boy's Lament'. The young man tells Anna that his mother still in Africa is unlikely to believe any good of white men if the only experience she has of them is their cruelty.

⁴⁴ *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More*, vol. ii. 97.

would do everything to block their motions for the abolition of the slave trade, they were persuaded to appeal to an extra-parliamentary constituency on some political issues. William Wilberforce reluctantly conceded this in 1791, writing that '[i]t is on the general impression and feeling of the nation we must rely....So let the flame be fanned'.⁴⁵ More's series of improving reading for the poor, *Cheap Repository Tracts*, which came out 1795-8 at the height of the abolition campaign, was an important plank in this strategy. The abolition issue took its place as one amongst many concerns reflected in diverse material produced in the *Cheap Repository* (the anti-slavery material fills three out of over a hundred tracts), but when this material is considered along with the considerable number of tracts propagating an anti-revolutionary message, the *Cheap Repository* can be identified as taking current political issues to a mass readership. The fact that part of More's political message was anti-republican does not make it any less an element in the contemporary debate over radicalism. By taking the issues of slavery and revolutionary politics to the lower classes, she was extending the political dialogue into new territory - or fanning the flame of popular feeling, as Wilberforce would have it. It had become the 'business' of this disenfranchised section of society to bring their weight to bear on 'the general impression and feeling of the nation'. She included the voiceless majority as participants in the moral and political life of the country - a sign of changing times and attitudes - linking them to their social superiors in the shared identity of abolitionists and anti-revolutionaries.

I am offering a different reading of working-class participation in politics than that presented by E. P. Thompson some thirty years ago. For him, the emphasis was on political radicalism and unions growing out of the culture of the lower classes despite the repressive interference of the ruling elite and religion. His work has continued to set the tone for many historians and literary critics who describe the growing political consciousness of the lower classes as arising despite the efforts of a repressive middle

⁴⁵ *Saints in Politics*, p. 40.

and upper class.⁴⁶ As argued in my introduction, these views should be balanced with a more subtle understanding of Evangelicalism as, in Bernard Semmel's words, 'both a spiritual Revolution of a progressive and liberal character and as a counter to revolutionary violence'. To be opposed to political radicalism does not exclude the possibility that one may hold other forms of liberal and progressive views. Tom Paine and fellow radicals were not the only writers who took politics to the working classes. Not all workers had Paineite sympathies; he was more often associated in the public mind with French politics alien to an English political tradition and More identified herself with those who held to these loyalist instincts by providing them with debating material and information. (It should not be forgotten that effigies of Paine were burnt on bonfires in the 1790s - a political statement of a sort showing that there was a significant anti-radical constituency which is too readily dismissed as a 'mob').⁴⁷ More encouraged the people to participate in a political campaign for abolition, thus legitimizing lower class political activity by identifying them with an issue that crossed social divisions. Thanks to the work of the Clapham Sect, a precedent was set for other campaigns, making political participation by the masses in some senses 'normal'. After the success of 1807, the influence of the campaign became a vast delta flowing into many new political channels. To name but two: the Chartists learnt some of their campaign techniques from abolition - petitions, literary propaganda, campaign organization - as did the Temperance Movement, the great Victorian pressure group

⁴⁶ See for example Thomas Walter Laqueur's *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850* (New Haven and London, 1976) which offers the thesis that the 'repressive, middle-class dominated Sunday School of Hannah More or William Fox was a rarity by the early nineteenth century' (p. 239). The decline of this institution allowed a kind of school to develop that gave expression to working class identity, as well as training their political leaders in the necessary literacy skills. Alan Richardson follows this line when he characterizes More as one of the writers who persisted in 'the pervasive infantilization of "inferiors" within the social discourses of the Romantic era' (*Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, p. 213). Ignoring the message of self-improvement already evident in More's and Edgeworth's writings for the lower classes, he credits Robert Owen, the experimental factory owner, with being the first to extend 'the language of self-motivation and rational assent...to the "millions of...untrained labouring poor"' (p. 218), making no mention of the fact that Edgeworth's stories were amongst the resources used by the New Lanark school. See also ed Phillip McCann, *Popular Education and socialization in the nineteenth century* (London, 1979), p. 18.

⁴⁷ See George Rude's *The Crowd In History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848* (London, first published 1964, this edition 1995), chapter nine 'Church and King Riots' in which he tries to tease out the political motivation of the individuals who made up the 'mob'.

which shared the abolition campaign's mixture of morality and social amelioration.

The three tracts in More's *Cheap Repository Series* that deal with slavery, 'True Stories of Two Good Negroes' (1795), 'The Sorrows of Yamba' (1795), and 'The Black Prince' (1797),⁴⁸ belong to an eighteenth century tradition of stories about virtuous slaves. The story of Babay in the 'True Stories of Two Good Negroes' was first recorded by the Rev. David Ramsay in his *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves* (1784), who tells it as one tale amongst many, treating them as a development of the tradition he traces to *The Spectator* No. 215 of showing the heroic nature of enslaved Africans.⁴⁹ Moira Ferguson notes that the well-known Christian educational writer, Sarah Trimmer, extracted the tale of Babay, added the other narrative from an unidentified source, and published them in her *Family Magazine* in 1788.⁵⁰ This suggests that More took her extracts from Trimmer, though Ferguson does not mention that More was also familiar with Ramsay as she uses his story of a noble slave, Qua-shi, in her poem, 'Slavery', and quotes an extract from his work in a footnote explaining her reference. The authorship of the other two tracts is uncertain. As all the pamphlets came out when More was general editor of the series, however, it can be assumed she commissioned and approved, even if she did not write, the

⁴⁸ Dates for the tracts are taken from W. Lee's contribution to *Notes and Queries*, series 3, vol. vi (1864), pp.291-294. It is worth drawing attention to this article because it has dropped out of bibliographical studies on More, which is to be regretted as it provides the best available list of the *Cheap Repository Tracts* with details of the publishers involved. G. H. Spinney's 'Cheap Repository Tracts: Hazard and Marshall Edition' is now used as the main bibliographical reference in recent studies of More, but Spinney does not use Lee's work (though he does refer to a query earlier in the same volume of *Notes and Queries* to which Lee is replying). Spinney's list of tracts is based on the holdings of the British Library and the libraries of Bath and Bristol; Lee does not disclose his sources but appears to have access to a more comprehensive collection. From Lee's list, one can establish the authenticity of the anti-slavery material as *Cheap Repository Tracts*.

⁴⁹ Rev. James Ramsay, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves* (London, 1784), pp. 259-261.

⁵⁰ More probably took more than these tales from Trimmer's *Family Magazine*. This publication was aimed at 'the inferior classes of people' and was intended to instruct whilst amusing them. Many of the hallmarks of the tracts can be found in this forerunner: illustrations, ongoing serials, frugal recipes, popular ballads and poetry, and a section called 'Village Dialogues' where two lovers discuss in colloquial language moral issues such as fashion. The target of the publication is, however, more 'up-market' than the tracts because, in addition to the material mentioned, each edition starts with a weighty sermon and contains a detailed exposition of a different country each month - demanding an advanced level of literacy. See Sarah Trimmer, *The Family Magazine* (London, 1788-1789).

material they contain. It is tempting to speculate that she wrote at least one of them. The close resemblance of the argument of 'The Sorrows of Yamba' to her poem on the slave trade makes its attribution to her pen not improbable.⁵¹

The aim of the anti-slavery tracts is two-fold. Firstly, they fit into the larger agenda of the series to reform the moral character of its readership. Secondly, they seek to inform and involve their audience in the abolition campaign. The two goals are inextricably linked: as in her poem, 'Slavery', More recognizes that wrong-headed ideas about racial superiority must first be challenged before a constituency receptive to abolition arguments can be created. The deeply rooted prejudice she was fighting is difficult to over-estimate. The most liberal minded amongst the pro-slavery lobby acquiesced to the predominant culture of European racial superiority as one Jamaican planter, Bryan Edwards, shows in his remarks on the Negro character: '[d]evoid of reflection on the past, they feel no apprehension for the future. Persuasion is lost on such men, and compulsion, to a certain degree, is humanity and charity'.⁵² More's tracts turn such assumptions on their head by arguing the moral superiority of some exemplary black slaves to the white community that enthralls them. They attempt to convince the readership that 'such men' are in fact one's brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the agenda behind the two stories, 'Babay' and 'A True Account of a Pious Negro', published by Marshall under the title 'True Stories of Two Good Negroes'. The first of them, 'Babay', is in the form of a short exemplary tale: a white boy, abandoned by his community on the death of his soldier father, catches a disfiguring disease called 'yaws'. Now doubly an outcast, his life is saved by a black slave woman called Babay. Her kindness in taking him in is repaid in later life when the boy buys her freedom and looks after her in his own household. The remainder of the tale takes the form of extracts from the funeral sermon preached in front of the black community on Babay's death. Though ostensibly aimed at the slaves, the reader is equally part of the

⁵¹ In *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834* (New York and London, 1992), Moira Ferguson speculates that 'The Black Prince' may have been written by John Newton (p. 221). Hannah More is unlikely to have written it as its reportage style is not characteristic of her known contributions to the series.

⁵² Brian Edwards, *A Speech Delivered at a Free Conference* (Kingston, Jamaica, 1789), p. 81.

congregation to hear the improving message that '[t]his instance of generosity found in one of her condition, is a proof that noble and great actions are not, as many think, confined to advantages of birth and education',⁵³ and the dismissal, ' "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"'.⁵⁴ The implication to be drawn from the tale is that the lower class readership of the tracts should find a black slave a counterpart, both as a Christian soul but also as a person placed in an inferior social situation. Exemplary characters, such as Babay, are therefore fitting models on which to form one's behaviour.

More's linkage between her readership and a black slave finds an echo in Edgeworth's *Popular Tales* (see pp. 171-172). Whereas Edgeworth regards worker and slave as united by the similarity of their economic position, More bases the common ground on social position and religion. More's association also worked in the opposite direction evidenced by the fact that the *Cheap Repository* was distributed to missions abroad, thus probably reaching the slaves of the British Empire. This project would not have undertaken by missionary societies if they had not expected their readers to sympathize with the cast of British lower class characters found in the tracts.

The second tale, 'A True Account of a Pious Negro', takes the anti-slavery lesson a step further and extends its social range. It consists of an account of a conversation a travelling Englishman has with a black slave on a plantation in North America owned by a Quaker. Interestingly, this is not overtly an abolition piece: the slave expresses his contentment at his treatment by his master. (Here, the detail that the master is a Quaker is significant: Quakers had the reputation of being enlightened employers and opposed in principle to slavery.) The story departs from its expected track when something beyond a catechistic conversation characteristic of the tract genre develops between the two men. The Englishman, despite his superior tone, finds himself drawn into what he calls 'communion' with this humble slave:

...we looked upon each other, and talked with that glow of christian

⁵³ 'True Stories of Two Good Negroes' (London, 1795), pp. 4-5

⁵⁴ p. 5.

affection, that made me more than ever believe, what I had often too thoughtlessly professed to believe, the communion of saints, viz. that sympathy of heart and soul which unites and endears good people to each other.⁵⁵

The phrase ‘communion of saints’ refers to the Creed repeated every week by Anglicans, but the author gives it a particularly Evangelical spin by defining saints, not as those who have been canonized by the Church, but as the fellowship of all believers living and dead. The story demonstrates that amongst true believers, colour and class do not hamper brotherly love. The editor of the story goes further. Once the Englishman has concluded his account, the editor draws out the moral lessons to be learnt, including one meant to humble the English audience:

Perhaps it may serve to fill us ENGLISHMEN with shame when we reflect, that [with] all our great and superior advantages, our knowledge and obedience are far from being equal to what seems to have been the case with this poor, but virtuous negro.⁵⁶

The black slave has made better use of his condition than Englishmen have made of their liberty. Though not explicitly an abolition tract, the implication that black slaves are worthy of their freedom is clear, challenging the pro-slavery lobby’s argument that Africans are only fit for compulsion.

The second tract, ‘The Sorrows of Yamba’, recounts these lessons in verse and adds an explicitly anti-slavery message. Its style differs from the other two tracts by being a first person narrative in verse from the point of view of the black slave herself. Some of the versions put out by Marshall in 1795 are illustrated, not only by the frontispiece woodcut, but also by smaller woodcuts inside telling Yamba’s story in pictures, from native village, to slave ship, to baptism by a missionary in the West Indies. No high level of literacy is required to follow the drift of the narrative; the pictures explain what may be obscure in the verse. The story that unfolds combines the pathos of the suffering of the individual with authentic detail gathered by the Clapham Sect about the trade. Once in the West Indies, separated from her surviving children, Yamba is sold

⁵⁵ p. 10.

⁵⁶ p. 12.

to a cruel master and driven into despair. Thinking to end her life, she is saved by the kind words of a missionary, who converts her to Christianity and helps her reach a frame of mind in which she can bear her sufferings. Her new found faith does not diminish her spirit: the writer gives Yamba a bitter sense of irony that she turns on her English audience:

Ye that boast "*Ye rule the waves,*"
 Bid no Slave Ship soil the sea,
 Ye that "*never will be slaves,*"
 Bid poor Afric's land be free.⁵⁷

The author employs an audacious strategy in subverting one of the country's favourite patriotic songs for the purposes of criticism, particularly in the context of the French wars where naval superiority was a proud boast. Yamba baits the free men of England to prove their inflated claims.⁵⁸

Yamba concludes her narrative with the wish that her husband left behind in Africa may too have the benefit of Christianity, but without the sting of slavery. The responsibility for this mission lies with the reader:

Where ye once have carried slaughter,
 Vice, and slavery, and sin;
 Seiz'd on Husband, Wife and Daughter,
 Let the Gospel enter in.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ 'The Sorrows of Yamba' (London, 1795), p. 11.

⁵⁸ This ironic note adds further to the case for More's authorship of 'The Sorrows of Yamba' as it resembles the tone taken in her poem 'The Negro Boy's Petition', written to support the cause of Christian education for black children in the Empire. The slave child too is allowed a side-swipe at the masters:

Yet stealing, sure, no sin can be,
 Because, dear Massa, you keep me;
 Of course, to steal no harm you see.
 But I should know if I could look
 In God Almighty's holy Book!

(The poem is to be found amongst the miscellany of *The Feast of Freedom* (London, 1827), p. 25). As with Yamba, the perspective of the black slave threatens the assumed superiority of the white man. The black boy's virtuous piety contrasts with the condoning of slavery (called straight-forward 'stealing') of the master.

⁵⁹ 'The Sorrows of Yamba', p. 11.

This verse is double-edged for it is the black slave, Yamba, who is in fact bringing the Gospel to a white readership, both by converting them to abolition, and by convincing them of the imperative left by Jesus that they should go and preach the Good News to all nations.⁶⁰ Before accepting her message, her listeners too are slaves - slaves to sin. Freedom is not only a social condition, but more importantly for More, a spiritual state. As the newly freed Cingalese sing in her 1816 poetic drama *The Feast of Freedom or The Abolition of Domestic Slavery in Ceylon*: 'We'll show that we indeed are free,/Because we serve the Lord'.⁶¹

The full title of the final tract explains its contents: 'The Black Prince, A True Story; Being an Account of the Life and Death of Naimbanna, An African King's Son, Who arrived in England in the Year 1791, and set sail on his return in June 1793'. Naimbanna's father was the main contact for the Sierra Leone Company - the company set up by the Clapham Sect to raise funds and organize a colony for freed slaves on the west coast of Africa. This tract is a good illustration of the two-fold aim of the abolition movement, serving both to preach moral improvement and to inform its readership about the details of the campaign then in progress. Naimbanna and his father are morally superior, despite their pagan origins; the writers says of the king that 'he was a better man...than many who call themselves Christians'.⁶² This good man, encouraged by meeting with the benevolent men of the Sierra Leone Company, decides to send his son to be educated in England and, in particular, to find out more about the religion of the first decent white men he has met. In London, Naimbanna not only becomes a Christian, but also a travelling ambassador for the anti-slavery cause. He attends a debate on the slave trade in the House of Commons, where he is incensed by the slighting description of black people given by one speaker. His reaction demonstrates his wisdom and his nobility: he finds it hard to forgive the MP at first for 'when he has once taken away their [African] character, there is nothing which he may

⁶⁰ Matt. 28 v. 19.

⁶¹ Hannah More, *The Feast of Freedom or The Abolition of Domestic Slavery in Ceylon* (London, 1827), p. 15.

⁶² 'The Black Prince' (London, 1797), p. 3.

not do to black people ever after'.⁶³ Naimbanna realizes that the heart of the case for slavery is a denial of the humanity of the individual slave. His anger, however, is tempered by his new-found faith; he shows his true 'character' by learning Christian forgiveness for the ignorant white man. His behaviour is the proof that gives the lie to the MP's ill-conceived assertions. Naimbanna, upon whose shoulders the hopes of the Sierra Leone Company rest, falls ill on his way home and he dies a few hours after his arrival. The writer notes how our expectations and anticipations of God's plan are thus frequently thwarted: Naimbanna's death is a lesson to prepare for other disappointments and set backs whilst pursuing a just cause. But death is not the end. Naimbanna lives on as an inspiration for the abolitionists and the reader. From him we learn 'hence to cherish sentiments of kindness and affection towards all men, whatever their colour, or however low they may stand in the scale of human beings'.⁶⁴ Once again, an African is seen as a fitting example for the tract's white readers, as it concludes with the exhortation: 'Be humble and willing to learn like this Prince Naimbanna'.⁶⁵ The recognition of Naimbanna's native title comes as a token of respect, but also as an assertion that he was truly a prince among men, as well among the people of Sierra Leone.⁶⁶

In the mission field, More treats black and white, rich and poor, alike: all those in need of salvation are equally objects of her attention. In the tracts, enlightenment frequently comes to the poor through the agency of ideal masters and mistresses. It should also be noted, however, that spiritual greatness confers status. Once the slaves and working men become Christians they are then fit to teach others, even those who are in the world's eyes their social superiors. This means that Yamba can lecture British merchants on their spiritual responsibilities to the nations they have ravaged and the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain can be an example for everyone to emulate. Evangelicals

⁶³ p. 8.

⁶⁴ p. 14.

⁶⁵ p. 16.

⁶⁶ For an alternative reading of the same character, see *Subject to Others*, pp. 221-227. Ferguson believes the version of Naimbanna's story found in the tracts to be 'fatuous reductions' (p. 221). She makes no mention, however, of the intended popular audience. Her 'fatuous reductions' can be read as simplifications in order to be understandable to the imagined reading capacities of the tract's audience.

believed in a democracy of believers: all are equal in the sight of God. It is a further step from religious equality to political equality: a step that More and the majority of her contemporaries did not yet envisage, but one which her tracts can be said to have advanced by teaching the equal value of each individual's soul.

Hannah More and the rights and responsibilities of the individual

More's training in political campaigning begun by 'Slavery' was one reason why the Bishop of London asked her to publish something to counter the spread of disaffection in 1792: he knew he could rely on her for a timely intervention. The result was *Village Politics*, the forerunner of the *Cheap Repository Tracts* series. More continued to follow an agenda responsive to events, writing tracts on management of food resources, including frugal recipes, during the famine year of 1795. She even came out of retirement in 1817 on the request of a government containing many of her friends to issue a new round of tracts. She wrote ruefully:

I did not think to turn ballad-maker in my old age, but the blasphemous and seditious tracts which have deluged the whole country called on every lover of religion and social order to provide some counter-action.⁶⁷

The 'old bishop in petticoats', as Cobbett called her, had not forgotten the political strategies of her youth and the value of a well-timed counterblast.

'Slavery' offers an insight into More's perspective on human rights on which she based the rights and duties of the working classes. In the poem she states her reverence for rational liberty, her 'sober goddess' (l. 19), in contrast to wild, revolutionary liberty which threatens 'To tread on grave Authority and Pow'r,/And shake the work of ages in an hour' (ll. 29-30). The contrast is meant to call to mind the 'excesses' of radical agitation and the liberty already enjoyed under the British constitution. She wishes this latter kind of freedom to be extended to slaves in the British Empire. Blackstone, in his seminal *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765), had already established the

⁶⁷ *Memoirs*, vol iii. 473.

principle that 'this [English] spirit of liberty is so deeply implanted in our constitution, and rooted even in our very soil, that a slave or Negro, the moment he lands in England, falls under the protection of the laws, and with regard to all natural rights becomes *eo instanti* a freeman' - which, as the runaway black servants in Bristol would have protested, was respected more in principle than practice.⁶⁸ More points out the inconsistency of the attitude of British merchants and slave-owners, implicitly referring to Blackstone's well-known legal argument: 'Shall Britain, where the soul of freedom reigns,/ Forge chains for others she herself disdains?' (ll. 251-252). As the leading industrial nation at this period, Britain was 'forging' chains in a literal as well as metaphorical sense. British workmen were hammering the shackles that were to bind their black brethren. This couplet contains the main argument of the poem, urging Members of Parliament to remove the inequality of treatment meted out to those under the protection of the Empire.

More's belief that the British constitution guaranteed the dignity and freedom of every inhabitant underpinned her attitude to the working class. The essence of the argument in *Village Politics* - a dialogue between Jack Anvil, the Blacksmith, and Tom Hod, the mason, supposedly written by 'Will Chip, A Country Carpenter' - is that French ideas of liberty are so extreme that '[t]hey are all so free, that there's nobody safe'.⁶⁹ Jack, the sensible one of the two, sums up the human rights enjoyed under the British constitution:

I have got the use of my limbs, of my liberty, of the laws, and of my bible. The two first I take to be my *natural* rights; the two last, my *civil* and *religious*; these, I take it, are the *true Rights of Man*.....As much as I hate Republican works, I'd scorn to *live* in a country where there was not liberty of conscience; and where every man might not worship God in his own way.⁷⁰

This view of rights belonging to the individual of every class, creed and colour

⁶⁸ William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (4 vols) (Oxford, 1765), vol.i. Bk I ch. I. 123.

⁶⁹ *Village Politics*, p. 5.

⁷⁰ pp. 17-19.

demonstrates More's eighteenth century philosophical inheritance. Few, if any, writers would have written in this vein at the end of the seventeenth century. At that period, as Roger Anstey has observed, 'men evidently believed that to question the ethical basis of slavery, given a fallen world, would be to question God's purposes. Slavery, after all, had been permitted in Scripture'.⁷¹ As discussed in the introduction, Mandeville had deployed similar arguments against improving the lot of the uneducated, because, as Scripture says, 'the poor will be with you always'. During the intervening century, British and French philosophers developed ideas about the importance of benevolence, liberty and happiness. For Frances Hutcheson, for example, the right to liberty is unequivocal: '[w]e must therefore conclude, that no endowments, natural or acquired, can give a perfect right to assume power over others, without their consent'.⁷² Montesquieu gave perhaps the most important contribution to the cause of liberty in his *L'Esprit des Lois* (1748), by claiming that countries as they grow more civilized should be increasingly moulded by moral ideas, forming a new *esprit general*. Where positive laws infringing the liberty of the individual are in conflict with the *esprit general*, the legislator, it could be argued, has the duty to change the law to remove the tension.⁷³ Montesquieu thus established modest grounds for reform.

What were germs of an idea in Montesquieu, his British followers and interpreters, Wallace, Ferguson, Beattie and Burke, developed into a fully-grown defence of moderate reform. They changed the intellectual climate in Britain to one in which the received wisdom was that man was born with a right to personal liberty. As a sign of this shift, it is notable that after 1780, no one attempted an ethical justification of slavery, arguing for it rather on the grounds of expediency. It also coincided with the period in which education of the working classes began to be seriously canvassed. Yet rights could not exist without corresponding responsibilities. More was an adherent to the traditional concept of a community of reciprocal ties between the classes. Edmund Burke gave the most famous contemporary expression of this view in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) stating his belief in the right to personal liberty, but

⁷¹ *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810*, p 94.

⁷² Quoted in *ibid.* pp. 100-101.

⁷³ For further detail of Montesquieu's contribution, see *ibid.*, p. 103 et passim.

arguing that this right could only exist within an ordered society. The oil that made the wheels of this society run smooth, bringing the classes into contact without friction, was benevolence and gratitude: the affluent caring for their neighbours and these neighbours recognizing the kindness given them. This is what some critics call patronizing the poor; for Burke and More it was an argument for social cohesion. From this basis, both writers criticize the *philosophes* and revolutionaries who thought that society would rub along well enough without any 'oil'.⁷⁴ In *Village Politics*, the argument for social cohesion is figured as social cement in a very tangible form: the desire of the local landlord's wife to redesign their manor house by jerry-building French notions would inevitably lead to the collapse of the whole edifice. Far better to have a 'little needful repair' when necessary than to risk bringing the place down about our ears.

The importance of benevolence and gratitude to such gradualist notions of social reform elucidates why More and fellow conservatives were joined by more 'progressive' writers, such as Maria Edgeworth, in emphasizing their role. Burke described the two duties as part of human nature; to raise up a society on any other basis would be to build on sand. Edgeworth and More agreed that benevolence and gratitude were natural reactions, demeaning to neither party, and strengthened social relationships. In an industrializing economy, they worked against the destructive tendency towards division of interests between higher and lower classes, creating a vertical rather than an horizontal alignment to class. In one of her *Popular Tales*, Edgeworth demonstrates their reciprocal benefit to the community of a Cornish tin-mine. In response to benevolent treatment, Edgeworth's Lame Jervas expresses his gratitude to his master by taking a courageous decision to expose the corruption of his workmates (gratitude in her fiction is consistently characterized as strong and moral). Like Jack of *Village Politics*, Jervas decides that his interests coincide with his master, not with the misguided of his own station. The key role of benevolence and gratitude in the exchange highlights the shared roots of the authors' different social visions in Enlightenment thought.

⁷⁴ See David Bromwich, *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community from Edmund Burke to Robert Frost* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989) p. 45.

In More's social outlook, where benevolence and gratitude exists, there is no tyranny. Locke had described a comparable state of relations for the classroom in his *Some Thoughts Upon Education* which figures the nursery as a miniature of the state in which a benevolent authority figure disciplines his children into reason and maturity. Once maturity is reached, discipline can be relaxed. More's view of education for all classes was essentially Lockean. She had no taste for repression, but rather saw education as a process of liberation from unpleasant disciplinary measures. Her stories tell and retell the same narrative of the success of pupils who have received the benefit from an early education in morals and the failure of those left to run wild. Her success stories, like Edgeworth's *Lame Jervas*, after passing through an apprenticeship of submission to the will of another, emerge as the masters fit to teach new pupils. Her aim was not to keep the lower classes in the state of infancy but to forge a band of loyal subjects proud of their achievements in the context of the possibilities open to people of their social status.

Influenced though she was by Burke and Locke, the deepest influence on More herself was her Christian Evangelicalism - a religious belief held in common with other members of the Clapham Sect. Evangelicalism at the end of the century reflected its times, having absorbed many of the key philosophical ideas, such as the importance of benevolence, but understanding them in specifically Christian terms.⁷⁵ Thus ideas of reform and personal freedom were already encoded within her religious faith. Freedom, for the Clapham Sect, meant being at liberty to live a good Christian life. Thus it was not enough merely to free slaves. The Evangelicals also campaigned to free minds caught in sin and sedition, in other words, to free the moral slaves. This Evangelical world view led the Clapham Sect to become one of the main generators of charitable organizations at the turn of the century, including Wilberforce's Society for the Suppression of Vice, an organization established to work with the poor of Britain, and for the society which established Sierra Leone as a nation for freed slaves, paying the costs of transporting former slaves to a new home. Mission at home and abroad

⁷⁵ See *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810*, p. 213.

was the key interest.

More was no Mrs Jellaby interested only in the natives of Borrioboola-gha; she also turned her attention to problems closer to home, giving her support to three clergymen (Thomas Chalmers, Thomas Biddulph and Daniel Wilson) active in the new urban mission field. Betty Fladeland in *Abolitionists and Working Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization* examines Cobbett's accusation of a lack of social engagement amongst members of the Clapham Sect and suggests the opposite to be the case: with some few exceptions, the very people who were interested in abolition were also motivated by their humanitarian beliefs to campaign for improvements to working conditions at home. She cites Granville Sharp, Joseph Sturge, Harriet Martineau, and many others in support of her thesis. Hannah More should be added to the list.⁷⁶ If her attempts to set up a network of schools in the Mendips was not proof enough, her foray into buying up surplus ore from local miners in bad years should be cited. More was anxious about 'bread' as well as 'Bibles'. Supplying Bibles and tracts illustrating Christian principles was not chiefly motivated - as some have claimed - by fear of revolution and sedition. To those of an Evangelical persuasion these were only secondary considerations in the missionary effort to spread the Word. Both at home and abroad, mission was regarded by More and her colleagues as a tool of liberation. It was more important for the woman of faith that her readers should be set free from sin; social order would follow as a natural consequence.

'Vulgar as heart can wish' - Learning to write for the lower classes

Hannah More did not cast herself as an easy convert to the cause of writing for the poor. Her own version of the train of events that led to her writing *Village Politics* betrays her distaste for the task. Having once refused the Bishop of London's request that she put pen to paper to counter the seditious writings of Tom Paine, More eventually succumbed:

⁷⁶ More herself used the term 'white slavery' ironically to denote a spiritual condition, see p. 79 above.

...in an evil hour, against my will and my judgment, on one sick day, I scribbled a little pamphlet called *Village Politics* by 'Will Chip'....It is as vulgar as heart can wish; but it is only designed for the most vulgar class of readers. I heartily hope I shall not be discovered; as it is the sort of writing repugnant to my nature, though indeed, it is a question of peace rather than politics.⁷⁷

Until this time in 1792, More had been known for her poetry, plays, and - more lately - her moral observations on the manners and education of the elite.⁷⁸ She had been moving in refined London circles: she had reason to fear ridicule in the press for metamorphosing into 'Will Chip'. Her repugnance is not only directed at sully her reputation as a writer by stooping to furnish material for a 'low' taste; she also shied from any imputation that she, a woman, was meddling inappropriately in politics - hence the rider 'it is a question of peace rather than politics'. However, the success of her first venture in this field helped change her mind. By the end of 1794 she had been persuaded by the bishop to form a scheme to publish a whole series of tracts. Between 1795 and 1798, a hundred and fourteen tracts were published, of which More contributed at least fifty, as well as acting as editor of the whole.⁷⁹ Her sustained effort to produce the *Cheap Repository* series demonstrates that More was convinced that the usefulness of these little books far outweighed any consideration of her own sensibilities on the matter. They were integrated in her greater scheme of education for the lower classes as they were written in part to provide her own schools with suitable teaching material.

The *Cheap Repository* makes extensive use of the range of genres found in chapbooks - ballads, allegories, and tales. More replicated the alluring titles to tempt her readers further, such as the ballad (probably written by her sister) entitled

THE STORY OF SINFUL SALLY, TOLD BY HERSELF.
Shewing how from being SALLY of the GREEN she was first led
to become SINFUL SALLY, and afterwards DRUNKEN SAL, and

⁷⁷ *Memoirs*, vol. ii. 345.

⁷⁸ We now tend to think of More in terms of her moralistic writings. She was better known in the earlier part of her writing career for her witty poetry and plays, such as the light verse satire, 'Florio'.

⁷⁹ *Hannah More*, p. 139.

how at last she came to a most melancholy and almost hopeless End;
being therein a Warning to all young Women both in Town and
Country.⁸⁰

The prose is followed by a jaunty ballad, charting the progress of the heroine through her sad (but sexy) decline and late repentance - a dose of morality delivered in a racy story. The importance of this approach to More was that it got her tracts read by the people she was targeting. Her shrewd market awareness was carried from the design concept to distribution, marketing the tracts at a price below the normal one-penny wares of the hawkers and offering incentives to the salesmen themselves if they carried the *Cheap Repository*. The importance to literary historians, however, is that the series offers one of the first examples of literature, emanating from the respectable end of publishing, consciously fashioning itself (after market research) for the perceived capacities and taste of a huge audience, mining popular culture for its materials. Jon Klancher, in his study of the development of mass reading audiences at the beginning of the nineteenth century, characterizes Romanticism as the first period in which writers had to carve out a readership for themselves: '[t]his inchoate cultural moment compelled a great many writers to shape the interpretive and ideological frameworks of audiences they would speak to'.⁸¹ Though he does not have More in mind, taking his examples from periodicals and writers such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, Klancher's argument is well illustrated by the deliberate manner More set about fashioning a product suited for a particular class of reader. Her use of the materials of popular culture was in contrast to the contemporary fashion for ballad collecting which took lower class songs, refashioned them and presented the result in the equivalent of coffee-table books for the rich, the kind of exercise in which Walter Scott first made his name. More took to give back. She attempted to create an image of lower class society, ventriloquising recognizable genres, in the hope that her readers would accept the representation as one by which they could fashion their own values - in a sense, becoming the virtuous image given them, and rejecting the 'sinful' option in the cautionary tales.

⁸⁰ 'The Story of Sinful Sally' (London, 1796, rpt. c.1805) p. 2.

⁸¹ Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832* (Wisconsin, 1987), p. 3.

Adopting a popular format was not without dangers. More had to keep a tight control over the editorial policy of the tracts to check that the moral content was maintained. 'Sinful Sally' is a case of a tract that sails close to the wind, dealing as it does with the theme of prostitution. How easily the same material could be nudged over the moral line was demonstrated when More broke with her publisher, John Marshall, in 1797. Marshall continued to produce tracts in the same style, trading on the popularity of More's series, but without the same concern for morality, as demonstrated by the mildly rude 'The Contented Cobbler and his Wife'.⁸² Nothing could be better calculated to distress the serious minded More than dubious tracts being sold on the reputation for probity she had patiently constructed.

Hannah More not only used popular genres, she also employed popular culture as part of her content. One particularly interesting tale in this respect is 'Tawny [sic] Rachel; or, The Fortune Teller: with some account of Dreams, Omens and Conjurers'. The purpose of the tale is to debunk popular superstitions, but in the process More records many country customs, weaving a picture of the world in which these beliefs flourished:

Poor Sally Evans!...She delighted in dream-books, and had consulted all the cunning women in the country to tell her whether the two moles on her cheek denoted that she was to have two husbands, or only two children. If she picked up an old horse-shoe going to church she was sure that would be a lucky week. She never made a black-pudding without borrowing one of the parson's old wigs to hang in the chimney, firmly believing there were no other means to preserve them from bursting. She would never go to-bed on Midsummer eve without sticking up in her room the well known plant called Midsummer-man, as the bending of the leaves to the right or to the left, would not fail to tell her whether Jacob...was true or false.⁸³

Sally is an easy dupe of Tawney Rachel who manipulates her credulity to make her marry the wrong man, unleashing a sequence of events that ends in Sally's early death. This criticism of country customs, however, can only be achieved by first detailing them and the society in which they function. More has preserved for the historian

⁸² *Hannah More*, p. 143. See also Spinney's 'Cheap Repository Tracts'.

⁸³ 'Tawny [sic] Rachel' (London, 1797), pp. 6-7.

social practices that otherwise may well have gone unrecorded. Her intention, however, was to allow her readers to examine their own beliefs by comparing their experience to that on the printed page; the story leads them through the process of freeing themselves from superstition and irrational fears; in the eighteenth century tradition of an enlightened education, More educates them out of their prejudices. To free the reader from the impositions of quack soothsayers can be plausibly described as a liberating message, rather than as an attack on country customs.

More's tracts not only recorded country life, but also detailed the life of cities and industrial towns as the author understood them. Her knowledge in these tales is drawn from second-hand observations as well as her own experience. She supplemented her knowledge gathered from her residence in London in the 1770s and 1780s and later visits with material from the most up-to-date sources so as to give the tracts as authentic a basis as possible, a sign that she wanted them to have credibility with her readership. For example, in 'Betty Brown, The St Giles's Orange Girl: with some Account of Mrs. Sponge, the Money-lender' (1796), More investigated the murky waters of London crime, taking her facts from P. Colquhoun's recently published *A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis* (1796). 'Betty Brown' introduces a new kind of heroine. Sinful Sally was all too familiar as the village girl gone wrong in the big city; Betty is more remarkable as the city girl making good against the odds and by obeying the law - a prototype Samuel Smiles. Betty, like many homeless unplaced children of urban centres, 'was born nobody knows where, and bred nobody knows how'.⁸⁴ She starts at the bottom of society: '[t]he longest thing that Betty can remember is, that she used to crawl up out of a night cellar, stroll about the streets, and pick cinders from the scavengers' carts'.⁸⁵ As a scavenger from a scavenger, she can hardly get any lower. Through her own exertions, and the timely advice of a lady who takes an interest in her

⁸⁴ 'Betty Brown, The St. Giles's Orange Girl: with Some Account of Mrs. Sponge, the Money-lender' (London, 1796), p. 3.

⁸⁵ p. 3.

case, Betty raises herself to be first an orange-woman,⁸⁶ then the keeper of 'a handsome Sausage-shop near the Seven Dials'.⁸⁷ More gives her fictitious character an air of reality, rooting her in a specific locality by referring to the shop as evidence. Betty, on her way up the social ladder, presumably passes Sinful Sally on her way down.

The facts drawn from Colquhoun on which More builds her story form the central plot issue. Betty is cheated by Mrs Sponge into paying an exorbitant rate of interest for money lent to her to start up her orange business. She is not even aware of her plight until the lady and her husband, a magistrate, open her eyes to the truth and help to free her from the financial net spun by Mrs Sponge to catch the unwary entrepreneur. Betty is not at fault for her ignorance - More does not blame the poor from falling unintentionally into a poverty trap. The tale puts the onus on the privileged upper classes to help the vulnerable members of society. The resolution is an idealistic picture of a city where the poor live close enough to the rich to receive their help and guidance, but the underworld of Mrs Sponge is convincingly sordid in its petty trickery and misery. The money-lender would be a fitting mother for Fagin.

'Betty Brown' is also an example of one of More's writing strategies to attract a popular following for her works by creating a sense of community between the characters of her tracts. If we are interested in Betty, we may also be interested to read about her husband, the Hackney Coachman, in the ballad 'The Way to Get a Good Fare'. If Tawney Rachel intrigued us, then why not read about her equally evil husband and sons in the two-part tale 'Black Giles the Poacher'? More's most elaborate sequence involves Mrs Jones of 'The Cottage Cook' who sets up the school in 'The Sunday School' and teaches the eponymous heroine of 'The History of Hester Wilmot'.

⁸⁶ Orange-women must have been a familiar sight on the streets of London at this period. Maria Edgeworth too chooses one for a lively character sketch in her novella *Harrington* (1817). This woman helps save the hero and his friends from the anti-catholic mob during the Gordon riots, the irony being that their protector is herself a catholic and the household she saves Jewish and Protestant.

⁸⁷ p. 16.

The overt didacticism may have palled with some readers, but compared to alternative strategies used by contemporaries to drill the poor in their duties, the tracts are thoroughly entertaining. Teaching until this date had largely happened, if it happened at all, in church where sermons and catechisms formed the staple diet. Women educationalists had begun to change this: both Anna Laetitia Barbauld in *Lessons for Children* (1778-9) and Sarah Trimmer in *Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature* (1780) had used a catechistic format as the basis for a more interactive teaching tool.⁸⁸ More and her sisters had taken inspiration from these examples and refined their teaching techniques in the girls' school they ran in Park Street, Bristol. More experimented with ways of relieving the monotony of the conventional method of learning by rote, introducing drama and conversational discussions as a means of conveying moral principles. Another way of looking at the tracts is to see them as an extension of the good teaching practice she had already tried with rich young ladies. *Village Politics* can be termed a dramatic dialogue; the discussions of moral principles in some of the tales can be called animated discussions, models for the poor to use amongst themselves on other issues. It is worth noting that many of the tracts are based on the idea of the labouring classes teaching themselves, or even teaching their social superiors. This strategy should be acknowledged when judging why More adopted the pen name of Will Chip for her first venture. It has been interpreted as a duplicitous move - a hidden condescension on her part - but it can also equally be seen as a championing of native wit and wisdom. Compare *Village Politics* with William Paley's 'Equality', another dialogue published at the same period to put quietist arguments to the labouring-classes. In Paley's tract the two characters are 'a Master-Manufacturer and one of his Workmen'. Though the manufacturer is a self-made man, drawn from the same class as his employee, he now speaks for the elite. He is travelled (he recounts his adventures in France where he almost got lynched for wearing a coat with steel buttons) and is full of aspirations well out of reach of most men:

⁸⁸ Norma Clarke, ' "The Cursed Barbauld Crew" - Women writers and writing for children in the late eighteenth century' in *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, writing and childhood 1600-1900* eds. Mary Hilton, Morag Styles and Victor Watson (London: Routledge, 1997) pp. 91-103.

Workman - You, master! why you are merry, surely you do not expect to be made a lord?

Master - Certainly I do not, John; but it is not at all improbable that my children should.⁸⁹

He may be proof of a new social mobility brought by industrial wealth, but only a few could hope to follow in his tracks. He has moved beyond the sphere of the working-man before the conversation begins. More, on the other hand, teaches her lesson for contentment through a double layer of labouring class spokesmen: the supposed author and the character of Jack Anvil, who acts the part in the dialogue Paley ascribes to the manufacturer. Jack has wit and imagination, such as when he uses the allegory of the landlord's castle to put the history of the constitution in parabolic form for his friend, the enthusiastic Tom Hod. Jack's able grasp of political ideas proves him to be eminently qualified to assume responsibility for the running of local affairs. The resulting portrait of the labouring class is thus rather flattering.

In the *Cheap Repository Tracts*, More extends this strategy further. A close parallel to *Village Politics* is found in the poetic dialogue, 'Turn the Carpet', where two weavers discuss their life and God's providence. One weaver is given the image - at once both elegant and reassuringly homespun - that forms the title to the piece, explaining, 'This world, which clouds thy soul with doubt, / *Is but a Carpet inside out*'.⁹⁰ The pattern, or meaning, of life will only be revealed when we see the finished product from the other side (i.e. in heaven). The spokesmen of *Village Politics*, Jack Anvil and Tom Hod, reappear - this time in rhyming couplets - in the 1795 dialogue 'The Riot or Half a Loaf is Better than no Bread'. More had already reused Will Chip as the supposed author of 'A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith with a few plain remarks on the Age of Reason in a letter from Will Chip, in Somersetshire to Thomas Pain [sic], Stay-maker, in Paris' (1794). This tract is rather a shameless venture on More's part as it reproduces the worst of the spurious slanders against Paine circulated by Francis Oldys, the hostile biographer of the author of the *Rights of Man*, and crows over his

⁸⁹ William Paley, *Reasons for Contentment addressed to the Labouring Part of the British Public* (Carlisle:Wheeler, 1793), appendix 'Equality', p. 8.

⁹⁰ 'Turn the Carpet; Or, The Two Weavers' (London, 1796), p. 5.

imprisonment.⁹¹ It shares with the other tracts, however, the elevation of home-bred common sense and, by assuming that its readers were aware of the religious and political ideas of the day, involves them in a debate that rarely was addressed to them by writers from the privileged classes.

If we describe More as a writer who uses 'the language of common men', her affinity with the poets of her era - Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge - comes to the fore. She may be approaching the exercise from a different political direction, but her intentions are not dissimilar. She wished to communicate - as did the poets - and did so by using language and formats familiar to her readers. Like Southey's 'Botany Bay Eclogues' and 'English Eclogues', she used poetic dialogues to convey her message. Like Wordsworth, she drew her wisdom from 'salt-of-the-earth' characters, such as 'The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain' - a Wordsworthian title if ever there was one. If these comparisons sound far-fetched, it is perhaps because we have in the past been too eager to focus on the limits of her agenda for the poor and missed the empowering effects of her scheme. As a progressive educationalist who employed popular culture as a teaching aid, she appears in a different light from the traditional image of her as a reactionary writer preaching unquestioning quietism.

Teaching industry to the industrial classes

More should be credited with one of the first attempts to represent, and write for, an industrial working class. Her grasp of the impact of industrialization was understandably rudimentary and drawn from a comparison with the provincial region she knew well. Her pictures of industrial life differ little from those of rural life: the societies seem the same, only transplanted from fields to coalfields. However, it should be taken into account that in the 1790s industry was still often located in rural

⁹¹ There is some doubt whether this tract is by More. It is not part of the *Cheap Repository Series*, but as it is entered by F & C Rivington (publishers used by More for other works) at the Stationer's Hall in October 1794, Spinney concludes that it 'is very probable that it is her work'. The argument of the tract also bears a close resemblance to her pamphlet of the previous year, 'Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont, Made in the National Convention of France, on the subjects of Religion and Public Education' (London, 1793) in which she speaks out against the atheistic trend of French politics.

areas where water power and raw materials were easily accessible. More's own experience of the mining industry was of this nature: one of her schools was set in the coal-mining and glass-making town of Nailsea. Martha More's journal gives a more detailed description of the poverty found in such areas than anything found in the tracts, including descriptions of miners popping in and out of the mine shafts like rabbits (the mines were literally on the doorsteps of the houses and in nearby fields). Hannah More was one of the first to take an interest in the new populations springing up around England and to see them as a constituency with distinct needs.

Martha More's journal reveals the sisters' shared concern for the industrial populations in and around the Bristol hinterlands. What shocked them most was the absence of any Burkean social order in these mining and factory villages. By the end of the eighteenth century, due to the practice of pluralism, only 38% of Anglican parishes had resident incumbents.⁹² With no resident squire and - more often than not - an absent clergyman, the people were left to shift for themselves, becoming so ungovernable that no law-officer dare go into the houses to arrest felons. Martha describes the people of the mining villages of Shiphham and Rowberrow as 'savage, and depraved almost even beyond Cheddar, brutal in their natures, and ferocious in their manners' - a description of white English labourers that uses the language often applied in pro-slavery material to black Africans.⁹³ Her prose lapses into the lurid when describing the inhabitants of Nailsea, where she anticipates the objections of the early nineteenth century critics of industrialization, describing the dangerous cocktail of sex, high wages, indulgence, bad company and irregular working hours brought by factory work:

Both sexes and all ages herding together; voluptuous beyond belief. The work of a glass-house is an irregular thing, uncertain whether by day or by night; not only infringing upon man's rest, but constantly intruding upon the privileges of the Sabbath. The wages high, the eating and drinking luxurious - the body scarcely covered, but fed with dainties of a shameful description.

The shocking spectacle makes her reach for the vocabulary of black slavery - not this

⁹² *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*, p. 5.

