



Issue 1:
**Regionalism Across the World
in the Long-Nineteenth Century**

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We would like thank all of the academics who participated in our double-blind reviews for this issue. We are also grateful to Palgrave Macmillan and Cambridge University Press for their assistance in providing copies of the books reviewed in this issue.

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Editorial:

Region, Identity, and the Genesis of *Romance, Revolution and Reform*

ZACK WHITE & KATIE HOLDWAY

(Editor-in-Chief & Deputy Editor)

AT THE HEART of the study of regionalism is a tension that continues to both shape and complicate the thinking behind what is an inherently fractious discipline. On the one hand, to seek clear definitions of 'the region' as quantifiable space seems to be an unavoidable necessity in order to render it distinguishable from, yet comparable to, other spaces. On the other hand, whilst regions can take on identities from their geographies in a given moment in time, these geographies are also prone to shifts. Added to this is the fact that regions are also shaped by more elusive and mutable factors, such as the communities that reside within them and the shifting ideologies upon which those communities are built, shaped or destroyed. It is therefore difficult to seek definitions that might help us to understand the fundamentals of regionalism, when those definitions can be nefariously challenging to pinpoint or map. As Edward Royle has pointed out, this is compounded by the fact that regional identity is sometimes more easily determined by what it *doesn't* represent, than by what it does.¹ The difficulties wrought by complex and contradictory definitions have resided at the centre of regionalism debates historically. However, they nonetheless also continue to drive the discipline forward in some fascinating new directions.

In this respect, the at times fraught distinction between the provincial or non-metropolitan, and the regional—with its more direct association with mapped or named topographies, such as counties, and including the metropole—has recently yielded multiple studies that have served to clarify or challenge the terms or to nuance their definitions. For example, Rachel Matthews and Mary Hammond have both applied

¹ Edward Royle, 'Introduction' in *Issues of Regional Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 11

the theoretical frameworks of regionalism to a study of the periodical press.² Where Matthews uses the press to ground and clarify the regional and provincial as categories, however, Hammond uses the same medium and the ideologies and identities it supported to unsettle them, interrogating Ian Duncan's understanding of the evolution of the regional novel into the provincial novel.

This focus on ideology and the constitution of self is in-keeping with another key thread in the study of regionalism, which, for many, represents a process of self-understanding by locating the individual within the space that they either inhabit or visit. This view has been advanced by Wendy Katz and Timothy Mahoney, who argue that human interaction with nature and the physical environment is integral to studies of regionalism, although the extent of the significance of these interactions is contested.³ Some have gone so far as to suggest that regionalism inevitably brings with it a degree of geographic determinism, suggesting that the environment moulds human perception and actions, which in return shapes regional character.⁴ Elsewhere, however, this has been considered to be insufficiently pluralist, with Guy Reynolds noting that it implies a homogeneity in the characteristics of a particular region and its people, which fails to appreciate the diversity that exists within a given region.⁵

Most recently, the issue of the provincial and how its regional parts might be understood is situated at the centre of a new AHRC research project led by Ruth Livesey. Livesey's work charts a 'simultaneous rise of provincial fiction and disparagement of provincialism in English cultural criticism during the nineteenth-century', speaking further to the ways in which definitions—clear or contested—serve both to propel and refresh the discipline.⁶

² Rachel Matthews, *The History of the Provincial Press in England* (New York; London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Mary Hammond, 'Wayward Orphans and Lonesome Places: The Regional Reception of Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and *North and South*', *Victorian Studies*, 3 (2018) pp.390-411.

³ Katz and Mahoney, p. ix.

⁴ Kurt Kinbacher, 'Imagining Place: Nebraska Territory, 1854–1867' in *Regionalism and the Humanities*, ed by Wendy Katz and Timothy Mahoney (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), pp. 251-273

⁵ Guy Reynolds, 'Willa Cather's Case: Region and Reputation', in *Regionalism and the Humanities*, ed by Wendy Katz and Timothy Mahoney (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), pp. 79-94.

⁶ Ruth Livesey, 'Provincialism: Literature and the Cultural Politics of Middleness in Nineteenth Century Britain', (January 2019-July 2020) <<https://qtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=AH%2FS002545%2F1>> [Accessed: 02/04/2019].

It was in response to these complex tensions and contested definitions, and with a view to exploring new directions, that the Southampton Centre for Nineteenth Century Research (SCNR) held a two-day interdisciplinary conference on 'Regionalism Across the World in the Long-Nineteenth Century' in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Southampton, in September 2018. Many of the articles in this inaugural issue of *Romance, Revolution and Reform* are in fact drawn from papers presented at that conference. The articles have been selected to demonstrate the rich and multidimensional nature of regionalism and its definitions, and since their authors come from a wide range of disciplinary backgrounds and career stages, their contributions to the debates are cumulative as well as individual.

The interplay between the 'provincial' and the 'regional' lies at the centre of our opening essay by Leonard Baker on 'West Country Scum' — awarded the BAVS/SCNR prize for the best postgraduate paper at the conference — as he demonstrates that the unenfranchised were not uninterested in national political issues, but instead sought to express their political views through the possession of space during elections. He examines in fascinating detail how they sought to influence the political process through the exclusion of individuals from those occupied spaces.