⁹³ Martha More, *Mendip Annals*, ed. Arthur Roberts (London, 1859), p.28. See also p.85 above.

time the slavery of Africans, but the 'black-looking' demons feeding the flames of Hell, familiar from Dante, Mediaeval art, or from the sermons of the hell-fire and damnation school. She distinguishes their slavery as a state of spiritual punishment.

The high buildings of the glass-houses ranged before the doors of these cottages - the great furnaces roaring - the swearing, eating, and drinking of these half-dressed, black-looking beings, gave it a most infernal and horrible appearance.⁹⁴

The More sisters do not remain spectators of this hellish scene. Martha quickly descends from this highly-coloured outburst to note that, despite appearances, they were met with scrupulous civility in all the houses of Nailsea. Martha had also earlier reflected on the causes of this hellish existence. Though tormented, the workers are not being punished for their own sins but by the failure of their spiritual guides to lead them. In this, they stand on common ground with the African. Martha notes wryly of Cheddar that 'there is as much knowledge of Christ in the interior of Africa as there is to be met with in this wretched, miserable place'.⁹⁵ Hannah echoes her sister, raising the very objection critics of Evangelical abolitionists were to pose: '[i]t is grievous to reflect, that while we are sending missionaries to our distant colonies, our own villages are perishing for lack of instruction'.⁹⁶ The 'darkness' of Africa is found on their doorsteps, not because of the factory and mining system itself (in contrast to Nailsea, Shipham and Rowberrow, Cheddar was an agricultural parish but it still suffered from the same social ills), but because the upper classes had reneged on their part of the social contract described by Burke, again making the parallel between white worker and black slave. The Mores believed that by giving these rough locals the encouraging example of a higher standard much could be achieved; as Martha notes after one feast for the Shipham Women's Friendly Society, '[i]t must be seen to be properly felt what a striking effect it has upon these poor creatures' minds and manners to associate occasionally with those who are presumptuously and impertinently called their

⁹⁴ pp. 61-62.

⁹⁵ p. 16.

⁹⁶ p. 31.

betters'.⁹⁷ (Her humbling qualification shows that, as a good Christian brought up on the Dives and Lazarus story, Martha recognized that many a rich man falls short of the poor in spiritual terms.) The sisters' attitude that, if only the poor and the rich could have more contact with each other, society would inevitably improve, is a cry taken up by Victorian writers, such as Elizabeth Gaskell, Disraeli, Carlyle and Ruskin - an early version of what Carlyle termed in *Chartism* the realization of 'the right of the ignorant man to be guided by the wiser'.⁹⁸

The Mores attempted to provide this guidance by putting an educational structure in place that would enlighten the darkness of the local inhabitants. They proceeded on the principle of consent, first gathering together the local 'heads' - the community leaders - to seek their support (and many of these heads, farmers and tradesmen, were the most staunch opponents of any attempt to educate the poor), or by responding to an invitation to introduce one of their schools to a parish. They had no wish to impose their system upon the unwilling and withdrew if support failed. The history of their schools demonstrates that many of the poor desired this 'enlightenment' and willingly took responsibility for the teaching. When the schoolmaster at Nailsea died in 1797, the sisters were far away in their winter retreat at Bath and were ignorant of this fact until the weather improved and communication was restored. During the interregnum, two collier lads took over on their own initiative and kept the school running. Martha More was quick to ascribe the ongoing success of the Nailsea school to these two miners, whom she described as being 'concealed from all human sight in the bowels of the earth six days out of seven, and on the seventh day they emerge, like two young apostles, to instruct and enlighten the rising generation, with a cheerfulness, humility, and spirituality, that is necessary to be seen to be believed and fully comprehended; and we can with truth assert that we have no teachers of any age that excel them'.⁹⁹ Both lads had gathered their little education in the Mores' school - an example which could

⁹⁷ p. 116. The Friendly Society was started by the sisters as a club to help women in times of illness, child-birth or death. The system of contributions - swelled by donations from rich contacts of the Mores - was meant to replace the missing social structure of active, benevolent gentry.

⁹⁸ Thomas Carlyle, *Selected Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 189.

⁹⁹ *Mendip Annals*, p. 199.

have been taken from one of Hannah's tracts of the poor raising themselves by their own efforts when given the opportunity to do so by their benefactors. The Mores kept the two colliers on as permanent teachers and the Sunday School went from strength to strength.

More's tracts dealing with industrial characters follow the Mendip plan by attempting to counter the breakdown in the social system with the written word. In the rootless society of industrial towns, she puts her tracts in place of the absent local squire and vicar to enlighten her readers as to the way they should go. Like their rural counterparts, the Lancashire collier girl and Patient Joe, the Newcastle collier, are rewarded for their God-fearing, industrious characters. The danger of their occupations, different from the slow pace of farm work, is also noted: Joe narrowly escapes dying in a mine accident; Mary, the collier girl, sees her father die in a pit disaster. The tracts make uncomfortable reading for More makes of the grim facts of industrial life a tool of Providence. The worst evil More imagines for Joe is not the back-breaking work and hazardous conditions but: 'It was Joseph's ill-fortune to work in a pit/With some who believ'd that profaneness was wit'.¹⁰⁰

The subsequent accident which Joe avoids is seen purely as a visitation of Providence on the ungodly, rather than a failure of the mine owners to ensure their employees' safety. However, this attitude should be seen in the context of More's faith: believing in an after-life decided by the spiritual state of an individual in this one means that moral considerations outweigh the urgency of physical conditions. Temporary discomfort is nothing to eternal damnation. Whilst wishing to relieve suffering, More had to keep her priorities in order and not be deflected from her task to minister to the spiritual before the temporal. Reflecting on the needs of the poor of the Mendips in 1794, she reminded herself that 'while I desire to keep alive a tender compassion for worldly want, I desire also to remember that sin is a greater evil than poverty, and to be still more zealous in teaching their souls than even administering to their wants'.¹⁰¹ Indeed, suffering can from this perspective be seen as redemptive - literally a means to a good

¹⁰⁰ 'Patient Joe' (London, 1795, rpt. c.1815), p. 4.

¹⁰¹ *Mendip Annals*, p. 139.

end. More felt she would have been a false friend to the poor if she had merely added her voice to the chorus of complaint - she saved her appeals for change for those who had the money and power to do so. Her task was to teach the poor to bear with their ills; to make good come out of something that appeared evil. This point is made rather baldly in 'The Lancashire Collier Girl' (1795): the father's death is explained as follows: 'in order to relieve the pain of my reader, I will here remark, that the most grievous afflictions are often appointed by Providence, to be the means, in one way or other, of calling some extraordinary virtue into exercise'.¹⁰² To complain that More makes light of terrible working conditions would be to read her material ahistorically. For her, deprivation was primarily a moral, not a 'social' evil as we understand the term. The way to cure the evils of factory life was to reform the individual first; a resulting improvement in the working conditions would then naturally follow as communities of godly workers are established.

A rather more palatable side to this attitude is an optimism that despite adversity the labouring classes can get on and make something of themselves. This is apparent in the case of Betty Brown mentioned above; Mary, the collier girl, rises in the world to obtain the genteel employment of maid. In another urban tale, Jem Stock, the parish boy apprentice in 'The Two Shoemakers', rises to be an employer himself. More encourages social mobility by holding out prospect of success for the poorest. This contrasts with the hopeless tone adopted by some contemporary radical writers. Mary, the collier girl, advances from a similar position as the heroine of Mary Hays' *The Victim of Prejudice* (1799). Hays' Mary fails to overcome the prejudice against girls unable to produce a character reference and cannot obtain honourable employment: society is weighed against her. Her response is emotional and vocal protestation. More's Mary, despite the bad reputation of collier girls, convinces her employers to take her on as maid by the opposite tactic: 'her patient and silent grief touched them far more than any loud complaints could have done'.¹⁰³ The two pictures are poles apart: More assuming society is basically just, and Hays unjust, but this leads to the conclusion that More is the progressive, believing in the prospect of self-improvement,

¹⁰² 'The Lancashire Collier Girl' (London, 1795) p. 7.

¹⁰³ p. 19.

in comparison to the gloomy outlook offered by Hays that might discourage anyone from setting out on the attempt to change things as they are.

It is impossible to assess accurately the impact the tracts had on their lower class readers. The ecstatic letters More received from the rich sponsors of the scheme may indicate wishful thinking on their part rather than evidence that the poor had taken the message of the tracts to heart. Certainly, on one level, the tracts functioned as expressions of middle class preoccupations, working out the anxieties and spiritual dramas of the rich in the context of lower class poverty - a process Kelly characterizes as 'fantasies of plebian complaisance'.¹⁰⁴ More presented an imaginary picture of a lower class world as many in the higher classes would have liked it to be, which helps explain why the tracts were popular with affluent readers. More's contemporaries were apt to credit the *Cheap Repository* with great power. A story circulated that a riot in Bath in 1796 had been quelled when a quick thinking gentleman struck up the singing of 'The Riot or Half a Loaf is Better than no Bread' - a tale which, if it could be proved, suggests a popular familiarity with More's ballads and a susceptibility to their moral teachings, but there is no impartial confirmation of the incident. Another more reliable indication of More's effectiveness as a writer for the lower classes is William Cobbett's attacks on her in 1821 in his counter production, *Monthly Religious Tracts*. If he had not believed her work to be a significant threat to his lower class readership, he would not have felt the need to bombard her as the 'HANNAH [who] was, perhaps, as artful, as able, and as useful a scribe as ever drew pen in the cause of the system', putting his readers on the alert against her still famous tracts.¹⁰⁵ Whilst Halevy described the dissemination of counter-revolutionary ideas by the Evangelical movement as a key factor in preventing England from following a more radical path,¹⁰⁶ we should be careful not to over-emphasize the impact of the written word amongst so many other influences on popular feeling.

¹⁰⁴ Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution*, p. 154.

¹⁰⁵ *The Opinions of William Cobbett*, p. 134. Leonora Nattrass compares the approach of Cobbett with More in *William Cobbett: The Politics of Style* (Cambridge, 1995), Ch. 7.

¹⁰⁶ *England in 1815*, p. 425. On the influence of tracts on lower class readers, see also Louis James, *Fiction for the Working Man 1830-1850* (Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 137.

Not all her contemporaries were impressed by the *Cheap Repository*. More reports to her sister that Horace Walpole took her to task for 'the ill-natured strictness of my tracts'.¹⁰⁷ No one would deny that the tracts are uncompromising in their morality and they have been fairly criticized for this both then and now. Many modern critics, however, have tended to simplify the complexity of 'popular culture' and assumed it to be hostile to More's productions. Whilst acknowledging that there were contexts in which the tracts were unwelcome, the probability remains strong that her values proved an inspiration to a significant number of readers.¹⁰⁸ To a constituency of the religious and traditionally minded amongst the labouring classes, her suggestion that high standards could be achieved by the poor on their own merits may have been received as ultimately encouraging self-improvement and self-determination. More included in her cast of characters loyal, God-fearing, virtuous labouring class subjects, challenging literary clichés of rural clods and vulgar city dwellers. This was not a picture for the consumption of the labouring orders alone: she taught her rich readership to admire and believe in the virtues of the lower classes, perhaps in a small way helping to prepare an audience that would come to accept Wordsworth's pedlar in *The Excursion* as an authority on English society. Moreover, she cultivated an articulate readership amongst the lower classes, enabling them to make informed moral choices. Thus, though her opinions locate her amongst the conservatives when compared to radical contemporaries, the implications of her educational and literary practice place her amongst the most progressive writers of her day.

¹⁰⁷ *Memoirs*, vol i. part ii. 435.

¹⁰⁸ David Hempton remarks that there was 'a much greater acceptance of religious values among the working classes than social historians, in the main, have been prepared to acknowledge', *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland*, p. 142.

SECTION II
TWO INTERPRETERS: ROBERT SOUTHEY AND
MARIA EDGEWORTH

Chapter Three: Robert Southey and the interpretation of industrial society

Robert Southey was to his contemporaries the best known amongst the first generation of Romantic poets for his views on society. He was never without opinions on the state of the nation, nor was he backward in publishing them, thus he attracted fiercer criticism for his politics than his fellow poets. The attacks never silenced him. As a radical youth, and later as a spokesman associated with the Tory politicians, Robert Southey carved out a role for himself as an interpreter of a changing society. Though his political allegiance altered, he remained interested in creating images of the working class for consumption by the intelligentsia, hoping that an acceptance of these images would lead to a conversion to his political views. His role as an interpreter went beyond that of political strategist; in a literal sense, he tried to interpret between the classes, striving to find a common language by which they could meet on the page on equal terms.

Southey's changing images of the labouring poor provide a key to the process of positioning and re-positioning that his generation were forced into as their views were challenged by the unravelling of the French Revolution from republicanism to imperialism, and the various stages of reaction in British politics. A growing awareness of the particular problems of the new industrial populations was contemporaneous in Britain with the debate on the implications of continental revolution. The body of the factory worker became the site on which many writers worked through their hopes and fears: a contested space in a debate about political freedom and economic slavery. Throughout his career, Southey consistently described the British worker as a 'white slave', but his changing definitions as to the causes of that slavery reveal his changing political agenda.

In the 1790s, Southey was a prominent poetic voice amongst the abolitionists, devoting a section of his 1797 volume of poems to 'Poems on the Slave Trade' and including in the 1799 volume 'The Sailor who had served in the Slave Trade'. Southey dates this

latter poem 'September 1798' - the same period in which he was reading his review copy of *Lyrical Ballads* - suggesting 'The Sailor' is a poetic reply to Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancyent Marinere' - the poem which opened the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*.

Southey's poem retells the mariner's story for the purposes of political protest, a comparison encouraged by the thematic similarity and use of the ballad technique of repetition also found in Coleridge's poem.¹ The treatment of black slavery in 'The Sailor' testifies to Southey's eagerness for direct political action. The social utility of his poem outweighed all other concerns. Southey's sailor is not haunted by anything as mysterious as the killing of an albatross, but by the rather more serious sin of flogging a black woman to death. 'The Sailor' implicitly contrasts Coleridge's imaginary horrors with the prosaic cruelty of the slave trade, making out of the basic material of 'The Ancyent Marinere', a poem that contributes in the contemporary political campaign to abolish slavery.

In favour of direct action to end slavery (even a bloody slave rebellion as his clarion cry 'Awake! arise! avenge!' in 'To the Genius of Africa' testifies),² Southey was also concerned to confront the causes of pauperism. In the early years of the wars with France, he attacks the establishment for leaving the disabled soldier without any resource but crime, as Humphrey of the second 'Botany Bay Eclogue' tells his mate: 'At last discharg'd, to England's shores I came,/ Paid for my wounds with want, instead of fame'.³ Only when transported, does the nation support its disgraced war-

¹ see, for example, the sailor's description of demonic haunting for his deed:

I shut my eyes, - it matters not -
 Still still the same I see, -
 And when I lay me down at night
 'Tis always day with me.
 (Robert Southey, *Poems, The Second Volume*, Bristol, 1799, p. 109)

The situation and metre of the verse recalls that of 'The Ancyent Marinere' -

Alone, alone, all all alone
 Alone on the wide wide Sea;
 And Christ would take no pity on
 My soul in agony.
 (IV stanza 3 1798 text of 'The Ancyent Marinere')

² Robert Southey, *Poems* (Bristol, 1797), p. 41.

³ p. 90.

hero - a case of crime really paying. Southey's other poems of this early period dealing with the plight of the poor take an equally expository line, as he interprets for the privileged reader the brutal reality of what it means to be a pauper, as in the haunting 'Complaints of the Poor'.

As with other writers examined in this thesis, Southey linked the plight of black slaves with the white victims of British society. His 1797 sonnet sequence outlines the fate of an African torn from his family, rebelling against his West Indian master and being executed for his 'crimes' - though the poet does not hold the slave guilty as his actions are seen as the inevitable result of his situation. One image in particular, that of the wife left behind in Africa, establishes the parallel with the British lower classes:

She whom he loves far from the chearful throng
Stands sad, and gazes from her lowly door
With dim grown eye, silent and woe-begone,
And weeps for him who will return no more.⁴

The abandoned wife recalls another in a poem of the same period, *Joan of Arc*. As one of the foot-soldiers dies in battle, Southey comments:

....Of unrecorded name
Died the mean man; yet did he leave behind
One who did never say her daily prayers,
Of him forgetful; who to every tale
Of the distant war, lending an eager ear,
Grew pale and trembled.
(Book Seven l. 320-325)

The women are linked by their isolation from their native society and their ignorance of the fate of their partner. The African widow has also been deprived of her spouse by warfare; in her case, the 'demon War' is brought in by Commerce - by merchants rather than monarchs. Slaves, soldiers and their families are all victims of the vested interests of the rich and powerful, figuring as no more than disposable pawns in somebody else's chess game.

⁴ p. 36.

Southey's black slave of the sonnet sequence remains anonymous as his role is that of a generalized representative of the fate of thousands of Africans. By contrast, the poet's first attempt to depict a 'white slave' - Wat Tyler - concentrates on an historical figure, a mediaeval serf, who distinguished himself from the masses in England by daring to lead a rebellion. Southey's play about the Peasant Revolt was written to counter the images of the lower classes coming out of the British debate on the French Revolution. For some observers, the Revolution meant the end to traditional order and descent into chaos. Edmund Burke spoke for these critics when he pictured the citizens of Paris as 'a mixed mob of ferocious men, and of women lost to shame' and imagined the king and queen being led 'amidst the horrid yells, and shrilling screams, and frantic dances, and infamous contumelies, and all the unutterable abominations of the furies of hell, in the abused shape of the vilest of women'⁵ - casting the politically active mob as a tool of Satan. For the Friends of the Revolution - of which Southey was one - the actions of the people of France were proof that the common man was finally shaking off the fetters of aristocratic rule and claiming his natural rights. By seizing on the hero of humble origins for the subject of his first poetic works, Southey aligned himself with the cause of the poor, making plain where his political allegiance lay.⁶ He was also attempting to project an acceptable image of the working classes for consumption by the reading public, an image that would exorcize that of the Burkean ghoulish mob.

The selection of an historic figure gave Southey artistic freedom. When writing *The Fall of Robespierre* with Coleridge, Southey tied himself to newspaper accounts of the recent events. By contrast, *Wat Tyler* gave him not only an historic distance from competing authoritative sources, but a distance from the moral complexities of revolutionary Paris. As the Terror began in France, Southey realized that the French Revolution was not a simplistic opposition of evil rich and good poor. Writing to Grosvenor in November 1793 he commented:

⁵ Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* [1790], ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 161, 165

⁶ As early as 1791, Southey was trying his hand at a romance, 'Harold' (unpublished), which takes Robin Hood as one of its characters - showing his youthful interest in heroes of the poor.

The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my faculties, and I begin to believe that virtue can only aspire to content in obscurity....I look round the world, and everywhere find the same mournful spectacle - the strong tyrannising over the weak...; ...the only difference is that it acts in Turkey through the anger of a grand seignior, in France of a revolutionary tribunal, and in England of a prime minister.⁷

To the disillusioned Southey, there was little to choose between the parliamentary system of England, the revolutionary government of France and the notoriously despotic regime of the Turks. The present offered only tarnished heroes; the violence of the mob had become a frightening, rather than an heroic, prospect. Southey sought for his ideal hero in the history of two revolutionary martyrs of the common people, Wat Tyler and the priest, John Bull, the kind of uncompromised characters he was reluctantly coming to realize did not, and could not, exist in the harsh world of the 1790s.

Wat Tyler has usually been dismissed as literature in its own right and read only for the sake of the part it was to play in embarrassing the Poet Laureate when it was given unauthorised publication in 1817. Following Coleridge's (and, to some extent, Southey's) later view of the play, F. T. Hoadley and others have described it as an immature effort.⁸ The history of the play's composition does not inspire confidence: Southey claims to have dashed the play off in three mornings in Summer 1794 - the same period at which he was working with equal celerity with Coleridge on *The Fall of Robespierre*.⁹ Southey writes close to his source, David Hume's *The History of England* (1754-1762), barely digesting Hume's language to produce his own style.¹⁰ Despite this, Southey does not use his source unthinkingly; instead he subverts the

⁷ *Southey's Life and Correspondence*, 6 vols, ed. C. C. Southey (London, 1849), vol i. 189. Hereafter cited as *LC*.

⁸ See F. T. Hoadley, 'The Controversy over Southey's *Wat Tyler*', *Studies in Philology*, xxxviii (Jan 1941).

⁹ See J Simmons, *Southey* (London, 1945), p. 42. The play does bear the hallmarks of a rapidly executed and unrefined piece. The plot moves with astonishing swiftness; key moments, such as Wat Tyler's murder of the tax-collector, are compassed in an absurd few lines with little preparation.

¹⁰ On occasion, the result is a paraphrase; the stage direction 'knocks out the Tax-gatherer's Brains' echoes Hume's account word for word (see David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Accession of Henry VII*. (London, 1762), vol ii. 246.)

historian's text for his own ends. Hume regarded the leaders of the Peasant Revolt with suspicion: they were merely 'the most audacious and criminal of their associates'.¹¹ For Hume, the incident illustrates the early promise of Richard II, a promise of good qualities that vanished as he grew older and his weaknesses became more blatant. Southey is less interested in the monarch, except as the figurehead of the corrupt aristocracy; his interest lies with the suffering and bravery of the poor. He identifies Hume's unnamed blacksmith, whose murder of the tax collector sparks off the revolt, as Wat Tyler, thus providing his hero with a motive for rebellion. By making Tyler a blacksmith, Southey places him in a tradition of popular revolt with contemporary resonance. In times of popular discontent, blacksmiths were called on to leave their horse-shoes and refurbish weaponry, and were thus often the first to fall under suspicion. In the troubled times of the 1790s, the authorities in Ireland tortured blacksmiths in order to find the location of caches of weapons. Tyler's profession, however, also sets him apart from his rural community and aligns him with the small-scale manufacturers and craftsmen rather than the peasantry; he can be read as a mediaeval forerunner of the lower class autodidacts of the 1790s, off-spring of the industrial revolution, who formed the Corresponding Societies in British towns and cities.

Southey emphasizes Tyler's righteous purpose and courage in direct contradiction to Hume's interpretation of events. Hume's Tyler approaches the King at Smithfield with a treacherous purpose:

Tyler, having ordered his companions to retire till he should give them a signal, (after which they were to murder all the company except the king himself, whom they were to detain prisoner) feared not to come into the midst of the royal retinue.¹²

Southey's Tyler goes boldly among his enemies disdaining any help:

Wherefore should I fear?

¹¹ *The History of England*, p. 246

¹² p. 247

Am I not arm'd with a just cause?¹³

Walworth's subsequent attack on Tyler (he stabs him from behind) is thus portrayed as a cowardly act befitting the duplicity of the courtiers. Tyler, the representative of the poor, is yet again betrayed by the Establishment.

Southey pares down the political events of Hume's account to concentrate on his main theme. Despite its brevity, the play is powerful propaganda, the historical setting providing a thin veil for contemporary political protest. Tyler voices the grievances of the common man in forceful language, wondering why he can make no headway:

When I - the honest, staid, hard-working Tyler,
Toil through the long course of the summer's day,
Still toiling, yet still poor! when with hard labour
Scarce can I furnish out my daily food -
And age comes on to steal away my strength,
And leave me poor and wretched! why should this be?

This is a timeless complaint - it is no wonder that the play was to become popular with the Chartist movement in the nineteenth century - but had particular resonance in 1794, a year of high prices and famine for the poorest. The blacksmith is caught in an invidious poverty trap; he is an economic slave. He asks why, even with two adults employed, are wage-rates unable to support a family?

My youth was regular - my labour constant -
I married an industrious, virtuous woman;
Nor while I toiled and sweated at the anvil,
Sat she neglectful of her spinning-wheel.¹⁴

His friend, Hob, asks why, when the poor are suffering, the government is pursuing an expensive war with France - the same question that Hannah More attempts to answer in *Village Politics*. The industrious poor man condemns the idle rich:

Curse on these taxes - one succeeds another -
Our ministers - panders of a king's will -
Drain all our wealth away - waste it in revels -

¹³ Robert Southey, *Wat Tyler*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (Woodstock, 1989), p. 41

¹⁴ p. 5

And lure, or force away our boys, who should be
The props of our old age - to fill their armies,
And feed the crows of France!

This was bold language at a time when Britain was at war with republican France; the cloak of history did not disguise the direct relevance to current affairs. The economic slavery of the poor is put down to the extravagance of the rich who 'waste' the national wealth and waste British lives in foreign wars.

In addition to this robust criticism, *Wat Tyler* lambastes established religion. Southey portrays true Christianity as belonging to the poor, reversing the discourse of slavery. The truly free man is John Ball - a prototype of the dissenting preachers of Southey's own day such as Joseph Priestley. Ball preaches radical Christianity, a revolutionary and levelling doctrine. Ironically, Hume provides Southey's priest with his sermon text. Hume introduces Ball as:

One John Ball also, a seditious preacher, who affected low popularity, went about the country, and inculcated on his audience the principles of the first origin of mankind from one common stock, their equal right to liberty and to all the goods of nature, the tyranny of artificial distinctions; and the abuses which had arisen from the degradation of the more considerable part of the species, and the aggrandizement of a few insolent rulers.¹⁵

Opinions which to Hume were self-evidently seditious become in Southey's version the basis of a brave defence before the court:

....That I told them
That all mankind are equal, is most true:
Ye came as helpless infants to the world;
Ye feel alike the infirmities of nature;
And at last moulder into common clay.
Why then these vain distinctions?¹⁶

Ball is persecuted by a legal system which has abandoned any concept of justice in order to defend the interests of the already powerful. Like the Pittite crackdown on radicals at the time of writing, the authorities in the play seem bent on crushing dissent

¹⁵ *The History of England*, vol ii. 245.

¹⁶ *Wat Tyler*, p. 65.

and have no intention of listening to just demands. Like Christ, Ball dies a martyr's death condemned to the eighteenth century equivalent of crucifixion - hanging, drawing and quartering.¹⁷ Despite his physical chains, Ball is unfettered spiritually - unprejudiced, democratic and wise. By contrast, the representative of the established Church in the play is an hypocrite, a slave to his earthly, rather than his heavenly, master. He puts spiritual values second to the interests of state, telling the king:

Grant all they ask - however wild and ruinous -
Meantime the troop you have already summon'd
Will gather round them. Then my Christian power
Absolves you of your promise.¹⁸

The comparison results in an image of the oppressed working poor providing the backbone of a moral society, in contrast to the degeneracy of those in power. The slaves - or serfs - of this society are the only ones fit to govern.

Southey developed this juxtaposition between the aristocratic slaves of prejudice and the free man (or woman) of the people in his first major poem, *Joan of Arc*. *Wat Tyler* was the work of a week; *Joan of Arc* took several years of intermittent labour before its publication in 1796; but the two pieces have much in common coming out of the turmoil of the same period in Southey's life. This has prompted one critic to write that 'Wat ... is but a weaker variant of Joan'.¹⁹ This is true up to a point. Both are models of integrity drawn from the working classes; both are used to show up the corruption and cowardice of the aristocratic world; both are martyrs. In his characterization of Joan, Southey anticipates a theme more commonly associated with Wordsworth: the idea that the poor have direct access to the things of nature and to the image of the Creator shown through his works. Taking her lessons from Nature, Joan is raised free from corruption and is morally strong. This concept was to be central to

¹⁷ The trial also had a contemporary parallel. 1794 was the year in which twelve leading radicals were arrested for treason - the penalty still being hanging, drawing and quartering. Though the two London men who went to trial were acquitted by a jury (charges against the remainder were then dropped), their Scottish associates were not so fortunate; they received a sentence of transportation.

¹⁸ *Wat Tyler*, p. 35.

¹⁹ William Haller, *The Early Life of Robert Southey 1774-1803* (New York, 1917), p. 138.

Wordsworth's thinking about the deprivations of the urban, as opposed to the rural, poor, a theme explored in chapter five. Joan, however, does not have the resonance with contemporary society of Tyler: she is a pastoral figure, an idealization. Her fight with the authorities is for recognition of her personal gifts, not for recognition of the plight of a class of people.

Though the poem is on a much larger scale than *Wat Tyler*, the social criticism is in many senses narrower. There is a strong anti-war message, but the main contest is between the slaves of superstition - defined in the poem as the repressive Catholic hierarchy and the trappings of monarchy - and the individual who follows the promptings of her inner enlightenment. Perhaps unconsciously, Southey was creating Joan in his own image. He had himself rejected the Church to gain what he saw as a purer approach to God. As he wrote in an early poem, 'Written on Sunday Morning', printed in his 1797 volume:

Go thou and seek the House of Prayer!
I to the Woodlands wend, and there
In lovely Nature see the GOD OF LOVE.²⁰

Joan embodies this ideal, making her a fitting romantic heroine - a type of noble savage - as well as constituting an attractive image of the poet's self in feminine form. She is a prototype of other romantic figures, such as Wordsworth's Pedlar:

....He had early learned
To reverence the volume which displays
The mystery, the life which cannot die,
But in the mountains did he FEEL his faith,
There did he see the writing.
(l. 119-123)²¹

The pedlar too bears many resemblances to his creator; the description of his education appears as an ideal projection of the development of the poet's mind and anticipates many aspects of the progress of the man from boyhood to maturity that Wordsworth

²⁰ *Poems*, p. 129.

²¹ William Wordsworth, 'The Pedlar', quoted from the text in Jonathan Wordsworth's *The Music of Humanity* (London, 1969).

describes in *The Prelude*. Both writers locate in the body of a lower class individual a new kind of authority, a wisdom that comes from a pure, rural world. This was the late eighteenth century third way: monarchical governments had failed; urban revolution had turned bloody; the poets turned to an imagined rural lower class tradition of independence and incorruptibility as an alternative basis for society. Thus, in this analysis, Wat is not simply a 'weaker variant' of Joan; he is rather the failed urban revolutionary replaced by his rural sister. Revolution has been privatized and sent into the country. Southey ends his poem at the point of Joan's greatest military triumph. Though the path to martyrdom is signalled in the text as the next stage of her crusade, Southey leaves his heroine at her most powerful, as if he wishes against all the evidence that the third way will succeed.

Finding a common language

Southey's early writing dealing with the position of the lower class majority in society accompanied an interest in mass communication. As the British population expanded and industrial towns burgeoned, radical poets responded with attempts to find a medium in which to communicate with a new audience. By the end of the 1790s, with the two collections of poetry and *Joan of Arc* to his name (*Wat Tyler* was not published), Southey had the reputation of being one of the foremost of the radical, or Jacobin, poets. Francis Jeffrey, reviewing *Thalaba* in the inaugural edition of the *Edinburgh Review* in 1802, placed Southey at the head of 'a sect of poets' who had showed themselves as 'dissenters from the established systems in poetry and criticism'.²² Jeffrey's choice of the word 'dissent' is deliberate: he equates deviation from literary tradition with political and religious dissent, 'revealing', in what could be deemed an innocuous intellectual pursuit, the revolutionary agenda.

Why Jeffrey should choose *Thalaba* for his diatribe against Jacobin poets, in particular Wordsworth, is at first surprising because the poem does not comfortably fit the description of the type of poetry he is attacking. Jeffrey explains, however, that this is

²² *Edinburgh Review*, i (Oct 1802), p. 63.

the first work from this 'sect' to come before him as editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, providing a platform for the criticism he had been meditating as a response to the 1800 Preface. He had good grounds for associating Southey with Wordsworth's experiments with the language of common men. Southey had already practised this form of literary dissent in his 1799 volume which contains 'English Eclogues'. *Thalaba*, despite its exotic setting, employs relatively simple language, making it easily accessible to a wide variety of readers. Habituated to thinking of Southey as a poet who adopts 'a colloquial plainness of style',²³ Jeffrey was on the watch for examples of the same (what he calls) 'feeble, low and disjointed' style in this romance, the poet's next major publication.

Jeffrey's objection to Southey's and Wordsworth's style is based on a Burkean concept of politics turned into a literary dogma. In *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke justifies the British Constitution on the grounds of tradition; the Constitution was a compact between generations to be lovingly maintained and respected by the present generation, not questioned or changed. Jeffrey saw literary language in the same terms:

The language of the higher and more cultivated orders may fairly be presumed to be better than that of their inferiors: at any rate, it has all those associations in its favour, by means of which, a style can ever appear beautiful or exalted, and is adapted to the purposes of poetry, by having been long consecrated to its use.²⁴

He appeals first to a presumed superiority and then, in what sounds like an unconscious concession ('at any rate') to the weakness of his assertion, turns to tradition for his justification of a primogeniture of language. Wordsworth and Southey are dangerous to his system because they stake the claim of the dispossessed to a piece of literary territory. To Jeffrey these classes are kept out by the 'obvious' fact that '[t]he love, or grief, or indignation of an enlightened and refined character, is not only expressed in a different language, but is in itself a different emotion from the love, or grief, or anger of a clown, a tradesman, or a market-wench'²⁵ - moving from an

²³ *Poems, The Second Volume*, p. 183.

²⁴ *Edinburgh Review*, i, p. 66.

²⁵ p. 66.

The authors, George Canning and John Hookham Frere, suspected the motives behind the stance of philanthropic concern. What to Southey was an expression of fellow-feeling for the sufferings of the poor was to his critics merely a front for the spread of rebellion amongst the lower classes.

It is against this background that the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* should be considered. Other poets, most notably Southey and Joanna Baillie, were publishing works making what - in the estimation of contemporary critics - were similar *political* points about subject matter and style. As one of the first reviewers of the 1798 edition, Southey would have been sympathetic to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's aims because they were essentially at this point in their development akin to his for his own poetry. The negative aspect of his review, with its famous attacks on 'The Thorn' and 'Rime of the Ancyent Marinere', has been wrongly assumed to be a rejection of his fellow poets' experiments with language. In reality, his judgement is not so damning:

The 'experiment', we think, has failed, not because the language of conversation is little adapted to 'the purposes of poetic pleasure', but because it has been tried upon uninteresting subjects.³⁰

He does not disapprove of the attempt to use 'the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society'³¹ : his problem is with the content. The review was written on the basis of the 1798 edition with its brief remarks in the Advertisement; the expanded 1800 edition with the Preface better shows where Wordsworth and Southey part company. Southey expected to find in the *Lyrical Ballads* another attempt by radical poets to democratize literary language, creating a powerful form for poems of protest that would speak in an accessible tongue. Wordsworth, though sharing Southey's politics at the beginning of the 1790s, was by the end of the decade taking greater interest in the philosophical origins of language and illustrations of human nature from all walks of life. His 1800 concept, formulated with the aid of Coleridge, that the language of low and rustic life was closer to the 'essential passions' was a

³⁰ *Critical Review*, xxiv (1798) p. 204.

³¹ *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 34.

development of the idea that the rural poor had a purer spirituality as a result of their communion with nature. In his scheme, they formed speech from the direct sense impressions of ordinary objects, the pure basis of language, uncluttered by the distortions of society. This interest led Wordsworth to delight in perceiving the world through the eyes of an idiot boy as a means of delving into the human mind and celebrating the love of the idiot boy's mother. He used language, not as a vehicle for democratic communication (Southey's agenda), but as a form of philosophical contemplation.

Southey had written on the lower classes using plain language before the *Lyrical Ballads* were published. These 'Botany Bay Eclogues', published in 1797, were followed by 'English Eclogues', which he gradually published in his 1799 collection, the Annual Anthologies of 1799 and 1800 and his 1805 collection. The poems consist of conversations or monologues of predominantly lower class characters. The convicts in the earlier eclogues are characterized with mixed success. The dialogues, 'John, Samuel and Richard' and 'Humphrey and William', for the most part employ simple language, but the effect of common speech is encumbered by the demands of the couplet form:

Talk of hardships! what these are the sailor don't know!
 'Tis the soldier my friend that's acquainted with woe,
 Long journeys, short halting, hard work and small pay,
 To be popt at like pigeons for sixpence a day!³²

Their exchanges sound artificial as the reader anticipates the inevitable rhyme. Southey has chosen the rhyming scheme of neo-classical verse, not the ballad which was the traditional form belonging to the poor. Thus the conversation fails to do justice to the dignity of the speakers or the potential of the couplet: his characters seem like servants masquerading in their master's clothes and a smile, rather than sympathy, is provoked by the image of them being 'popt at like pigeons'. The monologues, 'Elinor' and 'Frederick', come closer to the pattern of speech by using blank verse; however, their sentiments are expressed in a stylized poetic diction, as when Elinor describes herself

³² *Poems*, 1797, p. 93.

as 'a weary bark/ Long tempest-tost on life's inclement sea'.³³ Frederick's meditations on suicide also fail to find the right register as they sound like ham-Hamlet, rather than the expression of genuine emotional disturbance.

Southey improved upon these primitive essays in 'English Eclogues'. Perhaps as a result of reading the *Lyrical Ballads*, he was more conscious of his aim, even to the extent of prefacing the 1799 collection with a his own little manifesto of how he is attempting 'a colloquial plainness of style' which he hopes will be 'more true to nature'.³⁴ He claims that his inspiration was an account given him of a 'species of composition...popular in Germany' and believes that his eclogues 'bear no resemblance to any poems in our language'.³⁵ He is wrong in the latter contention: no friend to Evangelical tract writers, he may have been surprised to find that dialogic poems of rural encounters were already circulating from the pen of Hannah More (for example, 'Turn the Carpet'). Read against the Evangelical tracts, his eclogues reveal their radical agenda to resist quietist propaganda. 'The Sailor's Mother' internalizes the discourse of submission in the figure of the Traveller. He preaches to the woman, going to visit her dying sailor-son, that

....Were it not
Some comfort to reflect your son has fallen
Fighting his country's cause? and for yourself
You will not in unpitied poverty
Be left to mourn his loss.³⁶

His words are empty: the woman tells him her son joined up because the choice was service or prison for snaring a few hares. He is no willing hero. The Traveller noticeably does nothing material to relieve her opening plea for 'some small relief' - a curious anticipation of the *Anti-Jacobin* satire of the philanthropist. The woman's dignity in the face of her trials contrasts with the Traveller's platitudes. Though they exchange words, they do not meet: her acquaintance with sorrow has brought her a

³³ p. 80.

³⁴ *Poems, The Second Volume*. p. 183.

³⁵ p. 183.

³⁶ pp. 209-210.

world of suffering he knows nothing about. The only words he can find to answer her anguish are 'Well! well!', telling her to take comfort that the nation will look after her son if he lives and will look after her if he dies. Southey's interlocutor is a parody of the mid-eighteenth century sentimental traveller of Sterne and Mackenzie, interrogating the poor about their situation and sympathizing with them with open displays of emotion. In the eclogues, the man of feeling is now a debased creature who passes on the other side of the road when he encounters the frightening sight of true suffering. He represents the privileged members of society who are tough on crime, but not on the causes of crime, happy to condemn boys to the rigours of sea-life during war for the minor crime of poaching, rather than question the property laws that criminalize normal boyhood behaviour. Little wonder that the woman, who is given the final words, looks for comfort in the prospect of death as no other help seems forthcoming.

In 'The Wedding', another traveller plays a similar part, acting as a foil to the pessimism of the poor woman. He dismisses her argument that the bride and groom are headed for misery with the thought - comforting to the rich - that the poor are to blame for their lot:

....'Tis idleness makes want,
And idle habits. If man will go
And spend his evenings by the alehouse fire,
Whom can he blame if there is want at home?³⁷

The woman finds his words insulting, retorting bitterly:

Ay! idleness! the rich folks never fail
To find some reason why the poor deserve
Their miseries! is it idleness I pray you
That brings the fever or the ague fit?
...Is it idleness that makes small wages fail
For growing wants?³⁸

Her view that her children are better off in their coffins offers a bleak Malthusian view of society: the poor who cannot support their offspring should hold back from marriage

³⁷ *The Annual Anthology. Volume II* (Bristol, 1800), p. 124.

³⁸ p. 124.

and procreation. Hers is the worm's eye view of the population cycle Malthus had described from above. Southey argues elsewhere against Malthus in his prose, unable to reconcile the notion of over-population with his instinctive belief in the value of each human life. In 'The Wedding', Southey demonstrates that he understands how Malthusian ideas might resonate with the poor, but he does not submit to their logic. His traveller responds with the anti-Malthusian gesture of charity: the woman's words are taken as a spur to activity, not resignation to the inevitable.

'English Eclogues' succeed in conveying their message in fittingly vigorous speech, without resorting to the ham dialect or intrusive rhyme which mar the 'Botany Bay Eclogues'. The old man in 'The Old Mansion', for example, curses with energy - 'Plague, I say,/ On their new-fangled whimsies!'³⁹ He mocks the fashions of the aristocracy with words culled from their world - 'new-fangled whimsies' - their frothy language and fads contrast to his unfussy language and faith in the things of the past. The poem brings out his resistance on two levels, thematically and linguistically, as the old man freely criticizes the actions of his betters and opposes his plain speech to the devious questions of the stranger. The old man is as he appears; the stranger turns out to be his new master. Other eclogues illustrate the resistance of the lower classes to the views of their 'betters'. In 'The Witch', the father and son go back to their superstitious practices to ward off witchcraft, despite their seeming deference to the curate. The father comments on the cleric 'he don't believe/ In witchcraft, and that is not like a Christian',⁴⁰ Native beliefs bob up again after momentarily being quelled by the presence of social superiors.

Southey's experiment with simple language was not confined to 'English Eclogues'. The 1799 volume contains other poems of protest written with impressive simplicity and economy, the best of which is 'The Complaints of the Poor'. The metre is simple and ballad-like:

And wherefore do the Poor complain?

³⁹ p. 187.

⁴⁰ p. 225.

The rich Man ask'd of me;...
Come walk abroad with me, I said,
And I will answer thee.⁴¹

The poem progresses through encounters with representatives of the poor - an old man, a child, a soldier's wife and baby, a prostitute. The narrator confronts each with the rich man's question and their simple responses forcefully put their case for them; the prostitute at the conclusion of the poem sums up the 'complaints':

I ask'd her what there was in guilt
That could her heart allure
To shame, disease, and late remorse;
She answer'd she was poor.

I turn'd me to the Rich Man then,
For silently stood he,...
You ask'd me why the Poor complain,
And these have answered thee!⁴²

Unlike the bitter exchange between the woman and the traveller in 'The Wedding', which also attempts to answer the question as to what causes poverty, the power of this poem is in the silence it provokes rather than the words of the argument. Poverty has been shown iconographically rather than debated: the reader is asked implicitly, like the rich man, to pause thoughtfully over the images.

The 1799 collection indicates that Southey learnt much from his reading and thinking about *Lyrical Ballads*, yet the poetic traffic was not all one way. His poetry was known to Coleridge and Wordsworth, and though they were both later dismissive of his talents, his work fed into their collaborative efforts. At the very least as their critic, they responded to his remarks on the first edition, as Wordsworth shared some of Southey's reservations about the fitness of 'Rime of the Ancyent Marinere', moving it from the beginning to a less important place in the second edition. Southey was never entirely happy with the development of the *Lyrical Ballads* project. Though he did not comment again in public, he wrote to Coleridge in 1802, after *Lyrical Ballads* had been republished with an expanded preface, to express his doubts that the language used

⁴¹ p. 81.

⁴² pp. 83-84.

could carry the weight intended by the poet:

Does [Wordsworth] not associate more feeling with particular phrases, and you also with him, than those phrases can convey to any one else?...Who would part with a ring of a dead friend's hair? and yet a jeweller will give for it only the value of the gold: and so must words pass for their current value.⁴³

Wordsworth had noted his reservation in the 'Preface' that he feared his associations with certain words were 'particular rather than general'⁴⁴ - a recognition that it was impossible for a poet to find a truly universal language because his own was subject to the idiosyncratic processes of his own mind. Southey's point is that literature coming into the public domain should consider its audience and therefore aim to be commonly understood, something he himself had achieved in 'The Complaints of the Poor'. Though the 1800 Preface contained a democratic theory of the mind and language, it was a theory that still contained bastions of privileged access. Compared to Wordsworth and Coleridge, Southey in his more pedestrian style and less exalted concept of poetry is the true democrat of the trio.

Southey's theory of language for his own work was to ensure that the language he used was neither false coin nor over-rated. In prose and verse, his aim was to express himself '1st, as perspicuously as possible; 2nd, as concisely as possible; 3rd, as impressively as possible'.⁴⁵ This was the best way to achieve the language of common men in the sense of a language understood by everyone. He conceived of the page as a meeting ground for all classes, but without ignoring their differences. He appreciated this quality in others, even in his enemies, as Dr. Shelton Mackenzie recollected, when Southey praised Cobbett's 'Saxon basis'⁴⁶ for his language, which gave his writing the robust power of peasant discourse. Cobbett had not spoilt his strength by adopting a

⁴³ *LC*, vol ii. 191.

⁴⁴ *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 84.

⁴⁵ *LC*, vol iii. 275.

⁴⁶ vol vi. 303.

style alien to his natural element.⁴⁷ Southey judged poetry in a similar way. He was prepared to admire the verse of uneducated men, so long as they did not pretend to erudition, and he was a generous correspondent to those who solicited for advice, taking time to consider their verse and offer realistic, but tactful, comments. In his collection, *The Lives and Works of the Uneducated Poets* (1831), published to support the poetic attempts of John Jones, a servant, Southey gathered together what he considered to be the best examples of poetry from the lower classes. He gave particular praise to John Taylor, the Jacobean Water-Poet, saying '[n]o spoon could have suited his mouth so well as the wooden one to which he was born'⁴⁸, but lamented the decline of the verses of James Woodhouse and Stephen Duck:

...they began by expressing their own thoughts and feelings, in their own language; all which, owing to their stations in life, had a certain charm of freshness as well as truth; but that attraction passes away when they begin to form their style upon some approved model, and they then produce just such verses as any person, with a metrical ear, may be taught to make by a receipt.⁴⁹

He makes a fair point: there were enough second-rate Popes and Cowpers but not many first-rate poets drawn from common life. The virtue of their poetry was in its resistance to the literary traditions of the upper classes, not humble acquiescence.