Baker's piece is followed by Harry Bark's exploration of how regional identities were expressed in poetry anthologies to examine issues of marginalisation — especially as experienced by women — in Manchester, whilst also exploring the role of poetry and anthologising in the development of the city's identity, by arguing that it sought to facilitate a shift away from the national perception of Manchester as having a solely industrial character.

Tom Heritage's statistical study of affluence across the North-South divide explores the role of human and physical geography in the varying regional experiences of the elderly, and the disparity between regions within 'The North' and 'The South'. In the process, he urges a more nuanced approach to the study of regions than the broad delineation of 'North-South divide' implies.

Also exploring the topic from a literary angle, Yuejie Liu offers an assessment of the regional landscapes in Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* and Shen Congwen's *Long River*, to uncover a crucially under-researched relationship between the two authors, their ideologies and the regional landscapes of Wessex and West Hunan, which are so central to their respective works. Deploying theories shaped by Qi

Shouhua after Mikhail Bakhtin, Liu reveals a subtle but immensely productive 'dialogic reverberation' between the novels that not only sheds light on the regional identities in the texts, but nuances our understanding of the complex relationship between nature, culture and modernity.

In a similarly literary vein, Barry Sloan's exploration of the work of William Carleton contributes to ongoing questions about what constitutes regional identity and self-representation, as he explores how Carleton strived to reconcile the myriad influences on his own identity with the shifting regional tones of his novels and poetry. Sloan sheds light on how the colonial relationship between Ireland and London led to an appropriation of Carleton's work as part of a project of cultural nationalism.

This issue also welcomes two informative book reviews. The first, by Eleanor Shipton, analyses Karin Koehler's *Thomas Hardy and Victorian Communication* (2016), whilst Roger Hansford examines Bennet Zon's *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture* (2017). Finally, Sophie Welsh has written an illuminating review of the SCNR conference, which interrogates the conference's engagement in and advancement of current debates on regionalism and regional identities.

It is because questions of identity and self-definition are so central to the regionalism debate that we have chosen it as the perfect theme with which to launch the inaugural issue of *Romance, Revolution & Reform*, as it forges its own unique identity in the dynamic sphere of nineteenth-century research. Consciously spanning the divide between academic scholarship and student-run publications, *RRR* was founded upon the principles of instantaneous open access and academic rigour. From the outset, we have been committed to forging policies which guarantee that all articles are subjected to a thorough double-blind peer review undertaken by experts in the field of the article's chosen topic area, whilst also ensuring that we are fully compliant with the expectations of the 'Research Excellent Framework' (REF). In so doing, we forge a unique place for ourselves in the scholarly journal field, offering student contributors the best possible start in a competitive career market by treating them on an equal footing with established scholars, and giving our student Board Members invaluable management and editing experience. This is a stance which has been whole-heartedly endorsed by our superb Editorial Board (listed on page 2) from the outset. At the same time, we have adopted an innovative approach to leadership, as the journal's most senior positions are held by Post-Graduate Researchers, who are supported by the

Editorial Board's academic editors. Our most fundamental founding principle, however, is the supportive environment which we seek to provide for our authors. We welcome submissions from those at all levels of academia, regardless of their level of experience. We are therefore neither 'academics-only' nor 'students-only', but instead aim to offer everyone the chance to navigate the often-challenging experience of honing their research into publishable articles of the highest academic standards.

Time and again, it was said that *Romance, Revolution & Reform* was not a viable concept, that this journal could only exist by abandoning its commitment to Open Access, and that sacrifices would have to be made to our supportive environment for PGRs, and our pioneering PGR-led board structure. We on the Board firmly believe this inaugural issue proves them wrong, and that we have carved a new niche in a dynamic area of scholarly publishing.

‘West Country Scum’: National Politics, Local Ritual and Space in the English South West, c.1820-1832.

LEONARD BAKER

ABSTRACT: Rural electoral culture and protests have often been considered as merely ‘carnavalesque’ products of an ‘inward facing’ populace. In counties such as Somerset and Dorset an obsession with regional identities, rituals and spaces has often been accused of limiting the people’s political horizons. This article, conversely, will argue that rural politicians, electors and the popular crowd used regional concerns, rituals and identities to involve themselves in national protests and debates. In the decade preceding the Reform Bill a ‘West Country’ identity was continuously mobilised in service of national political aims. Both radical and conservative politicians used regional identities to not only secure their election but also to make national debates tangible and actionable to rural people. Equally, by seizing key local political spaces and deploying rural rituals the popular crowd were able to interject themselves into national political debates, allowing them to communicate their visions of an alternate political system.

KEYWORDS: nineteenth-century politics, regional identity, political protest, popular protest, rural ritual, electoral culture.