This argument logically extends to Wordsworth and Southey: born in the ranks of the silver spooned, their attempts to write about the lower classes should remain true to their own experience or the poetry would sound false - but this, it appears, is not an extension of the argument which Southey considered. Coleridge did, however: in *Biographia Literaria*, he counters the 1800 'Preface' - a document, he omits to mention, he helped Wordsworth formulate - by arguing that '[w]e do not adopt the language of a class by the mere adoption of such words exclusively as that class would use, or at

⁴⁷ Cobbett, however, experimented with many styles during his writing career; it was only in his later work, such as his *Political Register* and *Grammar of the English Language*, that he settled for the robust style admired by Southey. See also chapter vi in Olivia Smith's *The Politics of Language, 1791-1819* (Oxford, 1984) and L. Nattrass, *William Cobbett: The Politics of Style* (Cambridge, 1995).

⁴⁸ Robert Southey, *The Lives and Works of the Uneducated Poets*, ed. J S Childers (London, 1925), p. 86.

⁴⁹ pp. 118-119.

least understand; but likewise by following the order in which the words of such men are wont to succeed each other'.⁵⁰ He tries to pin the 'democratic' label on his friend (the failed project reflecting the failed radicalism of the 1790s), thus rejecting his former self in the process. He argues that Wordsworth, despite his theory (or, at least, Coleridge's 1815 interpretation of it), did not adopt common phraseology and therefore did not achieve the language of the lower classes. To prove his case, Coleridge simplifies Wordsworth's approach, which had been a more complex aspiration to experiment with language whilst acknowledging his role in the creative process as the educated poet. In 1815, Coleridge shares Southey's view of 1802 that for 'real' language, one should substitute 'ordinary, or *lingua communis*'⁵¹ - an unfalsified coin recognized by all. Yet, he does not agree that this is the best language to write in; for him, '[t]he best part of human language, so properly called, is derived from reflections on the acts of the mind itself'.⁵² His philosophical preference is now stated, though he had always preferred a more abstract style in contrast to plain-speaking Southey and Wordsworth, the poet of daily life. Unlike his younger radical self, Coleridge no longer preaches that rustic life gives a man special access to higher things; he now believes that '[e]ducation, or original sensibility, or both, must pre-exist if the changes, forms and incidents of nature are to prove a sufficient stimulant',⁵³ reinforcing the class judgement of the differences between the educated and the rest. He has begun to sound like Francis Jeffrey in the 1802 review. To the ignorant peasantry of North Wales, for example, 'the ancient mountains, with all their terrors and all their glories, are pictures to the blind and music to the deaf'.⁵⁴ Nature, the inspiration of the common language of the 'Preface', no longer speaks most clearly to the peasant, free from the distorting influence of society, but rather needs society (in the shape of education) to interpret it.

Coleridge achieved an u-turn between his collaboration on the 'Preface' and *Biographia*

⁵⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, eds. J. Engell and W. J. Bate (London, 1983), Part II, p. 58.

⁵¹ p. 56.

⁵² p. 54.

⁵³ p. 45

⁵⁴ p. 45.

Literaria without admitting his change of opinion; Southey in his humbler goals held his views with greater consistency throughout his writing life. It is not surprising that Southey's prose is more admired than his poetry as his views on language led him to believe that '[a] man with a clear head, a good heart, and an honest understanding will always write well'⁵⁵ - a view he was stating in 1829, but one that is not out of place with earlier remarks. It was an attitude that complimented clarity in prose but could result in dull verse.

His desire to be accessible to a wide audience led to a concentration on the communicative powers of narrative, and his distinct skill as a poet is his ability to tell a tale with pace and vigour. In the process he gives popular culture a platform, as for example when he rewrote the traditional ballads, 'Mary Maid of the Inn', 'Donica' and 'Rudiger'. The ballad form migrated with the workers from rural culture into the cities; ballads were repeated in taverns, distributed by hawkers and sung in the workplace. As the collections of nineteenth century songs from the industrial heartlands show, it was the first form in which the urban populations expressed their grievances and their distinct identity.⁵⁶ The subject matter of Southey's ballad revisions harks back to a disappearing oral culture, but the city dwellers were not so distant from their rural roots that the legends no longer resonated. Ballads were thus the natural choice for a poet wanting to attract a partially literate mass audience.

Though Southey was by no means unique in his interest in ballads - ballad collecting had been a favourite pastime of literary men since Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765) and was a fashionable poetic form in the 1790s following German examples - his almost naive relish for such tales makes his versions no antiquarian production, but in sympathy with the original spirit of entertainment and spine-tingling superstition of the cottage fire-side. Albert Friedman in *The Ballad Revival* comments that the problem with ballad imitation is that 'ballads ignore or de-emphasize precisely those elements which sophisticated poets would savor most and

⁵⁵ *LC*, vol vi. 53.

⁵⁶ For examples of industrial ballads, see *Ballads and Songs of Lancashire*, ed. John Harland (London, 1865).

develop most fully'.⁵⁷ Ballads are not concerned with the interior life of their subjects: the story is all. Wordsworth and Coleridge represent Friedman's sophisticated poets as *Lyrical Ballads* is clearly not a collection of ballads at all, but an intellectualization of the form. Once turned to these ends, the ballad of popular culture is no longer recognizable. Southey, however, continued to enjoy and employ a form which concentrated on narrative. It was not just ballad tales that he had an ear for: as the first to write down 'The Three Bears' in *The Doctor* (1834-1847), he brought a part of oral culture into the nursery of every British child.⁵⁸ He acted, as Marilyn Butler argues, as 'the medium by which traditional stories make their way down into the cultural water-table'.⁵⁹ In the case of 'The Three Bears', he fed a traditional oral story into the cultural water-table, making it available to an elite class of readers. His action has parallels with that of contemporary explorers: Captain Cook may have 'discovered' Australia for the northern hemisphere, but it was there all the time, as the Aborigines will tell you; Southey explored popular culture and 'discovered' it for book-readers.

As a poet, Southey did not achieve as extensive an audience amongst the lower classes as did others amongst his contemporaries, notably Burns and Byron. Ironically, it was the play of his radical youth, *Wat Tyler*, which he tried to suppress when it was given unauthorized publication in 1817, that was destined to be the work that reached a popular audience, puffed by the breath of scandal. As a prose-writer, he regularly addressed a wide audience from the pages of the *Quarterly Review*. He also made his mark in other non-fictional genres, in particular that of biography. He brought to biography his desire for accessibility and clarity, writing in his preface to *The Life of Nelson* (1813),

Many lives of Nelson have been written: one is yet wanting, clear and concise enough to become a manual for the young sailor, which he may carry about with him, till he has treasured up the example in his memory

⁵⁷ Albert Friedman, *The Ballad Revival* (Chicago, 1961), p. 295.

⁵⁸ Robert Southey, *The Doctor* (London, 1834-1847), vol iv. 318-326. Southey's version is more robust than the sentimental version now in circulation. There is no Goldilocks, but rather a little old woman who says 'bad words' when she finds something not to her liking.

⁵⁹ Marilyn Butler, *Literature as a Heritage or Reading other Ways* (Cambridge, 1987).

and in his heart.⁶⁰

The economic use of language to convey information in this introductory sentence gives a good example of the style of the biography. Stripped of rhetorical flourish, Southey's prose is deceptively simple - though, of course, the greatest art is to achieve the semblance of artlessness. The biography fulfils his intention: designed as a chronological series of anecdotes drawn from Nelson's life, interspersed with exact accounts of sea-battles, the book was calculated to suit the taste of a non-specialist audience, eager to hear about the life of the most recent British hero. The effect of the book is to reinforce the reputation of this popular heroic icon, a shrewd move on Southey's part as he caught the mood of the times and, in this publication at least, reached with his accessible style the wide readership he sought. His biography was regularly reprinted throughout the century and into the twentieth century, arguably his only work to achieve both longevity and popular appeal.

The success of *The Life of Nelson* inspired Southey to develop his career as a prose writer. A life of Wesley, Cromwell, Bunyan, Cowper, Bell and of British Admirals were to follow over the next thirty years. In addition, his other prose works, histories, and journalism, established him amongst the leading non-fiction prose writers of his day. Even his enemies were forced to acknowledge his clarity and skill: Hazlitt makes special mention of Southey's prose in an otherwise negative review of the writer in *The Spirit of the Age* (1825). Amongst the critics of the next generation, Macaulay unbent enough to admit that '[w]e find, we confess, so great a charm in Mr. Southey's style, that, even when he writes nonsense, we generally read it with pleasure, except indeed when he tries to be droll'.⁶¹ The content of his non-fiction works has now been surpassed by scholars drawing on resources unavailable to Southey in his Keswick study, but his effort to communicate has left its mark on those who have tried to emulate his achievements.

Surveying Southey's accomplishments as a communicator across the literary media of

⁶⁰ Robert Southey, *The Life of Nelson* [1813] (London, 1861), xiii

⁶¹ *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, ed Lionel Madden (London, 1984), p. 345.

prose and poetry casts a questioning light on much that has been written about literature of the early nineteenth century. Disproportionate interest has been given the *Lyrical Ballads* because they appeal to academic criteria as an intellectualization of the attempt by radical writers to enfranchise the poor amongst the literary electorate. We credit Wordsworth with 'revolutionizing' literature, but perhaps the real change in so far as it affected society at large was happening in the less exalted department of popular (or vulgar) writings and the development of a journalistic style that a person without a classical education could follow. As an advocate of a plain poetic style and economic prose, Southey consistently attacked concepts of literary elitism. The fact that later in his career this aim no longer attracted attention for its democratic agenda gives an indication of how society was changing during the period, a change which Southey helped engineer.

The Search for Solutions

Responding to changes in society with a reformation of literary culture was not the only field of Southey's activity. His interest in poverty - particularly that of the urban poor - went beyond his poetry. In response to increasingly visible pauperism in British towns and cities, he was concerned to find solutions, not contemplate suffering. He had a practical bent and believed it was not enough to lament the plight of the pauper; one had to do something to rectify the situation, and this often meant personal loss, both of money and time.⁶² Personally active on a small scale, he was also interested in large scale projects to alleviate the condition of the poor. Choosing to publish political works dealing with this subject, such as *Letters from England* (1807), *Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (1829), and essays for the *Quarterly Review*, he set out his stall in public as a thinker on current affairs. For this he attracted criticism throughout his life from his political enemies, particularly Utilitarians such as Thomas Babington Macaulay, who wrote of him:

⁶² His generosity cannot be disputed. On two occasions he undertook to edit, without remuneration, the work of deceased poets - Chatterton and Kirke White - so they could be published for the benefit of the struggling families left behind. His letters show that he was also ready with money for worthy causes - and it should be remembered that Southey was financially insecure himself until the very end of his life.

It would be absurd to read the works of such a writer for political instruction. The utmost that can be expected from any system promulgated by him is that it may be splendid and affecting, - that it may suggest sublime and pleasing images. His scheme of philosophy is a mere day-dream, a poetical creation, like the Domdaniel caverns, the Swerga, or Pandalon; and indeed, it bears no inconsiderable resemblance to those gorgeous visions. Like them, it has something of invention, grandeur and brilliancy. But like them, it is grotesque and extravagant, and perpetually violates that conventional probability which is essential to the effect even of works of art.⁶³

Macaulay avoids dealing with Southey's critique of society by dismissing him as a light-weight fiction writer. He does not acknowledge that Southey made an important contribution to contemporary debate by raising questions about the place man held in the new economic system. At the heart of Southey's political philosophy is the belief that man should come before profit, a view also expressed by Wordsworth and Coleridge. This conviction stayed with Southey first as a radical republican, then later as a radical Tory daring to challenge the received political wisdom of the day. Southey's political prescriptions were never those of an economist; he had little time for statistics and bald facts. He was guided rather by feeling, instinct and nostalgia - aspects notably lacking from the policies of Macaulay's generation of political economists, as Dickens was to show in *Hard Times*. Whilst Southey's approach exposed the potential of a commercial economy to neglect human values, however, by denying the morally and socially constructive potential of Smith's economic model, it can also be argued that he brought about the demoralized economy he feared.

Southey's vision of the social order was not a simple one; throughout his life he speculated that the commune model would build harmonious relationships. The search for solutions to society's inequalities led first to the aborted project of Pantisocracy, as described in chapter one. It was planned to be a prototype of a new way of living that would convince others by its success to adopt this mode of life. In the community, the inequalities of life - the idle rich and over-worked poor - would be eliminated. Differences soon emerged between the two architects of the scheme: Southey found it

⁶³ Thomas Babington Macaulay, unsigned review, *Edinburgh Review* (Jan 1830), 1, 528-565, quoted in *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, p. 343.

hard to imagine his former servant, Shad, following the same occupations as the educated members of the community. Though Coleridge had written to Southey 'SHAD GOES WITH US. HE IS MY BROTHER',⁶⁴ Southey had responded with a distinct lack of levelling enthusiasm: 'Let them dine with us and be treated with as much equality as they would wish - but perform that part of labor for which their Education has fitted them'.⁶⁵ Southey, for all his admiration of heroes of the poor, was not a true Communist as the word later came to be understood. Coleridge was incensed by Southey's unreformed prejudices: 'Is every Family to possess one of these Unequal Equals?'⁶⁶ Coleridge gained his point, but Southey never lost his instinctual feeling of class difference, betraying the seeds of the Tory in the nature of the young man. He also lost faith in the practicality of communal property, perhaps - as has been suggested - because he came into an income of his own, but more probably because the realization grew that Coleridge was a far from reliable partner.⁶⁷ The ideal of Pantisocracy foundered on the realities of personal differences - and lack of money at the right time.

Despite this early failure, throughout his later conservative years, Southey retained the hope that communal projects could be a means to solve the problem of poverty, in particular that of the industrial population. His enthusiasm for communes aligns him with some unexpected allies, most notably Robert Owen, the proto-socialist manufacturer, and the working-class Co-operative movement of the 1830s. Southey followed Owen's attempt to start an ideal mill community in Lanarkshire. Owen visited him in 1816 and, despite their profound differences, Southey recognized a kindred spirit: he had met another 'Pantisocrat'.⁶⁸ Their similarities went beyond a belief in communal solutions: both believed that the system was responsible for creating a vitiated working class; that the market could not be left to regulate itself in this matter;

⁶⁴ *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford, 1956), vol i. 103.

⁶⁵ *LC*, vol i. 114.

⁶⁶ *Collected Letters*, vol i. 114.

⁶⁷ See Molly Lefebure, *The Bondage of Love* (London, 1986) for one version of Coleridge's behaviour during the Bristol years. See also Leonard W. Dean, 'Coleridge and the Sources of Pantisocracy', *Boston University Studies in English*, vol v (Winter 1961).

⁶⁸ *LC*, vol iv. 196.

and they both singled out child labour as a particular evil.⁶⁹ Southey returned the visit in 1819 and left a full account of his praise and reservations about the New Lanark scheme. Southey believed that Owen was self-deceived: he was really a benign slave-owner, rather than an equalizer:

[Owen] jumps to the monstrous conclusion that because he can do this with 2210 persons, who are totally dependent upon him - all mankind might be governed with the same facility. *Et in Utopia ego*. But I never regarded man as a machine; I never believed him to be merely a material being; I never for a moment could listen to the nonsense of Helvetius, nor suppose, as Owen does, that men may be cast in a mould (like other parts of his mill) and take the impression with perfect certainty....Why the end of his institutions would be, as far as possible, the destruction of all character. They tend directly to destroy individuality of character and domesticity - in the one of which the strength of man consists, and in the other his happiness.⁷⁰

Southey realized the tyrannical implications of Owen's socialist community and distrusted any scheme that stripped man of his individuality. He preferred a communal model that would be fair and humanitarian in the spirit of Pantisocracy. Despite his reservations about imposing Owen's scheme on a large scale, he recognized from his patrician stance it could be the lesser evil, if used on the 'right' segment of the population:

... the Yahoos who are bred in our manufacturing towns, and under the administration of our Poor Laws are so much worse than the Chinese breed which he proposes to raise, that I should be glad to see his regulations adopted . . . for a colony of paupers.⁷¹

When the choice was between chaos and tyranny, Southey opted for the latter. His interest lived on into the 1820s as shown by his return to Owen's scheme in *Colloquies* as a possible solution to the disintegration of society brought by the manufacturing system.

When he thought a communal scheme had a chance of succeeding, Southey was an

⁶⁹ See Robert Owen, 'Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System' (London, 1815).

⁷⁰ Robert Southey, *Journal of a Tour in Scotland in 1819* (London, 1929), pp. 264-5.

⁷¹ p. 265.

enthusiastic supporter. One idea he promoted was the founding of lay institutions for single women on the lines of the Beguines he first saw in Ghent in 1815. He devoted a large section of *Colloquies* to this idea. He pictured them as a kind of Protestant nunnery, but without religious vows. This was not a new idea - Samuel Richardson makes Sir Charles Grandison an advocate of Protestant convents - but Southey was unique in his emphasis on the institution as a way of helping respectable women to be of use to society, particularly as nurses, and to live in community, rather than as miserable dependents. Also in *Colloquies*, Montesinos describes a commune of printers; he praises the venture but attributes its failure to a proposed community of goods - pooling of effort rather than property was what he favoured.⁷²

Though Southey's hopes for Pantisocracy faded in the mid-1790s, he remained concerned about the need to reform society. He passed through a brief period of disillusionment in 1797, prompted by the disappointment of his revolutionary hopes, and was tempted to 'retire from the contagion ; . . . like Noah, to preserve a remnant which may become the whole' - a gloomy echo of the idea of Pantisocracy. Yet, even in this mood, his very next sentence shows that he has not lost interest in society's ills:

As to what is the cause, of the incalculable wretchedness of society, and what is the panacea, I have long felt certified in my own mind. The rich are strangely ignorant of the miseries to which the lower and largest part of mankind are abandoned.⁷³

To cure that ignorance he set about advertising the plight of the poor in his poetry and prose, including, for example, in his 1797 volume, sonnets on the slave trade, a poem on a pauper's funeral, as well as on other outcasts. Grouping such subjects together was a statement in itself, a tactic resorted to by many writers mentioned in this study who also equated the white slavery at home amongst the poor with the more popular cause of the black slaves abroad.

One of his most effective attempts to bring the miseries of the poor to the attention of

⁷² Robert Southey, *Sir Thomas More; Or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (London, 2nd edition 1831), vol i. 139.

⁷³ *LC*, vol i. 317.

the wealthy reading public was in prose rather than poetry in *Letters from England* (1807), which he first thought of in 1803 as ‘an omnium-gatherum of the odd things I have seen in England’.⁷⁴ What began as an amusement became a serious vehicle for his censure of modern Britain. Posing as a Spanish gentleman, Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella, on a tour of England, Southey records his observations through foreign eyes, a device familiar to the reading public as it had been used most famously by Montesquieu, Walpole and Goldsmith. By adopting the guise of an outsider, Southey asks the reader to look again at the society he or she takes for granted. Publishing incognito had the added advantage for Southey that the book would not be immediately rubbished by his political enemies in the *Edinburgh Review* purely on the strength of his authorship. Though friends and relatives contributed to the work, *Letters from England* serves as a compendium of his views in much the same way as the later *Colloquies* was to do. It contains a wealth of fascinating detail on the society of the day, ranging from roads to religion, and includes observations on the new industrial towns of the Midlands and northern England, which at this period were burgeoning with the influx of labour. Espriella visits the cotton mills in Manchester and returns ‘with a feeling at heart that makes [him] thank God that he is not an Englishman’.⁷⁵ The sight that has inspired him with such strong emotion was that of young children servicing the machines. Espriella’s guide, a Manchester man, proudly conducts his foreign visitor around the mills, praising the productivity of the child-workers as a way of reducing the ‘burthen’ of children on parents. Espriella reads the activity differently:

I was looking, while he spoke, at the unnatural dexterity with which the fingers of these little creatures were playing in the machinery, half giddy myself with the noise and the endless motion: and when he told me that there was no rest in these walls, day nor night, I thought that if Dante had peopled one of his hells with children, here was a scene worthy to have supplied him with new images of torment.⁷⁶

The child-workers become the site for competing interpretations of labour. The Manchester man reads them analytically as economic statistics moved from the liability

⁷⁴ *LC*, vol ii. 231.

⁷⁵ Robert Southey, *Letters from England*, ed. Jack Simmons (Gloucester, 1984), p. 207.

⁷⁶ p. 208.

to the productivity column of the national account. Espriella reads them imaginatively: their 'play' in the machinery is 'unnatural', they are souls in torment, deprived of the freedom of childhood. Yet Espriella's questions to his guide reveal that it is the man of imagination rather than the man of statistics that has a grasp of the realities of human nature. His guide is stoutly optimistic, believing that, because those who recruit children have no interest in mistreating them, then it follows that the children will not suffer. Espriella comments on this delusion:

I thought of the cities in Arabian romance, where all the inhabitants were enchanted: here Commerce is the queen witch, and I had no talisman strong enough to disenchant those who were daily drinking of the golden cup of her charms.

If the guide is enchanted, so are foreigners who know only of England's wealth from the cheap products they buy.

In no other country can such riches be acquired by commerce, but it is the one who grows rich by the labour of the hundred. The hundred, human beings like himself, as wonderfully fashioned by Nature, gifted with the like capacities, and equally made for immortality, are sacrificed body and soul.⁷⁷

Reversing the Benthamite principle, Espriella points out that industrialization on utilitarian principles produces the greatest misery for the greatest number. The lives of the workers are so abject that they can only 'bring forth slaves like themselves to tread in the same path of misery'.⁷⁸ 'Heaven forbid,' he continues, '..that the Spaniard should ever be brutalized by unremitting task-work, like the negroes in America and the labouring manufacturers in England!' He wishes to leave to England the distinction of 'being the white slaves to the rest of the world'.⁷⁹

Southey's strategy is to shame his contemporaries into action by attacking their sense of national prestige. He uses the image of the slave as a goad to urge on reform. His character, Espriella, has no easy answer to the predicament of the poor in England

⁷⁷ p. 209.

⁷⁸ p. 210.

⁷⁹ p. 211.

who, he says, would only submit to the work they do because they are 'miserably poor'. Espriella suggests an alternative for countries like Spain on the brink of industrialization. Bringing machines into a non-manufacturing country is easier because there is no existing workforce to be made redundant. Thus on the relatively clean slate of Spain, the best method would be to extend 'to the utmost the use of machinery, and leaving the price of labour to find its own level: the higher it is the better'. Higher wages means that more wealth circulates in the economy and '[t]he labourer, lifted up one step in society, acquires the pride and wants, the habits and feelings, of the class next above him'⁸⁰ - the same argument Wadstrom used in the context of abolition.⁸¹ Civilization comes through consumerism. Stimulating the appetite for something more than mere survival lifts black and white above the level of slave.

The Manchester section of Southey's book attracted the most criticism from its reviewer in the *Edinburgh Review*. Not deceived by the supposed Spanish author, the reviewer remarks that the English writer of the piece belongs 'rather to the sentimental than the reasoning class of composers'.⁸² Espriella/Southey's comments on wages finding their own (high) level does not conform to the rules of political economy; no allowance is made for the antagonistic interests of employer and employees, which Adam Smith succinctly states as '[t]he workmen desire to get as much, the masters to give as little, as possible'.⁸³ Smith's reasonings were anathema to Southey, who had little time for those he saw as cold-blooded political economists. He singles Smith out for particular comment in his 1812 essay 'On the State of the Poor', condemning his reduction of man to appearing on the balance sheet as only the gain that can be made from his labour. Here Southey's criticism of Owenites and the *Laissez-faire* school meet: he believed that both were guilty of treating men as extensions of machinery. Southey counters this attitude with the view that man should be put before the system. Writing at a time when that system was in its infancy, Southey argued that it was vital to put in

⁸⁰ p. 212.

⁸¹ See chapter one, p. 38.

⁸² *Edinburgh Review*, xii (1808), 372.

⁸³ *The Wealth of Nations*, vol. i. 83.

a word for human values before they were forgotten in the rush to make a profit - a plea echoed by both Coleridge and Wordsworth.

The *Edinburgh Review* - this time in the shape of Macaulay - attacked Southey in a similar vein for his *Colloquies* twenty years later. The common thread linking the two reviews is the conflict between the *Edinburgh Review*'s liberalism - a belief in unfettered progress - and the instinct of the conservative who saw high speed development flattening humanity in its path.⁸⁴ This difference split the political spectrum, including the radical camp, in a new way. On the one side stood liberal, utilitarian thinkers, such as Bentham, Macaulay, Martineau, and Francis Place; on the other were their Tory and 'socialist-radical' opponents, such as Southey, Cobbett and Owen. All of the latter - violently at odds on other issues - shared the view that the poor were in a worse condition, rather than better off as the proponents of the new industrial system would have people believe. Macaulay berated Southey for claiming the condition of the working classes in the cities was worse than that of their rural brethren, opposing Southey's 'feeling' with statistics drawn from the poor rates. Yet Southey was not alone in his distrust of figures that did not match the evidence of his own eyes; William Cobbett writes in his *Rural Rides* (1830) of his scepticism about tales of population growth when parts of the countryside showed signs of decline. Both felt that statistics could not be relied on to tell the whole story; other evidence that could not be reduced to a balance sheet entry was necessary to understand the true state of the nation.

During the twenty year period separating the two *Edinburgh Review* articles, Southey changed his political affiliation, but the fact that the *Edinburgh Review* continued to attack him on the same grounds lends weight to his claim to consistency in his political views. As far as he was concerned, he 'altered [his] position as the world went round',⁸⁵ adapting as circumstances changed, and not, as his political enemies would

⁸⁴ Owen too perceived the changes in society in these terms, charging greedy men with hurrying forward 'at a mail-coach speed' regardless of his fellow man. See *Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System*, p 8.

⁸⁵ Robert Southey, *A Letter to William Smith Esq. MP* (London, 1817), p. 28.

have it, wedding 'the not very reputable lady, called legitimacy' for reasons of self-interest and greed.⁸⁶ A more sympathetic reading of his behaviour is that he believed strongly in the right of the individual to domestic peace and it was only when he saw the French Government, and their Whig radical sympathizers, threaten this right that he finally abandoned hope in what remained of the revolutionary agenda. The motive for his change of heart in support of the British Government was its commitment to pursuing the war against Napoleon. This was not a war against the revolutionary France of Southey's youth, but a war against a tyrant who had adopted all the trappings of despotic power, including a rapprochement with the Roman Catholic Church. Southey was persuaded by political developments to reincarnate his radical ideas in a new, more conservative form, or, as he wrote in 1806: 'My views and hopes are certainly altered, though the heart and soul of my wishes continues the same'.⁸⁷

His version of events comes with a caveat: the generous enthusiasm of his youth did undergo change. In his middle and later life, the radical struggled with the Tory within Southey when it came to his views on who or what should be blamed for the creation of poverty. Part of Southey carried on believing his eighteenth century philosophical inheritance that '[w]e are, in a great degree, what our institutions make us'⁸⁸ - an echo of the potentially pessimistic view of man as formed by the environment in which he lives to be met with in Montesquieu and in the histories of Hume and Gibbon. Southey was, however, also familiar with Godwin's development of the idea that man should use his reason to rise above the restrictions of his environment and thus gradually improve the society in which he lives. Though he had rejected the Godwinian belief in 'the persuadability of man' and 'the mania of man-mending'⁸⁹ by 1797, he retained some of the radical optimism that improving society's structures could bring about a beneficial change in the character of its members. This was the impulse behind his advocacy of national education, saving schemes for old age, allotments and improved working relationships between employer and employee.

⁸⁶ William Hazlitt, *The Spirit of the Age*, ed. P.P. Howe (London, 1932), p. 79.

⁸⁷ *LC*, vol iii. 22.

⁸⁸ *Colloquies*, p. 332.

⁸⁹ *LC*, vol i. 317.

Whilst holding onto this belief, he grew more orthodox in his faith, placing greater emphasis on the responsibility of the individual for their deeds; society could not be blamed for everything if one believed in the possibility of sin. By 1818, he was asking with some asperity: 'What then are the causes of pauperism? ...misfortune in one instance, misconduct in fifty'.⁹⁰ The belief that the poor were not victims but malingers was the impetus behind the rigours of the work house, the darling project of Southey's political enemies. Southey departs from his usual compassionate tone and joins the political economists, such as Sir Frederick Morton Eden, who, as disciples more orthodox than their master, Adam Smith, believed that self-help was the best remedy for poverty. In his report on the state of the poor in the 1790s, Eden writes that the miseries of the labouring poor 'arose, less from the scantiness of their income... than from their own improvidence and unthriftiness'.⁹¹ Southey, despite his dislike of the political economists, had more in common with them than he would admit.

After *Letters from England*, Southey's next foray into politics in prose on behalf of the poor were his essays written for the *Quarterly Review* in the 1810s on subjects ranging from parliamentary reform to education. Southey complained that the editor, William Gifford, often confused his sense by tampering with the articles, so in 1832 he collected his original drafts together and published them as *Essays, Moral and Political*. The essays demonstrate that, whilst remaining compassionate towards the poor of the industrial towns, Southey's compassion was linked with a near hysterical fear of the power of the mob. Projects to better their condition were now motivated by dual considerations: humanitarian feeling and prevention of a *bellum servile*. Yet he understood the motives for unrest amongst the masses, ridiculing Malthusians who required sacrifices only from the numerous poor, rather than the few rich, to contain population growth. Echoing an infamous image from Malthus' *Essay*, Southey writes ironically, '[the rich] have found a place at the table of nature, and why should they be disturbed at their feast?'⁹² If they persist in their selfishness, he fears that the poor will

⁹⁰ *Essays*, vol i.122.

⁹¹ Sir Frederick Morton Eden, *The State of the Poor*, abr. A G L Rogers (London, 1928), p. 100.

⁹² *Essays*, vol i. 92.

‘resort to the right of the strongest. “You have had your turn at the table long enough, gentlemen,” they would say, “and if those who have no places are to starve, we will have a scramble for it at least!”’⁹³ Southey presents this as a reasonable, if terrifying, demand, repeating his view that it is society which is at fault: ‘It is upon men whom that system has depraved, that the diatribes of the anarchists operate with full effect’.⁹⁴ On balance, he saw the majority of the poor as victims of circumstance, not originators of trouble, and thus believed they were worthy of the attention of reformers.

Southey had little compassion, however, for the radical press of the 1810s, a change of tune for which he was hauled over the coals by his contemporaries. The pirated edition of *Wat Tyler* in 1817 gave William Taylor the chance to stand up in parliament and compare the outpourings of the young Southey to his article on parliamentary reform in the *Quarterly Review*. The Laureate was a tempting target because, though not a Member of Parliament, he was identified with the Tory faction. Southey’s article attacked radical journalists, such as Hunt and Cobbett; he argued that their writings damaged society, a crime deserving the extreme penalty of transportation. The tone of the article is bullish and there is little wonder his enemies were spoiling for revenge. He was also mendacious about his own change of heart - making the revenge of *Wat Tyler* particularly sweet - for when he asks if, when Pitt began his war against France, he would have found ‘one dissentient voice in a thousand?’⁹⁵, he neglects to mention that his would have been that voice.

Southey’s view on the readers of radical journalism was more lenient than that towards those who led them astray. He thought they should be encouraged to improve, not punished: ‘You may as well attempt to stop the progress of contagion, by punishing all who are affected by the baneful principle in the air, as to remedy poverty by penal laws against the poor’⁹⁶ - a comment not inconsistent with the author of *Wat Tyler*. He practices the encouragement he preaches by listing in one essay of this period a series

⁹³ p. 94.

⁹⁴ p. 120.

⁹⁵ p. 332.

⁹⁶ p. 200.

of stories about successful, hard-working members of the lower classes who raised themselves out of poverty (anti-types of Wordsworth's rural failures and outcasts). He praises schemes whereby labourers are given land to work, with the effect of improving their diet, adding to their income and keeping the men out of the alehouse. Rather than take Malthus's gloomy prediction for a growing population, he turns even this 'problem' into a positive, slipping in an allusion to his own poetry in the process: 'A numerous population is, like the Amreeta cup of Kehama, the greatest of evils or the greatest of blessings, according to the government which wields it'.⁹⁷ His solution is emigration: 'It is time that Britain should become the hive of nations, and cast her swarms; and here are lands to receive them'⁹⁸ - an image Wordsworth evidently approved of as he quotes this passage in *The Excursion*.

Southey in the last twenty years of his life worried that revolution was imminent, a fear that even his closest Tory ally, Sir Walter Scott, found embarrassingly overplayed. Yet, as his views on emigration show, part of him shared the growing confidence of the British nation, world leader in industry, trade and colonial expansion. In respect to both attitudes he came to regard the poor as tools to be employed by the ruling classes. In the case of the threat of revolution, the sharp edge of the masses was to be blunted through enlightened means - education, provision of land, better working conditions; in the case of colonization, 'they' were to be cast out of the hive and sent to take British culture to those less fortunate parts of the globe that had not had the benefit of living under British rule. Gone are his youthful days of seeing the poor as individuals, victims of despotic power. Now the authorities - no longer called despotic, rather paternal - should arrange the poor as they saw fit. This distance from his subject is in part explained by the nature of his life in Keswick; his son notes his father's shyness and myopia meant that '[l]ong as he had resided at Keswick, I do not think there were twenty persons of the lower class whom he knew by sight'.⁹⁹ Southey did not consider his lack of direct involvement in the subject as a disqualification for promoting his opinion. He believed his solution was better than the alternatives offered by the

⁹⁷ p. 246.

⁹⁸ p. 154.

⁹⁹ *LC*, vol vi. 13.

Malthusian school: they thought that, instead of ‘enlarging the hive’, it was enough ‘to starve the bees...so that they may be prevented from breeding!’¹⁰⁰ He asserts that undesirables, such as prostitutes, would prefer to go to the colonies with the prospect of honourable marriage to redress the balance of gender, rather than stay to ply their trade on the streets of British cities. Emigration on his terms was a means of sweeping British problems away: the prostitutes, transported journalists and the emigrant poor would all thus disappear from British streets. He limits the right to remain in Britain only to those who have a stake in society, either through wealth or employment. His views contrast starkly with Cobbett who was writing in 1816 in the *Political Register*:

No: you will not leave your country. If you have suffered much and long, you have the greater right to remain in the hope of seeing better days. And I beseech you not to look upon yourselves as the *scum*; but on the contrary, to be well persuaded, that a great deal depends upon *your exertions*.¹⁰¹

Cobbett addresses the people directly, rather than talking about them as if they were to have no say in their fate. His encouragement of the poor to assert their rights was the kind of journalism that deeply worried Southey, fulfilling the prediction of his 1812 essay in which he warned that the poor would not remain passive. Southey was convinced that to prevent journalists like Cobbett setting the spark to the power-keg, reform was urgently needed to improve substantially the condition of the poorest in the nation.

Fearful of rebellion amongst the poor, Southey was sometimes ambivalent in support for the cause of the poor versus the rich, departing from his usual line of defending one man’s domestic peace against the system when a dangerous spirit of resistance was displayed. In his *Journal of a Tour in Scotland*, for example, he notes the problems one landowner was having with a local craftsman:

The Duke [of Athol] wishes to make a better entrance into the town from the bridge; but there is a stubborn blacksmith, whose shed stands just in the way, and who will not sell his *pen*, thus in a surly doggish spirit of

¹⁰⁰ *Colloquies*, vol ii. 123.

¹⁰¹ William Cobbett, *Political Register*, xxxi (1816), p. 565, quoted by Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language*, p. 229.

independence impeding by his single opposition a very material improvement.¹⁰²

This latter day Wat Tyler, the independent blacksmith, is seen as a retrograde element in society, one of the swinish multitude (the disparaging use of 'pen' is deliberate). The younger Southey may well have cast the incident in reverse, the honest working man being ejected from his home by a lord more interested in aesthetics than the welfare of his fellow Scot. Yet, just when one has given Southey up as hopeless lackey of the rich, he comes out with a strong condemnation of the clearances conducted by the Marchioness of Stafford:

... to expel them by process of law from their black houses, and if they demur in obeying the ejectment, to oust them by setting fire to these combustible tenements - this surely is as little defensible on the score of policy as of morals.¹⁰³

The clearances too could have been defended on the grounds of 'improvement', but in this case, Southey is for the humble people steam-rollered by the landlord into abandoning their family homes and traditional way of life. He does not appear conscious of the contradiction in his position, at one moment under the spell of the rich men and their agents with whom he mixed, at another indignant that representatives of this same class acted unfeelingly.

The contradictory appearance of his views stems from the Janus nature of his radical Toryism with its face both to the past and the future, advocating that strangest of compounds: progressive feudalism. There are some grounds for suggesting that Southey was aware of stresses his position entailed. Indeed, the structure of his last, most extended reflection on modern society, *Sir Thomas More; Or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society* (1829), allows for the tension between past and present to be played out in the conversation between the modern man, Montesinos, and the representative of the past, Sir Thomas More. Inspiration for the structure was traced by one contemporary critic for the *Monthly Review* to Walter Savage Landor,

¹⁰² *Journal of a Tour in Scotland*, p. 46.

¹⁰³ p.137.

who based his dialogues on those of Plato and Cicero.¹⁰⁴ Though Landor's resurrection of characters from the past for his dialogues, *Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen* (1824-29), probably suggested the idea of introducing an historic figure as a partner in conversation, Southey would have been aware of these classical models. He also had his own poetic version to draw on: *Colloquies* can be read as a late flowering of the dialogic mode used in his early eclogues. He, like Landor, used the literary device of a fictional dialogue to explore an argument thoroughly, avoiding the one-sided commitment of a polemic.

The strategy failed to communicate with many of his readers who, used to Southey's strident essays in the *Quarterly Review*, were determined to read it as polemic. In part, this is due to the fact that, though Montesinos is more closely identified by biographical details with Southey, both characters are spokesmen for the author.¹⁰⁵ The critic in the *Monthly Review*, who gave serious consideration to the relevance of the form of *Colloquies* to its theme, did not find the dialogue convincing, believing the characters fall 'almost immediately into the same strain'.¹⁰⁶ My reading sees greater definition between the two stances. The bifurcating stresses in Southey's political position are contained by being suspended in a dialogue between the characters. The conversation between Montesinos and More is thus an attempt at a thesis, antithesis, resulting in a synthesis, familiar as a 'romantic' methodology.¹⁰⁷ Thomas More's role is to compare the past favourably with the present:

Bad as the feudal times were, they were less injurious than these
commercial ones to the kindly and generous feelings of human nature,

¹⁰⁴ *Critical Heritage*, p. 336. Southey himself claims the model is that of Boethius.

¹⁰⁵ Contemporary reviewers were quick to identify both interlocutors with the author: the *Monthly Review* called More 'only a duplicate of the author himself'; Macaulay in the *Edinburgh Review* dismisses Montesinos and More as 'two Southey's' (*Critical Heritage*, p. 336, p. 350).

¹⁰⁶ *Critical Heritage*, p. 335.

¹⁰⁷ Wordsworth also used a dialogic model to analyse modern society in *The Excursion*, but the poem lends itself less readily to a synthesis of views as the Wanderer's authority remains dominant. Other parallels between *Colloquies* and *The Excursion* can also be traced: Southey reflects Wordsworth's structure of rural interludes and local tales by interspersing his dialogue with episodes such as the family walk to Walla Crag and the story of St. Kentigern; but whereas Wordsworth relates these incidents to the themes of his poem, Southey's episodes take the form of digressions only obliquely linked to his main subject.

and far, far more favourable to the principles of honour and integrity.¹⁰⁸

Renowned for his description in *Utopia* of an ideal commonwealth where a property-driven commercial economy has no place, More measures modern society and finds it wanting. By contrast, Montesinos argues that, despite its drawbacks, the ordinary consequences of commerce are ‘humanizing, civilizing, liberalizing’.¹⁰⁹ The optimistic reading of a commercial society is indebted to the Scottish Enlightenment thought, particularly Adam Smith, an author Southey usually dismissed as an apologist for the manufacturing economy. Thomas More’s pessimism, by contrast, is drawn from Southey’s wide reading in Mediaeval and Renaissance literature, reflecting the side of Southey which believed that lessons about what society now lacked could be learned from the image of alternative societies found in the past. One can also hear an echo of Burke’s *Reflections*, particularly in More’s defence of monastic charity and the safe hierarchies of social structures formed by the wisdom of ages. More laments the decline of a reciprocal relationship between landlord and tenant. One of the most palpable evils of industrialization in More’s view is the removal of the rustic from his roots, tearing him away from the social and moral obligations of a small hierarchical community and setting him loose in an impersonal city where he becomes a mere cog in an industrialist’s machine. The result is that the individual out of community is reduced to a sub-human level. More’s view carries forward Southey’s opinion expressed in his 1812 essay, ‘[w]hen his diviner part has never been called forth, the mere animal is all that remains’.¹¹⁰ His analysis also displays much shared ground with Wordsworth’s *Wanderer*, the details of which are discussed in chapter five.

The presence of Montesinos, however, moves the focus from a condemnation of the present by the standards of the past, to consideration of the future. Though Montesinos agrees with much that More finds at fault in modern society, his role is to qualify More’s comments. Montesinos reads the progress of society as ‘the revealed will of God’; this counters any suggestion that an irrevocable wrong turn has been made since

¹⁰⁸ *Colloquies*, ii.157.

¹⁰⁹ i. 195.

¹¹⁰ *Essays*, p. 117.

the sixteenth century because this would be to reject God's plan.¹¹¹ He draws More into a process that sifts the wheat from the chaff in modern society in discussions of emigration, communes, and education. There is also a suggestion that More's sixteenth century sensibility is not the last word on morality: More compares the paupers of nineteenth century society with 'the dogs at Lisbon and Constantinople...; a nuisance to the community while they live, and dying miserably at last!'¹¹² - a crude Malthusian view that Montesinos does not endorse. Nor is there a suggestion that a return to the past of feudal slavery is possible or desirable. More describes this form of slavery as a lesser evil which became 'relatively a good' and depended on ignorance to keep the serfs happy with their lot.¹¹³ Now, the 'health of the public mind' depends on literature and education creating an appropriate moral atmosphere.¹¹⁴

Contemporary reviewers came to *Colloquies* with their own expectations. Macaulay's review of *Colloquies* reads the bias in the book towards criticism of Britain's commercial society without stopping to consider how the qualifying dialogic structure differs from the polemics of Southey's essays in the *Quarterly Review*. The *Monthly Review* is nearer the mark when its reviewer finds an intriguing image of an author 'subject to the sway of two species of influences, which alternately, urge him towards moderation, benevolence, and charity, and towards the reverse of these'.¹¹⁵ Away from the public forum of the reviews, comparable conclusions were being drawn in private. J. S. Mill found that *Colloquies* helped him reconcile what he knew of the man and what he had read of his views; he thus describes Southey in a letter to John Sterling, dated October 1831, as 'a man of gentle feelings & bitter opinions'.¹¹⁶ The serious critical attention afforded *Colloquies* demonstrates that it was treated as an important text in the interpretation of Southey's social views. Its chosen format was understood to be part of the expression. Readings such as Macaulay's which

¹¹¹ *Colloquies*, ii. 319.

¹¹² i. 94.

¹¹³ i. 69-70.

¹¹⁴ ii. 270.

¹¹⁵ *Critical Heritage*, p. 337.

¹¹⁶ p. 386.

dismissed the 'machinery' ended up with a caricature of the arguments it contains.¹¹⁷ Subsequent use of *Colloquies* by literary critics and historians has also tended to overlook the framing device and identified the author unproblematically with the views expressed by both his characters. Southey's response to his changing society is more complex than Macaulay and later critics allow; a fictional framework, far from being - as Macaulay argued - inappropriate to a political statement, provided him with a strategy in which to explore the ambiguous relationship he had with the past and present.

Southey's qualified nostalgia for feudalism was shared by many others of his generation; as David Owen observes in *English Philanthropy 1660-1960*, it was common for the new problems of the age to be seen as ethical rather than structural. Owen comments that '[t]he early Victorians were inclined to define their social problem in moral terms, and to carry over to the new urban-industrial environment answers that had been formulated in the pre-industrial age'.¹¹⁸ Southey's ideal world was one of estates benevolently run by landlords, where workers were part of a defined social structure, the microcosm reflecting the model state of the national government. Southey's imagination could rest at ease with the harmonious image of the feudal community, which may be one reason why he and Coleridge looked to the past for solutions. This essentially rural vision was, however, being overtaken by the development of urban problems that could not be dealt with in this way.

Feudalism in its mediaeval form was an oppressive form of government for the vassals of the landowner, yet this was not the element in the system that Southey admired. Both he and Coleridge felt that the mediaeval system taught that society was greater than the sum of its parts, held together by a kind of organic wholeness. When a system is deemed greater than its constituent parts, the way is left open for tyranny, but Coleridge and Southey were saved from what Alfred Cobban calls 'excessive state worship' by their Christianity which taught the uniqueness of the individual. 'Thus social institutions only possessed validity in so far as they fulfilled the moral

¹¹⁷ Macaulay exclaims 'What cost in machinery, yet what poverty of effect!' (p. 350).

¹¹⁸ David Owen, *English Philanthropy 1660-1969* (London, 1965), p.136.

personality of the individuals forming society'.¹¹⁹ Society was made for man, not man for society.

At the same time as harking back to the perceived virtues of feudalism, which depends on a hierarchical structure, Southey was writing to one correspondent in 1829, that '[m]uch of that levelling is going on with us which no one can more heartily desire to promote than I do, - that which is produced by raising the lower classes'.¹²⁰ Some allowance must be made that to this American friend Southey wishes to present Britain as a progressive country. The comment is made in specific reference to the spread of books to 'a grade of customer which [booksellers and printers] deemed ten years ago beneath their consideration'.¹²¹ Southey was not amongst the most retrograde of the Tory camp, who believed that the lower orders were best left in ignorance; he realized that the spread of education was inevitable, and therefore print should be used to inculcate good citizenship rather than revolution. Turning the lower classes into informed, respectable members of society was a levelling upwards from their previous state of ignorance.

Macaulay and the *Edinburgh Review* may have belittled Southey's contribution to the debate on the poor, but many of Southey's ideas were practical. They were the fruit of his discussions with his friends in government service and parliament; some of them were introduced during the century that followed Southey's death, such as the provision of national education, a national savings scheme and legislation regarding working conditions. Even allotments came to be a popular means of supplementing a poor diet, as well as giving city-dwellers a sense of having a stake in the land. Southey, of course, was not single-handedly responsible for these policies; he was part of a wider movement in this direction. Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society* credits Southey, along with Burke and Coleridge, with having left an important political inheritance to the Young Englander movement, a strand in the new Conservatism of the

¹¹⁹ Alfred Cobban, *Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1929), p. 201.

¹²⁰ *LC*, vol vi. 40.

¹²¹ p. 40.

mid-Victorian period. Williams cites one Young Englander, George Smythe, who claimed that *Colloquies* was the main source of their ideas.¹²² Disraeli, the leading thinker in Young England, followed Southey by putting his concerns about the state of the nation into his writing. Many of the ideas in *Colloquies*, from the model of an organic society down to allotments, appear in *Sybil* (1845) in the discussions of the fictionalized Young Englanders. The conversations between Coningsby and his friends, Sidonia and Millbank, in Disraeli's companion novel of 1844, sound uncannily as if they had been lifted out of the pages of discussion between Thomas More and Montesinos, as for example, Coningsby's belief that 'true wisdom lies in the policy that would effect its ends by the influence of opinion, and yet by means of existing forms'¹²³ - an excellent summary of Southey's views in the last thirty years of his life. Southey was part of the generation that brought the old Tory party of landed interests further on its way to becoming the Victorian Conservative Party with a paternalistic social agenda and belief in moderate reform, the party of Peel and Disraeli rather than Pitt.

Southey's legacy was not confined to the Conservative Party. He succeeded in influencing opinion by promoting familiarity with the 'existing forms' of the past. As one of the channels, along with Chatterton, Scott, Coleridge, and Keats, through which Mediaeval literature and contemporary images of that period were brought into popular culture,¹²⁴ he contributed to the Victorian fashion for the Middle Ages in its various artistic expressions in poetry, criticism and the fine arts. It is a fitting coda to Southey's life that faint echoes of his advocacy of the virtues of Mediaeval society - having lost its direct association with his brand of Toryism - can be traced to William Morris and other socialists whose ideas fed into the Labour movement, showing the enduring ability of Southey's ideas to reincarnate themselves in new, and unexpected,

¹²² Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (first published 1958, London, 1990), see his chapter 'Contrasts ii Robert Southey and Robert Owen'.

¹²³ Benjamin Disraeli, *Coningsby*, ed. S M Smith (Oxford, 1982), p. 313.

¹²⁴ Southey edited the works of Thomas Chatterton (1803), *The Byrth, Lyf, and Actes of King Arthur* (1817), and *Selected Works of the British Poets, From Chaucer to Jonson* (1831) as well as translated *Amadis of Gaul* (1803), *Palmerin of England* (1807) and *Chronicle of the Cid* (1808).

political forms.

By some criteria, Southey moved far from the revolutionary ideas of *Wat Tyler* and *Joan of Arc*, but he retained an aspiration to put the poor man before the system. Why he came to be labelled a reactionary Tory and his progressive agenda ignored raises important questions about our understanding of the Romantic period. It has become a cliché that the victors write the history books; in literature, the dominant literary culture sits as first judge of the others. Much of recent scholarship has been devoted to the important task of excavating the repressed cultures of women, the ethnic minorities and the working classes. Robert Southey, as a dead white conservative male, has not found a champion; he remains too deeply unfashionable, just as he did in his own day when the liberal industrialists, backed up by political economic theory, were the rising stars in politics and the literary fashion was for Byron, followed by Wordsworth. Yet he deserves to be saved from obscurity, not only because of the significant part he played in the political debate on the plight of the poor in an industrial society, but also because he was one of the key innovators in democratizing literary style - an achievement commonly (and wrongly) ascribed to Wordsworth.¹²⁵ These two interests merge when one considers that Southey assisted in making the political debate genuine, as it became one pitched in a language which all the literate could take part - literary enfranchisement coming long before universal suffrage.

¹²⁵ J. P. Ward, for example, in *Wordsworth's Language of Men* (Sussex, 1984) gestures in his preface to an accepted reputation for Wordsworth as a democratizer of language (p. xi).

Chapter Four: Maria Edgeworth: *Practical Education* for an industrializing economy

Maria Edgeworth and her father, R. L. Edgeworth, were acknowledged in their own era as being amongst the most innovative educationalists of the late eighteenth century, breathing new life into the dry bones of education theory. They made their methods generally available to parents and teachers in *Practical Education*, first published in 1798. The book was a collaboration: R. L. Edgeworth provided theoretical input and technical material, as well as acting as editor of Maria's sections. It was an influential syllabus for educational theorists, reflecting the fashion for educational experimentation that stemmed from Enlightenment ideas about character formation. *Practical Education* was one conduit by which such ideas made their way into the main stream of British life. Whilst the Edgeworths helped popularize an intellectual movement, they were not uncritical of their material. Though taking their inspiration from writers such as Rousseau, they were careful to select for onward transmission to their readership only those elements that conformed with their project, recognizing that many ideas that appealed to philosophers were not 'practical' in the schoolroom. As Maria Edgeworth writes of her father's approach to education - which was essentially her own: '[i]n his earliest attempts he had endeavoured to reduce to practice Rousseau's theories'.¹ Their work taught methods of training the rational and moral judgement of children from their first years and stressed the value of cultivating the understanding rather than learning by

¹ Maria Edgeworth, *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth* (2 vols.) (London, 1820), vol. ii. 395. R. L. Edgeworth had been sobered by his attempt to raise his oldest son on a Rousseauistic plan but had been forced to abandon the project when the son turned out to be very difficult to control. *Practical Education* tries to rectify this weakness by laying great stress on forming moral qualities rather than leaving the child's character to Rousseau's concept of natural virtue.

rote.²

Secure of her place in history as an educator of the middle and upper classes, Maria Edgeworth is less well known as an early proponent of education for the lower classes, including the new populations of industrial towns. Most studies of her educational work have taken the child in the middle class nursery as her implied subject, but Edgeworth herself believed she was potentially addressing a wider social spectrum. The evidence is found both internally within her children's tales and in the prefaces for them written by her father and by herself. In addition to these is one interesting - but little discussed - collection of stories, *Popular Tales*, which was published in 1804 for an adult audience of 'all classes'.³ Her attempt to break conventional bounds succeeded: Robert Dale Owen notes that her books were used in his father's school at New Lanark, perhaps the most famous industrial working class audience of her day.⁴ One witness to the Edgeworths' influence on the working class is Bronterre O'Brien, the Chartist leader, who was a graduate from the school in Edgeworthstown which was

² Though Rousseau is one of the most important sources of many of the Edgeworths' educational innovations, they had other home-grown examples of practitioners from which to learn. These practitioners drew their inspiration from John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* which anticipated much to be found in Rousseau in its emphasis on physical strength, absence of corporal punishment and his notion that '...the chief Art is to make all that they have to do, Sport and Play too' (p. 157). One educational experiment that tried to put progressive ideas into practice was David Manson's Belfast Play School which opened in 1752 and ran for some forty years. Though not well known in England, it was famous in Ireland and, in view of the Edgeworths's interest in Education, they may have heard about its practice, which was to combine lessons with play and to put the teacher in the position of a guide and mentor rather than a taskmaster. Another fore-runner to Rousseau was William Gilpin's Cheam School where Gilpin encouraged the boys to run their own shops and work small plots of land in order to give them experience of aspects of the world outside the school gates. Many of these ideas crop up in Maria Edgeworth's stories in the *Harry and Lucy* series and in *The Parent's Assistant*. For further information about educational innovators see W.A. C. Stewart and W.P. McCann, *The Educational Innovators 1750-1880* (London, 1967).

³ Maria Edgeworth, *Popular Tales* (first published 1804), this edition: London, 1893, p. vi.

⁴ Robert Dale Owen, *An Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark* (Glasgow, 1824), pp.35-36.

run on the principles of *Practical Education*.⁵

One reason why Edgeworth has been overlooked as an educationalist for the lower classes is that her main theoretical statement on the matter has remained in manuscript. The unpublished essay, 'On the Education of the Poor', did not travel beyond the family circle, but the ideas it contains did as they can be traced in Maria's widely read published fiction and in her father's work on the Irish Board of Education. The essay was probably written for her father around 1800 and shows his pencil corrections. Its rhetorical style suggests it was composed primarily for the purposes of spoken debate, possibly for those in which R. L. Edgeworth took part in the Irish parliament.⁶ In view of R. L. and Maria Edgeworth's collaboration on other aspects of education, the essay can be read as expressing a shared attitude to the education of the lower classes. It is a clear exposition of an educational theory characteristic of progressive (but not radical) thinkers of the age and is compatible with Adam Smith's views on education as described in *Wealth of Nations*.⁷ Starting from the assertion that visionary schemes to create universal happiness by an equal distribution of goods were impossible dreams,⁸ Edgeworth argues that the most practical manner to give the poor their share in the pleasures of life is to educate them. She argues that education achieves the enlightened

⁵ Alfred Plummer, O'Brien's biographer, describes the school as O'Brien's 'golden educational opportunity'. His university education was sponsored by Maria and her half-brother, Lovell (*Bronterre: A Political Biography of Bronterre O'Brien 1804-1864* (London, 1971), p. 18). R. L. Edgeworth had intended the school for the poor; after his death, his son, Lovell, extended its scope to admit richer boys but he kept the atmosphere of the classroom democratic by having a school uniform of a linen smock over normal clothes.

⁶ The circumstances surrounding the writing of this essay are unclear. It is probable it was written around the time when R. L. Edgeworth was actively engaged in the question of popular education in Ireland. His first period of activity was in 1799, when he spoke in the parliamentary session to ask for a select committee to be set up to examine the issue. However, Maria Edgeworth notes that he spoke extempore and there was no written record, bar an imperfect newspaper report, of what he said. The second period of activity was 1806-1811 when he sat on the Board of Education. The earlier date is perhaps the most likely because R. L. Edgeworth's sentiments, as reported by the media, mirror that found in the essay. For example, he is reported as saying that '[h]e did not wish for the people any other education, but what might afford them a knowledge of their duty, what would make them virtuous and loyal, useful to themselves and to the state'. (*Memoirs*, vol. ii. 248). The essay likewise stresses the social utility of education. It may, therefore, have been a 'dry run' at home of the speech R. L. Edgeworth eventually made without notes.

⁷ See chapter one, pp. 34-35.

⁸ Edgeworth probably has in mind here Godwin's *Political Justice* and communitarian experiments characteristic of some 1790s radical thought.

goal of creating a society of responsible citizens who understand and (to a certain degree) control their own destiny. She goes on to argue the unfairness of expecting people to obey laws of which they are ignorant. Subjective ignorance is no longer an option as the habit of reasoning has spread through society by means of the press, therefore attention should be paid to ensuring the right kind of message is reaching the poor. The final section of the essay turns to the specific case of the industrial worker, rehearsing Adam Smith's argument that manufacturing brings both advantages and penalties for those who work in factories. Edgeworth argues that the conditions of work should be humanized, pleading for a variety of employments to stimulate the mental capacities of the factory-hands, and advocating the locating of factories in rural or semi-rural environments where the workers can be part of a community which places a natural curb on their behaviour as they aspire to maintain their reputation amongst their neighbours.

Attempting to convince those who took the Mandevillian line that education was wasted, and even dangerous, when offered to the poor, Edgeworth argues that it is both useful and inevitable that schooling should be extended to these classes:

The most certain and safe method of relieving the wretchedness of the poor & of encreasing [sic] their share of the pleasures of life is to *educate* them - without you inspire a general spirit of industry, you may in vain distribute, meat, drink, & clothing to a few mendicant pensioners - without you inspire a taste for cleanliness, and order, it is in vain you build or plant for your cottagers. It is in vain you exhort the servant or the manufacturer⁹ to diligence and sobriety, unless he has acquired in his childhood good habits & unless he feels and understands the advantages of the virtues you extol - in vain you expect that the poor should neither be discontented or seditious unless you teach them how their happiness is connected with their obedience to the laws, how those laws which are beneficial to society in general are advantageous to them in particular.¹⁰

This passage demonstrates the continuity with *Practical Education*. Though the latter was aimed primarily at those in easy circumstances with sufficient money to buy the

⁹ 'Manufacturer' here means 'factory hand'.

¹⁰ 'On the Education of the Poor', folios 9-10.

book and spend time tutoring their own children, its basic message is the same: 'Bring up a child in the way it should go'.¹¹ This did not imply a dictatorial parent/child relationship but meant that the parent should enable the child to learn from his or her own experience, ideally in a supportive environment (though her stories also explore the fate of children left without guardians and show that they can mutually support each other as siblings). The difference between rich and poor, upper and lower class, in her view, is merely that of opportunity. In the case of the rich child, their good or bad habits may lead them to squander or increase their wealth, make a prudent or imprudent match, raise their own family of obedient or improvident children. Edgeworth's tales show that the same tests will befall the poor child: the wealth may be numbered in shillings rather than thousands of pounds, but the principle remains the same.

In her essay, Edgeworth is primarily looking at education from the point of view of the elite, attempting to persuade them to subscribe to the change in educational culture. From this perspective she also considers in what way society in general will benefit. For the employer or landowner, she argues, education will soon pay off their investment in local schools; their employees and tenants will not only be able to improve themselves but carry that improvement over into their work practices. Indiscriminate charity is thrown away upon people who have never been taught to conduct themselves properly: the donated clothes will soon wear into holes if not mended, the food will be eaten and more required. In the light of the contemporary debate on the inadequacies of the Poor Laws, Edgeworth offers an important - though not unique - argument for pointing the finger of blame not at the laws themselves but at a more basic problem than that: the lack of a culture of industry and thrift amongst the ignorant poor. No system of poor relief can hope to alleviate poverty, she argues, if this question is not first tackled. Unlike the utilitarianism that produced the 1834 Poor Law, hers is a carrot rather than a stick approach to changing this culture. The poor should not be frightened out of dependency but brought to understand why it lies in their best interests to learn to help themselves.

¹¹ *Popular Tales*, 'The Contrast', p. 317.

Edgeworth's stance on education is also distinguished by her emphasis on rational assent. It is not enough for the upper classes, the law-makers of society, to demand blind obedience to the laws of the land; they must help the lower classes understand why they should abide by the rules and thus inculcate obedience on the basis of enlightened consent. 'To expect that the people should obey laws with which they are not acquainted is the height of absurdity & injustice'.¹² This passage enters the contemporary debate on the legal system by taking a view from the bottom of society. She does not adopt a Burkean position of arguing that laws should be respected because they were agreed to by our forefathers. She is closer to the position of Godwin and Bentham, who argued for the pre-eminence of reason in adjudicating behaviour and, like them, she is optimistic that reason will prevail. Her particular brand of optimism is characterized by her assumption that once the people are acquainted with the reason behind the law, they will have no difficulty concurring with its dictates. She presupposes that the law of the land is impartial, thus commanding universal respect. By contrast, Godwin and Bentham take more radical stances, emphasizing that the existing law needed to be reformed to conform to the 'reasonable' measure of utility before this assent could be expected.

Her conclusions about the fairness of the law may be disputable, but Edgeworth was surely right when she argued that there was no going back to subjective ignorance. Once Pandora's box had been opened by the spread of literacy and literature,

it is too late to uphold this system of mental coercion. The operations of thought are invisible to the eye of power, & no force can counteract them but that of reason - ...The press is a more powerful engine in society than the cannon, and all attempts to restrain freedom of opinion will only endanger instead of preserving public tranquility [sic].¹³

Edgeworth invests reason with enormous power to counter seditious views. Her faith in the effectiveness of rational argument marks her as a child of the Enlightenment.

¹² 'On the Education of the Poor', folio 29.

¹³ folios 53-54. Edgeworth's view anticipates that expressed by Coleridge in *The Friend*: See chapter one, p. 53.

However, looking forward to the future rather than to her philosophical past, this inheritance also puts her on the side of contemporary educational innovators who were to shape much of what was best in nineteenth century education for the masses - with such men as Brougham and Owen. Persuasion rather than repression was the watchword of these progressive educationalists. Though Enlightenment thinkers provided their ideas as seed, this generation cultivated the theories and raised a harvest in which the masses could participate. For example, the intensive tutoring required by Rousseau's *Emile* was a luxury available only to the few; the Edgeworths' version of this educational programme, extracting the core message from *Emile* of fostering rational assent, translated Rousseau's esoteric ideas into terms that were applicable to the population at large. The Edgeworths produced what they accurately termed a *practical* education relevant to all classes in society.

Edgeworth's tales for children and her *Popular Tales* set out to implement the educational theory expressed in *Practical Education*. Each tale takes the reader on an educational journey, but in order to maintain our interest, the routes Maria Edgeworth chooses are many and various. Sometimes the strategy is to provide a stable character with which we are to identify and whose judgement helps guide ours. In 'The Lottery', this point of stability is provided by Ellen, the wife of the feckless Maurice Robinson, a cotton worker from Derby. Ellen's role, mnemonically linked with the pretty, well-planted jessamine adorning the home, is not to reflect on her husband's mistakes - that role is played by others in the tale - but to keep the family together in the difficult times ahead. Her role as observer places the reader by her side. Her patience is rewarded: Maurice learns to resist the temptation of gambling on the lottery and to invest in the more worthy cause of his wife and family. Her example has brought both him and the reader safely through to a rational way of behaving.

In addition to the tale with its moral guide within the narrative are those tales which work by contrast.¹⁴ One of the stories is actually called 'The Contrast' to point up this

¹⁴ Edgeworth uses this strategy on a much larger scale in her novel *Patronage* (1814), which contrasts the fortunes of two families. The predictable patterning which suits the limited aim of a short story fails to maintain the reader's interest on this more ambitious canvas.

strategy, but others that work by a similar structure can be identified: 'The Will', 'The Manufacturers', 'Murad the Unlucky'. The result is sometimes a predictable seesaw with one family rising as the other sinks, but Edgeworth also likes to play with our anticipation of this pattern. In 'The Will', we are given three beneficiaries and a challenge: whoever makes the most of his uncle's bequest in the space of ten years will gain a further sum of ten thousand pounds plus interest. The Parable of the Talents leads us to guess the rest. Neither the characters of the nephews, nor the quality of the farms they inherit, are equal. Goodenough's land needs improvement but promises fairly, but he is a cautious, old-fashioned farmer; Marvel's land is the best, but he is an inventive man, ready to take risks without proper thought; Wright's land is the worst, but he is a clever man who knows how and when to make a good investment. The race is on - and the reader could be forgiven for thinking he can guess who will win. The twist in the tale is that, unlike the Parable of the Talents, the character of Marvel does not remain static. With the help of his generous cousin Wright, he learns to turn his rash but good qualities into financial and moral success. The just verdict, in recognition of Wright's 'prudence and justice on the one side, and generosity and abilities' on the part of Marvel, is that the legacy is divided between the two men; Goodenough is left to lament his niggardliness.¹⁵ The surprise is not merely a clever flourish for our entertainment: it also serves an educational purpose, telling the reader that not everything is inevitable. Sound decisions can change the course of a life for the better. It counters the hopelessness that readers might feel, trapped in the small ambit of their working life, the sort of apathy that Edgeworth met with from the Irish tenants who believed in make do, rather than make better.

Slavery and social cohesion: 'The Grateful Negro' and 'Lame Jervas'

Maria Edgeworth adopts a stance in her writing that is progressive without actually proposing sweeping social changes. Her views are indebted to the political economy and science of man developed during the eighteenth century by Adam Smith, an author she studied carefully. Smith describes society moving gradually through different

¹⁵ *Popular Tales*, p. 99.

economic stages; he links the spread of civilization to the evolution of a commercial and manufacturing system. Outdated practices, such as slavery, slowly wither away as they are demonstrated to be irrelevant to modern society. A comparison between the fate of slavery and the advancement of the working classes in Edgeworth's tales demonstrates her debt to Smith. In her essay, she argues that society will remain intact whilst individuals personally advance to be better suited to their allotted roles in life:

To educate the poor and to make them scholars are not synonymous terms - Education in the just sense of the word is not confined to reading, writing & arithmetic, it comprehends the knowledge of whatever may be necessary to make men useful, virtuous and happy - it comprehends the acquisition of habits which render men good subjects, & useful members of society - What this knowledge and these habits should be must in the case of every individual be determined by the mode of life which he is destined to lead.¹⁶

As society moves forward, education will be regarded as commonly beneficial, not an inappropriate training. A similar pattern of gradual progress is present in her story on the emancipation of slaves. 'The Grateful Negro', a short story included in *Popular Tales*, was written in 1802, a period when the issue of slavery in the British Empire was much in the air, culminating in the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. The tale inevitably participates in the political debate by virtue of its subject matter: the fortunes of Caesar, an African slave in Jamaica, and his relationship with his white master. Amongst the characters in whom Edgeworth invests authorial approval is Mr.

¹⁶ 'On the Education of the Poor', folios 11-12.

Edwards, an 'enlightened' plantation owner who treats his slaves considerately.¹⁷

Edgeworth describes Edwards' views on emancipation as follows:

He wished that there was no such thing as slavery in the world; but he was convinced, by arguments of those who have the best means of obtaining information, that the sudden emancipation of the negroes would rather increase than diminish their miseries. His benevolence, therefore, confined itself within the bounds of reason.¹⁸

Given Edgeworth's high evaluation of rationality, this view in her terms is plausible and respectable, and probably reflects her own thinking on the subject at that date.

Edwards recognizes that slavery is immoral but is afraid worse consequences would result if he acted according to his principles. Just as Edgeworth does not want to see education break down the social hierarchy, her fictional character Edwards does not want to upset the social apple cart of the West Indies, arguing that the slaves themselves have the most to lose if this was done precipitately.

Slavery is criticized, however, as inappropriate in a modern economy because it

¹⁷ The widely read amongst Edgeworth's readers would associate the fictional Mr. Edwards with the well-known historian of the West Indies, Bryan Edwards, who was also a plantation owner. Edgeworth drew many of the background details for her tale from his *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies* (London, 1793), particularly from Book IV which deals with the character of the black slaves of the islands. Though styling himself no friend of slavery, Bryan Edwards did not believe the time was yet right to abolish the slave trade. His grounds for doing so differ significantly from those given to his fictional counterpart. Bryan Edwards expressed his views as follows:

I fear that a direct and sudden abolition, by one nation alone, will *not* serve the purposes of humanity in Africa; and I am fully convinced that such a measure will tend to aggravate, in a very high degree, the miseries of a great majority of the Negroes already in the West Indies; whose decreasing population is a present unavoidable; and who therefore, unless recruited by supplies from Africa, must find their labours augment, as their numbers diminish.

(Vol. II. Bk IV. p. 112)

Here Edwards is considering the impact of the abolition of the slave trade and the knock on effect the end of the trade would have on those remaining in captivity. The fictional Edwards contemplates emancipation of the slaves themselves, something the real life Edwards believes the Africans are not ready for - not through any fear that their miseries would increase, but because they are not yet ready for freedom: 'Civility and improvement must...gradually prepare our Negroes to receive greater indulgence' (*A Speech delivered at a Free Conference*, p. 81.)

¹⁸ *Popular Tales*, p. 400.

prevents the natural development of the individual. This point is brought home by comparing 'The Grateful Negro' with another tale in the collection: 'Lame Jervas'. Though the latter takes for its theme the fortunes of a Cornish miner, the same code of behaviour is applied to the black slave and the white lower class employee. The parallel is made more apparent because the opening plot moves of 'Lame Jervas' closely resemble those of 'The Grateful Negro'. Both Jervas and Caesar are highly praised for their gratitude to their masters for an early intervention on their behalf (Jervas when he broke his leg in a foolish mining accident, Caesar when his master buys him and his bride-to-be to prevent them being separated). The two stories run parallel up to the point where Jervas and Caesar are given a choice to repay their masters by revealing a plot against them or to side with their class, miners and slaves. Their dilemmas differ only in degree - Jervas is faced with a plan to defraud the mine owner, Caesar with a murderous uprising - and Edgeworth makes it clear that in both cases their lives are at risk for breaking ranks. The two heroes opt to go with their masters. At this point, 'The Grateful Negro' comes to an end: a black slave has no place to go once he has become his master's most trusted dependent.¹⁹ For Jervas, it is only the start of his story. This one act sets him up for life as his master sends him away from the danger of revenge attacks and sponsors his education. Jervas rises from being an assistant to a travelling scientific lecturer, to become a teacher in the Bell school at Madras, and finally to be chosen as a mining consultant to a Sultan, where, after many difficulties, he makes his fortune and is able to return to Cornwall as a member of the master caste. As part of an upwardly-mobile industrial working class, Jervas demonstrates the egalitarian potential of the new society created by manufacturing.

¹⁹ 'The Grateful Negro' is in literary dialogue with another slavery tale, 'Master and Slave', part of the Aikin and Barbauld nursery book, *Evenings at Home* (1792-6), a work well-known to the Edgeworths. The dialogue between the Master and the Slave centres on the question of gratitude. Though the Master protests, as does Edgeworth's Edwards, that he treats his slaves well, the Slave replies 'What have you done - what can you do for me, that will compensate for the liberty which you have taken away?' As for gratitude, the Slave dismisses that too: 'Can gratitude take place between creatures in such a state, and the tyrant who holds them in it?' The Slave only feels gratitude when his master impulsively frees him and then - in a plot move followed by Edgeworth - reveals there are plans afoot amongst the slaves to rebel. Edgeworth modifies the pattern traced by this tale for her own, tacitly countering the Aikin and Barbauld view that gratitude cannot exist with slavery with the view that, at its best, the master and slave relationship allows this reciprocal exchange. *Evenings at Home*, 6th edition in 6 vols (London, 1805), vol vi.82-87.

It is vital to Edgeworth's argument that both the owner of the mine and the owner of the plantation are characterized as enlightened, caring men. Edgeworth is anxious to exonerate the 'good' masters from any implication that they are to blame for the evils that befall their employees/slaves because they have fulfilled their part in the social contract with their subordinates. The treatment of children in the mine is appalling but Jervas protests, when looking back to his childhood: 'My good master, here, never knew anything of the matter; but I was cruelly used by those under him'.²⁰ There is no hint of irony about Jervas' remark; Edgeworth does not consider employers responsible for everything that happens under their auspices. Similarly, she tries to protect the benign Mr. Edwards. She separates him from the ugly side of slavery - the ill-treatment of slaves and self-indulgence of the slave owning class - by embodying all the abuses in the owner of a neighbouring plantation. It would not do in an argument for solidarity between different social classes to admit that even the most enlightened superiors may be cruel; but why should they be forgiven for being ignorant or, as in Mr. Edwards' case, for complicity in an unjust economic system? A proto-Marxist style of class analysis which labelled *all* aristocrats, clerics etc. as guilty, was available as it arose from the French Revolution, particularly in the Terror of 1792-4. However, the liberal political economy on which Edgeworth modelled her analysis, took a much more individualistic line. Economic behaviour was the sum of the actions of individuals: these individuals acted in accordance with their own motives but the aggregate of their behaviour conformed to a larger pattern of economic behaviour. Edgeworth looks at the deeds of the individual, not the class, when assessing character. At the same time, she does not forget the larger pattern underlying the economy: the individual who bases his actions on an incorrect understanding of his economic interests puts it in danger. Thus even in the most adverse circumstance of slavery, good men and women are expected to behave as model employees else they risk both their own and society's well-being. This is why 'The Grateful Negro' is included in *Popular Tales*: it is not primarily an anti-slavery tale; rather, Caesar is meant as a role

²⁰ *Popular Tales*, p. 3.

model for the British lower classes.²¹ She anticipated that some of her readers would relate their own employment situation to Caesar's position of subordination and draw the appropriate moral. Thus Edgeworth gives a new perspective on the 'white' and 'black' slavery debate.

Edgeworth does not pit the concern for British industrial workers against slavery; she might even be claimed to be partially apologizing for the abuses in both systems by disguising the coerced relationship brought by want or the whip as the tie of 'gratitude'. Such a view, however, only looks at one side of the coin in the employer/employee relationship. Like other contemporary advocates of *gradual* progress, Hannah More and Edmund Burke, Edgeworth valued gratitude as one of the qualities binding society together, forming part of a mutual interchange between the ranks of society. The mirror action in the stories to Jervas' and Caesar's grateful loyalty to their masters is another kind of gratitude - a gift-bestowing one - from the masters to their men. If society is to remain intact as it reforms, these ties should be maintained, or else risk plunging into moral and social chaos. Submission and gratitude are not seen as part of the equation of slavery, but as the price of holding together a society which affords the vulnerable slave or worker the greatest protection.

Popular Tales and the nature of freedom

Edgeworth's educational tales reflect her preference for a progressive society in which continuity is reconciled with individual advancement. When a deserving individual comes on to the fictional scene, she argued for their right to rise on merit through the ranks. *Popular Tales* concentrates on this more human micro-level, rather than the

²¹ Alan Richardson also notes the relevance of the slavery tale to the situation of the British worker. He argues that Edgeworth's aim in both tales is to teach the subordinate to identify with the master's interest. However, he describes her ideology as 'ambivalent...', at odds with itself, caught between the nostalgia of the tract writers like Trimmer and More for an earlier era's vertical social hierarchies and bonds of patronage and obligation, and the ethos of self-improvement and rugged individualism which would come to mark the "popular" writing of the Victorian age' (*Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, p. 225). As I have argued above, the two are not at odds: More also advocated self-improvement. In short, both writers thought it was their duty to help the deserving poor, and the duty of the poor to help themselves wherever possible.

macro-level of her essay. Edgeworth's fictional world is that of a meritocracy. Lame Jervas, the eponymous hero of the first tale, rises from miner to master. William Deane in 'The Lottery' turns himself from factory hand into a partner in the concern thanks to the money he made from dreaming up an improvement to the machinery he tended. After initial set backs, every surviving member of the Frankland family in 'The Contrast' betters their condition, the boys moving from farming into the middle class professions of shop-keeping and the law. Even in 'The Manufacturers', whilst the main thread of the tale follows the downward trajectory of Charles, his fortune is shadowed by the success of his cousin, patiently making his way up the business - if not social - ladder. Education is the key to the success of each of these characters: if Mr. Frankland had not taught his boys to read, write and cast accounts, the loss of his farm would have been the death blow to the family. Instead, his misfortune proves to be the spur which impels them to make their own way. They are given their first opportunity to show their worth to their employers because their father is known to have not confined his attention to the three Rs: he has made sure they have developed good habits of honesty and loyalty. Thus they are not let down by either their moral or their intellectual reputation.

Edgeworth's position that education improves the working culture of the lower classes leads her in her tales to show this advancement being rewarded. The tales were meant to encourage readers to emulate the examples of good behaviour offered to them; how better to do so than by optimistically suggesting every effort will receive its just recognition? In this, the 'rational' Edgeworth displays a more consistently sanguine view of this world than her Evangelical contemporary, Hannah More. From More's religious perspective, the moment of recognition of one's individual effort will come at the Last Judgement; thus, though her tracts concentrate in the main on the self-advancement brought by good behaviour, she is not afraid to consider an unjust distribution of rewards in this life. Her tract, 'Tis all for the Best', takes as its subject the fate of Mrs. Simpson, the widow of a genteel tradesman, who ends up in the almshouse with her social inferior, Mrs. Betty, a vain former lady's-maid. Despite the tragedy of her life, the loss of both family and fortune, Mrs. Simpson refuses to echo

Mrs. Betty's grumblings, making the most of the little mercies she has left to her. Such religious consolation has no place in the world of Edgeworth's tales where virtue does not have to wait for the next life to be rewarded. Her didactic tales work themselves out with mathematical precision: the effort one puts in is repaid in exact and equal measure by the benefits that eventually accrue - a comforting fiction that excludes the possibility of real tragedy or injustice. This may be an acceptable limitation in the world of the moral tale made in the interest of conveying the intended message, but it is a limitation none the less. The reader's emotional engagement with the characters of this fictional world never rises above a cool interest in their stories as little seems to be really at risk.

The coolness of emotional temperature in the tales is due to this impression of inevitability; the end of the story is apparent from the opening sentence: justice will see the good rewarded and the bad punished. Suspense lies in how this is to be achieved, not if. This structure presents an important philosophical challenge for the author. As Edgeworth's characters inhabit a world where just laws are seen to operate, are her characters mere puppets of destiny, or is there a place for the exercise of their free will? Edgeworth does not make God an agent in her tales - a side of her work for which she was severely criticized by more pious contemporaries.²² She resolves the issue of destiny by invoking a form of necessity modified by human agency. The role of Providence is played by a private presence best described as 'character': whatever life brings, your habits and education will decide whether you sink or swim. In her model - based on a Baconian view of character development - as character is something the person forms for themselves from the experience on offer, their ability or inability to

²² See, for example, John Forster's review of *Tales of Fashionable Life* in *The Eclectic Review*. He finds a serious lack of religious belief in her work, classing her amongst those

minds of the highest and most vigorous capability...who yet, by their utmost exertions, lay scarcely a single stone, and never the foundation stone, in the great work of human improvement. The reason plainly is, because they do not refer to the plan of the original architect, of him who designed, and who knows the end of every part.

(Vol. 8, pt. 2, Oct. 1812, p. 981)

The most censorious review came in 1820 from the pen of John Wilson Croker on the publication of her father's memoirs, seriously damaging Maria's authority as an educationalist.

cope is their responsibility. The result allows for individual initiative: as Adam Smith writes in a 1790 revision to *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: 'in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own, altogether different from that which the legislature might chuse to impress upon it'.²³ Whilst the philosopher might be able to identify a larger pattern to society (here represented by the chessboard), it does not follow that he can direct the game. Smith's modesty did not extend to all political economists, particularly the extreme Benthamite Utilitarians, who believed the government was more powerful and could determine the moves.

Material determinism fits comfortably in the dispassionate world of economic treatises, but presents a serious challenge for the fiction writer. Political economists may find it helpful to talk of human behaviour in the same terms as they describe a market fluctuating under different economic pressures, but a novelist risks losing any sense of autonomy for her characters. Edgeworth adopted Smith's qualified concept of determinism, rather than the extreme position of Benthamites. Whilst strongly believing in the influence of environment on behaviour, she introduces a redefined concept of free will as that power of decision exercised within the parameters of environmental controls. This allows morality back in on sufferance, no longer as a supreme standard but as the best choice an individual can make *given* his or her situation and experience. Edgeworth avoids pushing the philosophical and theological boundaries back any further in her didactic tales to consider the difficult moral question underlying this view: that of the fairness of the hand dealt to some in life - bad parents, illness, poverty - but these were unanswerable and thus unhelpful for the purposes of her educational project.

Material determinism had been a strong current in British philosophy since Locke, but the industrial revolution gave it new currency as the framework for the most influential economic treatises of the early nineteenth century. The leading figure amongst the generation of political economists that followed Adam Smith, David Ricardo, turned political economy into a 'science' rather than a descriptive tool.²⁴ As methods of

²³ Quoted in *Riches and Poverty*, p. 91.

²⁴ *The Idea of Poverty*, p. 101.

statistical collection and analysis developed, he replaced the discursive style of Smith's economic works with an approach that claimed to be based on the impartial and indisputable ground of fact. The assumption underlying Ricardo's work, however, was deterministic: human behaviour in the collective group of the market was determined by economic factors. Under the influence of his kind of political economic vision of society, writers produced a new kind of literature: one in which the role of God was usurped by material forces, a shift which can be identified as one of the defining moments of the development of modern literature. An emphasis on material conditions affecting personal histories later came to be identified with Marxist writing, but in this early period the arch-capitalists and apologists for the free market, such as Harriet Martineau, were first in the field. As touched on above, the major problem for the writer who takes a deterministic view of society is that this view seems to go against the literary culture and the novel's concentration on character. It may be an attitude possible to sustain in a short didactic tale, but in a full-length novel? On the other hand, materialistic determinism was a dominant philosophy in the very period when the novel was flourishing - the mid years of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that it was not the only idea in the literary marketplace; determinism was held in fruitful conflict with other views of society, providing the questions at the heart of the greatest novels of the period. Back at the beginning of the century, the seeds of this future development can be seen in Edgeworth's novels. Her most interesting works are those that struggle with the dilemma of how much human character can be shaped by education and environment and how much it escapes the iron-hand of necessity. Unlike her didactic tales, she answers her own question with a multi-vocal response, allowing the issue to remain in dispute. Her novel *Belinda* (1801) takes this theme as a major part of its plot. The novel describes the attempt by Clarence Hervey, based on the true story of Thomas Day, to raise himself a perfect wife by educating her in a controlled environment. The experiment fails in two ways: firstly, the lady the experiment produces does not suit his taste for intelligent company; secondly, the environment is 'polluted' by Virginia's chance sighting of a picture of a man with whom she falls in love. Careful though you may be with the conduct of someone's education, Edgeworth implies, no one in the real world can be controlled to the extent

to which Clarence aspires.²⁵

The novel also suggests that the interaction of character with environment is unpredictable. Belinda reacts very differently from Mrs. Stanhope's other nieces who have trod the same path in society. In a possibly detrimental environment of bad female role models, the young woman exerts her influence on, rather than is influenced by, the more experienced people she meets. The exception to that rule is Lady Anne Percival - the one positive model of wife and motherhood - but Lady Anne distinguishes herself by advocating that Belinda marry an unworthy man. Belinda, after having followed Lady Anne on most points, has to resist her influence in this affair and exert her own control over her moves in the matrimonial gambit.

In this novel of female education, there remain areas of human experience that cannot be neatly ordered by social determinants. Love is one such area. Fear, and particularly the fear of death, is another. Lady Delacour's anguish over her suspected breast cancer leads her to assume a character far removed from the one she would like to have: she becomes an unpredictable wife and mother, repulsing those she loves best. Though she is at length persuaded to take the rational course and reveal her trouble to a doctor, her erratic behaviour, swinging from frivolity to maudlin piety, is a memorable picture of the human mind acting from irrational impulses.²⁶ Edgeworth as novelist finds the individual far more baffling - and more interesting - than the writer of *Popular Tales* suggests.

²⁵ For an interesting discussion of the Hervey/Virginia subplot and women's education, see Mary Jacobus, ' "The Science of herself": scenes of female enlightenment', in *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming literature 1789-1837*, eds. Tilottama Rajan and Julia M. Wright (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 259-267.

²⁶ Lady Delacour's recourse to the 'irrational' creed of Methodism has a real life source in the Countess of Huntingdon, mother of Lady Moira, and a medico-psychological source in Edgeworth's familiarity with her brother-in-law's, Thomas Beddoes', work on the health of the middling and affluent classes, published as *Hygeia: Or Essays Moral and Medical* (Bristol, 1802-3). Beddoes blamed the development of a culture of illness amongst the higher classes on the commercial society created by the industrial revolution; the British population was being driven into sickness and insanity by an unhealthy appetite for acquisition. See also Roy Porter, *Doctor of Society: Thomas Beddoes and the Sick Trade in Late-Enlightenment England* (London and New York, 1992).

Shaping the environment: the magic of manufacturing

In common with the writings of political economists who took Smith's optimistic line towards industrialization, Edgeworth's essay 'On the Education of the Poor' demonstrates that she believed that the introduction of an industrial economy had a potentially beneficial shaping influence on character. The increased knowledge and good habits brought by industry allowed the industrial worker more scope for 'free' action than his ignorant agricultural counterpart. Whilst not liking the extremes (when she visited Robert Owen's New Lanark factory school in 1825 she expressed her view that he had gone too far and produced mindless regimentation), she continued to argue in later life that industrial discipline was an education for adults and child workers in the virtues of self control and thrift, potentially producing a result that was the very opposite of oppression. Writing in May 1825 to an American correspondent, Edgeworth looks forward to a time when the stability brought by Catholic Emancipation for her troubled Ireland will encourage inward investment: 'English Capital, now overflowing will flow over here, set industry in motion all over this country and induce habits of punctuality, order and economy - virtues and happiness which have for centuries been unknown to the despairing oppressed Irish population'.²⁷ When writing this letter, she is at home in Edgeworthstown, far removed from day to day contact with industrial society. Prominent in her mind are the problems of rural Ireland and its rebellious Catholic majority of poor tenant farmers. Casting her eyes across the Irish Sea, she seeks for answers in the prosperous society of England and finds them in the order and imagined unity of purpose induced by industrialization. The benefits are not defined in terms of the interest of Edgeworth's own class; she describes the key gains as those reaching the mass population, gains both of 'happiness' and 'virtue'.

Edgeworth's experience in Ireland gave her a different perspective on the modern age

²⁷ To Mrs. Lazarus, 2 May 1825 (Edgeworth Papers 2) quoted by Michael Hurst in *Maria Edgeworth and the Public Scene* (London, 1969), p. 43. Ironically, Kay-Shuttleworth, writing in 1832, describes how the process works in reverse: the export of Irish labourers brought into Manchester 'the contagious example of ignorance and a barbarous disregard of forethought and economy' (*The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes*, new imprint of 2nd edition of 1832, Manchester, 1969, p. 21).

from the first generation of Romantic poets.²⁸ For Wordsworth, surrounded by a rural population of statesmen whom he does not want to see changed, industrialized work leads to the brutalization of the rural poor he loves and ends in the disintegration of social virtues.²⁹ In Book VIII of *The Excursion*, following the Wanderer's denunciation of the cotton mill, the poet asks:

Oh! where is now the character of peace,
Sobriety, and order, and chaste love,
And honest dealing, and untainted speech,
And pure good-will, and hospitable cheer;
That made the very thought of country-life
A thought of refuge, for a mind detained
Reluctantly amid the bustling crowd?

(l. 239-245)

The Wanderer replies that these virtues have 'fled' before the tainting influence of industrialization and are now to be found only in hidden valleys. Edgeworth, writing from her obscure rural spot (albeit an Irish one), sees the matter in a different light. She would have allowed that the different history of Wordsworth's Lakes to her Irish bogs produced a different calibre of peasant, but her general point in her letter remains that a backward agricultural world could benefit from an infusion of modern industrial habits of mind.

Wordsworth's argument in *The Excursion* allows for the possibility of moral and mental depravity in the countryside. In response to the Solitary's challenge on just this issue, the Wanderer replies:

When, heretofore, I placed before your sight
A little-one, subjected to the arts
Of modern ingenuity, and made
The senseless member of a vast machine,
Serving as doth a spindle or a wheel;
Think not, that, pitying him, I could forget
The rustic Boy, who walks the fields, untaught;
The slave of ignorance, and oft of want,

²⁸ See Tom Dunne, *Maria Edgeworth and the Colonial Mind* (Cork, 1984), p. 21.

²⁹ The character of Luke in 'Michael', for example, falls away from the good habits learnt in his father's cottage once he goes away: 'He in the dissolute city gave himself/ To evil courses.' (l. 449-450). The best upbringing cannot save a man from the moral pollution of the city environment.

And miserable hunger.

(Bk. IX, l. 156-164)

The ignorant rustic boy comes much closer to Edgeworth's perception of the state of the Irish peasantry. Wordsworth, however, parts company with her when he analyses the cause of this depravity. He is convinced that the evil of both situations lies in the children being absorbed into dehumanizing conditions of employment. The child in the factory resembles the machinery he operates - 'the senseless member of a vast machine'; the rustic boy seems no more sentient than the oxen that pull the plough. The two children lack independence, a key human quality that, in Wordsworth's estimation, can only be engendered by education and a work environment where one has intellectual and moral control over one's labour.

Edgeworth would have approved the importance placed on education in *The Excursion*, but she disagreed that industrial work was always a deadening experience. She believed - as Adam Smith had done - that there were benefits as long as the worker was actively engaged in the task: 'The common labourers in mines, the workmen in manufactories have innumerable opportunities for the exercise of observation & invention & if their attention was early awakened & directed properly they would undoubtedly make use of the advantages which *Fortune* places in their power'.³⁰ Hence she creates such figures in her fiction as William Deane of 'The Lottery' who makes his fortune by this process, educating himself in his spare time in the principles of mechanics.³¹ Edgeworth's industrial world is that of Arkwright and Hargrave, men who made their way from the factory floor to the ranks of the manufacturers, not that

³⁰ 'On the Education of the Poor', folios 62-63.

³¹ In the example of William Deane, Edgeworth is transmitting the principles of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* to a wider audience. Smith writes in on the division of labour that

It is naturally to be expected ... that some one or other of those who are employed in each particular branch of labour should soon find out easier and readier methods of performing their own particular work, wherever the nature of it admits of such improvement. A great part of the machines made use of in those manufactures in which labour is most subdivided, were originally the inventions of common workmen, who being each of them employed in some very simple single operation, naturally turned their thoughts to finding out easier and readier methods of performing it. (vol. i. 20)

Deane's thoughtful application to his own work is this passage brought to life.

envisaged by later writers such as Dickens and Frances Trollope who see only the hellish conditions of work.³²

The second part of the 'Lame Jervas' story illustrates this key aspect of Edgeworth's attitude to industrialization: for her, the new scientific advances were to be celebrated and displayed. She was in good company: other writers were also inspired to greet the new era in verse and prose, for example, Erasmus Darwin, whose description of Franklin's experiments with electricity and the development of the steam engine in *The Botanic Garden* (1791) were widely cited.³³ Her treatment of the hardships of the industrial workers is upbeat and optimistic because she saw industry as leading, not to social collapse as some of the Romantic poets and Victorian novelists did, but rather to inevitable improvement: truly a 'brave new world'. Jervas celebrates this world in a direct way, first by exhibiting his model of the tin-mine to English audiences, later by performing various scientific tricks before the Indian sultan.

The era of scientific advance in the eighteenth century has been described as one of theatrical display, with lecturers touring the country with their apparatus, showing off the magic of modern technology to enthusiastic audiences.³⁴ This era shaped Edgeworth's views on the future of industry. She had mingled in the scientific circles of her father, meeting many of the leading lights of British industry through her father's

³² Edgeworth gives Hargrave and Arkwright an important place amongst the role models for her child readers of the Harry and Lucy series. Their achievements perfectly suit the gospel of *Practical Education* with its emphasis on experimentation and scientific improvement. The history of both men is recounted in volume I of *Harry and Lucy Concluded* (1825).

³³ Darwin projected a future of flying machines, showing the age's confidence that the sky was no limit:

Soon shall thy arm, UNCONQUER'D STEAM! afar
Drag the slow barge, or drive the rapid car;
Or on wide-waving wings expanded bear
The flying-chariot through the fields of air.

(*The Botanic Garden*, London, 1791, Pt. I, ll. 289-292)

Edgeworth quotes this passage in *Harry and Lucy Concluded*, but opts for a prudent silence as to the likelihood of steam-powered flying-chariots.