Henry Bankes was almost guaranteed to win the Dorset parliamentary election of May 1831.¹ The county was a Tory heartland, and Bankes epitomised conservatism. He had spent fifty years in Parliament and was a vocal opponent of both Catholic Emancipation

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Southampton Centre for Nineteenth-Century Research conference in September 2018, and won the prize for best Post-Graduate paper. I would like to thank the participants of that conference for all their comments and suggestions. Additionally, I would like to thank Professor Isobel Armstrong and Professor Michael Wheeler for their encouraging comments on my submission to the paper competition.

and Parliamentary Reform. This had won him support from the local landholding electorate.² However, standing on the hustings at Dorchester in front of twelve thousand spectators, Bankes turned to his servant and whispered that once this election was done 'he wanted no more to do with the West Country scum.' He had failed to notice that his two Whig opponents were standing next to him and they happily relayed his comments to the assembled crowd. According to a local newspaper:

Mr Bankes attempted to speak but he was instantly assailed by the most appalling and discordant noises; execrations and yells and hisses [...] the freeholders made a most determined rush, armed with bludgeons and sticks, tore Mr Bankes's standard into shreds, and, with a cheer, drove these miscreants over the great extent of the field.³

This humiliation, coupled with accusations that he had hired 'cudgel-men' to assault his opponents, forced Bankes to concede the election.⁴ Consequently, and for the first time in its parliamentary history, Dorset returned two Whig candidates.⁵

For the past forty years, historical scholarship has often dismissed such events as part of the meaningless violence and revelry that accompanied elections in nineteenth-century England. Whilst it is relatively uncontroversial to suggest that electoral politics remained inherently local throughout this period, the connection between rural political protests and national concerns has remained rather tenuous.⁶ Much of the research on rural popular political culture has characterised such violence as being driven by bribery or 'apolitical' and 'carnavalesque' excess. As such, many inhabitants of rural regions, such as the West Country, have been written off as 'pre-political' or 'inward facing'.⁷ The cause of these limited horizons has, similarly, been

² Stephen Farrell, 'BANKES, Henry (1756-1834).', in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1820-1832* ed. by David Fisher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

³ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 12 May 1831.

⁴ *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 May 1831; 'Ponsonby to Bankes Regarding the Aftermath of the Election, 17 May 1831', Dorchester, Dorset History Centre, (hereafter *DHC*) D-BKL/D/B/2/40.

⁵ Stephen Farrell, 'Dorset' in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1820-1832* ed. by David Fisher (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁶ Frank O'Gorman, *Voters, Patrons and Parties: The Unreformed Electorate of Hanoverian England, 1734-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 285-98. Subsequently O'Gorman, *Voters*; John Phillips, *The Great Reform Bill in the Boroughs: English Electoral Behaviour, 1818-1841* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 1-10.

⁷ K. Theodore Hoppen, 'Grammars of Electoral Violence in 19th-Century England and Ireland', *English Historical Review*, Vol. 109, No. 432 (1994), 597-620; Justin Wasserman and Edwin Jaggard, 'Electoral

identified as a local obsession with regional identities and spaces. David Harvey labelled these attachments as 'militant particularism' and has argued that such a mindset was incompatible with wider class identity or the development of national protest movements.⁸ The 'West Country Scum', therefore, have been portrayed as detached from national politics due to their focus on defending regional identities, interests, and spaces. This, supposedly, prevented them from ever truly engaging with national political concerns.

This article will demonstrate that such assessments have misrepresented West Country electoral culture and protest during the early-nineteenth century. Recent work by Jaggard on Cornwall and Scriven on Somerset has undermined previous assumptions regarding an 'isolated' South West, revealing a politically active population who were eager to debate national issues publicly.⁹ Equally, research by Navickas and Parolin has highlighted the importance of the 'politics of space and place' in both disseminating political knowledge and allowing protestors to construct alternative political systems.¹⁰ By reclaiming access to town halls, central squares or public houses, it is argued that radicals were critiquing their exclusion from national political institutions. Through these spaces political protestors could forcibly insert themselves into the official mechanisms of state, symbolically and physically. Yet, despite these theoretical developments, most studies on the 'politics of space and place' have focused on larger cities. Vernon, for example, has argued that politically contested sites were significantly less important in rural regions than in their urban counterparts where

Violence in Mid Nineteenth-Century England and Wales', *Historical Research*, 80 (2007), 124-55. For the West Country see: Kevin Bawn, 'Social Protest, Popular Disturbances and Public Order in Dorset' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Reading, 1984), pp. 52-75, 208-25; Adrian Randall, *Riotous Assemblies: Popular Protest in Hanoverian England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 180-207.

⁸ David Harvey, 'Militant Particularism and Global Ambition: The Conceptual Politics of Place, Space, and Environment in the Work of Raymond Williams', *Social Text*, 42 (1995), 65-98.

⁹ Edwin Jaggard, *Cornwall Politics in the Age of Reform, 1790-1885* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press) esp. pp. 24-48, 74-103; Tom Scriven, *Popular Virtues: Continuity and Change in Radical Moral Politics, 1820-1870* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), pp. 44-66.

¹⁰ Katrina Navickas, *Protest and Politics of Space and Place, 1789-1848* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790-c.1845* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 2010).

space was at a premium.¹¹ This argument fails to recognise the cultural importance of specific locations to rural people. Even if rural radicals and protestors had more land to choose from this did not diminish the symbolic importance of specific locales. It will be shown throughout this article how certain rural political spaces served as bridges between the political periphery and the metropolitan centre. In assaulting these specific sites rural protestors could criticise prevailing exclusivity and privilege, both locally and nationally. Subsequently, the locally focused repertoires and discourses of provincial electoral culture should not be perceived as necessarily omitting national goals and aims. As Lawrence and Williams have noted, we cannot hope to understand popular political behaviour by studying either 'national' or 'local' factors in isolation. Instead, we need 'an analytical framework that sees movements, mediation and influence proceeding along a two-way street', connecting the local with the national.¹² By acting locally and promoting their West Country identities, protestors were attempting to make statements on matters of national importance. Concurrently, issues such as parliamentary reform were integrated into regional political debates through important rural rituals and sites. The 'West Country Scum' were not crippled by an attachment to regional identities and locales but used such aspects to engage with contemporary issues.