³⁴ See, for example, Stephen Daniels' essay, 'Joseph Wright and the Spectacle of Power,' *Fields of Vision: Landscape imagery and National Identity in England and the United States*, ed. Stephen Daniels (Cambridge and Oxford, 1994).

membership of the Lunar Society, amongst whose members were Josiah Wedgwood, Erasmus Darwin and James Watt. Joseph Wright, the preeminent artist amongst the scientific men in the group, captured on canvas this optimistic mood. He progressed from painting nocturnal forge scenes, which celebrated and ennobled the individual artisan of small scale industry, to canvases such as *Arkwright's Cotton Mills by Night* which lauded the machinery and buildings of the new factories, dwarfing the workers. He belonged to the first optimistic era of industrialization 'celebrating the birth of modern science from superstition'.³⁵ His successors, such as Phillippe Jacques de Loutherbourg, pushed the images of industrialization further, producing or reflecting an attitude that perceived the factories as 'dark satanic mills'. He did so by making the industrial site less stable and more apocalyptic, for example in his picture *Coalbrookdale by Night* (1801) - a landscape reminiscent of Blake.

Edgeworth follows Wright rather than Loutherbourg. Throughout her educational work, but predominantly in *Harry and Lucy Concluded*, she does in print for an audience of children what Wright does on canvas: she is her own Jervas demonstrating the marvels of industrialization for a captivated audience. She shares with Wright the sense that the machinery was increasingly taking over from men, but this is seen as a fact rather than a threat. She describes a Bristol sugar refinery as typical of this development in working conditions:

In truth, the men seemed of little importance. It appeared as if they were employed only as under-servants to the machines, and to do trifling things, which the mechanic and the chemist had not thought it worth their while to invent the means of effecting in any other way.³⁶

The workers appear on a scale akin to Jervas' cut-out figures of miners in his model of the tin mine; the only people in this brave new world to assume any stature are the god-like figures of the mechanic and chemist, the arbiters of what will be invented and what ignored. Her words, however, are in the spirit of a showman, aiming not to belittle the

³⁵ Francis D. Klingender *Art and the Industrial Revolution*, revised by Arthur Elton (Chatham, 1968), p. 53.

³⁶ *Harry and Lucy Concluded* vol ii. 246.

Bristol refiners, or to turn them into a nightmare vision of pandemonium devils serving a Moloch, but to marvel at the machines.

The urge to display had a serious educational side. Edgeworth was convinced that, in order to remain the leading industrial nation, Britain had to cultivate a generation of scientifically literate children. This agenda is present from her earliest days as an educationalist. In *Practical Education*, Maria and her father recommend that children be exposed to workshops and encouraged to understand the processes that make the things with which they are familiar. In the *Early Lessons* series, traditional crafts are joined by the latest scientific developments as the whole of industry - factories and mines, canals and steam engines - is put on display for their pupils. What the Edgeworths recommend in their teacher's textbook, they put into practice in the school-room of their fictional pupils, Harry and Lucy, with their counterparts, Rosamond and Frank. Edgeworth worked with her father on the first story of the series and already the young Harry is learning how to manufacture bricks and Lucy butter. R. L. Edgeworth continued to supply material but Maria took over the direction of the series, introducing a more narratorial approach. As the reading age of the child increases, so does the complexity of the depictions of manufacturing. By the time we have reached *Continuation of Early Lessons*, aimed roughly at the seven to ten age group, we are ready to go to our first cotton mill. We are prepared for the encounter by Rosamond's brother Godfrey, who tells his sister what to expect:

And first when you go in, you will hear such a noise of whirling and whirring - *whirr - whirr - whirr* - and you will see so many wheels spinning round, round and round, without knowing what moves them; then such numbers of pale-faced men, women, and children! such numbers, every where, so busy, none of them thinking of, or caring for you! and there will be such a dust! and such disagreeable smells! and such want of fresh air! and, Rosamond! you will not be able to hear a word that is said, or to make any body hear what you say, without bawling, as loud as I do now.³⁷

Godfrey's experience of the mill echoes that depicted by Loutherbourn: he tries to scare his little sister with his vision of a factory hell, the workers figuring as frightening

³⁷ Maria Edgeworth, *Continuation of Early Lessons*, (2 vols.) (London, 1814), vol. i. 254-255.

wraiths with pale-faces. After having our expectations wrought up by Godfrey, the real experience comes as a let-down:

The disagreeable smells, and dirt, and want of fresh air, which Godfrey had described, Rosamond did not perceive in this manufactory; on the contrary, there was plenty of fresh air, and but little dust: nor were the faces of the men, women, or children, who were at work, pale, or miserable; on the contrary, they had a healthy colour, and their looks were lively and cheerful. This manufactory was managed by a sensible, humane man, who did not think only of how he could get so much done for himself; but he also considered how he could preserve the health of the people who worked for him, and how he could make them as comfortable as possible.³⁸

Edgeworth rehearses in these two word pictures the debate that was to become more familiar later in the century. In the 1830s, Andrew Ure, apologist for industry, countered Robert Southey's dismal picture of factories in *Colloquies*, with an up-beat exposition of the best manufacturies in the country. He accused Southey of pandering to an aristocratic dislike of trade and asserted that, like Edgeworth's 'humane man', employers take the greatest care of their workforce: '[t]he slightest inquiry on the spot, the most superficial ocular inspection, would have satisfied any candid mind, that the owners, from regard to pecuniary interest, as well as to humanity and reputation, always set their faces against every species of oppression within their premises'.³⁹ Edgeworth's text is less polemic than either Southey or Ure; she allows both versions to stand. Though an optimist about industrialization, Edgeworth was aware of the existence of bad practice and did not see it as a weakness to admit to it. Unlike Ure, she did not have to adopt the extreme positions of seeing all good or all bad in the factory system to make her case. Rather, her case works on the contrast: Godfrey's view of a cotton mill is not a fantasy - he had been taken to one like that by his father on an earlier occasion. Edgeworth knows the value of a negative example; she wants her child readers to understand that it does not have to be like that and thus shows them a good example. Looking to the future, she is providing a training for the next generation of managers and owners of British industry, embedding her progressive ideas within

³⁸ p. 259.

³⁹ Andrew Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (London, 1835), p. 290.

the text to mould the opinions of those still in their early years but who will one day decide the fate of many in their employ.

Though Edgeworth was excited by the potential of machinery to replace human labour, she realized that it was the human that, in the end, provides the interest of a place for a writer. Thus every process is seen through the eyes of the visiting child. She also wants her child readers to sympathize with the people that work in the great cathedrals of the industrial revolution, as well as leave with a passing knowledge of the steam engine. She achieves this by making the story child-centred, picking one of the younger operatives out from the crowd. In many respects, the little story about Ellen, the generous factory girl, could have been written by Hannah More: Rosamond and Godfrey learn how Ellen worked extra hours to help the little children pay their proportion of a subscription to buy their favourite teacher a silver cup. The Edgeworthian addition is that the story comes within the framing narrative of child listeners reacting to the tale. In More's tales, the assumption is usually that the main character reflects the social status and aspirations of the readers. In Edgeworth, our sympathies extend to Ellen, but we empathize with the listeners, Rosamond and Godfrey, and their admiration of the little heroine. Whilst Edgeworth in *Early Lessons* displays the wonders of machinery for her readers, she also wants to present her reader at this stage in their education with a picture of an equally marvellous worthy labouring class.

Notwithstanding her position amongst the supporters of the factory system, Edgeworth did not ignore the ugliness of industrialization; a close observer of her world, she could not fail to see what lay before her when she passed through the great cities of England. Her letters whilst on her trips away from home reflect her dual vision. On the one hand, when confronted by the landscapes of industry, such as a slate mine in Wales, she reaches for the vocabulary of art, calling the prospect 'sublime and picturesque',⁴⁰ endowing the scene with nobility. On the other hand, during her visits to Liverpool

⁴⁰ Maria Edgeworth, *Letters from England 1813-1844*, ed. Christina Colvin (Oxford, 1971), To Miss Mary Sneyd, 31 March 1813, p. 5.

and Manchester in 1813, she is struck by the vulgarity of manufacturing towns.⁴¹

Despite her statements that industry has a beneficial effect on character formation, clearly there are exceptions to her rule. The social snobbery which Edgeworth shared with other members of the Irish gentry would not countenance *les nouveaux riches*.

Her condemnation of towns went much further than this letter of 1813. As early as the essay 'On the Education of the Poor', she was deploring the conditions of city life on behalf of the lower classes: 'The miseries to which the poor are exposed in large manufacturing towns is [sic] scarcely credible'.⁴² Not only were the physical conditions reprehensible, but the anonymity of conurbation was not conducive to moral behaviour: 'Nothing contributes more to make any individual careful of his conduct than the idea that he has some credit to lose'.⁴³ She shared with the Romantic poets a belief in the moral virtue of contact with the soil and is on common ground - particularly with Southey - when she suggests one solution is to allow for a variety of employments in factory communities: 'Why should not they [the workers] be on a small scale cultivators as well as artificers[?]'⁴⁴ Her ideal was the factory placed in a rural setting; a best-of-both-worlds atmosphere where the workforce could relax among the fields after their labours. She notes that the iron foundries of Coalbrookdale seem to be placed in such a setting.⁴⁵ 'On the Education of the Poor' anticipates the course of the debate on industrialization in the coming decades⁴⁶ and reminds us that industry was often located, particularly in this early phase, in rural and semi-rural situations. The heavily industrialized conurbations known to the Victorians were not at this period a foregone conclusion; commentators, as Edgeworth demonstrates, believed they could still have influence on the shaping of the new social landscape.

41 To Mrs Ruxton, 6 April 1813, p. 15.

42 'On the Education of the Poor', folios 92-93.

43 folio 90.

44 folio 76.

45 folio 92.

46 Andrew Ure, for example, writing in 1835, makes very similar points about the harmonious relationship between factory and fields in his *The Philosophy of Manufactures*, a defence of industry against its detractors in the factory reform movement. See in particular pp. 353-354.

Encoding the politics of change

Unlike Harriet Martineau, Edgeworth did not seek a high profile as a social campaigner in the 'masculine' sphere of politics. Yet her involvement in education could not be disentangled from politics and inevitably led her into territory exceeding the bounds of the nursery. As she defined education primarily as the process of teaching the child or the uneducated adult how to reason, her didactic works could hardly avoid confronting social problems. Her strategy was to embed her political attitudes in her fiction. As part of the grain and texture of her narrative, these views have to be sought out but they are still there to teach the reader how to reason correctly. Again, the emancipation issue provides an helpful example of her procedure. Whilst not an acknowledged abolitionist, from references to slavery in her work she emerges as a sympathizer for the campaign to end the slave trade.⁴⁷ Her tale, 'The Grateful Negro', has already been mentioned. Though Edgeworth is chiefly concerned with the politics of social cohesion, she also uses the story as a vehicle for arguments against slavery. Drawing on Adam Smith, her line of reasoning prefigures that used by Martineau in 'Demerara', one of the stories included in *Illustrations of Political Economy*. Edgeworth makes the comparison with British industrial workers this time to point the difference rather than stress the similarity between the two worlds. Mr. Edwards asks: 'Does any negro, under the fear of the overseer, work harder than a Birmingham journey man, or a Newcastle collier, who toil for themselves and their families?'⁴⁸ Edwards pays his slaves wages for extra task work, introducing into a slave economy the principles of a capitalist market based on free labour. Martineau gives Alfred, her enlightened plantation owner, similar sentiments and practice. The young man argues with his father that 'we ...can never guess from looking at a negro sulking in the stocks, or tilling lands which yield him no harvest, what he may be where there is no white man to fear and hate, and where he may reap whatever he has sown'.⁴⁹ Both women, coming from rational, progressive households, were revolted by slavery not only as a

⁴⁷ See also her play *Whim for Whim* and her anonymous article for the *Edinburgh Review* (April, 1807) on John Carr.

⁴⁸ *Popular Tales*, p. 403.

⁴⁹ *Illustrations of Political Economy*, vol. ii. No. IV. 140.

sin against humanity, but also as a sin against reason and the economy.

Edgeworth frequently associates the black slave with the English labouring class in her writings for children. Edgeworth was by no means the first to include children in the anti-slavery debate: the theme had become a regular feature in the main nursery texts, partly in response to the campaign to win over public opinion at large, but also to cultivate sympathy for the sufferings of fellow creatures - humans and animals - which was a key tenant in many educational agendas. Other female educators felt like Edgeworth that they were within the bounds of decorum to include this kind of political issue in writing for children. Barbauld's popular *Hymns in Prose for Children* includes a reference to the plight of slaves. In Hymn VIII, after celebrating the community, Barbauld moves to contemplate the sad fate of the exiled slave:

Negro woman, who sittest pining in captivity, and weepest over thy sick child; though no one seeth thee, God seeth thee; though no one pitieth thee, God pitieth thee: raise thy voice, forlorn and abandoned one, call upon him from amidst thy bonds, for assuredly he will hear thee.⁵⁰

The hymns were designed to be memorized, thus from an early age Barbauld was indoctrinating her child reader in anti-slavery sentiment. It worked in Edgeworth's case because she recalls this passage and quotes it in *Harry and Lucy Continued*.⁵¹

Barbauld was followed by her contemporaries in laying the issue before a juvenile audience: Hannah More's tracts, which she used with her school children, also give prominence to slavery. A greater influence on Edgeworth herself was, however, *Sandford and Merton* (1783-9), her favourite children's book written by a family friend, Thomas Day (also co-author of 'The Dying Negro, mentioned in *Belinda*). Tommy Merton, the spoilt rich boy brought up in the vitiating atmosphere of a plantation in Jamaica, learns a lesson in humanity whilst in the more liberal atmosphere of England from talking with his Negro servant. The servant tells him about his birth and upbringing in Africa, with exciting anecdotes about wild animal hunts and heroic deeds. In response, Tommy

⁵⁰ A. L. Barbauld, *Hymns in Prose for Children*, fourth edition (London, 1787), pp. 66-67.

⁵¹ *Continuation of Early Lessons*, vol. ii. 148.

reflected with shame and contempt, upon the ridiculous prejudices he had once entertained; he learned to consider all men as his brethren and equals: and the foolish distinctions which pride had formerly suggested, were gradually obliterated from his mind.⁵²

Tommy's moment of epiphany is a lay version of that experienced by the traveller in More's 'A True account of a Pious Negro' discussed in chapter two. Edgeworth writes in the spirit of *Sandford and Merton*, sharing its values of hard work, honesty and kindness to others; and like Day, she believed that recognizing one's fellow man to be a brother was the basis of right human relationships.

Her observations for children in the *Harry and Lucy* series on slavery were written after the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 at a time when the issue was of less immediate political relevance (though full emancipation of slaves in the British Empire was still to be achieved). Her point is a larger one than the issue of slavery itself: the lesson is to admire and emulate those campaigning for humanitarian ends.

'Humanitarian ends' encompasses both 'black' slavery and 'white' lower class suffering. In *Harry and Lucy Concluded* (1825), the two children are each given a memento:

Lucy's [cameo], which was black on a white background, represented a negro in chains, kneeling with his hands raised, in a supplicating manner, with this motto engraved,

'Am I not a man and a brother?'

Harry's cameo was all one colour, brown. It represented three allegorical figures, Peace, Art and Labour; and it was made of clay, which had been brought from Botany Bay. Mr. Wedgewood [sic] made use of this clay, as Mrs. Frankland told Harry, on purpose to show the settlers and inhabitants of that country, what could be made of their materials by industry and ingenuity; and thus he encouraged them to exert themselves. Of these cameos the late Mr. Wedgewood [sic] distributed many hundreds. And no doubt considerable effect was produced by

- 'the poor fettered slave, on bended knee,

⁵² Thomas Day, *The History of Sandford and Merton* (first published 1783-9, this edition, London, 1826), p. 425.

From Britain's sons imploring to be free.'⁵³

One major battle had been won by the abolitionists - the end of the slave trade in 1807 - so the cameos, like Wedgwood, are mentioned as objects of historical interest.

However, the cameos also carry with them a personal message for each child with implications for the present and future: it is no accident that Mrs. Frankland gives the slave medal to Lucy - the girl of feeling and imagination - and the Botany Bay cameo to Harry - the earnest inventor whose future clearly lies in industry. She is passing the values of the previous generation - the values of Wilberforce and Wedgwood in their campaigns to liberate the slaves and improve the lot of the working classes - on to the rising one, represented in the text by Harry and Lucy. This is a lesson meant also for the young reader who empathizes with the children, being of the same age and era.

Two-way traffic between the classes: *The Parent's Assistant*

Edgeworth treated the different classes of society on equal terms because she recognized that there was no difference between the way the mind operated: what worked well for one class, if it could be brought within reach of another, was likely to meet with similar success. This approach formed the rationale behind the school in Edgeworthstown but can also be traced to her educational works. She did not assume that the rich had all the answers; she believed they could learn from the experience of

⁵³ Maria Edgeworth, *Harry and Lucy Concluded* (London 1825) vol. ii. 40-41. The quotation is from Erasmus Darwin's poem, *The Botanic Garden*, Pt. 1, l. 315-316. Darwin is also the source of the linkage of the two cameos: in his passage on Wedgwood, he adds the following footnote:

Alluding to two cameos of Mr. Wedgwood's manufacture; one of a Slave in chains, of which he distributed many hundreds, to excite the humane to attend to and to assist in the abolition of the detestable traffic in human creatures; and the other a cameo of Hope attended by Peace, and Art, and Labour; which was made of clay from Botany Bay; to which place he sent many of them to shew the inhabitants what their materials would do, and to encourage their industry. (p. 87).

Many of Edgeworth's readers would have been familiar with Darwin's poem and would have recognized that the incident echoes its language and sentiment. Edgeworth has not got her facts quite right, however, as she describes the Botany Bay medallion as showing only three figures: Darwin makes clear that there are four.

the poor. The educational process conducted in the Edgeworth nursery shares common ground with the monitorial systems of Bell and Lancaster, the fashionable solution for schools for the poor (see chapter one). In both Edgeworth's nursery and the monitorial system, children are made responsible for passing on the knowledge they have gained to their class-mates. The 'system of mutual instruction'⁵⁴ receives its most developed treatment in *Harry and Lucy Concluded*. Edgeworth explains in the preface that using children as the vehicles of instruction aids the process of learning because children listen to each other for longer and can sympathize with each other's difficulties. This strategy aimed at her readership of ten to fourteen year-olds is played out by an internalized child-audience in the text. The interaction between Harry and Lucy shows the enriching experience of sharing an educational journey. The children have different skills: Lucy is more imaginative and fond of literature; Harry, her younger brother, is drawn to science and factual knowledge. Edgeworth says in her preface that Lucy is 'too childish and volatile', but her faults 'produce the nonsense and the action necessary to relieve the reader's attention'.⁵⁵ In truth, Lucy's conduct throughout the four volumes proves her to be more witty and to have a quicker intelligence than her brother; she seems childish only because her methodical brother seems precipitately mature. He has to be reminded by his father that '[i]t is sweet to talk nonsense in season. Always sense would make Jack a dull boy'.⁵⁶ Harry is given the task of bringing Lucy up to speed with his own lessons (she has been spending time learning feminine skills such as needlework and reading literature). He takes Lucy (and the reader) along the same educational path he has already trod. Her swift grasp of difficult matters prompts him to tell her that she has understood the principles of the steam-engine more quickly than he did when he was taught by his father. Harry may know more, but Lucy is by this measure more intelligent.⁵⁷ Harry's virtue is application: he persists in his building experiments long after Lucy would have dropped the task from

⁵⁴ *Harry and Lucy Concluded*, vol. i. xiii.

⁵⁵ p. xiv.

⁵⁶ vol. ii. 155.

⁵⁷ Most of Edgeworth's child characters are drawn from life. Her materials were at hand because she had a share in the education of many of her own siblings and later their offspring. This balance between clever females and unimaginative males reflects the experience in the nursery at Edgeworthstown as the girls (in particular, the first Honora and Maria herself) outshone their brothers.

frustration.⁵⁸

The resemblance between the mutual instruction in the Edgeworth nursery and the monitorial scheme is demonstrated by comparing her approach with one of the first monitorial schools in England. P. Colquhoun was responsible for popularizing the educational ideas of Dr. Bell, implementing in the Free School in Westminster the system Bell had practised in Madras. In his pamphlet to advertise the scheme - 'A New and Appropriate System for Education for the labouring People' (1806) - Colquhoun describes in great detail the monitorial system which allows one master to teach a room containing hundreds of children. The pupils were encouraged to conform to the rules by a system of praise rather than punishment. The similarity to the *Early Lessons* method of teaching (which first appeared in 1801) is evident as the children in Edgeworth's tales are encouraged by praise from their parents, with no mention of corporal punishment, and are taught to teach each other. Bell's and Edgeworth's methods developed independently, owing their similarity to their shared inheritance in enlightened educational thought. It comes as an interesting cross reference to note that in *Popular Tales* Lane Jervas acts as a master in Bell's school in Madras, indicating that Edgeworth was familiar with the scheme and approved of it as a means of educating the lower classes.⁵⁹ Thus she achieved a reverse of what Hannah More attempted: More took her teaching skills out of the school-room of the rich and extended them to the poor; Edgeworth took methods usually applied to the poor and used them to stimulate the privileged pupil.

The children of *Harry and Lucy* are of course privileged compared to their contemporaries in the Free School at Westminster; they have the luxury of individual

⁵⁸ Edgeworth pokes gentle fun at the serious approach of Harry and his father to educative tasks when she describes them both trying their hand at embroidery:

There was a knack in it, which could be learned only by practice. But the gentlemen talked very learnedly to each other about it, and agreed that their perfect theory had helped, would help, or should have helped, them very much (vol.i. 183).

⁵⁹ Colquhoun also links back to Hannah More. Members of the Clapham Sect appear on the list of trustees of his school ('A New and Appropriate System for Education for the labouring People' (London, 1806), p. 13).

tuition and are encouraged to follow their own interests. Where practically possible, however, Edgeworth brought the elitist education of Rousseau's *Emile* to bear on lower-class children. Following the practice of Rousseau's ideal tutor, her lessons for humbler pupils are child-centred with the emphasis being on discovering a truth for oneself, rather than learning it parrot-fashion. In 'The Cherry Orchard', one of the *Early Lessons* set in a rural working class community, the children experience the value of the division of labour when straw plaiting. The role of the adult is to facilitate the lesson by providing the wages for the children's work, but not to interfere with the natural process of education. This emphasis on self-discovery would seem to be antagonistic to Edgeworth's use of the monitorial form of learning, but she manages to reconcile the two systems. The central point is discovery. The child discovers something for himself, then helps his 'pupil' to have the same revelation, in the process clarifying his discovery in his own mind. Both the monitor and the pupil are supposed to engage actively in the intellectual journey, the pupil's role being to question and test the knowledge of the monitor in the best empirical fashion.⁶⁰ Indeed, to call these tales 'didactic' may be misleading: though they teach, they do so by gaining the reader's assent to a moral or intellectual conclusion, rather than dictating the 'correct' response.

In *The Parent's Assistant*, Edgeworth constructs another kind of bridge for two-way traffic between education for the rich and poor. Edgeworth's tone is never condescending as she shifts from her privileged schools to her poor cottages. Indeed, her attitude to all children is that they should not be patronized:

Dr. Johnson says, that 'Babies do not like to hear stories of babies like themselves; that they require to have their imaginations raised by tales of giants and fairies, and castles and enchantments.' - The fact remains to be proved: but supposing that they do prefer such tales, is this a reason why they should be indulged in reading them? It may

⁶⁰ Edgeworth's procedure has interesting similarities with the theory of knowledge put forward by Schelling in 'The Scientific and Moral Functions of Universities' (1803). In this work, he describes many of the discoveries of human knowledge as being 'of a kind whose inner essence can be grasped only by a kindred genius through a rediscovery in the literal sense of the word' (quoted in 'Romantic Philosophy and the organization of the disciplines', p. 42.) He, like Goethe before him, advocates repeating all the steps taken to discover something in order to make the knowledge personal. Edgeworth's pupils likewise go through a process of self-education where they learn from trial and error, for example in Harry's attempts in the field to build a roof and a bridge in *Harry and Lucy Concluded*.

be said that a little experience of life would soon convince them, that fairies, giants, and enchanters, are not to be met with in the world. But why should the mind be filled with fantastic visions, instead of useful knowledge?⁶¹

These remarks were first drafted by her father, but Edgeworth endorses them in her stories. This is not an anti-imagination argument but a plea for children to be considerately treated as potential adults, not 'babies' to be fed on pap. Elsewhere in her writings, Edgeworth uses an Arabian Nights setting ('Murad the Unlucky') and repeatedly refers to these tales in the *Harry and Lucy* series, so she evidently saw a role for fantasy. By presenting the world of the rich to the poor (and vice versa) in *The Parent's Assistant*, she provides her readers with the fantasy of the exotic of another kind. She does not even discard the Johnsonian machinery of tales for babies - castles, buried treasure and so on - but repackages it to achieve another effect. In 'The Orphans', we are given these very motifs: a family of orphaned children are forced to take shelter in the ruins of an old Irish castle. There, after an accident in one part of the building, they find some lost golden coins. Described like this, one expects a Johnsonian fantasy story, but the tale works against a 'romantic' view of such adventures. Castles are poor substitutes for well-built cottages; golden coins are exciting, but conniving grown-ups will work to swindle you out of your reward. The 'romantic' view of buried treasure is ironically represented by an old woman, who has abandoned all her natural responsibilities to delve in the ruins of buildings, hoping to fulfil a prophecy once made about her. Her life is wasted in the pursuit of a 'fantastic vision'; the children only benefit from their lucky find through hard work and judicious help from some local sponsors.

This anti-romantic strain in Edgeworth is also found in *Harry and Lucy Concluded*. Like Austen's *Northanger Abbey* (1817), Edgeworth writes her own little satire on gothic romances when she takes Harry and Lucy to stay at Digby Castle. Sir Rupert gives the children leave to explore the whole castle with the exception of the room behind an iron door. Lucy, the one with the fantastical imagination, immediately begins to dream up all sorts of possible explanations, but better behaved than Catherine

⁶¹ *The Parent's Assistant*, p.xi.

Morland, she does not disobey her host. Her prudence is rewarded: it turns out that the prohibition had been for their safety. In a characteristic technological twist, the door hides only Sir Digby's laboratory and electrical machine. The wonders his laboratory reveal about the natural world are described as being far more exciting than anything offered in the pages of novels obsessed with the supernatural.

Edgeworth's comment on Johnson's remark that it 'remains to be proved' that babies do not like to hear stories about babies like themselves gestures to her own belief and writing practice for children. Just as for an adult audience the taste for gothic romances was becoming passe and a new kind of 'naturalistic' novel was developing, so Edgeworth felt children, rich and poor, should be provided with their own narratives of 'real' life rather than fantastical visions. Female educationalists, like Edgeworth, Wollstonecraft, More and Barbauld, have suffered from a critical bias towards the outstanding tradition of fairy tales and nonsense verse of the Victorian and Edwardian era - it being assumed that children found moral tales as unexciting as do the critics. This is a dangerous assumption and ignores the continuing popular tradition of moral tales set in daily life. A child does not only relate to the world in one way: magical fantasy has its place; but children also enjoy the fantasy of identifying with characters in situations comparable to their own experience. Effective moral tales, such as Edgeworth's, should not be defined as overbearing didacticism, but as liberating spaces where children can face the dilemmas of growing up.⁶²

Modern children's writers have inherited many of their strategies from Edgeworth and other pioneers in this field. The child is made the central consciousness of the piece; authority figures are often absent or distant; important questions of right and wrong are left to the hero or heroine to decide on their own. Many such examples can be found in *The Parent's Assistant*. Edgeworth's stories do not belittle the achievements of her child heroes and heroines. In 'The Basket-Woman', for example, she writes approvingly of the ingenuity of the poor boy, Paul, who devises a simple device to put under carriage wheels to stop them rolling back down the hill outside his home. He

⁶² See 'Romancing the Moral Tale', p. 97.

gets pennies from the grateful travellers for his trouble. Edgeworth regards her poor engineer with the same admiration she reserves for Harry in *Harry and Lucy Concluded* when he attempts an improvement, such as bridge building or roof construction. Her stories place a high value on childhood self-sufficiency and powers of invention whatever one's social position.

She demonstrates particular understanding of the enormity of some decisions from the perspective of the child and her stories often revolve around an act of self-sacrifice. Simple Susan, for example, gives up her pet lamb to the butcher as part of her deal with the local lawyer to allow her father's departure for the army to be delayed one week so that he can stay with Susan's sick mother. Susan also gives up the honour of being the May Queen in order to nurse her parent. Learning to be strong in small things of this nature, Susan becomes the moral authority amongst the village children: private dramas becoming important on the larger scale of the community.

Another tale, 'The False Key', shows Edgeworth using the same material for two-way traffic between rich and poor readers. On one level, 'The False Key' is a story for young people destined for service. Franklin, a poor boy of disreputable origins, meets with an hostile reception - such is the bias against charity boys - and suffers in comparison to the other new boy, Felix, the cook's nephew. The story follows a pattern familiar from Hannah More: the reader is presented with two examples - one negative, one positive - and is expected to aspire after the good. Once Mr. Spencer - Franklin's sponsor - exits the narrative, Franklin's moral choices and adventures become more dramatic and exciting, encouraging an imaginative identification with the little hero. The story also works on another level with a different audience in mind. In addition to moral behaviour, the story discusses the question of prejudice - a discussion aimed at the rich, who are in the position of (pre)judges, rather than the poor. When Franklin first arrives to take up his job, he gets a cold reception from the housekeeper, her malapropism betraying her prejudices against him: 'Ma'am, is not this the boy Mr. Spencer was talking of one day - that had been brought up by the *Villainotropic Society*, I think they call it?' Felix, in contrast, is given a much warmer reception by the staff;

according to the kitchen-maid, he was 'a much more genteeler, gentlemanly-looking sort of a person'.⁶³ The implication of the story is that vice and virtue are not inherited traits, but the result of education and character formation. Felix's aspirations to be gentlemanly and his susceptibility to flattery are part of his downfall; Franklin's behaviour shows him to be the child of his adopted father rather than his natural one. The story thus not only teaches the poor how to behave towards their rich employers, it also teaches the rich how to behave towards the poor.

This is one of the key themes of the *Harry and Lucy* stories. By the time the characters (and readers) have reached their early teens, they are ready for a more complex lesson in managing the working class. When Harry and Lucy visit Coalbrookdale they are allowed to experience the place and the people both imaginatively and practically. They arrive by night and remark how it looks like Hell. Lucy, mixing her mythologies, goes on to compare the iron foundry workers to Cyclops - industry representing something primeval, or as Harry says, '*a sort of sublime*'⁶⁴ - two examples of how Edgeworth provides children with the pleasure of fantasy in the mundane. At this point in the story, gender intervenes and Edgeworth keeps the practical lessons for Harry, the future manufacturer. Harry and his father go down a mine and afterwards watch the men receiving their wages from Mr. Watson, their employer. During the visit, Mr Watson dismisses a man for drunkenness, resisting the desperate pleas of the man's wife to reverse the decision. Harry's father approves the ruling, explaining to his son that Watson had to consider the good men who would want the job over the claims of the dissolute. Harry remarks, 'I see it is not so very easy to be just, as I should have thought it was'⁶⁵ - receiving his first lesson in man-management. The reader is thus taught through Harry's reaction about the difficulty of making choices affecting subordinates. By never letting the individual human cost to the miner's family fall out of the frame, Edgeworth gives her readers' humanitarian feelings a chance to wrestle with their reason in an imaginary situation, hoping they will learn by this practice a useful lesson that will save them from mistakes in later life.

⁶³*The Parent's Assistant*, vol. i. 131, 135.

⁶⁴*Harry and Lucy Concluded*, vol. ii. 165.

⁶⁵p. 201

The concern unifying all of Edgeworth's educational writings is her desire to prepare the child reader to take his or her place in society as an active, useful citizen. She is therefore anxious that her works should convey useful information that does not have to be unlearned with experience. There was no need to go to fairyland to find exciting locations for children's stories: modern life offered all that an artist could want, particularly the new challenges of the industrial world. Just as Sir Digby's laboratory behind the iron door provided more wonders than anything a gothic novelist could dream up, so did the daily life of cotton mills, factories, mines and poor children furnish more food for thought than fairyland. She was not only recording the changing society of the industrial era: she was also playing her small part in making that development possible. By forging an attractive image of thrifty, hard-working workers and inventive, compassionate managers, she was presenting a picture to which she hoped her readers would conform. Her method was not to preach, but to take her readers on a fictional journey that would result in their rational assent to the wisdom she purveyed in her tales. She hoped that the environment of her fiction would be, like industry itself, one of the factors that positively determined British character. In doing so, she helped to found an educational culture that changed attitudes towards the lower classes. By giving *Lame Jervas* and *Harry* the same practical education, she made a breach in the educational wall dividing rich and poor.

SECTION III
TWO LEGACIES FOR VICTORIANS: WORDSWORTH AND
HARRIET MARTINEAU

Chapter Five: William Wordsworth and the shadow of industry

Wordsworth has accumulated a colourful critical reputation over the years since *Lyrical Ballads*, becoming red, blue and green as the political fashions change. An interest in him as a poet who had something to say about man's relationship to nature and about the poor brings with it a perplexing critical baggage. Wordsworth the nature poet and social activist is an historic construction, in the first instance carefully pieced together by Victorian critics.¹ The process continues as his reputation evolves with each generation, every time revealing more about our current agenda than about that followed by Wordsworth. At the beginning of this last decade of the twentieth century, Nicholas Roe in *Politics of Nature* and Jonathan Bate in *Romantic Ecology* added two political interpretations formed in the image of our times, reading him respectively as anti-Thatcherite and environmentally aware. Whilst Bate's reading uncovers in Wordsworth's poetry a sensitivity and a deep feeling of responsibility towards the poet's natural world, attitudes that have taken on new relevance for our own era, he follows earlier critics in perpetuating the association of Wordsworth with the pastoral.² Privileging the pastoral in Romantic literature obscures the fact that, for Wordsworth and his peers, mountain scenery held more than shepherds and celandines. The Lake District was also a cradle for British industry in the days of water-powered factories, as recognised, for example, in contemporary accounts such as Southey's *Colloquies* or Aikin's *A Description of the Country from thirty to forty miles around Manchester*. In this chapter, I will suggest that Wordsworth was truly environmentally aware in the sense that he was aware of his own environment: pastoral and industrial. His relationship to both ways of life produces the social vision of his most influential poem published during his lifetime: *The Excursion*. This poem, more than any other, was admired by his later nineteenth century readership for its wisdom as well as its verse. In what way, therefore, did Wordsworth mould the perception of

¹ Stephen Gill's *Wordsworth and the Victorians* (Oxford, 1998) gives a fascinating account of the use made of the poet's reputation by the Wordsworth Society in a number of late Victorian environmental campaigns and the Society's connection with the development of the National Trust.

² See also David Worrall's response to Bate's thesis in 'Agrarians against the Picturesque: ultra-radicalism and the revolutionary politics of land', *The Politics of the Picturesque*, eds. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 247-248.

industrialization for his contemporaries and the next generation?

Poet of the Poor?

To answer this question we must first establish in what way Wordsworth's poetry entered the debate on industrialization. Wordsworth's enduring reputation as the poet of the poor would suggest that this would be the ground on which he would choose to debate. If there is any truth in this characterization of the poet, however, it is not in the simple sense that his contemporaries understood the term. In the 1790s, Wordsworth shared with other poetic heirs of sensibility a concern for the suffering experienced by the marginalized figures in society, as evidenced by *Salisbury Plain*, 'The Ruined Cottage' and many poems in the *Lyrical Ballads*. These poems have no direct political agenda; they do not call for a reform of national institutions; they work on the personal, rather than the public level.³ 'The Old Cumberland Beggar' is a beautifully expressed argument for inactivity, to leave abject poverty alone to survive on the crumbs from the tables of the poor. After several drafts, Wordsworth chose to end 'The Ruined Cottage' by finding solace in the tranquillity of the natural world, not by an appeal to relieve the poverty of domestic manufacturers. 'The Female Vagrant', the part of *Salisbury Plain* published in the *Lyrical Ballads*, ends in silence and weeping, the vagrant's greatest burden being that she has her 'inner self abused' - a spiritual rather than social problem with which we can feel profound sympathy, but one we cannot cure by legislation or charitable donations. Some contemporary critics felt that, for a poet who had once identified himself with radical politics and reform, Wordsworth singularly failed to fulfil the agenda expected of the champion of the poor (witness De Quincey's question when reviewing *The Excursion* why Margaret did not ask the War Office to trace her husband) and concentrated instead on morbid states of mind rather than obvious practical solutions.

³ Joanna Baum notes Wordsworth's debt to the abolition movement: 'What Wordsworth retrieved from the abolition movement were metaphors to advance the cause of the exploited and outcast at home. The working-class movement's gain was the emancipation movement's loss' (*Mind Forg'd Manacles*, p.71). Her view, however, that the working-class gained will be questioned in this chapter.

To be annoyed at the lack of practical application in Wordsworth's poetry of the poor is to misunderstand the poet's purpose - deliberately, one suspects, in De Quincey's case as he was normally a sensitive, if not always sympathetic, reader of his fallen idol's poetry. De Quincey's own relationship to Wordsworth was complicated by his personal links with Wordsworth's family; after living intimately in the Wordsworth circle, he was 'pushed away'⁴ as his behaviour became more difficult to accommodate in a household already preoccupied by the needs of small children and their own poet. Thus De Quincey's interpretation of *The Excursion* is inflected by personal bitterness. He was also differentiated from Wordsworth by a growing belief in a Ricardian form of political economy. Following this bias rather than surrendering to the poetry, De Quincey gives a reading hostile to the sense in which Wordsworth may best be termed a champion of the disadvantaged; he refuses the poetic invitation to sympathize with Margaret and adopts the voice of the utilitarian age which looks for tangible solutions in the system of government, rather than empathizing, as Wordsworth did, with the emotional state of the individual sufferer. De Quincey placed himself outside the poetic compact to hear 'the still, sad music of humanity' that Wordsworth bids us enter, diminishing the poem with his mocking comments. There are more sensitive ways of reading the same poems rejected by De Quincey that make greater sense of the agenda behind Wordsworth's 1790s poetry of human suffering. Kenneth R. Johnston, in *Wordsworth and 'The Recluse'*, suggests that the focus is on beholder rather than the sufferer: 'The need of a proper attitude is the narrator's problem in each poem....His final attitude, though shifted from prior aversion or sentimental pity, is not the conventional liberal assumption that 'something should be done' for, about, or to the sufferers. Although charity is assumed to be good..., the poems nevertheless indicate that it is insufficient or beside the point'.⁵ Johnston places even the earliest of Wordsworth's 1790s poetry on human suffering in the larger context of Wordsworth's thinking for his life-long philosophical project, *The Recluse* - a context in which Wordsworth is concerned with questions of 'Man, Nature, and Society' on an epic

⁴ See Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A life* (Oxford, 1989), p. 300.

⁵ Kenneth R. Johnston, *Wordsworth and The Recluse* (New Haven, 1984), p. 9. Gary Harrison's argument in *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse: Poetry, Poverty and Power* (Detroit, 1994) takes a comparable line, finding in Wordsworth's poetry of the poor an opportunity for the reader to engage with the poor as subjects, rather than objects (p. 80).

scale, not with short-term politics. This agenda still governed Wordsworth when he revised some of his 1790s work for inclusion in *The Excursion*, but his approach baffled most of his readers. The millennarian project of *The Recluse*, founded on the optimistic belief that this ambitious agenda could be realized in poetry, seemed out of date by the second decade of the nineteenth century. The unexpected encounter with a ghost of a past literary fashion partly explains the bemused critical reception his poem evoked.

De Quincey's hostile review of *The Excursion* is mean-spirited, but it was prophetic of the use later critics were to make of Wordsworth, a use in which Wordsworth himself conspired. They wished to *simplify* and *apply* him as a commentator on contemporary problems. Sensitive to the charge that his work was out of touch with the world, Wordsworth colluded in this process and devised his own practical agenda for subsequent editions of his poems, for example, resetting some of them in 1835 in a context in which they became directly part of the political debate on the Poor Law. He added a postscript to *Yarrow Revisited and Other Poems* which made explicit his hope that reading the poems would put his audience in a frame of mind conducive to accepting the arguments of the following paragraphs on the new law.⁶ The poems are thus pitched as an emotional preparation for the words of rational debate. Examining the contents of the volume itself reveals that the preparation only happens in the most general terms: few of the poems, notably 'Humanity' and 'The Warning', address the condition of the nation directly. If Wordsworth considered the experience of reading all the poems relevant preparation, he presumably meant the volume to develop a general sensibility to suffering through the power of verse, rather than to function as poetry of political protest. Thus, even in this intervention into contemporary politics, he does not choose the most obvious path to get his message across, relying instead on his skill as a poet to manipulate the emotional reactions of his audience.

⁶ Wordsworth tried a comparable strategy years before in a letter he sent to Charles James Fox accompanying a complimentary copy of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*. He hopes that the poems will 'excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good heart, and may in some small degree enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature' (*Lyrical Ballads*, p. 44).

The great mind debate - moulded or moulding?

Though Wordsworth was no campaigner on factory conditions in the party political sense that Coleridge and Southey were, it is noticeable that his work crystallized - perhaps set - the agenda for later debaters of this social issue. He helped to establish the climate of opinion that saw the problems of industrial communities primarily in spiritual and moral terms. Many of his contemporaries did not perceive factory conditions as a 'social problem' as we now understand the term - a problem to be solved by changing the social system - but rather as a problem for the individual worker to solve by consulting their own conscience and intellect. This approach which places the onus on the worker as agent of his own destiny co-existed with a school of thought that emphasized the worker as victim of circumstance. These two extremes constituted the philosophical poles in the debate on the responsibility of the individual for his own behaviour.

The philosophy of the worker as agent of his own destiny had its root in conservative Christian thought. As a belief in free will is a crucial element in a theology preaching that the believer chooses salvation and is responsible for his moral behaviour, it naturally followed that the individual, whatever his God-given circumstances, should be looked on as being accountable for his handling of his earthly life. This sounds harsh, but it had the merit of treating the individual as a being capable of mature, autonomous decision-making.

The other philosophical stance of seeing the worker as victim traced its origins back to Locke and Enlightenment materialist thought that stressed the mind as a creation of experience, as opposed to a belief in a moral soul. The most influential articulators of this stance in the British context were writers such as William Godwin, Jeremy Bentham and Robert Owen. The logical conclusion of an argument casting the individual as artifact rather than artificer is the removal of moral responsibility from the person and placing it in the system. As Robert Owen writes, '[i]n those characters

which now exhibit crime, the fault is obviously not in the individual, but the defects proceed from the system in which the individual was trained'.⁷ Though this view allows for an understanding of the disadvantages under which many were forced to labour, it also deprives them of their stature as free moral beings. Owen, for example, believed that his workers could be regulated in their behaviour with the same ease with which his factory machines were managed:

And when it was perceived that inanimate mechanism was greatly improved by being made firm and substantial; ...it was natural to conclude that the more delicate, complex, living mechanism, would be equally improved by being trained to strength and activity; and that it would also prove true economy to keep it neat and clean; to treat it with kindness, that its mental movements might not experience too much irritating friction; to endeavour by every means to make it more perfect; to supply it regularly with a sufficient quantity of wholesome food and other necessities of life, that the body might be preserved in good working condition, and prevented from being out of repair, or falling prematurely to decay.⁸

Whilst his description strips the workforce of their personality, he casts himself as a Newtonian god on the small scale adjusting the mechanism of his creation at New Lanark.

The division of opinion between these two poles should be read as a simplification of the shifting sands of political and philosophical thought in the period. There were many other possible perspectives, not least the Baconian scientific and materialist tradition - the kind of intellectual culture in which Maria Edgeworth was raised.⁹ The Baconian tradition emphasized the role of the individual as an investigator and shaper of his or her own education. This strand of Enlightenment thought was consistent with the emphasis on 'self-help' adopted by the middle and commercial classes, as well as by female educationalists writing for literate domesticated women.

On closer analysis, individual writers draw on more than one of the intellectual currents

⁷ Robert Owen *New View of Society and Other Writings*, ed. G. D. H. Cole (London, 1927, rpt. 1966), p. 34.

⁸ p. 9.

⁹ See chapter four, pp. 174-177.

of their era. Wordsworth, for example, does not sit comfortably in the conservative Christian camp with which he became identified, though he shared many of their beliefs about appropriate solutions to the problems in society. Rather, he was sounding deeper waters where the crude debating lines of 'moulded' versus 'given' character made little sense. He was engaged in a balancing act between the two, with the imagination as the intermediary between the natural-material and the spiritual-transcendental realms. The imagination removes the dichotomy of inner and outer that informs the moulded/given debate: inhabiting both realms of experience, the imagination moulds and is moulded in a seamless process. Wordsworth's extended reflection on the formation of his own mind, *The Prelude*, illustrates his complex stance. In the poem, his mind is figured both as a product of his environment, and - through the imagination - an agent which transforms and interprets the sensory experience. In Book II, he describes the imagination in the following terms:

....A Plastic power
 Abode within me; a forming hand, at times
 Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;
 A local spirit of his own, at war
 With general tendency, but, for most,
 Subservient strictly to external things
 With which it communed.
 (1850, Bk II, l. 362-368)

Language forces Wordsworth into describing boundaries between inner and outer where he sees none. The imagination is the intermediary, here given an independent will of its/his own, that links the mind to the outer world. It is described as rebellious and subservient, forming and formed. Giving the imagination an identity that lies beyond the control of the poet puts the mind beyond the dualities of the philosophical debate on the nature of man. Distinctions are blurred by placing a power at the centre which inhabits both worlds of internal and external experience.

Whilst occupying a more sophisticated philosophical position than those who saw man as moral agent pure and simple, Wordsworth shared with this camp a common enemy: the prevailing materialist tradition which had its latest incarnation in utilitarianism. Kenneth Johnston describes Wordsworth and Coleridge as 'part of a tiny philosophical

avant-garde which had sprung up a century earlier in reaction against the alienating implications of Descartes's new philosophy: a dead earth inhabited by powerful but groundless ghosts'. He identifies 'Cartesian materialist assumptions' as the 'predominant mold of our modern world, a process which began first and most strongly in the British Industrial Revolution'. His description of the philosophical orientation of Wordsworth and Coleridge counter to the prevailing spirit of the age illuminates why they received hostile treatment at the height of their careers from critics voicing the opinions of a society heavily investing in the industrialization of Britain. Their poetry and prose was read as a threat to the development of a manufacturing and commercial economy based on material values.

Johnston continues his analysis by reading the poets as still positioned today in a minority, calling their efforts 'to preserve a humanizing connection between mind and nature' 'sentimental'.¹⁰ Postulating a linkage between the mind and the natural world does not seem 'sentimental', but rather topical, particularly in the realm of quantum mechanics and the role it gives to the observer of quantum effects. There is no need, however, to argue that Wordsworth and Coleridge anticipate modern physics; it would be more accurate to say that they reflected the scientific and philosophical debates of their own era, which were asking similar questions - within the parameters of the evidence available at the time - about the nature of the mind and how it interacted with the world. These issues reverberate in the discussion of the effects of the industrial revolution because industrialization was interpreted as shutting the masses off from direct access to the natural world for the first time in human history. What did this mean for the prospects of mankind? Johnston's positioning of Wordsworth in the philosophical debate simplifies Wordsworth's response. The poet's answer to the question about the future of mankind in a material world is to turn his adversaries' weapons upon themselves. He counters the Cartesian perspective on the world of the industrial revolution with a theory of mind grounded in the Hartleyan system of materialist thought.

¹⁰ pp. 17-18.

The Excursion: debating the mind

Wordsworth's declared aim in *The Excursion*, as part of *The Recluse*, is to deal with questions of Man, Nature and Human Life. The question of the mind in relation to nature is clearly central to this project. Despite what the poet felt was his failure to complete *The Recluse*, Wordsworth is following a logical path through his subject. If one is setting out to describe 'Man', awareness of one's own subjectivity is a vital component, thus the necessity of writing *The Prelude*. Following on from this (though the poems were not published together in Wordsworth's lifetime) *The Excursion* reads as an attempt to describe the environment in which contemporary man lives.

The central argument in *The Excursion* is that between the Solitary and the Wanderer on the stance of the individual towards his environment. The Solitary states that

- my business is,
Roaming at large, to observe, and not to feel
And, therefore, not to act - convinced that all
Which bears the name of action, howsoe'er
Beginning, ends in servitude
(Bk 3, l. 891-895)

His goal is to avoid association as he does not wish to feel too acutely. Skimming over the surface of life, he may avoid pain, but he also avoids self-development which would release him from his cynicism. The Wanderer responds to the Solitary by extolling the pleasures of community, taking his lessons from nature, claiming that it must not only be 'general guardianship' and 'dependence upon mutual aid' that brings some animals together; delight in communal activity too has its part:

What other spirit can it be that prompts
The gilded summer flies to mix an weave
Their sports together in the solar beam,
Or in the gloom of twilight hum their joy?
(Bk 4, l. 445-449)

Though a 'roamer' himself like the Solitary, the Wanderer involves himself in the communities he visits by offering his friendship: he is not afraid to associate. I use the

word 'association' intentionally because, in addition to its common meaning, it also looks to David Hartley's associationist theory of the mind which, I will argue, remained an influence on Wordsworth's thinking long after the revival of interest in the natural philosopher in the 1790s had passed. What is at stake in the debate in *The Excursion* is not the simple issue of the desirability of being a sociable and well-liked character in society, but whether one allows oneself to be moulded by the environment in which one lives, whether that be the company of other humans or the influence of the natural world. Living the impoverished life of the Solitary excludes a person from the regenerative associations available in nature and in the experience of other men and women.

The discussion of the Solitary's way of life prepares the way for the debate on urban, industrial conditions. Echoing the 'torpor of ...mind' diagnosed by Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*, the Wanderer in his remarks is not protesting against factories *per se* but against the result, which is to shut away the worker so that his senses are too dull to receive regenerative impressions even when they are available to him:

....rarely competent
 To impress a vivid feeling on the mind
 Of what there is delightful in the breeze,
 The gentle visitations of the sun,
 Or lapse of liquid element - by hand,
 Or foot, or lip, in summer's warmth - perceived.
 (Bk. 8, l. 327-332)

The Wanderer characterizes the country which allows such a fate to befall her people as a neglectful mother:

....Can the mother thrive
 By the destruction of her innocent sons
 In whom a premature necessity
 Blocks out the forms of nature, preconsumes
 The reason, famishes the heart, shuts up
 The infant Being in itself, and makes
 Its very spring a season of decay!
 (l. 285-291)

The *unnaturalness* of living shut away from nature is emphasized by the imagery of the

destructive mother. Natural instincts are overthrown. People of the cities are doubly imprisoned: shut up in the bastille of the factory, they are also locked within their own small selves.¹¹ The industrial worker is thus the negative image of the poet - the spectre of what the poet could have been placed in the same circumstances.¹² On the stage set by *The Excursion*, the imagination is in flight from this urban trap, seeking its liberty amidst nature in the Lake District. This flight and longing for the natural world would have no urgency if the shadow-world of industry did not loom just over the horizon.

To uncover the debt this analysis of the evils of industrial life owes to Hartley, one has to go back to the period in which Wordsworth moved in circles where associationist theories were hotly debated. At the end of the 1790s Wordsworth's connection with the scientific *avant garde* of his era was largely thanks to Coleridge's interest in the work of Thomas Beddoes and Humphry Davy at the Bristol Pneumatic Institution. Coleridge and Southey both participated in the scientists' experiments with various gases, including nitrous oxide, or laughing gas. Beddoes' and Davy's work built on the discoveries of the dissenter, scientist and man of letters, Joseph Priestley. He was the first to investigate the properties of nitrous oxide. Inhaling the gas, both Coleridge and Southey experienced for themselves that the human mind was influenced by material phenomena in a directly demonstrable manner.¹³

Joseph Priestley was also known for his investigation into respiration. Discovering that breathing altered the nature of air and that various natural processes, including natural vegetation, restored the air to its original purity, Priestley established one of the

¹¹ See also Judson Stanley Lyon's account of Wordsworth's attitude to industrialization in *The Excursion: A Study* (New Haven, 1950), p. 99, p. 120. His conclusion, however, that Wordsworth was the 'first' to expose the abuses of the system is proved wrong by Southey's career.

¹² In *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Janowitz makes a related argument, suggesting that the 'lyric capacity' is the 'redemptive mirror' to that of industrial labour, locating the contrast in the two kinds of work - writing and factory work - rather than in the differing exposure to nature (p. 23).

¹³ For details of Coleridge and Southey's relationship with Davy and Beddoes, see David Knight, *Humphry Davy: Science and Power*, Jan Golinski, *Science as Public Culture: Chemistry and the Enlightenment in Britain, 1760-1820* (Cambridge, 1992), and Roy Porter, *Doctor of Society*.

most important principles that demonstrated the interdependence of man and his environment.¹⁴ It is fitting, therefore, that this scientific man was the editor of a philosopher from earlier in the century, David Hartley. Priestley found Hartley's work coincided with scientific evidence gathered from his own investigations, in particular that the mind was organic, not an immaterial entity set apart from the environment. His edition gave the philosopher's ideas renewed popularity amongst the scientific community, including Coleridge's Bristol friends; taking up his fellow intellectuals' enthusiasm for Hartley's theory of association and vibrations, Coleridge even called his first child (born 1796) after him. Coleridge's enthusiasm was relatively short-lived, the lack of a transcendental dimension being a major stumbling block. Yet neither Coleridge or Wordsworth were impervious to the shift in scientific opinion towards an emphasis on the organic nature of all life. Enlightenment thinkers had changed the intellectual climate for good. Though Coleridge claimed in 1801 that he had abandoned Hartley for Kant, elements of Hartley's theories about the brain mediated through Priestley's disciples remained an influence on Wordsworth, and arguably on Coleridge as well.¹⁵

The Excursion has a complex relationship with Hartley. Whilst repudiating some of the ultra-materialist interpretations of Hartley's theory of the mind, it may also be read as a development of his thought. Wordsworth made no claim to rival Coleridge as a philosopher; even his knowledge of Hartley was largely derived from his conversation with his fellow poet. Wordsworth's grasp of the process of mind formation, however, is indebted to the mechanical theories of Hartley which seem to have remained with him once Coleridge had physically and intellectually distanced himself from his friend. There was much in these theories that Wordsworth found repellent; readings of Hartley that emphasized the reductive potential of his kind of materialism were amongst the enemies Wordsworth set out to defeat by writing *The Excursion*. Hartley's mechanical

¹⁴ 'On Dephlogisticated Air', from *Experiments and Observations on Different Kinds of Air*, 1775, taken from *Revolutions: 1775-1830*, ed. Merryn Williams (Harmondsworth, 1971), pp. 359-375.

¹⁵ Jonathan Lamb's article, 'Hartley and Wordsworth: Philosophical Language and the Figures of the Sublime', *Modern Language Notes*, 97, 1982, also argues the case for Hartley's influence on Wordsworth, putting his case on different grounds of linked theories of language.

brain had contributed to the development of a modern spirit that 'Viewing all objects unremittingly/ In disconnection dead and spiritless' (Bk 4 l.961), missed out on the vital unity underlying all. The very idea of association, however, held within it a redemptive interpretation. Hartley's brain need not be pure machine regulated by controlled stimuli: as it was physical, it was part of material nature, at one with the bee's wing and the grass of the fields. In the same passage on the modern spirit, Wordsworth talks of nature regenerating the mind, giving a proper place to science as 'a support/ Not treacherous to the mind's *excursive* power'. He goes on to describe the healing associations a mind receives being open to the beauties of nature:

So build we up the Being that we are;
Thus deeply drinking-in the soul of things,
We shall be wise perforce;
(l. 1264-1266)

Hartley described the mind as being built up by associations creating pathways in the brain, giving a physical expression to a theory of knowledge indebted to Locke. By recognizing the part played by the receptor - the brain - in the process, he anticipates the theories of later philosophers, such as David Hume, who, in metaphorical terms, whilst recognizing the world beyond the window, wanted to establish a place for the refracting part played by the glass pane. Thus in Hartley's theory of the brain, these pathways themselves condition the way experience is processed: an interaction that is far from 'dead and spiritless'.¹⁶

Read in this light, Hartley's brain is not antagonistic to Wordsworth's poetic

¹⁶ Hartley's theories inspired much debate as to the animating principle defining the material and immaterial. Erasmus Darwin, for example, rejected reductionists who saw the body as 'an hydraulic machine' in the process 'forgetting that animation was its essential characteristic' (*Zoonomia* (2 vols.) (London, 1794), vol. i.1). He posited the idea that animation could be likened to other physical phenomenon: 'Nor is this theory ill supported by analogy, since heat, electricity, and magnetism, can be given or taken from a piece of iron; and must therefore exist, whether separated from the metal, or combined with it. From a parity of reasoning, the spirit of animation would appear to be capable of existing separately from the body as with it' p. 109. If it is analogous to other known physical forces, it is thus still in the material realm. The idea of animation able to exist both in and outside the body casts an interesting light on Wordsworth's idea of the imagination being 'a plastic power', vivifying both the mind and the natural world. For further discussions of materialism versus immaterialism in the science of the period, see *Humphry Davy: Science and Power*, particularly p. 25, p. 58 and p. 75 onwards.

description of the nature of Man. Both describe the mind as an accumulation of experience absorbed from the 'external' world; both see the mind in its very nature as part of this world. Hartley described the correspondence between the mind and the world around as a series of vibrations passing through the nerves to the brain. He gives the analogy of the eye continuing to see the glare of a bright light after the light has been extinguished: as with the eye, the brain continues to resonate with the impact of a sensation or an idea, being physically altered by the experience.¹⁷ Turning to Wordsworth's poetry, the influence of this idea can be most readily identified in a draft of *The Prelude* written in the late 1790s - a time when Hartley's influence was beginning to wane. Working on what is now called the two-part *Prelude* of 1799, Wordsworth expressed a kindred concept in the image of the baby at the breast gaining his first impressions of the world:

Such feelings pass into his torpid life
Like an awakening breeze, and hence his mind,
Even in the first trial of its powers,
Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine
In one appearance all the elements
And parts of the same object, else detached
And loth to coalesce.

(Second Part, l. 274-280)

Until stimulated by the presence of the mother, the baby is in a 'torpid' state, but once 'awakened' to the world around him, the baby's mind plays a vital role in processing the images his senses are absorbing. A baby's first knowledge of self is not that of a mind separate from the rest of nature, but one inextricably linked to it:

Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature that connect him with the world.
(l.292-294)

Wordsworth draws on scientific discourse in the word 'gravitation' to emphasize the material nature of the relationship. The spiritual and the physical are inseparable as the baby, like other natural objects, is inescapably attracted to the earth by his feelings for

¹⁷ Wordsworth is likely to have been familiar with contemporary versions of Hartley's theory of perception through Humphry Davy's 'Essay on Heat and Light' (1799).

his nurturing mother and by the bodily resonance between them. The fundamental basis of being is to experience the world as a corporeal entity. The idea that this experience is 'interfused' into the baby's veins also echoes Hartley's concept that vibrations may be passed like a current through matter; at the heart of each image is the notion of the influx of experience.

The vital relationship to nature expressed by the description of the babe of the two-part *Prelude* is not confined to this passage alone. It constitutes one of the most important underlying themes of Wordsworth's poetry of this period. Many poems in the *Lyrical Ballads* express an equally visceral connection to the natural world. Poems that Francis Jeffrey was later to dismiss as puerile can be read as illustrating a fresh approach to the world around. Humanity in its authentic state is not set apart from nature but intimately associated with it, like Lucy of 'A slumber did my spirit seal...', who is rolled round 'With rocks and stones and trees'. In 'We are Seven', the stranger totally misunderstands the little girl, reading her reaction to the death of her siblings as a state of denial, imperfect religious instruction, or irrationality. She has no need of the comforts of religion he tries to give her; a creature close to her natural roots, she is not disturbed by the fact of death, drawing instead on her instinctive knowledge to explain it.

The conflict of views in this poem reads as an ironic prediction of the grounds on which Wordsworth officially distanced himself from materialist philosophy. 'We are Seven' is balanced so that the reader can sympathize with both the girl's natural materialism and narrator's insistence on a religious interpretation of death. Wordsworth shifted the balance towards the assertion of the spiritual. Wordsworth, like Coleridge, appears to have moved away from Hartley's ideas of an organic human nature in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Poems expressing an original, intense involvement in nature dominate the first 1798 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. The two volume edition of 1800 dilutes their impact, resetting them amongst poems which complicate and mute the poet's relationship to the natural world. This shift occurred in part because he found himself at odds with thinkers in the Hartleyan school about the

nature of transcendent experience: logically, Hartley's concept of the human spirit is not an essence imported into a bodily receptacle, but an accretion of associations. This raises theological problems when the material body dissolves on death.¹⁸ Hartley's theory of the brain was also used to give intellectual substantiation to populist scientific pursuits, such as the vogue for phrenology in the 1820s and 30s, as it suggested character could be broken down into measurable phenomena. Wordsworth reached for a transcendent spirit beyond the physical to counter what he saw as these reductionist attacks on the human spirit, particularly its creative faculty. His poetry turned to expressing ways in which human nature transcended this reductive approach - ways which were to be glimpsed in the intermediary function of the imagination or, at other times, when he is more theologically orthodox, to be found in religion. These differences with materialism are important, but I am arguing that more significant to the debate on human nature in *this* world are the similarities between Hartley and Wordsworth. Wordsworth's critique of the effects of an industrialized environment with which I began this section shows that Wordsworth digested Hartley's theories and later used them to shape new poetic material for *The Excursion* in the decades when he had supposedly moved away from materialist thought. He may not have recognized his debt to a philosophy associated with an earlier phase of his poetic career, but like the ongoing project of *The Recluse*, Hartley travelled with him into a new century.

Wordsworth and the other nation

In *The Excursion*, Wordsworth puts his own gloss on what it means to be part of the 'other nation'. In the literature of the educated elite, from the classical times to Wordsworth's own era, the poor had always functioned as a foil to the genteel characters, an image of the 'other' to the privileged reader. Their presence shapes the

¹⁸ Hartley circumvents the theological bind by leaving the resolution of the issue to an all powerful God (*Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind*, ed. Joseph Priestley (London, 1790), p. 346).

self-image of the dominant classes: they are what we, the readers, are not.¹⁹

Wordsworth explored the London cityscape in Book Seven of *The Prelude* and celebrated it in his sonnet 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge', written in 1802. London is not the city featured in *The Excursion*. The capital was the pre-eminent commercial city of the modern economy, but it was not dominated by manufacturing. Wordsworth signals a shift into the modern technological society by choosing to make his contrast that of the mill-worker in a northern industrial city. Something new has entered society; the nature of work and the worker has been changed by mechanization. The 'other nation' is no longer only different by virtue of their economic status or lowly lineage: they are becoming essentially different by having the springs of their humanity quelled by their environment. We - if we read and appreciate poetry - have our natures opened up to the influence of the imagination; we eavesdrop on the privileged group of friends met in the secluded valley, enjoying vicariously their exposure to the natural world. Whilst calling on our compassion for these unfortunates, Wordsworth reinforces our sense of difference from them.

This is not to suggest that everything in the country is perfect. Even in surroundings of physical freedom the mind can remain in darkness. This is a fate that befalls the Solitary's ploughboy whose soul sleeps 'like a caterpillar sheathed in ice' (Bk. 8, l.419). The Wanderer concedes the point to the Solitary, explaining that he chose the example of the factory boy because the evils he endures are 'new and chosen' (Bk. 9, l.187); the factory system is 'a mischief by the wise diffused' (l. 195) in recent years, not an age-old problem. The two boys share a state of profound ignorance. Their state is imagined as the opposite to the active principle inhabiting all of nature, but which is most apparent in the human mind in the season of childhood. This principle makes a mind ready to drink in all the impressions of the world around. The Wanderer believes that a mind alive to the natural world will be moulded in a benign fashion:

¹⁹ See, for example, Judith Frank's *Common Ground: Eighteenth Century English Satiric Fiction and the Poor* (Stanford, 1997), which argues that the poor in the novels of Fielding, Smollett and Sterne act as 'conjurers, shaping the consciousness and the literary forms of the dominant culture' (p. 3). This view contrasts with that of Alan Bewell who describes Wordsworth disrupting the anthropological framework of the Enlightenment, seeing in the marginal subject tales of the common life of everyone (*Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry* (New Haven, 1989, pp. 39-46).

And 'tis known
 That when we stand upon our native soil,
 Unelbowed by such powers as oppress
 Our active powers, those powers themselves become
 Strong to subvert our noxious qualities
 (l. 128-132)

'Unelbowed' here recalls the swarming crowds of the cities, the rough pressure of other lives jostling for a place on the pavement or to be the first to get through the factory gate. It is strange, therefore, that the Wanderer should seem to contradict his own principles of freedom from these pressures by concluding that the answer lay in national education. Being pent up in a schoolroom is surely to be 'elbowed' by another sort of crowd, to be imprisoned and separated from nature? One may speculate that this is the older, more anxious Wordsworth ventriloquizing a solution through the Wanderer. Worried about the decline in public order in the 1810s with Luddites and political assassinations filling the newspaper columns, 'the discipline of virtue' (l. 353) at the blackboard was perhaps more attractive than the less predictable education offered by wandering the fields. The contradiction, however, may not be as great as first thought: the kind of education offered in the Bell monitorial system - the system Wordsworth advocates - at its best encouraged participation, as discussed in chapter one. The boys, for example, were to decide punishments by committee and showed their active grasp of a subject by teaching each other. It was the cheap imitations of the scheme that produced the dry rote learning and exploitation of child-teachers that we now associate with the Victorian monitorial schools, not the scheme as it was originally conceived. Wordsworth, at the time of writing *The Excursion*, hoped that Bell's educational scheme would be the means to awaken the active principle in the population at large.

Education is one amongst a number of practical solutions offered by the Wanderer to the problems of an industrial society. The conclusion of *The Excursion*, however, demonstrates how poetry can counteract the spirit of the materialistic age. The reader accompanies in his or her imagination the friends and the Pastor's family on a picnic in the glorious surroundings of the Lakes. One moment in particular encapsulates the

experience of sharing the journey through poetry when

...by happy chance we saw
 A twofold image; on a grassy bank
 A snow-white ram, and in the crystal flood
 Another and the same!
 (ll. 439-442)

The poet emphasizes the experience by reiterating and elaborating on the sight (ll. 442-451). The verse mirrors the double-image described by repeating the positioning of the ram twice, making the reader pause over the reflection. To borrow from the language of *The Prelude*, Wordsworth creates a fragile 'spot of time' for us to share with the characters of his poem. It is the sort of moment which regenerates the mind by impressing upon it a sense of the breath-taking beauty of creation. No equivalent sight could be expected in the slums of the industrial towns and constant hum of the factory: 'perfect stillness' is denied the urban workers. Yet, by this point of the poem, even if we are reading it in the confines of an urban environment, the poem should have prepared us for the final test. We travel with the characters in our imagination, ready for the influx of experience. Thus the experience of reading the expedition which concludes *The Excursion* puts to the test the sensitivity to the natural world described as true education in the poem.

The urban shadow

For his nineteenth century audience, *The Excursion* confirmed Wordsworth's reputation as a commentator on contemporary society. This reading was encouraged by the preface in which he states in Miltonic terms that his subject is Man, Nature and Human Life for which he must go to

...hear Humanity in the fields and groves
 Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang
 Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
 Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore
 Within the walls of cities. (l. 75-80)

In fact, though the poem does explore the 'solitary anguish' of those living in 'fields

and groves' at length, far less room is given to those 'barricadoed' in cities. They are the distant exiles from the quiet vale of *The Excursion*, having no representative with even a walk-on part. They remain the anonymous mass whom no one intimately knows, in contrast to the departed of the parish, to whom the Pastor can give a name and history.²⁰ This was in part because Wordsworth was writing about what he knew, but also because the absence of the city speaks more powerfully to the argument of the work. It is the threatening cloud on the horizon, making the pleasures of the countryside more brilliant in contrast. The industrial city represented everything that Wordsworth wished to write out of human life. The absence of factory life in *The Excursion's* Lakeland landscape is all the more significant because, at this stage in industrial history, the Lake District was one of the places where factories were located to make use of water-power. In Southey's *Colloquies*, for example, Montesinos and More only have to go on a short walk from Keswick to Applethwaite and Millbeck to look upon the factory and cottages of a manufacturing enterprise. All Wordsworth's main characters are in retreat from urban life: the Wanderer has wandered there and seen its ugliness; the Solitary has retired to a place where he is not thrust promiscuously into company; the Pastor 'withdrew' from an academic city to pass his life amongst the rural poor; even the poet describes himself as having chosen retirement away from the passions of the world. When urban factory life is mentioned, it appears as a mistake, a wrong turn taken by misguided men away from the path of nature.

The relative absence of urban life muddies any claim that this poem contributed directly to the contemporary debate about factory conditions. Concentrating on the theme of character development, Wordsworth's argument is no simple campaign of country versus town, unspoilt peasant opposed to degraded industrial worker. What Wordsworth said in his poem and how his contemporaries interpreted it are two

²⁰ The off-stage shadow of the city is present in Wordsworth's early poetry. In 'Michael', Luke is lost to 'the dissolute city' (l. 459) whilst the scene of the poem remains in the Lakes. In 'Tintern Abbey', the poet emerges from the vaguely described 'din/Of towns and cities' (l. 26-27) to see once more the precisely delineated 'forms of beauty' (l. 24) of the Wye Valley. The countryside/city opposition works symbolically in these poems. Wordsworth draws on the familiar topographical associations of the countryside and city with virtue and vice, repose and business, but in 'Tintern Abbey' he also develops the notion of taking the country into the city in one's imagination, gesturing to a way in which the opposition can be broken down.

different things. The discussion of factory conditions found in *The Excursion* sketched out the territory for subsequent critics and apologists of the system. The same body of evidence is assessed - the effect the shutting out of nature has on the individual, the physical condition of the factory worker, his moral and intellectual development - but, divorced from the wider philosophical context of *The Excursion* debate, the polemicists' analysis of society is shorn of all of Wordsworth's subtle qualifications. Yet the similarities are sufficient to suggest that the poet had at least crystallized, if not set, the agenda for the debate - an example of an imaginative work, not merely representing, but forming its world.

A comparison of two writers of the 1830s - Andrew Ure, an apologist for the factories, and P. Gaskell, a critic - illustrates this point. They both share *The Excursion's* preoccupation with the physical and moral development of the individual, equating a deformed body with a depraved character. To varying degrees, they both accept the poem's premise that exposure to the natural world gives a healthy tone to the lives of workers. Following this agenda, Ure sets out to dismiss the dark images of factory life generated by *The Excursion* and Southey's *Colloquies* and to replace them with positive illustrations of his own. Wordsworth's child cotton worker, 'creeping' to work, a slave to the machine he serves, is exchanged for an absurdly sanguine description of children at work:

[The children] seemed to be always cheerful and alert, taking pleasure in the light play of their muscles, - enjoying the mobility natural to their age.... It was delightful to observe the nimbleness with which they pieced the broken ends, as the mule-carriage began to recede from the fixed roller beam, and to see them at leisure, after a few seconds' exercise of their tiny fingers, to amuse themselves in any attitude they chose, till the stretch and winding-on were once more completed. The work of these lively elves seemed to resemble a sport, in which habit gave them a pleasing dexterity.²¹

Ure may be accused of confusing his 'delight' at watching skilled work with the sensations of the children he is observing. He overplays his hand to stress that factory work is a better option than many other kinds of employment available to the majority

²¹ Andrew Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (London, 1835), p.301

of children who had to work for their living - better, for example, than going down a mine or breaking stones on frozen fields.

This kind of rhetoric - itself a response to the condemnation of the system by Romantic poets - inspired a new round of literary responses: the factory novels of Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Frances Trollope, Dickens, Disraeli and Gaskell. Tonna and Trollope, early practitioners of this form, develop the factory tale into a new kind of gothic horror story: instead of a heroine locked in a castle, they substituted an innocent child or young girl incarcerated in a mill, persecuted by patriarchal authority figures who abuse their power. *Helen Fleetwood* is representative of the genre, centring on an innocent country girl thrown into the horrors of life in a mill, persuaded to move with her adopted family by the sugar-coated words of a factory agent. He gives her guardian a pamphlet which, like *The Philosophy of Manufactures*, paints town life as consisting of 'a home, lucrative employment, independence, respectability, all the advantages that schools for the children, and abundant spiritual privileges for them and herself could impart'.²² The reality proves to be the opposite to the promises held out in such pamphlets.

Tonna's countryside is a Wordsworthian world of honest poverty, decency and moral behaviour, a kind of Eden, the memory of which deepens the shadows of the town. Even Ure, the apologist for cotton mills, finds something distasteful in the promiscuous mixing of urban dwelling and posits as his ideal the factory placed in a semi-rural location. He concedes that in towns 'the tie that binds together employers and employed is ... less strong', but a rural parish without the leaven of invigorating industry is also undesirable: '[w]hat a contrast is there at this day, between the torpor and brutality which pervade very many of the farming parishes...and the beneficent activity which animates all the cotton factory-towns, villages and hamlets!'²³ Writing at a time when many factories had until recently been placed in valleys suitable for water-power, and before the spread of huge conurbations effectively shut the worker away from the countryside, Ure's image of the semi-rural factory is not an oddity, rather a

²² Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, *Helen Fleetwood* (London, 1841), p. 38.

²³ *The Philosophy of Manufactures*, p. 354.

reflection of this evolutionary stage of industrialization. More idiosyncratic is his description of the workers who man these factories. His answer to Wordsworth's stunted cotton mill boy and bestial ploughman is the athletic factory girl. Concentrating the argument on the female, rather than the male child's, body, he writes of Mr. Ashton's factory girls:

Their light labour and erect posture in tending the looms, and the habit which many of them have of exercising their arms and shoulders, as if with dumb-bells, by resting their hands on the lay or shuttle-bearer, as it oscillates alternately backwards and forwards with the machinery, opens their chest, and gives them generally a graceful carriage. Many of them have adopted tasteful modes of wearing neat handkerchiefs on their heads, and have altogether not a little of the Grecian style of beauty.²⁴

A healthy physique, combined with classical taste, exalts these girls from factory fodder to representatives of Ure's industrial golden age. Far from deforming the body, factory work for both children and young women - the usual subjects of parliamentary enquiry - is portrayed as being a beneficial work-out, enabling the employees to become the apogee of human development, not the nadir as others would have it.

P. Gaskell, writing two years before Ure, gives his criticism of the factory system an historical context the other lacks. He recognizes that the rural factory is becoming a thing of the past; the most representative factory-hand is to be found in the smoke of Manchester, rather than the lanes of a village, for it is in the big cities that the future of industry is to be found. The deprivation with which Gaskell was daily confronted in that city calls forth his pity, but his compassion is conceived in terms articulated by the Romantic poets. For example, he shares their view that the poor condition of the working class is not primarily due to poverty or a lack of education - though both of these undoubtedly contribute - but rather to 'the separation of families, the breaking up of households, the disruption of all those ties which link man's heart to the better portion of his nature'.²⁵ Or, in other words, to the breakdown of an organic society of

²⁴ p. 350. This same Mr. Ashton's son was assassinated by a group of disaffected workers - this real life incident providing the kernel of the plot of Gaskell's *Mary Barton*. Ure's Grecian beauties can thus be said to be Mary's colleagues.

²⁵ P. Gaskell, *The Manufacturing Population of England* (London, 1833), p. 7.

traditional hierarchies. Gaskell goes on to adumbrate the evils resulting from this breakdown in words that could be a paraphrase of the argument of *The Excursion*, even to the extent of employing a village graveyard as a potent symbol of the virtues of country dwelling. It is humanity's common destination, visible at the heart of the community, where a man ends his days

crowding the same narrow tenement in the quiet and sequestered church-yard - there suffered to moulder in peace beneath its fresh and verdant turf, undisturbed by the unholy and sacrilegious hand of the robber of the dead, and swept over by the free, the balmy, and the uncontaminated breath of heaven.²⁶

This passage evokes many literary ancestors, notably Gray's 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard' where the mounds tell '[t]he short and simple annals of the poor'. Gaskell's contrast with the degenerate atmosphere of the city, however, suggests Wordsworth's many village churchyards to be the closest relation of this passage. In his 'Essays upon Epitaphs' appended to *The Excursion*, Wordsworth spells out his belief that

[a] village church-yard, lying as it does in the lap of nature, may indeed be most favourably contrasted with that of a town of crowded population....The sensations of pious cheerfulness, which attend the celebration of the sabbath-day in rural places, are profitably chastised by the sight of the graves of kindred and friends, gathered together in that general home towards which the thoughtful yet happy spectators themselves are journeying.²⁷

Gaskell shares Wordsworth's assumption that the village graveyard works within the community as an unambiguous moral lesson, a lesson which the Pastor of *The*

²⁶ p. 26

²⁷ William Wordsworth, *Selected Prose*, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth, 1988), pp. 329-330.

Excursion dwells on at length for the benefit of his auditors.²⁸ They also share the view that the graveyards of the city, with their ostentatious monuments and promiscuous over-crowding, manifestly represent the ills of city life. If they offer any lesson, it is a negative one, a warning that life in town is as corrupt as the ground beneath the tawdry show of memorials.

Gaskell stands chronologically at the mid-point, looking back to *The Excursion*, but also anticipating the image of the town graveyard in a famous Victorian portrait of the city. In *Bleak House*, Dickens uses a London graveyard to represent the horror of life and death for the poor. Jo describes to Lady Dedlock where they laid her first lover's body: "Over yinder. Among them piles of bones, and close to that there kitchen winder! They put him wery nigh the top. They was obliged to stamp upon it to git it in".²⁹ The graveyard is a symbolic as well as a real location in the novel. Dickens exposes the physical corruption of the city where bodies are so ill-buried that they pollute the houses of the poor (it is no accident the bones are near a *kitchen* window, implying the contamination of food). It also stands for the moral corruption that ties Lady Dedlock to this location. She returns to the spot to die, acknowledging her identification with this place of decay where her secret of an extra-marital sexual

²⁸ Elements of Wordsworth's *Essay on Epitaphs* are echoed by the decade's most popular Evangelical tract writer, Legh Richmond. In his tract, 'The Young Cottager' (first published in 1814 in book form as part of his *Annals of the Poor*) he writes at length about the place epitaphs have within the village community. He teaches his Sunday School children to read from them, commenting that 'Thus my churchyard became a book of instruction and every grave-stone a leaf of edification for my young disciples.' Like Wordsworth, he is concerned for the propriety of the the messages found on tombstones:

I have often lamented, when indulging a contemplation among the graves, that some of the inscriptions were coarse and ridiculous; others, absurdly flattering; many, expressive of sentiment at variance with the true principles of the word of God; not a few, barren and unaccompanied with a single word of useful instruction to the reader....

With the isolation of traditional village life changing under the pressure of an exodus to urban centres and speedier communications, the parish priest no longer reigns as the sole dispenser of knowledge to his parishioners so he looks for a place on which to inscribe his authority. Both the poet and the priest treat graveyards as a disputed text lying in the heart of the community. Richmond suggests that parish priests should fulfil the role of censor to ensure that the right theological messages are placed before the people (*Annals of the Poor*, this edition London, 1852, pp.153-154, pp.172-173).

²⁹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (Harmondsworth, 1971), p. 278.

relationship is hidden - its outer putrefaction mirroring the sin that has eaten away inside her for years. There are no healing lessons to be drawn from picturesque grassy mounds here, only bodies stamped into the earth, so close to the surface that a brush of Jo's broom would bring them up again.

Dickens was following Wordsworth's lead using this mixture of the physical and metaphorical to describe the urban environment. In *The Excursion* Wordsworth employs the image of the brook converted

...as it runs
 Into an instrument of deadly ban
 For those, who, yet untempted to forsake
 The simplest occupation of their sires,
 Drink the pure water of its innocent stream
 With lip almost as pure.
 (Bk. 8, l. 257-262)

On the literal level, Wordsworth suggests the encroachment of industry on the countryside as factories pour their effluent into streams, poisoning the water supply of local inhabitants down-stream. Wordsworth, however, changes the meaning of 'pure' from the physical to the moral in its second appearance in the passage, pointing up the metaphorical level on which the stream is to be read. He goes on to describe the pollution reaching even the remotest rural parts as the steady migration of the younger generation to the cities, disrupting the natural order of the family. Just as the body of the working classes is read as a sign of moral health, so the landscape lends itself to a similar interpretation.

Gaskell's analysis of the evils of factory life reads in parts as a prose version of the Wanderer's words in *The Excursion*. Like the Wanderer, Gaskell is concerned that the conditions of factory labour produce a physical body suited only to being a slave of a machine, perpetuating the scourge of the system to new generations. The factories produce, he claims, 'a diminutive and ill-shaped race, possessing little muscular strength, and fitted as labourers *only* to act in subservience to a more powerful

agent'.³⁰ But, like Ure, he departs from the image of the male child's body that occupies the attention of the debaters in *The Excursion*, and concentrates his proof on the female body, particularly its sexual attributes. Breasts, for example, amongst young factory girls are, to his mind, too 'large and firm' - indicating premature sexual activity; those of women of child-bearing age are 'soft, flaccid, pendulous, and very unirritable'. Both conditions he claims are 'the most decisive proofs of perversion in the usual functional adaptation of of [sic] parts'.³¹ His assumption that one can read moral behaviour from breast size is absurd, but also very revealing. Both he and Ure debate working conditions primarily in sexual terms as their main concern is the moral health of families, hence the change of emphasis from child to female body. Women as wives and mothers, the regulators of the domestic sphere, are their test case.

Though Gaskell attempts an analysis of the physical conditions in which the population live, he soon reverts back to moral arguments, continually mixing facts with moral judgments. A typical passage is as follows:

The fountains of domestic purity being thus poisoned, the sanctity of marriage rites thus profaned - social virtue is driven from her last strong hold, and leaves [the inhabitants of the slums] a prey to obscenity, coarseness, selfishness, and everything that is pernicious and abominable.³²

The chapter in which this comment appears starts with an examination of the filthy accommodation which the average factory worker endures, with its poisoned water supply and coarse jerry built walls. Gaskell is led by his own imagery into a symbolic reading of the environment - as Dickens does with his graveyard - and turns his terminology to a moral conclusion: water supply is sublimated into the poisoned 'fountains of domestic purity' and the shaky foundations of lower class housing is the

³⁰ *The Manufacturing Population of England*, p. 170.

³¹ p. 165.

³² p. 147.

stronghold from which virtue has fled.³³ This reversion from the physical to the moral mirrors the intellectual confusion Gaskell experiences in regard to the factory hand as victim or perpetrator, in other words a confusion as to his positioning in the moulded/moulding debate. In his account of the physical deprivations of the factory-hand, including lengthy details about the diseases spread by the urban environment, Gaskell appears to side with the view that man is a victim of the circumstances in which he is born. He deplores the working practices that reduce the worker to the 'condition of mere slavery'.³⁴ This approach seems incompatible with other passages in which he assumes the worker to be the architect of his own destiny: the squalid homes of the poor worker are 'in a great measure the results, not of the pressure of actual want, but of his own bad and improvident habits'.³⁵ In his conclusions about the health of the town population, he declares that '[t]he first step to be made is to improve the moral condition of the labouring population - without this nothing can avail it'.³⁶ His answer as to how this first step is to be made is a watered-down Wordsworthian one: moral education. He includes the inculcation of religion within moral education and this, he implies, is to be achieved in part by restoring to the town dwellers a sense of their Creator through the natural environment for at that time the factory labourer

knows nothing of nature - her very face is hidden and obscured from him, and he is surrounded and hemmed in by a vast circle of human inventions. He is at perpetual warfare with the world and with himself, and his bad passions are consequently in constant play.³⁷

³³ Gaskell's metaphorical interpretation of physical conditions is shared by James Phillips Kay (later better known as Kay-Shuttleworth), demonstrating how widespread the poetic version of the industrial landscape had become. In his influential report during a cholera outbreak - *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (imprint of second edition of 1832, Manchester, 1969) - he uses cholera as a metaphor for moral and political degeneration (p. 8). He fears an epidemic of revolutionary ideas in conjunction with the spread of the disease which will touch the rich man in his castle, as well as the poor man at his gates. Engels used Kay's report as a guide to the streets of Manchester when he later visited the city. He found that the evils Kay reported in the 1830s were largely untouched by reforms.

³⁴ *The Manufacturing Population of England*, p. 358.

³⁵ p. 115.

³⁶ p. 215.

³⁷ p. 283.

This returns the argument back to where it started: how can workers be morally culpable if they are deprived of the improving influence of the natural world? Moulded or moulding? The jury is still out as far as Gaskell is concerned.

Gaskell's faith in the civilizing effects of the natural world is typical of the prescriptions for social improvement put forward by the next generation. In terms of town planning, it can be seen in the peculiarly Victorian institution of the urban park. In this spirit, for example, Queen Victoria gave Epping Forest to the people of London to be a place of repose and recreation, the destination of thousands of Sunday School outings. Part of the project was to give the masses access to the countryside by the railway. This casts Wordsworth's objection to the Kendal and Windermere railway in a different light. Rather than read him as an environmental campaigner as Jon Bate has done, perhaps we should instead emphasise his betrayal of the labouring classes? Though he preached the value of the natural world in his poetry, if it meant the great unwashed arrived on his door step, he was not prepared to give others the chance to experience it at his expense. Wordsworth was aware of this interpretation of his motives and felt called to defend himself against the charge in his first letter on the subject to the *Morning Post*, but his defence that everyone already had access to the Lakes by the existing transport network is negated by his preference for keeping as many people away from his patch as possible:

Instead of tempting artisans and labourers, and the humbler classes of shopkeepers, to ramble to a distance, let us rather look with lively sympathy upon persons in that condition, when, upon a holiday, or on the Sunday, after having attended divine worship, they make little excursions with their wives and children among neighbouring fields, whither the whole of each family might stroll, or be conveyed at much less cost than would be required to take a single individual of the number to the shores of Windermere by the cheapest conveyance. It is in some such way as this only that persons who must labour daily with their hands for bread in large towns, or are subject to confinement through the week, can be trained to a profitable intercourse with nature where she is the most distinguished by the majesty and sublimity of her forms.³⁸

Nature no longer speaks unambiguously: to feel the improving influence of nature, the

³⁸ *Selected Prose*, pp. 81-82.

urban worker must undergo a training course of 'little excursions' before being fit for her great landscapes. A refinement of his stance in *The Excursion* or is Wordsworth attempting a weak intellectual justification of his irreconcilable position? Known as the poet of the poor, he wants to keep the awkward urban poor at a distance. As the majority of city-dwellers come for fun and a frolic, rather than spiritual communion, in the Lake District, their 'untrained' taste disturbs him. Beneath the paternalism lies deep fear of the masses, a distrust that fuelled the conservatism of his middle and later years.

Though Wordsworth drew back from paying the price of applying his credo to a factual situation, his work inspired later writers to imagine this process taking place. Another Manchester Gaskell - this time Elizabeth, the novelist - clearly had Wordsworth in mind when writing her short story, 'The Heart of John Middleton', for the periodical, *Household Words*, in 1850.³⁹ In the year *The Prelude* first appeared before the public, she made use of a Wordsworthian spot of time to bring about the conversion of a poor factory hand from his savage state to a religious and spiritual salvation.⁴⁰

Whilst wandering the countryside, John meets a little child carrying a water jug over a bridge. He stops to help her and receives her thanks, the first time he has ever exchanged a civil greeting with someone. His reformation follows an uneven path but this initial meeting proves to be the turning point. Even the worst cases amongst the factory workers, Gaskell asserts, can be redeemed with the slightest exposure to something pure and beautiful.

The Nature of Work

Whilst debating the nature of the industrial worker, also at issue in *The Excursion* is the changing nature of work. The two are connected for the deadening repetition of tasks demanded by factory machines kills the active principle in the worker. Picking up the

³⁹ I am grateful to Stephen Gill's *Wordsworth and the Victorians* for pointing me in the direction of Gaskell's short stories and for highlighting their debt to Wordsworth.

⁴⁰ The story was probably written at the same time as Gaskell was reading the newly published poem. In a letter to Eliza Fox, 27 August 1850, Gaskell records her attempts to get hold of a copy of *The Prelude* through Charlotte Brontë. 'The Heart of John Middleton' was written later that autumn and was finally published on 28 December in *Household Words*.

images circulated by Lord Kames of repetitive factory work,⁴¹ Wordsworth's child labourer becomes '[t]he senseless member of a vast machine,/Serving as doth a spindle or a wheel' (Bk. 9, l. 159-160). The Wanderer explains the wider application of this point in a passage that appears to anticipate Marx's alienation of the worker:

...Our life is turned
Out of her course, wherever man is made
An offering, or a sacrifice, a tool
Or implement, a passive thing employed
As a brute mean, without acknowledgement
Of common right or interest in the end[.]
(l. 113-118)

Healthy work is that which involves all the faculties of the worker without harming his physical body. Wordsworth describes in 'Michael' an example of this in the domestic economy of shepherding and spinning shared between Michael, his wife and son until an unexpected debt threatens their livelihood. There are no examples of this kind of employment in *The Excursion*: the pastor and the Wanderer are amongst the few whose work is described positively and neither of their careers involve serious physical exertion. Rural occupations, though capable of a favourable expression as in the widower's elder daughter teaching the younger ones to spin, are also described negatively, as with the hungry ploughboy. It is not the task but the spirit in which it is performed which is most deplored.

Despite the ambiguity of Wordsworth's stance on work, it was the description of the factory boy as a cog in a vast machine that seems to have caught the imagination of his contemporaries. Ure's playful children resting between piecing and Grecian beauties exercising their chests is his attempt to counter this gloomy view of work. He accuses such well-meaning detractors of the factory system of being misled by the Spinners' Union who 'mystif[y] their dupes by romantic representations of *white slavery*, and of hecatombs of infants sacrificed annually on the calico-crowned altar of Mammon'.⁴² (This may be a reference to Wordsworth's temple-factory 'where is offered up/ To Gain, the master-idol of the realm,/ Perpetual sacrifice' (Bk. 8, l. 183-185), though the

⁴¹ See chapter one, p. 24.

⁴² *Philosophy of Manufactures*, p.302.

rhetorical image is not unique to Wordsworth, having its roots in ubiquitous biblical language). Ure blames most deformities on the workers themselves being too lazy to vary their approach to their task or misusing the machinery.

P. Gaskell once more places himself on the opposite side of the argument, drawing on a Wordsworthian image of work to make his point: the labourer 'is condemned hour after hour, day after day, to watch and minister to [the machine's] operations, - to become himself as much a part of the mechanism as its cranks and cog-wheels, - already to feel that he is but a portion of a mighty machine'.⁴³ The physical and mental exhaustion this kind of sapping labour produces is vividly described as 'a protracted life in death'.⁴⁴ Gaskell's Manchester operative has no interest beyond his wage in the work done in the factory and no creative input. Working only for gain, not for any higher motive of pride in his craft or loyalty to his master, the operative's morally impoverished working life is reflected in his domestic conduct. Until the evils of this situation are addressed, the accusation that employment in a factory equals 'white slavery' is no 'romantic representation':

By reducing the labourer to a mere machine - by destroying his personal independence - by cutting off his claim to self-respect - they degrade him to a condition of mere slavery, compared to which the West Indian slave may indeed congratulate himself on his good fortune, for his is a state to be a thousand-fold desired in preference. The name of slave is a bye-word for conjuring up a frightful catalogue of miseries and degradations; but the slave has no master like the steam-engine, none which requires such assiduous, such untiring attention.⁴⁵

This passage casts a backward light on why the statesmen of the Lakes were felt by Wordsworth to be the ideal labourer. The poet would have agreed with Gaskell that the central evil of factory labour and slavery was that 'both necessarily render the men improvident and reckless - destroy all forethought - paralyze every better feeling within them - and thus brutalize and degrade them in exact ratio as they are made dependant

⁴³ *The Manufacturing Population of England*, p. 183.

⁴⁴ p. 239.