Central to the debates regarding the relationship between 'national' and 'local' political causes has been the issue of regional identity. Unfortunately, in this regard the West Country is poorly served, with most regional studies focusing on either the north or Celtic fringes of England.¹³ Certainly, this paper does not seek to suggest that belief in a united 'West Country' identity was widespread across the entirety of South West England during this period. Counties such as Devon, Dorset and Somerset did not possess a reflective and conscious belief in a collective regional identity to the same degree as neighbouring Cornwall.¹⁴ However, this does not necessarily preclude any involvement of an imagined collective West Country identity during times of political

¹¹ James Vernon, *Politics and the People: A Study in English Political Culture, c. 1815-1867* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 213-4.

¹² Chris Williams, "'One Damn Election After Another": Politics and the Local Dimension', *Family & Community History*, 5:2 (2002), pp. 111-23; Jon Lawrence, *Speaking for the People: Party, Language and Popular Politics in England, 1867-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 165-70.

¹³ Edward Royle, ed., *Issues of Regional Identity*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

¹⁴ Jaggard, pp. 7-23.

tension and conflict. Regional identities serve to not only construct a 'language of difference', distinguishing one place from another, but also a 'language of integration' whereby those who meet the specified criteria are supposedly united in a common cause.¹⁵ In areas like rural Dorset such discourses were evidently present, with the fear of the 'foreigner' engendering what Snell has described as a 'culture of local xenophobia'.¹⁶ As one vicar wrote '[the labourer] loves the locality in which he was born [...] they will suffer anything at home, rather than become such "foreigners"'.¹⁷ Subsequently, this article demonstrates how appellations such as 'foreigner' were used by politicians and the popular crowd alike to castigate opponents and construct a commonality between those who resisted, or supported, existing national political structures. The increasing use of regional identities in the West Country for political purposes will also be explored, highlighting how a growing belief in a noble, independent and generous 'yeoman' identity became of a central feature of electoral contests in the years preceding the Reform Bill. Admittedly unstable and often nebulous, these regional identities, much like the local focus on spaces and customs, were not inherently incompatible with national political protest.

The following section thus examines how parliamentary candidates used regional identities and causes between 1820 and 1832 to engender support during their electoral campaigns. Rather than a 'gentlemanly detachment' from local concerns it highlights how politicians frequently prioritised these issues.¹⁸ Appealing directly to the voting population; the image of a noble, independent and masculine West Country yeomanry was frequently deployed in political discourse. This West Country identity, aimed specifically at the local electorate, did not hamper the dispersion of political knowledge but, rather, empowered it. Connections to regional concerns made national debates tangible and actionable to rural people. Equally, local reputation and identity also allowed a select few women, who were often excluded from official electoral rituals,

¹⁵ Bernard Deacon, 'Regional Identity in Late Nineteenth-Century England: Discursive Terrains and Rhetorical Strategies', *International Journal of Regional and Local History*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (2016), 59-74.

¹⁶ Keith Snell, 'The Culture of Local Xenophobia', *Social History*, Vol. 28, No.1 (2003), 1-30; Bawn, pp. 95-106.

¹⁷ Rev. S.G. Osborne, *A Letter to the Right Hon. Lord Ashley M.P. on the Condition of the Agricultural Labourer* (Blandford, 1844), p. 36.

¹⁸ O'Gorman, *Voters*, pp. 108-41, 285-98.

to take leading roles.¹⁹ The article then reveals how popular crowds deployed local rituals and identities during periods of electoral violence to protest national political issues in local spaces. These riots were not merely drunken acts of vandalism but part of a coherent desire to reshape national politics by challenging local spaces of exclusivity. Indeed, the claims from the political elite that the 'yeomanry' were a paternalistic and generous ruling class were often used against them by the popular crowd. Capturing key political sites allowed the rural poor to momentarily articulate alternative political outlooks in an electoral system which sought to prevent any meaningful participation from the unenfranchised. Both elite politicians and rural crowds, therefore, used local concerns and identities to engage in national protests and debates.

By the early-nineteenth century there was a growing consensus in counties such as Somerset and Dorset that their farming populations were a unique breed. Local surveys confirmed that amongst the 'West Country yeomanry' there was 'no want of justice, candour and liberality in their dealings' and whilst 'they are also far too fond of old custom' West Countrymen were known for their 'habits of sobriety, honesty and industry'.²⁰ The term 'yeoman' had long since lost its specific economic meaning, that of a small but independent farmer, but had retained essential moral characteristics. It harkened back to a pastoral idyll and conjured images of rural masculinity, political independence and superior morality.²¹ In its political coverage, the local press enthusiastically adopted this language, depicting a noble yeoman class beset on all sides by corruptive influences. Reflecting on the passing of the Reform Bill, the *Dorset County Chronicle* grumbled that 'these levelling reformers' wished to eliminate all that has 'warmed the heart of every true Englishman', namely the 'nobility and independence' of 'our local yeomen'.²² There was a great deal of overlap, therefore,

¹⁹ Jon Lawrence, *Electing Our Masters: The Hustings in British Politics from Hogarth to Blair* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 21-3. Subsequently Lawrence, *Electing*.

²⁰ John Billingsley, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Somerset* (London, 1798), p. 34; William Stevenson, *General View of the Agriculture of Dorset* (London, 1812), pp. 453-4.

²¹ Kathryn Beresford, "'Witnesses for the Defence": The Yeomen of Old England and the Land Question', c. 1815-1837' in *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950*, ed. by Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 37-56.

²² *Dorset County Chronicle*, 14 January 1836.

between the West Country yeoman and appeals to the 'freeborn rights of Englishmen' seen elsewhere during this period.²³ However, unlike the more general national appeal the West Country yeomanry sourced their prestige from local history and their connection with the land and its resources. As one Dorsetshire election ballad attested:

We boast our descent from those Foresters bold,
Who with *Billy the Norman* made merry of old;
And, like them, we'll our lives and honours defend,
While we've *Billy the Fourth* for our sailor and friend.²⁴

In these rural counties landed property was subsequently emphasised over industrial and commercial wealth as the source of authority and disinterested leadership.²⁵ The independent yeoman farmer, deriving his power from both his lands and noble heritage, became central to political debates in these counties.

Naturally, a desire to protect this honourable and independent yeomanry helped shape regional political causes. Between 1820 and 1832, a period of agricultural depression, repeated calls were made for parliament to 'adopt such measures as may alleviate the existing and accumulating distress of the landed interest'. This relief not only included the lowering of 'rents, tithes and taxes' but also policies such as: protecting the cottage silk and woollen trades from being 'stolen' by the industrial north, tightening the Game Laws, ending 'the unjust operation of the New Turnpike Act', querying 'the propriety of appropriating parts of the Crown Lands to the service of agriculture', 'No Popery' and 'No Irishmen'.²⁶ Linking all these issues were a series of common threads; namely the belief that the West Country was under threat from outside influences and that the landed interest in these counties deserved recognition for their services. Such notions were not merely the idle talk of a deferent or venal farming population.²⁷ In 1826, for example, the Marquis of Anglesey attempted to pressure his tenantry into supporting his preferred Whig candidate for the Dorset

²³ Vernon, pp. 206-12; Randall, p. 207.

²⁴ A New Song to An Old Tune, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/5/42.

²⁵ Vernon, p. 30; J.R. Fisher, 'The Limits of Deference: Agricultural Communities in a Mid-Nineteenth Century Election Campaign', *Journal of British Studies*, 21:1 (1981), pp. 90-105.

²⁶ Examples taken from county meetings and electoral speeches: *Taunton Courier*, 22 January 1823; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 October 1831; *Western Flying Post*, 9 May 1831.

²⁷ Frank O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference in "Unreformed" England: 1760-1832', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 56, No. 3 (1984), pp. 391-429. Subsequently O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference'.

county elections. His embattled steward simply replied that all attempts had failed and 'all of your lordships servants are as against Mr Portman as any other candidate supporting Catholic Emancipation'.²⁸ An anonymous letter to *The Times* confirmed this opposition stating that with 'the Marquis not having been here for many years' the farming population would not submit to 'the management of an attorney, who lives 20 miles distant'.²⁹ Such was the power of these local causes that even noble landlords were condemned as ignorant foreigners.

Thus, whilst several historians have argued that championing a 'regionalist' mindset or policies was often considered anathema to political candidates during the nineteenth century, the realities of local electoral campaigns triumphed over these concerns.³⁰ Colonel Tynte, a candidate for Bridgwater in 1826, proudly declared that 'nothing on earth shall induce me to enter on a canvass, for I conceive it would be altogether inconsistent with those principles of independence [...] and the future welfare and purity of the cause [of Reform]'.³¹ Even the commonplace electoral ritual of the canvass, whereby candidates would parade through the town and listen to local concerns, was deemed by Tynte to be unacceptable. However, his decision to abstain sent shockwaves across Bridgwater, and, following the nomination of an unexpected third candidate, Tynte was soon obliged to hold an 'enthusiastic meeting' for nearly two hundred of his supporters at a local inn 'to preserve the peace of the borough.' There Tynte reaffirmed his affection for the locality declaring that Bridgwater was 'a splendid and enviable example of public virtue to all England'.³² Concurrently, Tynte's supposed political opponent, the avowedly 'local' Tory William Astell, canvassed the electors with the aim of securing re-election for both himself and Tynte as nothing would 'induce him to break off that friendship which they had contracted since their joint return to parliament'.³³ Consequently, during the 1820s it was easy for a candidate to remain aloof, detached and 'nationally minded' when their parliamentary seat was

²⁸ William Castleman's Notebook, *DHC*, D-ANG/B/6/2.

²⁹ *The Times*, 31 August 1826.

³⁰ Lawrence, *Electing*, p. 19-21; O'Gorman, *Voters*, pp. 108-41, 285-98; Miles Taylor, 'Interests, Parties and the State: The Urban Electorate in England, c. 1820-72' in *Party, State, and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain Since 1820*, ed. by Jon Lawrence and M. Taylor, (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1997), pp. 65-6.

³¹ 'Colonel Tynte's Answer, Taunton, Somerset Heritage Centre (hereafter *SHC*), DD\S\WH/351.

³² *Taunton Courier*, 15 February; 22 February 1826.