⁴⁵ p. 358.

and hopeless of amelioration or amendment'.⁴⁶ The condition of statesman encourages the opposite tendencies: independence, improvement of personal skill, a feeling that one has a stake in the land. Though it took Marx to elevate the alienation of labour from the means of production into a Communist political doctrine, Gaskell and Wordsworth show that seeds of disquiet about the estrangement of worker from the purpose of his task were already flourishing in men of other political persuasions. Wordsworth's solution for the 'white slavery' of factories was very different from the workers' revolution advocated by Marx: Wordsworth believed the answer lay primarily with the individual backed up by a restored paternalistic employer, a stance he shared with a number of his contemporaries but for which he became most famous, thanks to a rising critical reputation in the mid nineteenth century. Thus, though his early poetry on poverty had been concerned with personal philosophy over public utility, it was now read in the light of what was known of the views of the older man. Collections of his works, newly categorized and arranged by the poet, took on a public role of setting the predominant tone of later Victorian social solutions. Appropriated and changed for a new era, Wordsworth's poetic legacy bore some unexpected practical fruit.

⁴⁶ p. 359.

Chapter Six: Harriet Martineau - Economics for All

Wordsworth's legacy as a thinker on social problems was inherited by the Victorians rather than his contemporaries and can be traced in the attitudes and imagery of many of the mid-century industrial novelists, including Gaskell, Dickens, Kingsley and Disraeli. The writer that P. J. Keating identified as the 'mother of the industrial novel', Harriet Martineau, belonged to this generation, but Martineau's approach does not place her amongst Wordsworth's disciples. Her literary treatment of industrialization is drawn from the example of female educationalists rather than the first generation Romantic poets and carries forward their attempt to maintain social and moral integrity in new conditions. Martineau takes her place in this study as a representative of this group which posed a major challenge to Tory paternalism, putting into literary practice a counter-reponse to industrialization: the popularization of the concepts of utilitarianism and political economy.

Philosophical radicalism and education

Martineau's links to the previous generation of social reformers reflect her complex inheritance. Starting her writing life as a committed Unitarian, her roots were in the intellectual dissenting circle of Norwich. Her background in rational dissent prepared the way for her interest in the ideas of the reformers of her generation, including the Utilitarians, Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, and political economists, such as Malthus, who became a personal friend. By the time she came to write *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-34), some of Bentham's disciples held key government posts. The most notable was Henry Brougham, who served in Grey's government as Lord Chancellor. He had already written in 1825 that he 'could hardly imagine...a greater service being rendered to the men, than expounding to them the true principles and mutual relations of population and wages'.¹ To promote this end, he set up with Matthew Davenport Hill in 1826 the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (S.D.U.K.), immortalized in satirical vein in T. L. Peacock's *Crochet Castle* (1831) as

¹ H. Brougham, *Practical Observations upon the Education of the People* (London, 1825). p. 5.

the 'Steam Intellect' Society, showing its origin as a response to the industrialized era. The S.D.U.K. started with an ambitious plan to educate working men, but failed to fulfil its early radical promise as Brougham, mindful of his alliance with the 'Liberal' Whigs, steered it away from controversial areas. Once Brougham saw Martineau's success as a popularizer of political economy in *Illustrations* outstripping anything achieved by his S.D.U.K., he hurried to employ her services for his parliamentary programme of reform: *Poor Laws and Paupers* (1834) was the result.²

Brougham's sponsorship of written materials for the working classes mirrors the institutional educational innovations with which he was also involved. Philosophical Radicals were taking education to new constituencies: George Grote, Mill and Bentham were the main movers behind the establishment of the University of London in 1828, bringing advanced education within the reach of the London middle classes. For the working classes, Philosophical Radicals and Liberal Whigs joined forces to set up Mechanic's Institutes in industrial towns around the country; the institutes were given the role of providing education for male workers, particularly in science and political economy. The reformers believed that men who understood the forces that produced the booms and busts in the market were likely to perceive their interests as bound up with those of their employer and thus constitute a more tractable workforce.

The seeds of eventual failure were present from the start as middle class reform was achieved at the expense of working class initiative.³ Brougham and his fellow Radicals had firm convictions as to what constituted economic truth; whilst advocating education for the working classes, they made sure that only their economic orthodoxy was taught. They aspired to make the working man identify with the middle class employer's interest and were chary of examining where conflicting interests could arise between master and employee. The quelling of dissent from this view, evidenced by the dismissal of Thomas Hodgskin as one of their lecturers, eventually proved to be the

² R. K. Webb usefully places Martineau's productions in the context of other publications by the S.D.U.K., but he believes her portrait of the Poor Law is wanting. His view is undermined, however, by a failure to explain this observation. See *The British Working Class Reader 1790-1848*, p. 127.

³ *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure*, p. 154.

death of the Mechanic's Institutes as an effective educational force. Workers around the country set up independent organizations to provide themselves with the education they wanted, rather than that mediated by their social superiors. At the time of Martineau's *Illustrations* the experiment had not yet run its course and her work came out in a period of optimism that education could really be 'the road to happiness' and to some extent can be said to have succeeded for, as one historian has observed, '[n]otions of masters and men reciprocally linked in their own proper spheres are discernible in industries as different as mining and factory-based engineering' far into the early twentieth century.⁴

Hodgskin's dissent was not quelled purely from self-interest: Philosophical Radicals believed that the economic tenets they held were incontrovertible. Once explained, they would be accepted by any reasonable man. Charles Knight's *The Results of Machinery* (1831), written for the S.D.U.K., is full of this sense of conviction. He addresses his audience in the same terms and on the same basis as Martineau's *Illustrations*: 'For the benefit of you all, the informed as well as the uninformed, we address you as men capable of reasoning'.⁵ After some well-chosen examples of the benefits of machinery, from the plough to the printing-press, he concludes: '...you will learn now, that it is useless in any way to struggle against that progress of society, whose tendencies are to make all of us more comfortable, more instructed, more virtuous, and, therefore, more happy'.⁶ His belief in progress is infectious; his work leaves no room for dissent for he makes dissension tantamount to claiming we should go back to living in mud huts. The work of Thomas Hodgskin is thus all the more significant for he finds an alternative to orthodoxy whilst arguing from the same basis: like Knight, he describes political economy as natural laws:

[Adam Smith] taught, that *the division of labour* among individuals, and the wonderful co-operation of different classes of labourers to produce a common result, by which the productive power of the whole is amazingly increased, are not the result of human or

⁴ James Mill, *Westminster Review*, July, 1825, quoted in *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure*, p. 160. 'Work', p. 166.

⁵ Charles Knight, *The Results of Machinery* (London, 1831), p. 7.

⁶ p. 189.

legislative wisdom, foreseeing and willing the sublime, and for us most important, effect of general opulence, but an instinct in man, by which he takes to this peculiar practice, as a duck takes to the water and a fox to his cave.⁷

Yet he draws a different conclusion as to the 'natural' place of the capitalist in providing machinery:

The capitalist being the mere *owner* of the instruments, is not, as such, a labourer...In this which is at present the case, the labourers must share their produce with unproductive idlers, and to that extent less of the annual produce is employed in reproduction.⁸

The working class man views the capital of the worker - his labour - as the investment to be rewarded; Knight and other middle class Philosophical Radicals are mindful for the money tied up in machinery and seek a profitable return for it. Both sides read the theory to the advantage of their place in the economic system, showing that, even from the early decades of the century, amidst the language of the harmony of interests provided by Smithian political economy, there were contending interpretations of where the unity lay, creating divisive tensions which contributed in time to the formation of the Liberal Party and the Labour Movement.

In this debate, Martineau positions herself with the middle class reformers but she emphasized that this stance was in harmony with the interests of all participants in the economic system. She presents the industrial revolution as offering a chance for society either to realize its potential and progress towards this harmony or suffer the destructive consequences of attempting to flout the system. Her second tale in *Illustrations*, 'The Hill and the Valley', concerning an iron foundry, reads as a fictional illustration of Knight's *Results of Machinery*. Step by step she takes the reader through the economic reasons for the introduction of machinery and the consequences of machine breaking. Mr. Wallace, the capitalist, tells his workers at the outset that 'All are gainers by the co-operation of Labour and Capital'.⁹ When hard times hit the valley,

⁷ Thomas Hodgskin, *Popular Political Economy* (London, 1827), p. 25. This work is based on the lectures he gave to the London Mechanic's Institute the previous year.

⁸ p. 245.

⁹ p. 42.

Wallace has to make wage cuts and redundancies, and in an echo of Knight's treatise, advises his men to become capitalists themselves and manage the family capital so that their children are trained up for more than one trade, spreading the family's risk.¹⁰

The men are not persuaded and choose a blunter instrument to get their way: they break up the machinery which they believe has put them out of work. Wallace's co-participation in the moral economy with his men ends when they scorn his part in the bargain and he responds by taking his capital elsewhere, illustrating Knight's central point that machinery, once invented, cannot be ignored: someone somewhere will be using it. A micro-economic situation, such as an iron foundry, cannot resist macro-economic trends.

Economic environment and the formation of character

Placing Martineau's work in its context of this ongoing debate demonstrates why most literary critics of *Illustrations* have failed to understand her tales. The few critics who have mentioned these volumes have tended to be dismissive of what they read, judging them solely by the criteria of the Victorian novel. As discussed in the introduction, Louis Cazamian at the beginning of this century found them a 'limited and insensitive emotionally'.¹¹ At the end of the century, even her most sympathetic reader, Valerie Sanders, describes Martineau's characters as 'flat as the figures on a banknote', though she goes on to note that 'most, at some stage, begin to quiver with real resentment, despair, or the weary incomprehension which we associate with Mrs. Gaskell's Manchester operatives'.¹² The problem with looking for the complexity of characterization and emotional response expected from a Victorian novelist is that Martineau was not writing a Victorian novel, but illustrations of economic theory.

¹⁰ p. 64. See Knight's advice in *The Results of Machinery*. 'Become capitalists. When there is too much labour in the market, and wages are too low, do not combine to raise wages; do not combine with the vain hope of compelling the employer to pay for more labour than there are funds for the maintenance of labour: but go out of the market' (p. 197).

¹¹ *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850*, p. 50 p. 54.

¹² *Reason over Passion*, p. 42. Deirdre David also finds Martineau wanting, complaining that she lacks ambivalence or reservation: 'Martineau transforms complex problems into happy fables' (*Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, George Eliot*, Ithaca, 1987, p. 43), a complaint which can be criticized as giving insufficient weight to the educational agenda behind *Illustrations*.

Should we therefore be surprised if illustrations are what we get?¹³

Her characterizations make sense in the philosophical context of the work. The workers and masters are meshed into a network of 'natural' economic laws; similar to the determined view of character adopted by Edgeworth (see chapter four), individual activity conforms to a recognizable pattern. The issue of slavery as an example of the most extreme of economic environments provides a useful illustration of Edgeworth and Martineau's approach. In keeping with the Christian view of the responsibility of the individual for their moral choices, Hannah More's slaves are paragons of virtue, tested but not spoilt by their experience of slavery. By contrast, Edgeworth and Martineau demonstrate their Enlightenment inheritance when they describe their characters as warped by the environment of slavery. Edgeworth, in 'The Grateful Negro', examines the culture that the slaves brought with them from Africa, seeking in it an explanation for their actions. She describes the premium placed on the 'virtue' of revenge in the tribe to which both Caesar and Hector, the leader of the revolt, belong, allowing for some cultural relativism. She also describes the power of the Obeah woman over the black community. If Edgeworth's slaves are formed by the environment of their birth, Martineau's are perverted by the unnatural institution of slavery. Old Robert and his wife are taught deception by their condition, learning ways to get out of the work imposed on them. Worse still, they treat as slaves those whom fate has put in their power, in particular the orphan child, Hester. The narrator notes that 'slavery is the school of tyranny'.¹⁴ Martineau is not so simplistic as to suggest that the experience has the same effect on every one: her community of slaves has a

¹³ Martineau was capable of writing 'characters' of the sort Sanders is searching for: her novel *Deerbrook* exhaustively examines the motivations and feelings of her menage a trois - Dr. Hope, his wife Hester, and the woman he loves, Margaret, his sister-in-law. She also provides an intimate portrait of the sterile life of the lame governess, Maria Young. If *Deerbrook* is ultimately an unsatisfactory novel, it is not due to flat characterization, but rather the strangely dry moral atmosphere in which her characters function and a lack-lustre plot.

¹⁴ *Illustrations*, vol. ii. No IV. p. 46. The effect of slavery on the planters - turning them into tyrants - was used by many writers in the eighteenth century as an argument for abolition. The Rev. James Ramsay, for example, in his widely read *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies* (London, 1784) writes that 'Slavery, in the manner and degree that it exists in our colonies, could never have been intended for the social state; for it supposes tyranny on one side, treachery and cunning on the other' - good summary of Martineau's portrait of a plantation (p. 173).

polyphony of voices - as do her communities of working people. Willy, for example, does not want to marry '[b]ecause a black must be first a slave and then a man'.¹⁵ He is afraid of his wife obeying his master over and above him. His view is represented as a legitimate choice but not the only one possible in the circumstances as other slaves are married for better or worse.

The illustration of the negative effects of slavery on those subjected to its rigours is akin to Martineau's examination of the old parish relief system in her series of tales, *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*, which she wrote to assist the arguments for a reform of the Poor Law. Paupers, like slaves, can be vitiated by the perverse system in which they are caught up. In 'The Town', Charlotte Lucas, who starts the tale as an honest girl, falls under the malign influence of her new associates amongst the paupers; in this degrading environment, she falls pregnant, and a pauper-woman strangles the illegitimate child at birth. Charlotte's is only one of many sorry tales. In 'The Land's End', the decent Cornish copper-mining family of the Nelsons are forced into pauperism by their debt to the poor rates. The whole fabric of their society is collapsing under the unnatural strains placed on it by the artificial conditions created by pauper labour and rates. The poor relief system is shown to benefit the malign and the greedy and ruin the honest and efficient.

Martineau's belief that environment shapes the individuals in the community was shared by the most successful novelist of this period, Bulwer-Lytton.¹⁶ The thrust of the social criticism in Bulwer-Lytton's *Paul Clifford* (1830) is that society manufactures its own malefactors. Paul is accused of a crime he did not commit and thrown into gaol. There he is drawn into a life of crime. When he is finally caught, he tells the judge and jury: 'Your laws are but of two classes; the one makes criminals, the other punishes them. I have suffered by the one - I am about to perish by the other'.¹⁷ Potentially a decent young man, he has been perverted from his rightful path by the

¹⁵ *Illustrations*, vol. ii. No IV, p. 61.

¹⁶ In contrast, Dickens' product of the poor law, *Oliver Twist*, emerges unscathed from his upbringing in the work house, implying faith in an essence of character that cannot be perverted by environmental conditions.

¹⁷ Bulwer-Lytton, *Paul Clifford* (London, 1830, 1840), p. 392.

penal code, just as is Charlotte Lucas by the poor relief system. Yet neither Martineau nor Bulwer-Lytton felt that the possibilities ended there; their stories also bear testimony to the potential of people to make other choices and rise above the difficulties of their position, grasping the positive factors in their environment and turning them to their advantage. In 'Demerara', as an antidote to the sad story of Willy and Nell, Cassius saves up to buy his freedom. Nelson in 'The Land's End' is rescued by some judicious local reform to the administration of poor relief and by being given due recognition for his value as a worker. Nelson becomes a manager of the mine that he had earlier been forced to abandon because of his debts to the parish rates. In Bulwer-Lytton's *Paul Clifford*, Paul evades his sentence of transportation and restarts his life in America as a model citizen, a fairer society allowing him to be the man he should have been all along. Only in Martineau's tale, 'The Town', is the battle against the system represented as lost, as in this case, her strategy is to argue for a reform of the system and thus she shows things at their worst to encourage the appetite for change.

Martineau's tales are not, therefore, chiefly about the interaction of characters but about the interaction of character with economic environment. This relationship is circular as environment forms character and character influences environment - a model with which a post-Darwinian world is familiar, but one which had unsettling implications for many of her contemporaries. Though Martineau's philosophical starting point may produce characters that seem over-determined to some critics, it is also amenable to a greater degree of realism, foreshadowing late nineteenth century developments in the novel genre. Martineau felt that the leading novelists of her era failed as they described characters who had no connection to their fictional environment. In later life, Martineau commented to one correspondent:

I sh^d very much like to throw myself into the scenery, external & internal, of worky life... I dare say you are aware (it now strikes me) how entirely Mrs. Gaskell fails, except in single portraits & collecting anecdotes. Her personages are a museum of oddities,

each one of which has struck her fancy, some time or other.¹⁸

If Martineau could say this of Mrs. Gaskell, one of the industrial novelists most given to close social observation, how much truer is it of Dickens, Disraeli and Kingsley?

Stephen Blackpool, the soft, saintly operative, Alton Locke, the autodidact tailor poet, and Sybil, the queenly child of the people - all of these are indeed 'oddities'.

Martineau's industrial workers are much more 'run of the mill' and live and move in a recognizable workaday world. Martineau embeds her characters in the common details of daily life. Mrs. Ellis, one of the silk weavers in 'Loom and the Lugger', and her family are visited by her employer's sister and her friend:

The girls had observed, as they mounted the stairs, that though there was a green baize on the floor of the room below, a handsome mahogany chest of drawers, a tea-tray with a tiger upon it, and above it two fine pictures, - viz., the Duke of Wellington staring mightily upon his companion, a Madonna, as if meditating war against her child - though all these things testified to the means of comfort being in the house, there existed the deplorable discomfort of unmade beds late in the evening.

Martineau uses a humorous touch in her portrait of every day life, both in the detail of the bellicose Wellington and in the registering of the ladies' shock at the state of the room (it is later explained that the beds are unmade because the girl responsible for them is kept at her loom). This passage compares with a similar description in *Mary Barton* (1848). Mrs. Gaskell also has an eye for the small but telling details of a room. John Barton's home, for example, 'seemed almost crammed with furniture (sure sign of good times among the mills)'.¹⁹ Like Martineau, Gaskell recognized that the furnishings of a home are both a guide to the economic condition of the family and an indication of their character. In contrast to Martineau, Gaskell's presence is more forcibly intruded into the scene: she feels compelled to act as guide and interpreter.

'Opposite the fire-place,' she continues, 'was a table, which I should call a Pembroke,

¹⁸ From a letter to Reeve, 14 March 1859, in a private collection, quoted in *Reason over Passion*, p. 19. On the portrait of oddities, see Helena Bergmann, *Between Obedience and Freedom. Woman's Role in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Industrial Novel* (Göteborg, 1979) in which she notes the prevalence of 'flawless idealistic portrayals' of working class characters, p. 23. See also David Craig, 'Fiction and the Rising Industrial Classes', *Essays in Criticism* (Oxford, 1967), pp. 64-74.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton*, first published 1848 (London, 1969) pp. 12-13.

only that it was made of deal, and I cannot tell how far such a name may be applied to such humble material'.²⁰ By these little asides, she reminds the reader that she is conducting them through her imaginary kingdom. She is the Prospero showing the magic visions of the world of the poor, thus framing and distancing them for our imagination to comprehend. Martineau works through the contrary tactic of self-effacement, letting her characters speak for themselves without a strong mediating narratorial voice to muster them into order. She reserves most of her observations for the conclusion of each tale when she summarizes the economic principles she hopes she has illustrated. Her tales are full of 'opinions', but these are usually expressed by characters, not a narrator, and are often in competition with each other; our task as reader is to evaluate the choices for ourselves, as if we are looking at 'bare facts', not having our judgement clouded by the passions and prejudices of an emotional intermediary.

Emotional intermediaries predominate in the mid-century industrial novels. Compared to Martineau's matter-of-fact tone and 'rational' conclusions, the temperature of feeling runs very high in the works on industrial themes of Dickens, Disraeli and Kingsley, and the furnace of emotional intensity, with its sparks of rhetorical excess, sometimes obscures the subject. Take, for example, Dickens' much quoted description of Coketown in *Hard Times* (1854), in which he describes the mill town as an urban jungle, with a face like 'the painted face of a savage', chimneys belching 'interminable serpents of smoke' and 'the piston of the steam engine work[ing] monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness'.²¹ He impresses the sensual impact of the town on the reader, providing an image that is the lens through which we view the actions of the unfortunate inhabitants of the place. Indeed, it is now hard to disentangle our impression of the Victorian industrial town from the powerful imagery of Dickens - an example of our historical view of the nature of life in these towns imitating Art - a problem that also faced the contemporary reader who had no first-hand experience, or mediated what experience he or she had, through the lens provided by the novelist. Dickens' image, however, is that of the outsider, choosing

²⁰ p. 13.

²¹ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London, 1955), p. 22.

descriptions that were unlikely to characterize the place for the inhabitants who made their home there. We are not brought closer to the working folk but alienated from them and their surroundings. Sheila M. Smith in *The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s* observes this phenomenon more generally in novels of the period: '[p]icturesque horror, sensationalism feeding on reality, panders to the spectator's pleasurable sensations and enlarges the gulf between the Two Nations rather than appealing to feeling to bridge it'.²² It no longer matters if we find ourselves on the elite side of the gulf between the Two Nations of rich and poor: Dickens' imagery has a literary pleasure and power that we are free to enjoy. At the time of writing, however, it would have been a rather more serious criticism. Whilst Dickens was ostensibly trying to bring his readers into imaginative sympathy with the poor, his style potentially reinforced divides in an already fractured society of Haves and Have-nots.²³ In a political context, the highly-seasoned rhetoric could be cited against writers as proof of the fictional nature of their complaints. Harriet Martineau herself objected to Dickens campaigning on the strength of fictional sentiments rather than a dispassionate analysis of the case.²⁴ In an article written to counter Dickens' argument for protective factory legislation, Martineau comments on *Hard Times*: 'Master and man are as unlike life in England, at present, as Ogre and Tom Thumb'. She goes on to use Dickens' style to undermine his stance on the machine-casing question:

The mingled levity and fustian of the style of the specimens we have quoted will neutralise their mischief to educated people; but the responsibility of presenting such pictures, and offering such sentiment, to a half-educated order of readers, is such as few writers would like to be burdened with.²⁵

Hers is the rationalist's complaint of the emotive argument - already familiar in the

²² *The Other Nation*, p. 60.

²³ Wordsworth may be interpreted as doing something similar in *The Excursion*, see chapter five, pp. 215-218.

²⁴ John Carey notes Dickens' inconsistency on industrialization. In the year before *Hard Times* he had attended a banquet and praised the wealth that made Birmingham. Carey defends the writer on the grounds that he was an imaginative writer, not a social theorist - a distinction Martineau did not allow (*The Violent Effigy. A Study of Dickens' Imagination* (London, 1991), p. 9).

²⁵ Harriet Martineau, *The Factory Controversy: A Warning against Meddling Legislation* (Manchester, 1855), p. 36, p. 38.

accusation of Macaulay on Southey's fictional grasp of his subject in *Colloquies*. *Hard Times* was, of course, written as an answer to the more calculated responses of the Utilitarians like Martineau to the problems of industrialization; but, in reacting to the tight emotional control of these writers, Dickens has perhaps gone too far and given his opponents a stick with which to beat him. Martineau's own work eschewed such tactics in favour of a drier rehearsal of the facts - as Martineau saw them - making *Illustrations* less satisfying as a imaginative piece of literature, but also less vulnerable to the accusation of gratuitous emotive language.

Here we are glimpsing a small part of a much larger debate on facts versus feeling that occupied many writers, notably Carlyle,²⁶ in the mid-nineteenth century. Both approaches have their limitations. Dickens' emotional intensity is hard to disentangle from distracting sentimentality, such as when he describes the pitiful deathbed of Stephen Blackpool with all its heavy symbolism.²⁷ It can be argued that the scene has the affect of tidying Stephen's 'muddled' life away by death and the promise of heavenly reward, muffling the lingering questions about the society that drove him to his tragic end. If Dickens' sentimentality at times diffuses the impact of his social comment, Martineau's naked statement of events seems to cry out for a comforting clothing of emotion. Despite its virtues as an analytical tool, the 'rational' distance in *Illustrations* was read as a repellent hardness of heart of the sort Dickens successfully satirized.²⁸ In 'The Hill and the Valley,' an accident disrupts the work of the iron foundry:

It soon after happened, most unfortunately, that a boy, who was in charge of the management of some part of the new machinery, was careless and put himself in the way of receiving a blow on the head, which killed him on the spot.²⁹

²⁶ See in particular Carlyle's *Signs of the Times* (1829) in which he gives a famous critique of nineteenth century society being driven by 'the material, the immediately practical, not the divine and spiritual' (*Selected Writings*, p. 77).

²⁷ *Hard Times* p. 274.

²⁸ See for example the character of Filer, in *The Chimes*, who wants to put down every pleasure for the poor, ranging from the eating of tripe to married love in accordance with the principles of political economy.

²⁹ *Illustrations*, vol. i. No II, p. 92.

From the pen of Swift, this could read as heavy irony, yet the context in which the passage falls gives no room for an ironic interpretation. The bland tone of the piece leaves the reader wondering if Martineau thinks the boy's death was 'unfortunate' or did she mean the bother of dealing with the disruption created by so careless a child? Conspicuous incidences of her utilitarian views provided material for critics such as Dickens to play upon, weakening her other arguments by satirizing her views in their most extreme form.

Recognizing ordinary life in literature

If Dickens increased the division between the Two Nations by sensationalizing urban life, Martineau can be read as producing the opposite effect by emphasizing the ordinary. She creates literary pictures of 'one-nation' communities bound up in a harmony of interests located in the economic system of industrialization. Her workers are absorbed by questions of real importance to them: not on the whole, the larger questions of politics or morality, though these do enter when they have a relevance to their situation, but on the issues that immediately affect the working class: employment conditions, wages and how to make one's way in the world. Almost without exception, the working class are unself-pitying about their station in life, as is the narrator. In 'Tale of the Tyne' for example, the six-year-old Tim, blinded in a mining accident at four, sets manfully to the work he can manage when his family is brought into hardship by the impressment of his father for naval service. He is no Tiny Tim presented as an object of pity, but a brave child whom we are supposed to admire. Tim's predicament also gives Martineau an occasion to sketch in details of the wider industrial community. Tyneside is not the savage jungle of Coketown. The narrator notes that Tim often spoiled his workmates' coal-piles by walking into them, but everyone bore the inconvenience of his disability in sympathy with his desire to earn a few pennies. Martineau's portrait of the community may be less sensational than that of the mid-century industrial novelists, but perhaps it approaches closer to the truth as the workers themselves perceived it. Sheila M. Smith includes in *The Other Nation*

extracts from a number of parliamentary commission reports used by Victorian social novelists. What is striking in the evidence from the working people is how 'matter-of-fact' the witnesses tend to be, in contrast to the rhetorical use the novelists made of their words. One girl's evidence - which may have contributed to Disraeli's out-pouring against the abolitionists in *Sybil* - reads as follows:

I am nearly 15 years old; and began to work in Webster's pit when I was going on 10...[.] When the corve is loaded, one of us is harnessed with a belt round the waist, and a chain comes from the front of the belt and passes betwixt our legs and is hooked on to the corve, and we go along on our hands and feet, on all fours. I do so myself, and a little boy pushes behind. We wear trousers always as when you saw us. It doesn't tire us very much.³⁰

All the essential ingredients of Disraeli's outburst are there, bar the tone of moral outrage. For Harriet Morton, the speaker in this case, this is normal life, not an 'issue'. Martineau's descriptions of working life, with an acceptance of the necessity of wage earning for some children and of the conditions in which they do so, demonstrates a similar attitude to the fact of work. Until incomes were raised to the point where child-labour was no longer needed by the poorest families, Martineau would argue, such protests as Disraeli's, if they lead to children being stopped from working, are unwelcome amongst the poor. The possibility is strong that, in this respect, Martineau better represents the views of workers than the Victorian social novelists.

In her attempt to articulate the view point of so many different players in the economy, Martineau creates a remarkable variety of characters, sketching a sophisticated picture of communities linked by shared economic fortunes. The variety is there for a purpose: it is meant to reflect the complexity of the economic system mediated via different characters in which her readers live and work. She shows particular interest in the thoughts and feelings of 'misguided' working-class leaders whose actions derail economic progress. Though she disagrees with their choices, she portrays their

³⁰ Evidence given by Harriet Morton, 18 February 1841, Hunshelf, Yorkshire, to J. C. Symons; CEC, I Appendix, I, P. P. Session 1842 (XVI), 241 f. quoted in *The Other Nation*, p. 143.

motivations sympathetically. In an early story, written before undertaking *Illustrations*, 'The Turn-out' (1829), the central character is one such a man. Henry Gilbert, the union leader, is instrumental in persuading his fellow millworkers to strike for better wages. Gilbert thinks he is doing good; his fault is to try and fight economic realities. When the strike fails, Gilbert's motives become more complicated:

he could not bring himself to yield and while he assured himself that he was only exercising a well-principled firmness, a closer examination into his feelings would have told him, that he was unwilling to relinquish his power, to fall into the ranks instead of holding command, and to acknowledge that plans so long laid and so vigorously pursued as his, could fail.³¹

In this case, economically damaging actions are tinged with morally questionable pride and selfishness. Despite this, the final note on Gilbert's character remains sympathetic: Henry's younger brother James, whose future prospects were also injured by the strike, regrets that Henry must now live with the sad effects of the turn-out on his conscience. An essentially good man has brought suffering upon himself.

Henry Gilbert has his counterpart in *Illustrations* in the figure of William Allen, the reluctant union leader of 'A Manchester Strike'. Martineau's thought on the moral responsibility of strike leaders has developed since 'The Turn-out' and she chooses to deal with a man who is sucked into a dispute he does not want and unwillingly created a leader. When the strike fails, Allen is embittered against the masters and, as a proscribed man, can never work in a mill again. Martineau is not interested in 'happy ever after' conclusions where they are not plausible. She wants her fiction to reflect the harsh realities of life. Allen is depicted as the victim of the strike; he is proof that it is not enough to be a good man: one also has to understand how moral attitudes should mesh with an understanding of the economic consequences of one's actions. She writes the tale as a warning, hoping to educate would-be Allens and Gilberts that strikes in periods of poor trade inevitably fail as the workers are at their weakest and masters unable to meet their demands.

³¹ Harriet Martineau, *The Turn-out; or, Patience the best Policy* (Salop, 1829), p. 92.

Part of Martineau's strategy to create convincing communities is to try to portray the experience of participating in the economic system from the point of view of the workers themselves. The case of Nelson, the Cornish copper miner of 'The Land's End' in *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*, demonstrates that economic conditions are perceived as being a social as well as a statistical factor in their lives. When Nelson loses his livelihood as the result of the poor rates, Martineau tries to enter imaginatively into his feelings, to understand the pride of this kind of man: 'None but a miner can understand the pain he felt in losing caste - in becoming a day-labourer in the quarry, after having been long a tributer in the mine'.³² Her characters are not the simple characters of More's tracts: she is aware that their world is divided into its various ranks, just as the upper classes distinguish between their various titles and occupations. For Nelson, it is important for his self-respect that he is employed in the quarry as an independent labourer, not a parish pauper, and the worst humiliation he suffers comes when his employer refuses to recognize the distinction. Martineau does not belittle the feelings of her working man; rather she gives his anguish full weight, raising him to an heroic stature. He, and others like him, she believed, were where the true heroes of the present age were to be found. She reflects on this at the conclusion of her tale in *Illustrations*, 'For Each and All': her two aristocratic protagonists discuss the dramatic potential of their life in contrast to that of the poor. Letitia, formerly an actress before marriage into the nobility, remarks that:

The true romance of human life lies among the poorer classes; the most rapid vicissitudes, the strongest passions, the most undiluted emotions, the most eloquent deportment, the truest experiences are there. These things are marked on their countenances, and displayed by their gestures; and yet these things are almost untouched by our artists; be they dramatists, painters, or novelists.³³

Letitia's speech echoes Martineau's views on literary practice expressed elsewhere. At the same time as she was writing this tale, Martineau was also reviewing Scott for *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, January 1833. In her article, she praises Scott's power to

³² Harriet Martineau, *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* (2 vols) (London, 1834), vol ii, No IV, p. 69.

³³ *Illustrations*, vol iv, No. XI, p. 127.

embody 'truth in fiction', but goes on to note:

And not only has he left the great mass of material unwrought, but, with all his richness of variety, has made but scanty use of the best instruments of illustration. The grandest manifestations of passion remain to be displayed; the finest elements of the poetry of human emotion are yet uncombined; the most various dramatic exhibition of events and characters is yet unwrought; for there has yet been no recorder of the poor; at least, none but those who write as mere observers; who describe, but do not dramatize humble life... We have yet to wait for the philosophical romance, for the novels which shall relate to other classes than the aristocracy; we have yet to look for this legitimate offspring of the productions of Scott, though wearied with the intrusion of their spurious brethren.³⁴

This passage is crucial to an understanding of Martineau's aspirations for her own work. Reacting against the fashion for 'silver spoon' novels of the 1820s, she anticipates Bulwer-Lytton's call, made in *England and the English* (1833), for greater moral seriousness. This moral seriousness is to be found in material diametrically opposed to the aristocratic intrigues of the fashionable novel. Though she did not claim to be the awaited messiah of the philosophical novel, she attempted in *Illustrations* to provide a new kind of fictional writing with a serious agenda, set on the grand stage of humble life. She was not only reacting against the poor imitators of Scott; she was also developing ideas drawn from Wordsworth's 1800 Preface, a document she much admired at this stage of her writing career.³⁵ Martineau differed from Wordsworth in that she did not confine the imaginative possibilities of humble life to the countryside; on the contrary, she was stimulated by the dramatic possibilities of the industrial communities abhorred by the Lake poet. She was less interested in Wordsworth's concept of 'plainer and more emphatic language' spoken by those who dwell amidst the 'best objects'; rather she was attracted by the concept of a display of the deeper, undisguised truths about human nature where life is lived in the raw. She demonstrated this latter point literally by setting several of her stories in extremely testing environments. The poor families of 'Homes Abroad' emigrate to Van Diemen's Land; in this wilderness, basic character traits of honesty, idleness or aggression are

³⁴ ed. John O. Hayden, *Scott: The Critical Heritage* (London, 1970), p. 341.

³⁵ In later life, Martineau became disillusioned with the poet, writing that 'I need not say that Wordsworth's reports of his neighbours were fancy-pieces - not intended so, but steeped in subjective colouring.' Quoted in *Reason over Passion*, p. 5.

accentuated. For example, Jerry, one of the convicts, shows his 'savage' streak by settling down with the aborigines, a reject from the small Western society being carved out by the other emigrants. Likewise, in 'The Charmed Sea', the Polish exiles in Siberia have to build their society again from scratch, abandoning many of their previous cultural assumptions. Living life on the edge of survival reveals the strengths and weaknesses of each in a harsh light. Fittingly, the two who adapt best are Clara, the child who has no preconceptions of 'society', and Paul, the pragmatist, who is not shy of marrying a local woman to benefit from her survival skills. With the exception of the man who commits the economic sin of cheating his fellows of their bone currency, Martineau passes no moral judgement on the survival choices of the Poles: pragmatist and patriot are all given even-handed treatment. Her works may be didactic in the strictest sense, but she does not preach a narrow moral code.

Wordsworth's 1800 Preface is a natural association to make with any literary creed such as Martineau's which values the life of common people as its main focus. Yet this is not only a creed of the first generation Romantic poets; as I have argued, it was a concern shared in a different forum by the female educationalists. Like Edgeworth and More, Martineau used the narratives of the poor, not only as a rich source of human drama, but also as an effective teaching tool. She wanted to communicate with working men and women in all stations: how better than to do so by taking scenarios that form their daily existence? She, of course, did not believe that people only learned through familiar associations, otherwise her stories set in Siberia and Ceylon would be pointless: a certain amount of exotic material was a useful leaven in a mass of more customary material. Like Edgeworth and More, however, she thought people learned best when the central interest of the story was provided by characters with whom the readers could empathize: people like themselves. Edgeworth, writing for children, provides child-heroes; Martineau writing for a wide audience of adult autodidacts, offers a diverse variety of figures with which to identify. In 'The Loom and the Lugger', for example, there are the rich manufacturers, such a Culver and his family, the poor weavers, Cooper and his wife, and the smuggling villagers on the south coast. Neither group is privileged: the focus of the story shifts from one world to the other;

Culver's drawing room, Cooper's little garden and Mr. Pim's schoolroom are independent of each other. We visit each, presumably feeling at home in that which is most familiar to us. Martineau not only offers a variety of class heroes: she also mixes urban and countryside. In 'Sowers and Reapers' she shows how the two worlds interact; the rural world of the Kay family is disturbed by Luddites from nearby Sheffield practising their drills in the fields under cover of night. It is an environment of farm workers and steel workers living side by side. The story concludes with a debate between the representatives of society: Fergusson the landowner, Oliver the foundry man and the workers. This microcosm of English society provides a role model for every reader.

The mixture of zeal and optimism for the opportunities of the industrial world found in the philosophical radicalism of Martineau's writing demonstrates that Martineau's early work shares some attitudes as well as approach with the other female educationalists in this study. The primary aim of the texts discussed - *Cheap Repository Tracts*, *Popular Tales* and *Early Lessons*, and *Illustrations* - is to educate and inform readers about a changing world; each work presents a vision of how social and economic relationships cutting across class divisions can be regulated to produce a workable society. In this literary lineage, Martineau's work appears as a further development of the attempt to address both labourers and lords pioneered by More, but written with greater sophistication and information than her predecessor's tracts.³⁶

Her immediate inspiration came from another female educationalist - Mrs. Marcet - whose *Conversations on Political Economy* (1816) were the seed from which grew Martineau's *Illustrations*.³⁷ Marcet dramatizes her attempt to explain political economy in the form of a dialogue between the well-informed Mrs. B. and the naive and

³⁶ Martineau was familiar with More's work. Her first published article in the *Monthly Repository* was 'Female Writers and Practical Divinity' in which she discussed the work of Hannah More and Mrs. Barbauld. See R. K. Webb, 'Rational Piety' (p. 306) in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge, 1996).

³⁷ The literary connections between these female writers are revealed by Jane Marcet. Mrs. B. praises Maria Edgeworth's tales for children, especially 'The Cherry Orchard', saying that 'The author has judiciously avoided naming the science, but that little tale contains a simple and beautiful exposition of the division of labour' (*Conversations on Political Economy* (London, 1816), p. 12).

questioning Caroline. Martineau, however, breaks away from the Marcet dialogue pattern: though many of her stories have long conversations within them of this type, the fictional situation is used to add variety and interest to the economic questions under analysis. Mrs. Marcet's conversations take place in a timeless schoolroom or day-palour and are of general rather than immediate application. By showing a riot, machine breaking, or a strike, Martineau makes the dynamics of the economic situation alive for the imagination, as well as the reason, of her readers.

Martineau had a teaching agenda to get through in *Illustrations*. The work has been criticized for being too didactic to be a novel, but when considered as a dramatized economics text book it suddenly seems much more interesting. Following the example of Hannah More, who took religious catechism and turned it into dramatized dialogues with the aim of stimulating her pupils; Martineau took economic theory and produced staged debates with the same hope. The long discussions which now seem to drag when the *Illustrations* are read 'for the story' were the central plank of her teaching method. Rather than give her readers a bald statement of theory, she takes them through the reasoning that produces the theory, aspiring to persuade them to adopt these principles of political economy as their own. How stimulating her approach would have seemed can be illustrated by comparing her style to that of other educational writers of her day which defeated the imagination with their weight of useless facts.³⁸ Martineau realized that the imagination had to be stimulated for the reason to grasp the truth of a proposition. She popularized social science, as Edgeworth had technology, by interpreting it for a mass audience of non-specialists. This was a democratic aspiration in tune with the age of the Great Reform Act: she was doing her best to make the mysterious processes of government and industry understandable. If the workers realized the part they played in the whole, they gained more control over their lives. Martineau wanted a politically active and well-informed population and intended her work to be one step on the road to achieving this.

³⁸ See, for example, two of the most popular work of the day: Richmal Mangnall, *Historical and Miscellaneous Questions*, 12th edition (London, 1815), and Rev. David Blair *The Universal Preceptor*, 2nd edition (London, 1811).

Martineau would have rejected any suggestion that the British industrial worker was a 'white' slave. She knew too well the horrors of black slavery to confuse the two. Harriet Martineau's credentials as a campaigner for the emancipation of slaves, particularly in the United States where she travelled and befriended many of the leading abolitionists, are well established. Even in the early period of her writing career, she campaigned at home to assist the Parliamentary Bill on the emancipation of slaves in the British Empire. The Act was passed in 1833 and it is no accident that in the previous year she had published 'Demerara' as the fourth number of her *Illustrations of Political Economy* - taking the issue out of Parliament to the wider public. Like Hannah More, she was not afraid to intercede in a political debate, hoping to motivate public opinion on behalf of the reformers. 'Demerara', however, is only one element in her much wider scheme, just as 'Sorrows of Yamba' was only one of many *Cheap Repository Tracts* - a fact that is now often forgotten. Betty Fladeland comments on this development of Martineau's critical image:

It has been suggested that Harriet Martineau was the prototype for Charles Dickens's Mrs Jellyby in *Bleak House*, whose 'telescopic myopia' focused on the poor natives of Borrioboola-Gha to the complete neglect of her own household and children. In Martineau's case, however, interest in her own poor neighbours preceded her commitment to the cause of the far-off black slaves. The two concerns always remained intertwined in her thinking.³⁹

How 'intertwined' can be demonstrated by 'Demerara'. The greater scheme of *Illustrations* is to explain political economy systematically - moving from property, to capital, to poor relief, to competition and so on. Martineau used slavery to demonstrate the absurdity of the idea of owning men as property, as well as to illustrate the advantage of allowing men to take their capital of their own labour to a free market. In 'Demerara', the enlightened plantation owner, Alfred, argues with his father from first principles, asking whether one would, or could, force personal physical property, such as strength or hair, from another. If not, '[n]ow, we see that man has no natural property in man'.⁴⁰ As we have seen above, ⁴¹ she also argues that forced labour is

³⁹ *Abolitionists and Working Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization*, p. 75.

⁴⁰ *Illustrations*, vol. ii. No IV. p. 20.

⁴¹ See chapter four, pp.187-188.

ineffective labour, thus undermining the logic of slavery whilst illustrating economic ideas. In contrast to such classics of the anti-slavery movement as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, this approach may seem rather calculating, but that was its point: it was calculated as a response to those arguing that, though slavery was regrettable, it was necessary to prevent commercial ruin of the planters of the West Indies. To refute these reasoners, she combats them on their own terms: the economics of the system. Her argument cannot be dismissed as sentimental propaganda: it is sustained by the combined authority of Adam Smith and other noted political economists. To allow her emotional abhorrence to the system, rather than intellectual condemnation, to dominate would have weakened the strength of her position. This said, her story does not lack emotive details familiar in anti-slavery propaganda; economic exposition is interrupted by the escape of Willy and Nell, two slaves driven to this extreme by the hardships they endure and their resolute determination to be free. Their story ends in Willy being torn to death by a bloodhound, and by Nell being taken back into remorseless bondage. The horror of the incident is not rationalized away by the author, but left unsoftened as an illustration of the cruelty of the slave system.

Her condemnation of black slavery in *Illustrations* contrasts with the positive depiction of work for British factory hands in a modern industrial society. She was - as Edgeworth before her - an optimist when it came to industry, believing that it was in the economic interest of the employers to provide safe, fair conditions for his workers and therefore abuses were an aberration from the system, not a symptom of the system itself. These views did not make her into the voice of the Establishment, nor the chilling dogmatist of Cazamian's analysis. She is better figured - as are More, Southey and Edgeworth - as someone who builds a bridge, or interprets between the two worlds of rich and poor. Her stories appeal at least as often for an understanding of the sufferings of the unfortunate on the part of the rich as they do for submission to economic forces from the poor. In 'Sowers and Reapers', one young man is bitter about the ignorance of the rich:

Their painters show them pictures of jolly rent days, and the music they hear is triumphant and spirit-stirring...Ay; if we could set each of them down in this vale as one of ourselves, they would be

surprised to find how dismal night-lights are when they shine on scowling brows and hollow cheeks; and how little spirit war-music has when it cannot drown the moans of the famished, and the cries of the mothers weeping for their children.⁴²

He is attacking the fiction of national patriotism during the Napoleonic Wars - the background to this story - arguing that one can only be patriotic on a full stomach and out of personal danger. The wars of the rich are largely fought by the sons of the poor, leaving many women weeping for their dead children abroad, as well as for their starving children at home. This is a tough message to convey to the powerful. As the rich cannot all be literally 'set down' in the homes of the poor to learn the truth, Martineau provides the nearest experience she can by bringing the lives of the poor into the homes of the rich in fictional form. Political economy was not the only lesson she had to teach.

The sophistication of Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy* demonstrates how far literature for the lower classes had progressed since the days of More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*. Out of a tradition of fairly simple lessons in personal morality developed a complex syllabus of economic exposition. The evolution in educational literature for the lower classes could not have been made, however, without the pioneering work of the 1790s. The strengths of More's formula - the familiar characters, the interpretation of difficult political and spiritual concepts in a popular form - all survive. Indeed, Martineau shared with both her predecessors, More and Edgeworth, the belief that the methods discovered to be effective as teaching tools with the poor were perfectly serviceable for the rich as well. Edgeworth, whilst maintaining an apartheid in the preface of *The Parent's Assistant* makes no such distinction in the body of her text, bringing all classes into contact with each other; Martineau makes no discriminations at all, starting from the premise that all her readers were equally impoverished in knowledge, if not in financial status.

The educational works of these three women have been ignored for too long for their contribution to the debate on industrialized society at the beginning of the nineteenth

⁴² *Illustrations*, vol. vii. No. XIX. 59.

century. They are well worth our attention and reward critical investigation - once the critic abandons his or her own brand of 'telescopic myopia', blaming the works for not being novels or too dogmatic. On their own terms, the female educationalists wrought a significant revolution in teaching materials and enormously expanded the audience for literature. They provided the readers of the era of the early industrial revolution with optimistic approaches to the new social order, offering an alternative to those writers like Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey who saw political economy as divorced from a healthy moral and social context. As historians now recognize that the industrial revolution itself was experienced as a 'gradual and cumulative'⁴³ change by many workers, often having more continuity with past working and social patterns than the Marxist class-conflict model suggests, it is time that literary critics too opened up a new space in the debate for the voices of women educationlists who stress these factors in their work.

⁴³ 'Work', p. 156

Conclusion

The images of the industrial revolution which have attained academic literary longevity come almost exclusively from the pens of the critics of the factory system. Whereas the optimism and credo of self-help which runs through the works of More, Edgeworth and Martineau would seem to lead only to the unfashionable literary regions of tract societies, children's literature and Samuel Smiles, the values of the Romantic poets are echoed by the major novelists of the mid-nineteenth century. Factory work is presented as an evil - though sometimes a necessary one. The path blazed by the poets is not difficult to track. The fears that Wordsworth expresses in *The Excursion* about the consequence of departing from traditional ways to the deadening regime of the machine are taken up by the most influential writers of the next generation, in particular, by Thomas Carlyle. In an early piece for the *Edinburgh Review*, 'Signs of the Times' (1829), Carlyle describes machinery as succeeding men in the work place: 'On every hand, the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier, inanimate one. The shuttle drops from the fingers of the weaver, and falls into iron fingers that ply it faster'.¹ His sentence makes the living man redundant as he passes over the presence of the factory hand as the operator of the machine; the only 'hand' left in the work place is the iron one of the power loom.

In *Chartism* (1839), Carlyle develops the logic of this essay to predict potentially disastrous consequences from the descent into the mechanistic, materialist world. Southey, in an optimistic mood, had described the Madras system of education as a 'moral steam-engine' - harnessing the explosive energies of the working classes for good: Carlyle fears those energies have been pumped round a soul-less, God-less machine. The energies thus trapped would seek a way to escape, unleashing an explosion on all of society - 'If men had lost a belief in a God, their only resource against a blind no-God, of Necessity and Mechanism, that held them like a hideous World-Steamengine, like a hideous Phalaris' Bull, imprisoned in its own iron belly, would be, with or without hope, - *revolt*'.² Almost every Victorian novel on an

¹ *Selected Writings*, p. 64.

² p. 178.

industrial theme takes a realized or threatened explosion as its subject matter: the workers in *Hard Times* plot a strike in their union, expelling the dissenter, Stephen Blackpool, from their midst; Elizabeth Gaskell's John Barton is driven to murder; her operatives in *North and South* break into the factory and throw stones at their master; Disraeli's workers in *Sybil* riot and loot the home of a local magnate; Brontë's *Shirley* chooses the Luddite troubles of the early years of the century, showing that explosions were present even from the first days of mechanization. The list is not yet exhausted. These incidents of violence are partly self-selecting as novelists are inevitably drawn to times of drama, but the impression left is that the industrial revolution is only characterized by misery and class conflict.

In all the novels mentioned above, a breakdown in communication between master and men precedes incidents of violence. The mid-nineteenth century literary world read the cause of this failed communication much as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey had done, namely that the cash nexus severed the bonds holding an hierarchical society together, pitting the workers against their employers, rather than encouraging them to work together for mutual benefit. Following the example of Romantic poets, writers tried to find alternatives to recuperate a fractured society. John Ruskin promoted the idea that the employer must approach his men 'with a distinctly paternal authority and responsibility' and that his men must be given a 'permanent interest' in the factory, much as sons have an interest in the fortunes of their father.³ His preference was for the world of the artisan rather than the factory hand, where the interest a worker felt was that of a craftsman adding his distinctive mark to the finished product. In the economics of the factory system, there was no scope for individual skill. Ruskin's ideal is that of a lost era. This kind of nostalgia can be found in many works of Victorian literature. George Eliot's description of craftsmen at work, such as Adam Bede at his carpentry, dignifies labour and stresses its sociability. The profession of her most solitary workman, Silas Marner, is significantly that of a weaver. Though not a factory hand, he is a scion of an industrial town; his machine separates him from others and from himself: Eliot describes him weaving 'like a spider, from pure impulse,

³ John Ruskin, *Unto this Last* (first published in the Cornhill Magazine 1860, this edition, London, 1903), p. 35 and p. 18.

without reflection'.⁴ He willingly acquiesces to being dulled by repetitive work to silence his sorrows. He is only saved from the heartlessness of the loom by the needs of a child, drawn out of his isolation and re-introduced to society.

Eliot's Felix Holt, another town-bred working man, is rarely described working at his trade of watch-mender; but he is also an isolated figure, separated from the people of Treby Magna by his superior education and ambition. He represents the radicalism that in the period in which the novel is set - the passage of the Great Reform Bill - brings an end to the old world. Looking back thirty-five years to 1832, Eliot describes two worlds living side by side: 'The busy scenes of the shuttle and the wheel, of the roaring furnace, nests in the midst of the large-spaced, slow-moving life of homesteads and far-away cottages and oak-sheltered parks'.⁵ The passing of the Reform Act tips the balance from the rural past in favour of the industrial world. Her nostalgic descriptions of the lost world are, however, tempered by criticism of the social relationships it legitimized: the rural past may have more poetry, but it was a backward-looking, static world; the urban present of Felix is one in which the working man can take his place as an equal to the privileged classes. He can aspire to this equality thanks to the power that the factory mode of production has given the working classes: by gathering them together in large numbers, they gain collective strength. Yet the strength comes with a heavy price: they lose their old status as independent craftsmen and have to endure the ugliness and poverty of town life.

In literature, the factory system loses out to nostalgia because its benefits are abstract and the cost to the individual worker vividly present to novelists who take character as their theme. Yet was it really a defeat for the optimists in favour of industrialization? Looking at the economic statistics of the nineteenth century, it is evident that those hankering after a lost world of traditional values and small scale enterprise had no effect on the juggernaut of industrialization. Perhaps the predominantly critical treatment of the factory system in literature is a sign of impotency? Anxieties could be indulged in the cultural space of the novel, poetry and periodical but not in the commercial world.

⁴ George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, ed. Q. D. Leavis (Harmondsworth, 1967), p. 64.

⁵ *Felix Holt*, ed. Peter Coveney (Harmondsworth, 1972), p. 80

Or perhaps it was due to the fact that nostalgia sold well: criticism of the free market was a marketing success?

The debate between those for and against industrialization is by no means settled. During the course of researching this thesis, I have felt that our own era has more affinity with the views expressed in the writings of Romantic age than it does with the novels of the mid-Victorian period. Like the optimists who marvelled at the steam engine, our appetite for technology seems insatiable as machines take over many roles once performed by men and women in the workplace and the home. Yet, like the Romantic poets, the fear is frequently expressed that human values are trampled in the rush to the brave new world of genetic engineering and computerization. As the literature of the Romantic period has blended into the culture we have received from the past, perhaps it is partly due to them that we phrase the debate in the way we do? If so, this is one more reason for putting the literature dealing with industrialization back on the literary map of Romanticism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary

a) Manuscripts

Edgeworth, Maria, 'On the Education of the Poor', Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e. 1461.
 Southey, R., 'Harold', Bodleian MS. Eng. misc. e. 114.

b) Printed Works

- Aikin, J., *A Description of the Country from thirty to forty miles round Manchester*, London: John Stockdale, 1795.
- Arnold, Matthew, *Culture and Anarchy*, ed. J. Dover Wilson, Cambridge: C.U.P., 1971.
- Austen, Jane, *Northanger Abbey*, ed. Ehrenpreis, Anne Henry, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972.
- Ayton, Richard, *A Voyage round Great Britain*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1814.
- Babbage, Charles, *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufacturers*, London: Charles Knight, 1832.
- Baillie, Joanna, *A Series of Plays*, London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1798.
- Bamford, Samuel, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co, second edition 1844.
- Barbauld, A. L. (née Aikin)
 'An Enquiry into those kinds of Distress which excite Agreeable Sensations,' *Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose*, eds. Aikin, J. and A. L., London: J. Johnson, 1773.
Hymns in Prose for Children, London: J. Johnson, fourth edition 1787.
Lessons for Children by Mrs Barbauld corrected and improved, London: William Darton and Son, 1844.
Poems, London: J Johnson, 1792.
The Works of Anna Laetitia Barbauld with a memoir by Lucy Aikin, (2 vols), London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1825.
- with Aikin, J.
Evenings at Home, (6 vols), London: J. Johnson, 6th edition 1805.
- Beddoes, Thomas, *Hygeia: or Essays Moral and Medical, on the Causes affecting the state of our middling and affluent classes*, (3 vols), Bristol: R. Phillips, 1802.
- Bell, Andrew, *Elements of Tuition III*, London: Rivingtons, 1815.
- Benezet, A., *The Case of our Fellow-Creatures, The Oppressed Africans by the People called Quakers*, London: James Phillips, 1784.
- Bentham, Jeremy
Chrestomathia, London: Payne and Foss, 1816.
A Fragment on Government, London: T. Payne, 1776.
- Blackstone, William, *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, (4 vols), Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1765.
- Blair, David, *The Universal Preceptor*, London: Richard Phillips, second edition 1811.
- Bronte, Charlotte, *Shirley*, eds. Andrew and Judith Hook, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974.
- Brougham, H., *Practical Observations upon the Education of the People, addressed to the Working Classes and their Employers*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1825.
- Bulwer, Lytton
England and the English, ed. Meacham, Standish, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970.

- Paul Clifford*, London: George Routledge and Sons, this edition 1840.
- Burke, Edmund
Reflections on the Revolution in France, ed. O'Brien, C. C., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.
The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, gen. ed. Langford, Paul, vol. ix, ed. McDowell, R. B., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Canning, G. and Frere, J. H., *Poetry of the Anti Jacobin*. [1799], ed. Wordsworth, J., London: Woodstock, 1991.
- Carlile, Richard, *An Address to Men of Science*, London: R. Carlile, second edition 1822.
- Carlyle, Thomas, *Selected Writings*, ed. Shelston, Alan, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971 (rpt. 1987).
- Cobbett, William
The Opinions of Wiilliam Cobbett, eds. G. D. H. and Margaret Cole, London: The Cobbett Publishing Co. Ltd., 1944.
Rural Rides, ed. Woodcock, G., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967.
Two-Penny Trash or Politics for the Poor, London: William Cobbett, 1831.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
 i) published works
Biographia Literaria, eds. Engell, J. and Bate, W.J., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983.
Conciones ad populum, facsimile of 1795 edition, ed. Wordsworth, J., Oxford: Woodstock, 1992.
Essays on His Times, (3 vols.), ed. Erdman, David V. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978.
 (with Southey, R.), *The Fall of Robespierre*, facsimile of 1794 edition, ed. Wordsworth, J., Oxford: Woodstock, 1991.
The Friend, ed. Barabara Rooke, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.
Lay Sermons, ed. White R. J. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972.
Lectures 1795, On Politics and Religion, eds. Patton, Lewis and Mann, Peter, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
Lectures 1808-1819, ed. Foakes, R.A., London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.
On the Constitution of the Church and State, ed. Colmer, John, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.
The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ed. Coleridge, Ernest Hartley, London: Humphrey Milford, 1912 (rpt. 1940).
- ii) letters
Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (6 vols). ed. Griggs, E. L., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956.
- iii) miscellaneous
The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, (vol iii), ed Coburn, Kathleen, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.
- Colquhoun, P.
 'A New and Appropriate System for Education for the labouring People', London: J. Hatchard, 1806.
A Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis, London: C. Dilly, 1796.
- William Cowper, *The Poems of William Cowper*. (3 vols), eds. Baird, J. D. and Ryskamp, C., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995.
- Darwin, Erasmus
The Botanic Garden, London: J. Johnson, 1791.
A Plan for the Conduct of Female Education in Boarding Schools, Derby: J. Johnson, 1797.
Zoonomia, or The Laws of Organic Life, (2 vols), London: J Johnson, 1794.
- The Collected Works of Sir Humphry Davy*, (9 vols), ed. Davy, John, London: Smith

- Elder and Co, 1839.
- Day, Thomas, *The History of Sandford and Merton*, London: J. F. Dove, 1826.
- Dickens, Charles
Bleak House, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971 (rpt. 1985).
The Christmas Books, ed. Glancy, Ruth, Oxford: OUP, 1998.
Hard Times, London: OUP, 1955.
- Disraeli, Benjamin
Coningsby, ed. Smith, Sheila, Oxford: OUP, 1982.
Sybil, ed. Smith, Sheila, Oxford: OUP, 1981.
- Dyer, George, *Complaints of the Poor People of England*, London, 1793.
- Eden, F. M., *The State of the Poor*, abr. Rogers, A. G. L., London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1928.
- Edgeworth, Maria
 (A Pickering Edition of the Works of Maria Edgeworth will be published shortly. In its absence, I have used recent editions of individual texts where available and the ten volume Longford edition of 1893 for other texts as this is at present the main reference work).
- i) published works
Belinda, ed. Chuilleanain, Eilean Ni, London: J. M. Dent, 1993.
Continuation of Early Lessons, (2 vols), London: J. Johnson, 1814.
Early Lessons I: Harry and Lucy in two parts, London: J. Johnson, 1809.
Harrington etc., (3 vols), London: R. Hunter, 1817.
Harry and Lucy Concluded, (4 vols), London: R. Hunter, 1825.
The Parent's Assistant, (6 vols), London: R. Hunter, 1822.
Patronage, ed. Figs, Eva, London: Pandora, 1986.
Popular Tales, London: George Routledge and Sons, 1893.
 (with R. L Edgeworth) *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, Esq.*, (2 vols.), London: R. Hunter, 1820.
Practical Education, (3 vols), London: J. Johnson, second edition 1801.
- ii) letters
Letters from England 1813-1844, ed. Colvin, Christina, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- iii) reviews
 'The Stranger in Ireland; or a Tour in the Southern and Western Parts of that Country in the Year 1805 by John Carr', *Edinburgh Review*, 19, April 1807.
- Edwards, Bryan
The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British Colonies in the West Indies (2 vols), London: John Stockdale, 1793.
A Speech Delivered at a Free Conference between the Honourable The Council and Assembly of Jamaica, Held the 19th November, 1789, on the Subject of Mr Wilberforce's Propositions in the House of Commons, concerning the Slave-Trade, Kingston, Jamaica, 1789.
- The Eclectic Review*, vol. 8, October 1812.
- Eliot, George
Felix Holt, ed. Coveney, Peter, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972.
Silas Marner, ed. Leavis, Q. D., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967.
- Gaskell, P., *The Manufacturing Population of England*, London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1833.
- Gaskell, Mrs.
The Letters of Mrs Gaskell, eds. Chapple, J. A. V. and Pollard, Arthur, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966.
Mary Barton, first published 1848, London: Dent, 1969.
The Moorland Cottage and other stories, ed. Lewis, Suzanne, Oxford: OUP, 1995.
North and South, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1994.

- Godwin, W., *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, (2 vols), facsimile of 1793 edition, ed. Wordsworth, J., Oxford: Woodstock, 1992.
- Hartley, David, *Hartley's Theory of the Human Mind*, ed. Priestley, Joseph, London: J. Johnson, 1790.
- Hansard: The Parliamentary Debates from the Year 1803 to the Present Time*, London: T. C. Hansard, 1818.
- Hays, Mary, *The Victim of Prejudice*, ed. Ty, Eleanor, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1994.
- Hazlitt, William, *The Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, vol xi *Spirit of the Age*, ed. P.P. Howe, London, 1932.
- Hodgskin, Thomas, *Popular Political Economy*, London: Charles Tait, 1827.
- Hume, D., *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Accession of Henry VII*, (2 vols), London: A Millar, 1762.
- Hutcheson, Francis, *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections*, first published 1728, this edition Menston: Scholar Press, 1972.
- Kames, Henry Home, Lord, *Sketches of the History of Man*, ed. Price, John Valdimir, London: Routledge, 1993.
- Kay (later Kay-Shuttleworth), James Phillips, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*, Manchester: E. J. Morten, 1969.
- Kingsley, Charles, *Alton Locke*, ed. Cripps, Elizabeth, A., Oxford: OUP, 1983.
- Knight, Charles, *The Results of Machinery*, London: Charles Knight, 1831.
- Landor, Walter Savage, *Imaginary Conversations of Literary Men and Statesmen*, (2 vols), London: Henry Colburn, second edition 1826.
- Locke, John, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. Axtell, James L., Cambridge: CUP, 1968.
- Malthus, T.R., *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, ed. Winch, Donald, Cambridge: CUP, 1992.
- Mandeville, Bernard, *The Fable of the Bees or Private Vices, Publick Benefits*, (2 vols), ed. Kaye, F.B., Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1988.
- Mangnall, Richmal, *Historical and Miscellaneous Questions*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, twelfth edition 1815.
- Marcet, Jane, *Conversations on Political Economy*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1816.
- Martineau, Harriet
- i) Published works
- Biographical Sketches*, London: Macmillan and Co., 1869.
- The Factory Controversy: A Warning against Meddling Legislation* Manchester: The National Association of Factory Occupiers, 1855.
- Illustrations of Political Economy*, (9 vols), London: Charles Fox, 1834.
- Illustrations of Taxation*, London: Charles Fox, 1834.
- Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*, (2 vols), London: Charles Fox, 1834.
- Principle and Practice; or, The Orphan Family*, Wellington, Salop: Houlston and Son, 1827.
- The Rioters; or, a Tale of Bad Times*, Wellington, Salop: Houlston and Son, 1827.
- The Turn-out; or, Patience the best Policy*, Wellington, Salop: Houlston and Son, 1829.
- ii) Letters
- Harriet Martineau: Selected Letters*, ed. Sanders, Valerie, Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1990.
- More, Hannah
- i) published works (including those cited as edited by her in the *Cheap Repository*)
- 'Betty Brown, The St. Giles's Orange Girl: with Some Account of Mrs. Sponge, the Money-lender', London: J. Marshall, 1796.

- 'Black Giles the Poacher. Part I and II', London: J. Marshall, 1796.
 'The Black Prince', London: J. Evans and Son, 1797.
 'The Carpenter', London: J. Marshall, 1795.
 'The Cottage Cook; or, Mrs Jones's Cheap Dishes', London: J. Evans and Co., 1797.
 'A Country Carpenter's Confession of Faith', London: F. and C. Rivington, 1794.
Essays on Various Subjects Principally designed for Young Ladies, London: J. Wilkie, 1777.
The Feast of Freedom or The Abolition of Domestic Slavery in Ceylon, London: T. Cadell, 1827.
 'The Hackney Coachman; or, The Way to get a good Fare', London: J. Marshall, 1796.
 'Hints to all Ranks of People on the Occasion of the present Scarcity' London: J. Marshall, 1795.
 'Hints towards forming a Bill for the Abolition of the White Female Slave Trade, in the Cities of London and Westminster', *The Weekly Entertainer; or Agreeable and Instructive Repository*, 45 (12 August, 1805), pp. 621-625.
 'The History of Hester Wilmot, or the New Gown', Dublin: William Watson and Son, c. 1800.
 'The Lancashire Collier Girl', London: J. Marshall, 1795.
 'Patient Joe', London: Howard and Evans, c. 1815.
Poems, London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1816.
Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont, Made in the National Convention of France, on the subjects of Religion and Public Education, London: T. Cadell, 1793.
Selected Writings of Hannah More, ed. Hole, Robert, London: William Pickering, 1996.
 'The Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain. Part I and II', London: J. Marshall, 1795.
 'Slavery, A Poem', London: T. Cadell, 1788.
 'The Sorrows of Yamba', London: J. Marshall, 1795.
 'The Story of Sinful Sally', London: J. Evans and Co. c. 1805.
 'The Sunday School', London: Howard and Evans, c. 1815.
 'Tawny [sic] Rachel, or, The Fortune Teller', London: J. Marshall, 1797.
 'Tis All for the Best', London: Howard and Evans, c. 1805.
 'True Stories of Two Good Negroes: Babay. A True Account of a Pious Negro', London: J. Marshall, 1795.
 'Turn the Carpet', London: J. Marshall, 1796.
Village Politics [1793] with the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain c. 1820, ed. Wordsworth, J. Oxford and New York: Woodstock, 1995.
The Works of Hannah More, (8 vols), London: J. Cadell and W. Davies, 1801.
- ii) letters
- Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*, (4 vols), ed. Roberts, William, London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1834.
 More, Martha, *Mendip Annals*, ed. Roberts, Arthur, London: James Nisbet and Co., second edition, 1859.
 Norton, Caroline, *A Voice from the Factories*, ed. Wordsworth, J., Oxford and New York: Woodstock, 1994.
 Opie, Amelia, *Poems*, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, fifth edition 1808.
 Owen, Robert
Observations on the Effect of the Manufacturing System, London: Richard and Arthur Taylor, 1815.
A New View of Society and Other Writings, ed. G. D. H. Cole, London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1927 (rpt. 1966).
 Owen, Robert Dale, *An Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark*, Glasgow:

- Wardlaw and Cunninghame, 1824.
- Paley, William, *Reasons for Contentment addressed to the Labouring Part of the British Public*, Carlisle: C. Wheeler, 1793.
- Percival, Thomas, *A Father's Instructions*, London: J. Johnson, fifth edition 1781.
- Priestley, Joseph,
An Essay on a Course of Liberal Education for Civil and Active Life, London: J. Johnson, 1768.
Lectures on History and General Policy, Dublin: Luke White, 1788.
- Ramsay, David, *An Essay on the Treatment and Conversion of African Slaves in the British Sugar Colonies*, London: James Phillips, 1784.
- Rees, Abraham, *The Cyclopaedia or Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*, (first American edition in 41 vols), Philadelphia: Samuel F. Bradford, 1810-1824.
- Richmond, Legh
Annals of the Poor, London: Thomas Nelson, 1852.
 'The Negro Servant', Edinburgh, c. 1804.
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques
Emile or On Education, edited and translated by Bloom, Allan, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979.
Reveries of the Solitary Walker, trans. France, Peter, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.
Rousseau's Political Writings, eds. Ritter, Alan and Bondanella, J.C., translated by Bondanella, J.C., New York: W.W. Norton, 1988.
- Ruskin, John, *Unto this Last*, London: George Allen, 1903.
- Sandford, Mrs H., *Thomas Poole and his Friends*, (2 vols), London: Macmillan and Co, 1888.
- Smith, A.
An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, (2 vols), eds. Campbell, R. K. and Skinner, A. S., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.
The Theory of Moral Sentiments, eds. Raphael, D.D. and Macfie, A.L., Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982.
- Southey, R.
 i) published works
The Annual Anthology, Bristol: Biggs and Cottle, 1799, 1800.
The Book of the Church, (2 vols), London: John Murray, 1824.
The Doctor, (7 vols), London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, Longman, 1834-47.
Essays, Moral and Political (2 vols), London: John Murray, 1832.
 (with Coleridge, S. T.), *Joan of Arc*, facsimile of 1796 edition, ed. Wordsworth, J., Oxford: Woodstock, 1993.
Journal of a Tour in Scotland, London: John Murray, 1929.
 'A Letter to William Smith M.P.', London: John Murray, 1817.
Letters from England, ed. Simmons, J., Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1984.
Life of Nelson, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1861.
The Lives and Works of the Uneducated Poets, ed. Childers, J. S., London: Humphrey Milford, 1925.
Metrical Tales and Other Poems, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1805.
The Origin, Nature, and Object, of the New System of Education, London: John Murray, 1812.
Poems, Bristol: Cottle, 1797.
Poems. The Second Volume, Bristol: Biggs and Cottle, 1799.
The Poetical Works of Robert Southey (10 vols), London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1838.

Sir Thomas More; Or, Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society (2 vols), London: John Murray, second edition 1831.

Wat Tyler, facsimile of 1817 edition, ed. Wordsworth, J., Oxford: Woodstock, 1989.

ii) letters

New Letters of Robert Southey, (2 vols), ed. Curry, K., London: Columbia University Press, 1965.

Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, (4 vols), ed. Warter, J. W., London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longman, 1856.

Southey's Life and Correspondence, (6 vols), ed. Southey, C. C., London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1849.

iii) miscellaneous

Southey's Commonplace Book, ed. Warter, J. W., London: Reeves and Turner, 1876.

The Spectator, (5 vols), ed. Bond, Donald F., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965.

Taine, H., *Notes on England*, translated by Rae, W.F., London: Strahan and Co., 1872.

Tonna, Charlotte Elizabeth

Helen Fleetwood, London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1841.

Memoir of Charlotte Elizabeth, Bristol: J. Wright, 1852.

The System; A Tale of the West Indies, London: Frederick Westley and A. H. Davies, second edition 1832.

The Wrongs of Woman, London: W. H. Dalton, 1843.

Trimmer, Sarah

A Comparative View of the New Plan of Education promulgated by Mr. Joseph Lancaster, London: F. C. and J. Rivington and J. Hatchard, 1805.

The Family Magazine, London: John Marshall and Co., 1788-89.

Reflections upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools, London: T. Longman and J. & F. Rivington, 1792.

Trollope, Frances, *Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong The Factory Boy*, (3 vols.), London: Henry Colburn, 1840.

True Stories of Two Good Negroes, London: J. Marshall, 1795.

Ure, Andrew, *The Philosophy of Manufactures*, London: Charles Knight, 1835.

Wadstrom, C. B.

An Essay on Colonization London: Darton and Harvey, 1794.

Observations on the Slave Trade, and a Description of Some Part of the Coast of Guinea, London: James Philips, 1789.

Wordsworth, William

i) published works

Home at Grasmere Part First, Book First of The Recluse, ed. Darlington, Beth, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977.

(with Coleridge, S. T.), *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. Mason, M., London: Longman, 1992.

Poetical Works, ed. Hutchinson, T., revised by De Selincourt, E., Oxford: OUP, 1969 (rpt. 1984).

The Prelude: The Four Texts (1798, 1799, 1805, 1850), ed. Wordsworth, J., Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1995.

The Prose Works of William Wordsworth, (3 vols), eds. Owen, W.J.B. and Smyser, J.W., Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.

The Ruined Cottage and The Pedlar, ed Butler, J., New York: Ithaca, 1979.

Yarrow Revisited and other Poems, London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman; and Edward Moxon, 1835.

Young, Arthur A *Six Month Tour through the North of England*, (4 vols), London: W. Strahan, 1770.

Secondary

a) Contemporary

- Critical Review* xxvi, 1798.
Edinburgh Review i, 1802.
 xii, 1808.
Notes and Queries, Series 3, vol. vi, 1864.

b) Later Studies

- Abrams, M. H., *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, New York: OUP, 1953.
 Altick, Richard D., *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1957.
 Anstey, Roger, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760-1810*, London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1975.
 Ashton, R., *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996.
 Bate, Jonathan, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition*, London: Routledge, 1991.
 Baum, Joan, *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: Slavery and the English Romantic Poets*, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1994.
 Bergmann, Helena, 'Between Obedience and Freedom: Woman's Role in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Industrial Novel', *Gothenburg Studies in English*, 45, 1979.
 Best, Geoffrey, 'Evangelicalism and the Victorians', see ed. Symondson, Anthony, *The Victorian Crisis of Faith*.
 Bewell, Alan, *Wordsworth and the Enlightenment: Nature, Man, and Society in the Experimental Poetry*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989.
 Blake, R., *The Conservative Party from Peel to Churchill*, London: Fontana, 1972.
 Bloom, Harold, *The Visionary Company: A Reading of English Romantic Poetry*, London: Faber and Faber, 1962.
 Brantlinger, Patrick
 'Bluebooks, the Social Organism, and the Victorian Novel,' *Criticism*, XIV No 4, 1972, pp. 328-344.
 The Spirit of Reform: British Literature and Politics, 1832-1867, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1977.
 Bratton, J. S.
 The Impact of Victorian Children's Fiction, London: Croom Helm, 1981.
 The Victorian Popular Ballad, London: Macmillan, 1975.
 Briggs, Asa, *The Age of Improvement, 1783-1867*, London: Longman, 1959 (rpt. 1975).
 Brinton, C., *The Political Ideas of the English Romanticists*, first published 1926, Michigan, The University of Michigan Press, 1966.
 Bromwich, David, *A Choice of Inheritance: Self and Community from Edmund Burke to Robert Frost*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989.
 Brown, Ford K., *Fathers of the Victorians: The Age of Wilberforce*, Cambridge: CUP, 1961.
 eds. Butler, H. J. and Butler, H. E., *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown and other Edgeworth Memories 1585-1817*, London: Faber and Faber, 1927.
 Butler, M.
 'Irish Culture and Scottish Enlightenment: Edgeworth's Histories of the Future', publication forthcoming.

- Maria Edgeworth*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
 'Literature as a Heritage or Reading Other Ways', Cambridge: CUP, 1987.
Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries, Oxford: OUP, 1981.
- Byrd, Max, *London Transformed: Images of the City in the Eighteenth Century*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978.
- Calhoun, C., *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism during the Industrial Revolution*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1982.
- Calleo, David P., *Coleridge and the Idea of the Modern State*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1966.
- Carnall, G., *Robert Southey and His Age: The Development of a Conservative Mind*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960.
- Carey, John, *The Violent Effigy: A Study of Dickens' Imagination*, London: Faber and Faber, second edition 1991.
- Carpenter, Humphrey and Prichard, Mari, *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, Oxford: OUP, 1984, 1987.
- Cazamian, Louis, *The Social Novel in England 1830-1850: Dickens, Disraeli, Mrs. Gaskell, Kingsley*, (first published 1903, this edition trans. Martin Fido), London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.
- Childers, Joseph W., *Novel Possibilities: Fiction and the Formations of Early Victorian Culture*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995.
- Clarke, Norma, ' "The Cursed Barbauld Crew" - Women writers and writing for children in the late eighteenth century', see eds. Mary Hilton, etc., *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, writing and childhood 1600-1900*.
- Cobban, A., *Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1929.
- Coleman, Deirdre, *Coleridge and 'The Friend' 1809-1810*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Colmer, John, *Coleridge, Critic of Society*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959.
- eds. Copley, Stephen and Garside, Peter, *The Politics of the Picturesque*, Cambridge: CUP, 1994.
- eds. Cosgrove, D. and Daniels, S., *The Iconography of the Landscape*, Cambridge: CUP, 1988.
- Craig, David, 'Fiction and the Rising Industrial Classes', *Essays in Criticism*, 17, 1967, pp. 64-74.
- Cropper, Margaret, *Sparks among the Stubble*, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1955.
- Cruse, Amy, *The Englishman and His Books in the Early Nineteenth Century*, London: George G. Harrap and Co. Ltd. 1930.
- eds. Cunningham, Andrew and Jardine, Nicholas, *Romanticism and the Sciences* Cambridge: CUP, 1990.
- Curry, K., *Southey*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.
- Daniels, Stephen, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States*, Cambridge and Oxford: Polity Press, 1994.
- David, Deirdre, *Intellectual Women and Victorian Patriarchy: Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and George Eliot*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987.
- Dean, L. W., 'Coleridge and the Sources of Pantisocracy', *Boston University Studies in English* vol v, 1961.
- Dean, M., *The Constitution of Poverty*, London: Routledge, 1991.
- Demers, Patricia, *The World of Hannah More*, Kentucky: University of Kentucky Press, 1996.
- Dunne, Tom, *Maria Edgeworth and the Colonial Mind*, Cork: University College, 1984.
- Ellis, Markman, *The Politics of Sensibility*, Cambridge: CUP, 1996.
- Erikson, Lee, *The Economy of Literary Form: English Literature and the*

- Industrialization of Publishing 1800-1850*, Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996.
- ed. Everest, Kelvin, *Revolution in Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution*, Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1991
- ed. Feldman, Paula R., *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era: An Anthology*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997.
- eds. Feldman, Paula R. and Kelley, Theresa M., *Romantic Women Writers*, Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1995.
- Felski, Rita, *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics: Feminist Literature and Social Change*, Hutchinson Radius, 1989.
- Ferguson, Moira, *Subject to Others: British Women Writers and Colonial Slavery, 1670-1834*, New York and London: Routledge, 1992.
- Fladeland, Betty, *Abolitionists and Working Class Problems in the Age of Industrialization*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984.
- Flint, Kate, *The Victorian Novelist: Social Problems and Social Change*, London: Croom Helm, 1987.
- Frank, Judith, *Common Ground: Eighteenth Century English Satiric Fiction and the Poor*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Fraser, David, "Fields of Radiance": the scientific and industrial scenes of Joseph Wright', see eds. Cosgrove, D. and Daniels, S., *The Iconography of the Landscape*.
- Fraser, Nancy, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.
- Freedgood, Elaine, 'Banishing Panic: Harriet Martineau and the Popularization of Political Economy', *Victorian Studies*, 39/1, (1995), pp. 33-53.
- Friedman, A. B., *The Ballad Revival*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961.
- Fulford, Tim, *Landscape, Liberty and Authority: Poetry, Criticism and Politics from Thomson to Wordsworth*, Cambridge: CUP, 1996.
- Gallagher, Catherine,
The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction 1832-1867, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1985.
Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670-1820, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
- Gerin, Winifred, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Biography*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976.
- Gill, Stephen
William Wordsworth., Oxford: OUP, 1989.
Wordsworth and the Victorians, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998.
- Girouard, M., *The Return to Camelot*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Golinski, Jan, *Science as Public Culture - Chemistry and Enlightenment in Britain, 1760-1820*, Cambridge: CUP, 1992.
- Guy, Josephine M., *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel*, London: Macmillan, 1996.
- Haakonssen, Knud *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Halevy, Elie, *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century: I - England in 1815*, first published in French 1913, trans. Watkin, E. I. and Barker, D. A., London: Ernest Benn Ltd., 1960
- Haller, W., *The Early Life of Robert Southey 1774-1803*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1917.
- Harland, John, *Ballads and Songs of Lancashire*, London: Whittaker and Co., 1865.
- Harris, R. W., *Romanticism and the Social Order 1780-1830*, London: Blandford Press, 1969.
- Harrison, Gary, *Wordsworth's Vagrant Muse: Poetry, Poverty and Power*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994.
- Hatch, Ronald B., 'Joseph Priestley: An Addition to Hartley's *Observations*', *JHI*, 36,

- 1975.
- ed. Hayden, John O., *Scott: The Critical Heritage* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970.
- Hempton, David, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland. From the Glorious Revolution to the decline of empire*, Cambridge: CUP, 1996.
- Hill, Bridget, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1989.
- eds. Hilton, Mary, Styles, Morag and Watson, Victor, *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, writing and childhood 1600-1900*, London: Routledge, 1997.
- Himmelfarb, Gertrude, *The Idea of Poverty: England in the Early Industrial Age*, London and Boston: faber and faber, 1984, 1985.
- Hoadley, F. T., 'The Controversy over Southey's "Wat Tyler"', *Studies in Philology*, xxxviii, 1941.
- Hobart, Ann, 'Harriet Martineau's Political Economy of Everyday Life', *Victorian Studies*, 37/2, (1994), pp. 223-251.
- Hobsbawm, E.J., *Industry and Empire. An Economic History of Britain Since 1750*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969.
- Hofkosh, Sonia, *Sexual Politics and the Romantic Author*, Cambridge: CUP, 1998.
- Holmes, Richard, *Coleridge: Darker Reflections*, London: Harper Collins, 1998.
- Howse, Ernest Marshall, *Saints in Politics*, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1971.
- Hunt, Peter, *An Introduction to Children's Literature*, Oxford: OUP, 1994.
- Hurst, Michael, *Maria Edgeworth and the Public Scene: Intellect, Fine Feeling and Landlordism in the Age of Reform*, London: Macmillan, 1969.
- Jacobus, M.,
' "The Science of herself": scenes of female enlightenment', see eds. Rajan, Tilottama and Wright, Julia M., *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming literature 1789-1837*, pp. 240-269.
Tradition and Experiment in Wordsworth's 'Lyrical Ballads', Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974.
- James, Louis, *Fiction for the Working Man 1830-50*, (first published 1963), Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974.
- Janowitz, Anne, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge: CUP, 1998.
- Johnston, Kenneth R., *Wordsworth and 'The Recluse'*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1984.
- Jones, M. G., *Hannah More*, Cambridge: CUP, 1952.
- Joyce, Patrick,
Democratic Subjects: The self and the social in nineteenth century England, Cambridge: CUP, 1994.
Visions of the People: Industrial England and the question of class, 1840-1914, Cambridge: CUP, 1991.
'Work', see ed. F. M. L. Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950 vol II*.
- Kaufmann, David, *The Business of Common Life: Novels and Classical Economics between Revolution and Reform*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1995.
- Keating, P. J., *The Working Classes in Victorian Fiction*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.
- Kelly, Gary,
'Revolution, Reaction, and the Expropriation of Popular Culture: Hannah More's *Cheap Repository*', *Man and Nature*, 6 (1987), pp. 147-59.
Women, Writing and Revolution 1790-1827, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- Klancher, Jon P., *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987.

- Klingender, Francis D., *Art and the Industrial Revolution*, (revised Arthur Elton), Chatham: Evelyn, Adams and Mackay, 1968.
- Knight, David, *Humphry Davy: Science and Power*, Oxford: Blackwells, 1992.
- Knight, Frances *The Nineteenth-Century Church and English Society*, Cambridge: CUP, 1995.
- Kovacevic, Ivanka, *Fact into Fiction: English Literature and the Industrial Scene 1750-1850*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1975.
- Kowaleski-Wallace, Elizabeth, *Their Father's Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity*, New York and Oxford: OUP, 1991.
- Lamb, Jonathan, 'Hartley and Wordsworth: Philosophical Language and Figures of the Sublime', *Modern Language Notes*, 97, 1982.
- Landes, Joan B., *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Laqueur, Thomas Walter, *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976.
- Lean, Garth, *God's Politician: William Wilberforce's Struggle*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1980.
- Lefebure, M., *The Bondage of Love*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1986.
- Levere, Trevor H., *Poetry realized in nature: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the early nineteenth century science*, Cambridge: CUP, 1981.
- Lown, Judy, *Women and Industrialization: Gender at Work in Nineteenth-Century England*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990.
- Lyon, Judson Stanley, *The Excursion: A Study*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- McCalman, Iain, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
- ed. McCann, Phillip, *Popular education and socialization in the nineteenth century*, London: Methuen & Co, Ltd., 1979.
- ed. McGavran, James Holt, *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*, Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1991.
- MacInnes, C. M., *Bristol and the Slave Trade*, Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1963.
- ed. Madden, L., *Robert Southey: The Critical Heritage*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Manning, Peter J., *Reading Romantics: Texts and Contexts*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
- Marshall, Peter, *The Anti-Slave Trade Movement in Bristol*, Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1968.
- Mellor, Anne K., 'Joanna Baillie and the Counter-Public Sphere', *Studies in Romanticism*, 33, No 4, 1994.
- Midgley, Clare, *Women against Slavery: The British Campaign 1780-1870* London: Routledge, 1992.
- Morris, K. L., *The Image of the Middle Ages in Romantic and Victorian Literature*, London: Croom Helm, 1984.
- Morrow, John, *Coleridge's Political Thought: Property, Morality and the Limits of Traditional Discourse*, London: Macmillan, 1990.
- Murch, Jerome, *Mrs. Barbauld and Her Contemporaries*, Bath: William Lewis, 1876.
- Myers, Mitzi
 'De-Romanticizing the Subject: Maria Edgeworth's "The Bracelets," Mythologies of Origin, and the Daughter's Coming to Writing, see eds. Feldman, Paula R. and Kelley, Theresa M., *Romantic Women Writers*, pp. 88-110.
 'Hannah More's Tracts for the Times: Social Fiction and Female Ideology', see eds. Schofield, Mary Anne and Macheski, Cecilia, *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*.

- 'Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books' *Childrens Literature* 14, 1986, pp. 31-59.
- 'Romancing the Moral Tale: Maria Edgeworth and the Problematics of Pedagogy', see ed. McGavran, James Holt, *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*, pp.96-128.
- Nattrass, Leonora, *William Cobbett: The Politics of Style*, Cambridge: CUP, 1995.
- Neale, R. S., *History and Class. Essential Readings in Theory and Class*, Oxford: Blackwells, 1983.
- Neuburg, Victor E., *Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England*, London: The Woburn Press, 1971.
- Newman, G. 'Anti-French Propaganda and British Liberal Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century: suggestions toward a general interpretation', *Victorian Studies*, 18 (1975), pp. 385-418.
- eds. O'Brien, Patrick and Quinault, Roland, *The Industrial Revolution and British Society*, Cambridge: CUP, 1993.
- Oldfield, J. R., *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.
- Orwell, George, *Inside the Whale and other Essays*, London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1940.
- Osborne, John W., *The Silent Revolution: The Industrial Revolution in England as a Source of Cultural Change*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970.
- Owen, D., *English Philanthropy 1660-1960*, London: OUP, 1965.
- Pederson, Susan, 'Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 25, (1986), pp. 84-113.
- Perkin, Harold, *The Origins of Modern English Society 1780-1880*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.
- Pinchbeck, Ivy, *Women Workers and the Industrial Revolution 1750-1850*, London: Frank Cass, 1969.
- Plummer, Alfred, *Bronterre: A Political Biography of Bronterre O'Brien 1804-1864*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971.
- Polkinghorn, Bette, and Thomson, Dorothy Lampen, *Adam Smith's Daughters. Eight Prominent Women Economists from the Eighteenth Century to the Present*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1998.
- Porter, Roy, *Doctor of Society: Thomas Beddoes and the Sick Trade in Late-Enlightenment England*, London: Routledge, 1992.
- Raimond, J., 'Southey's Early Writings and the Revolution', *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol xix, 1989
- eds. Rajan, Tilottama and Wright, Julia M., *Romanticism, History, and the Possibilities of Genre: Re-forming literature 1789-1837*, Cambridge: CUP, 1998.
- Richardson, Alan
Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832, Cambridge: CUP, 1994.
 'Romantic Voodoo: Obeah and British Culture 1797-1807', *Studies in Romanticism*, 32, No 1, 1993.
- eds. Richardson, Alan and Hofkosh, Sonia, *Romanticism, Race, and Imperial Culture 1780-1834*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Roe, Nicholas
The Politics of Nature: Wordsworth and Some Contemporaries, London: Macmillan, 1992.
Wordsworth and Coleridge: The Radical Years, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.
- Rorty, Amelie Oksenberg, *Philosophers on Education*, London and New York:

- Routledge, 1998.
- eds. Rosso, G. A. and Watkins, Daniel P., *Spirits of Fire: English Romantic Writers and Contemporary Historical Methods*, London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1990.
- Rudé, George, *The Crowd in History: A Study of Popular Disturbances in France and England, 1730-1848*, London: Serif, 1995.
- Rule, John, *The Labouring Classes in Early Industrial England, 1750-1850*, Harlow: Longman, 1986.
- Sales, Roger, *English Literature in History 1780-1830: Pastoral and Politics*, London: Hutchinson, 1983.
- Sanders, Valerie, *Reason over Passion: Harriet Martineau and the Victorian Novel*, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1986.
- Schofield, Robert E., *The Lunar Society of Birmingham: A Social History of Provincial Science and Industry in Eighteenth-Century England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.
- Semmel, Bernard, *The Methodist Revolution*, London: Heinemann, 1973.
- Shoemaker, Robert B., *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?*, London and New York: Longman, 1998.
- Simmons, J., *Southey*, London: Collins, 1945.
- Simon, Brian, *The Two Nations and the Educational Structure 1780-1870*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1974.
- Siskin, Clifford, *The Work of Writing: Literature and Social Change in Britain, 1700-1830*, Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1988.
- Smith, O., *The Politics of Language 1791-1819*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984.
- Smith, Sheila M., *The Other Nation: The Poor in English Novels of the 1840s and 1850s* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.
- Spinney, G. H., 'Cheap Repository Tracts: Hazard and Marshall edition', *The Library*, 4th series, XX (1940), pp. 295-340.
- Steinman, Lisa M., *Masters of Repetition: Poetry, Culture, and Work in Thomson, Wordsworth, Shelley and Emerson*, London: Macmillan, 1998.
- Stewart, W.A.C. and McCann, W. P., *The Educational Innovators 1750-1880*, London: Macmillan, 1967.
- Sutherland, Kathryn, 'Hannah More's counter-revolutionary feminism', see ed. Everest, Kelvin, *Revolution in Writing*.
- ed. Symondson, Anthony, *The Victorian Crisis of Faith*, London: SPCK, 1970.
- Thompson, E. P.
Customs in Common, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1993.
The Making of the English Working Class, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968.
- ed. F. M. L. Thompson, *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950 Vol. 2 People and their Environment*, Cambridge: CUP, 1990.
- Uglow, Jenny, *Elizabeth Gaskell: A Habit of Stories*, London: Faber and Faber, 1993.
- Valenze, Deborah, *The First Industrial Woman*, New York and Oxford: OUP, 1995.
- Vicinus, Martha, *The Industrial Muse*, London: Croom Helm, 1974.
- Wang, Orrin N. C., 'Romancing the Counter-Public Sphere: A Response to Romanticism and its Publics', *Studies in Romanticism*, 33, No 4, 1994.
- Ward, J. P., *Wordsworth's Language of Men*, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1984.
- Ward, J. T., *The Factory Movement 1830-1855*, London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1962.
- Ward, W. R. *Religion and Society in England 1790-1850*, London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1972.
- Watson, Lucy, *Coleridge at Highgate*, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1925.
- Webb, Igor, *From Custom to Capital: The English Novel and the Industrial Revolution*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981.
- Webb, R. K., *The British Working Class Reader 1790-1848: Literacy and Social*

- Tension*, Londo: George Allen adn Unwin Ltd., 1955.
- Weiss, Harry B., *Hannah More's Cheap Repository Tracts in America*, New York: The New York Public Library, 1946.
- Whalley, G., 'Coleridge and Southey in Bristol', *The Review of English Studies*, vol i, 1950
- Wheatley, Vera, *The Life and Work of Harriet Martineau*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1957.
- Williams, Mervyn, *Revolutions: 1775-1830*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971.
- Williams, Raymond
The Country and the City, London: Chatto and Windus, 1973.
Culture and Society, London: The Hogarth Press, 1990.
- Wilson, Ellen Gibson, *Thomas Clarkson: A Biography*, London: Macmillan, 1989.
- Winch, Donald, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1834*, Cambridge: CUP, 1996.
- Wolffe, John *The Protestant Crusade in Great Britain 1829-1860*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991.
- Wordsworth, J., *The Music of Humanity*, London: Nelson, 1969.
- Worral, David, 'Agrarians against the Picturesque: ultra-radicalism and the revolutionary politics of land', see eds. Copley, Stephen etc. *The Politics of the Picturesque*.
- Wylie, Ian, *Young Coleridge and the Philosophers of Nature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.