³³ *Taunton Courier*, 1 March 1826.

left uncontested. In the uncertainty of an electoral campaign, however, even the most devout follower of the 'principles of independence' had to engage to some degree with the local population and their concerns.

Luckily for candidates like Tynte, such contests were relatively rare. Prior to the reorganisation of parliamentary seats in 1832 no West Country constituency returned less than two members of parliament. As O'Gorman has argued, whilst it was a common, albeit not universal, practice for tenant farmers to 'reserve' one vote for their 'landlord's interests' it was a point of pride that they were free to use the rest however they wished.³⁴ Thus, supporting a 'nationally minded' candidate did not necessarily preclude the same voter from also putting his support behind a strongly 'localist' man. It was only during the rare instance of a by-election that electors were forced to make a clear choice. When only a single seat was in contention voting patterns and levels of partisanship changed dramatically.³⁵ Consequently, these contests often forced parliamentary candidates to address both national and local concerns in order to ensure success. During the Dorset by-election of October 1831, Tory candidate Lord Ashley found himself trailing by only ten votes on the final day of polling. Subsequently, at the Dorchester hustings where Bankes had been assaulted six months previously, Ashley proclaimed himself to be the defender of South West announcing that the peace, tranquillity and ancient institutions of the West Country 'are to be overthrown and destroyed by a measure concocted in the space of three short months!' He warned the crowd that in a reformed parliament 'the South and West of England will not be adequately represented' and that 'the interests and political influence of agricultural counties would be transferred to towns.'³⁶ The febrile atmosphere of the ongoing Reform Crisis naturally lent such an election immense national importance. However, Ashley presented the Reform Bill as a measure that would not only cause countrywide chaos but also endanger the sanctity and influence of the West Country. Furthermore, Ashley presented himself as the protector of those rights and freedoms which were, apparently, unique to this region of England. West Country identities were thus

³⁴ O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference', pp. 399-403.

³⁵ Philip Salmon, "'Plumping Contests": The Impact of By Elections on English Voting Behaviour, 1790-1868', in *By-Elections in British Politics, 1832-1914*, ed. by T.G. Otte and Paul Readman (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013), pp. 23-51.

³⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 October 1831.

deployed by Ashley with opposition towards parliamentary reform intertwined with local obsessions over prestige, dignity and 'foreign' influence.

Whilst conservatives envisioned parliamentary reform as a threat to local tranquillity, reformist candidates instead presented such legislature as the only solution to the regions internal and external maladies. During the early-nineteenth century radical politicians such as Henry Hunt sought to champion local causes in order to integrate national political debate into local electoral culture and win over the rural population of the West Country. Hunt was a seasoned radical orator and advocate for universal male suffrage. In 1819, immediately following the Peterloo Massacre, Hunt had been arrested for sedition and imprisoned in Ilchester gaol, Somerset. During his imprisonment Hunt became invested in the county's administration and, following his release, he ran for one of the counties' parliamentary seats.³⁷ This challenge outraged the two incumbent members, Thomas Lethbridge and William Dickinson, who immediately sought to discredit the radical candidate. Hunt was described as a 'foreigner' who hoped to achieve 'a momentary triumph by hurling the poisoned missiles of calumny and falsehood against the honourable men who are opposed to his strange and unpalatable politics.'³⁸ The *Bath Chronicle* agreed, reporting that, in London, Hunt was a mere 'dealer in black coffee' and that a merchant could never hope to understand 'this county and its people.'³⁹ The 'culture of local xenophobia' was thus deployed with Hunt's radicalism being 'unpalatable' to the people Somerset. The candidates continued this assault during the elections, with Lethbridge claiming:

He began his career in the county not until he was kicked out of every honourable description of society; and he has not ceased since the first moment of his coming among you, to mislead you, and to strive to bring you to dishonour [...] you would find no truly British spirit there.⁴⁰

In these speeches Hunt was presented as both a political exile and a moral danger to Somerset. Not only was he a 'foreigner' in terms of the West Country but even his Britishness was questioned. Evidently, the term 'foreigner' was nebulous yet still contained unpatriotic suggestions. In these speeches both regional and national

³⁷ John Belchem, *'Orator' Hunt: Henry Hunt and English Working Class Radicalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

³⁸ *Taunton Courier*, 12 February 1823.

³⁹ *Bath Chronicle*, 16 December 1824.

⁴⁰ *Taunton Courier*, 21 June 1826.

identity coalesced to condemn Hunt. His supposed lack of 'British spirit' referenced earlier condemnations of republican figures such as Tom Paine.⁴¹ Indeed, Hunt was accused of 'endeavouring to produce discord by sowing Paine's bones in the fields of Somerset.'⁴² Hunt was therefore presented as a creature utterly alien to Somerset, a man whose political stances would only serve to induce chaos locally and, in so doing, endanger the region and nation.

The labelling of Hunt as a 'political adventurer' was aided by Lethbridge's and Dickinson's control over local political sites.⁴³ Despite Vernon's claims that public houses were 'invariably' hired out to the highest bidder during elections, Hunt was utterly incapable of doing so in 1826. In both Yeovil and Wells, Hunt was 'refused admission' due to fears that supporting his campaign would draw the ire of the incumbent members, who were both wealthy local landowners.⁴⁴ This strategy was also an attempt to recast Hunt as an 'exile' who no-one could have 'had the assurance to imagine that the Freeholders of Somersetshire would intrust their interests to.' However, this banishment also allowed Hunt to construct new spaces of political knowledge. In Yeovil, after being ejected from the Mermaid Inn, Hunt travelled to the Three Cloughs, a poorer establishment on the outskirts of town, whereupon:

He dined at the market-table; and when the cloth was removed, amused the farmers and labourers, for three quarters of an hour, with a statement on their grievances, the crimes of the Magistrates, and the total incompetency of the present members.⁴⁵

Rather than the silk banners, fine dining and eloquent speeches that usually accompanied electoral dinners, Hunt had instead inverted the usual customs. The 'market-table' was one of the cheaper dining tables at the inn, and a tablecloth replaced the usual banner.⁴⁶ Taking advantage of his 'exile' from polite political society, Hunt

⁴¹ Nicholas Rogers, 'Burning Tom Paine: Loyalism and Counter-Revolution in Britain, 1792-3', *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, Vol. 32, No.64 (1994), 139-71.

⁴² *Taunton Courier*, 29 January 1823.

⁴³ *Taunton Courier*, 31 May 1826.

⁴⁴ Vernon, pp. 214-20; *Taunton Courier*, 31 May 1826, 7 June 1826. For licensing laws see: Parolin, pp. 179-243.

⁴⁵ *Taunton Courier*, 31 May 1826.

⁴⁶ James Epstein, 'Radical Dining, Toasting and Symbolic Expression in Early Nineteenth Century Lancashire: Rituals of Solidarity', *Albion*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1988), pp. 271-91.

embraced the identity of a West Country farmer. By converting this new space, Hunt had an opportunity to recast himself as a champion of the local downtrodden.

Subsequently, throughout the electoral campaign Hunt continuously emphasised his connections to the West Country. In response to Lethbridge's comments about his 'British spirit' Hunt issued a sarcastic reply: 'I understand Sir Thomas Lethbridge has been prattling about 'Itinerant Orators' attending the meeting. I shall come from my estate in Glastonbury – perhaps the bristly Baronet will come from his estate – in the Moon'.⁴⁷ What Lethbridge had neglected to mention, was that Hunt was Lord of the Manor of Glastonbury Twelve Hides. Following his release from Ilchester gaol in 1823, Hunt regularly returned to his manor and presided over his Court Leet. During this ceremony Hunt listened to local grievances and appointed officers to police the 'correct and fair' weights and measures of the marketplace.⁴⁸ Hunt thus transformed himself from a 'foreign' radical into the very model of a paternalistic local lord. This plan seems to have succeeded as it was reported that in one meeting the Glastonbury farmers proclaimed that while 'the Corporation laugh at us, and say they don't care a fig for us' Hunt was worthy of 'the great authority of Alfred' and was a 'man of true county stock'.⁴⁹ Hunt was beloved in this community, not simply for being a Lord but for epitomising a West Country identity. During the Court Leet, Hunt also conducted the ancient ritual of Perambulation, whereupon Hunt traversed his manor's borders to ensure no trespasses had taken place. Such an act connected Hunt with both his tenants and the landscape of Somerset. A small farmer later recounted a feeling of 'awe' as Hunt stopped at his home to refresh himself with a cup of cider.⁵⁰ Since the medieval period Perambulation had been a key ritual in defining who was, and was not, a formal member of village society. The boundaries set and confirmed during these ceremonies not only reinforced cultural bonds but also defined eligibility for charity or poor relief.⁵¹ Consequently, rather than deny his regional attachments or present himself as superior to rural squabbles, Hunt directly engaged in local society. By

⁴⁷ *Morning Chronicle*, 23 January 1823.

⁴⁸ Henry Hunt to the Radical Reformers, *SHC*, SERIAL 6/21; Town Clerk of Glastonbury to the Home Office, National Archives, London, HO 40/17, f. 369.

⁴⁹ *Morning Post*, 30 October 1826.

⁵⁰ William Goodson's Diary, 1794-1849', *SHC*, A\ATT/1.

⁵¹ David Fletcher, 'The Parish Boundary: A Social Phenomenon in Hanoverian England', *Rural History*, 14 (2003), pp. 177-96.

becoming the personification of a landed West Country gentleman, alongside rituals that directly connected himself with the local environment, Hunt was attempting to make his radicalism as much a part of the Somerset landscape as his manor's borders.

To fully integrate local concerns with radical policies Hunt also attempted to demonstrate that the current unreformed political system was a corruptive influence which had damaged the reputation of the region. In 1816 a ship known as the *Greyhound* ran aground on the Galver Sands near Bridgwater. The lighthouse that was supposed to have warned the crew had fallen into disrepair and was unmanned. Over one hundred lives were lost, including a party of local townspeople who had attempted to save the crew.⁵² Even a decade later, newspapers described the catastrophe as a 'black mark on our town and county.'⁵³ During his electoral speeches in 1826, Hunt explicitly linked national corruption, noble privilege and parliamentary reform with this 'black mark.' Lethbridge and Dickinson, Hunt claimed, were puppets of 'Old Corruption' siphoning money from the region to pay 'the great paupers who do mischief in society.' Without these 'sinecurists' those 'accidents would never had happened in consequence.'⁵⁴ Hunt not only countered claims that his radical politics was 'foreign' to the West Country but also established how national corruption and political exclusivity had disastrous local consequences. Criticising proposals from Lethbridge and Dickinson to lower tithes and protect corn prices Hunt declared that such 'milk and water' policies did 'not go to the root of the evil.'⁵⁵ It was not Hunt's demands for radical reform that were 'poisoned missiles' threatening Somerset but the corruption of existing political institutions. Radical reform was thus the only real corrective to the corruption of men such as Lethbridge and Dickinson. In this sense, there was no sharp divide between national political concerns and local identity. Politicians like Hunt deployed both simultaneously to achieve their goals.

It was this mobilisation of local identity and relationships in service of national political aims that granted some elite women an opportunity to engage in regional politics. As with all aspects of society, nineteenth-century electoral rituals were highly gendered. The hustings, for example, were portrayed as an exclusively male space. Lord

⁵² *Morning Post*, 8 January 1816.

⁵³ *Bridgwater and Somerset Herald*, 12 February 1826.

⁵⁴ *Taunton Courier*, 22 June 1826.

⁵⁵ *Taunton Courier*, 22 January 1823.

Ashley encapsulated contemporary feelings when he announced that 'if it were consistent with female delicacy, I am sure she [his wife] would come to these hustings.'⁵⁶ With enough local influence, however, certain women could overcome these boundaries. At the West Somerset Elections of 1834, Mary Sanford took it upon herself to canvass for her son, Edward Sanford, following the crowd's 'unfavourable' reaction to his candidature. Edward was thus shipped off to Gibraltar whilst the noble matriarch of the Sanford family campaigned for him.⁵⁷ Mary's position as head of a local noble family allowed her to leverage the name of her family and overcome the traditional barriers facing women in nineteenth-century politics. Even women who did not command as much respect as Mary Sandford were still often appealed to during the canvas. In Ilchester it had become a tradition that, at each election, local women were treated to bottles of wine by election agents whilst they danced down the high street.⁵⁸ The reasoning behind such displays are readily obvious when consulting the reports of election agents. In Bridport, for example, it was reported that Joseph Batson's wife 'manages and controls him' and thus she was paid £7 for her husband's vote.⁵⁹ As Gleadle has argued, middle-class and aristocratic women during the nineteenth-century were not wholly excluded from the masculine political world but were viewed as 'borderline citizens'.⁶⁰ The exclusion of women at the national level of politics, was mediated and adapted by the realities of local society and reputation. Leveraging noble status or their personal relationships provided these women with a degree of power generally unseen elsewhere.

Although some politicians may have found it distasteful, the practicalities of early nineteenth-century elections ensured that candidates became invested in local concerns and customs. By capitalising on local spaces, rituals and legacies even those not considered traditional political subjects could become involved in national debates. Regional identity was malleable and adaptive and so both conservatives and radicals sought to prove themselves as the true supporters of the landed interest. Far from

⁵⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 October 1831.

⁵⁷ Mary Sanford to E.A. Sanford, 1834, *SHC*, DD/SF/7/5/15.

⁵⁸ *Memories of Ilchester*, *SHC*, A\CTP/1/12/18.

⁵⁹ Election Agent's Record of the Canvass, *DHC*, D-COL/X/7.

⁶⁰ Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1815-1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 2-34.

precluding national political knowledge, the intertwining of national and local concerns by candidates like Hunt enabled the West Country electorate to become directly involved with debates surrounding Britain's political future.

Electoral contests, however, did not solely revolve around the actions of the enfranchised. Whilst it was the elite West Country electorate that candidates inevitably sought to win over, the unenfranchised were also increasingly adopting regional identities, rituals and customs to serve national political aims. In the years preceding 1832 the vast crowds that gathered at the hustings were comprised primarily of non-voters. These public political displays were often the only opportunity for the bulk of the rural population had to engage with their representatives. Subsequently, 'clamour and the most boisterous interruptions' were commonplace and it was not uncommon that 'not one of the speakers could be heard five yards from the spot on which he stood.'⁶¹ Early nineteenth-century elections were not designed to accommodate nuanced speechwriting or rhetorical genius but were exercises in the command of visual culture and crowd management.⁶² Moreover, elections provided a periodic opportunity for a public assessment of the conduct of the local ruling classes. The landed elite were supposed to represent the common interest, of both the electorate and unenfranchised poor. If it was believed that they had neglected this duty, elections also provided an occasion to forcibly remind the elite about their obligations.⁶³ By utilising their strength in numbers and controlling key local spaces, the unenfranchised popular crowd could thus both involve themselves in national political issues and exploit the grandiose claims of the West Country yeoman's generosity and charitability.

Whilst their formal involvement at the hustings was either limited or non-existent, by controlling this key local political space popular crowds in the West Country attempted to critique and reshape local and national political systems.⁶⁴ Civil disturbances during elections, therefore, were often conducted with the hope of directly influencing the political process. During the Weymouth elections of 1826, opposition

⁶¹ *Taunton Courier*, 26 December 1832; *Bath Chronicle*, 12 May 1831.

⁶² Paul Pickering, 'Class Without Words: Symbolic Communication in the Chartist Movement', *Past and Present*, Vol. 112 No. 1 (1986), pp. 144-62

⁶³ Fisher, pp. 99-104; O'Gorman, 'Electoral Deference', pp. 396-9.

⁶⁴ Navickas, pp. 3-19.

towards the corporation's 'Union', an alliance between conservative and liberal corporators to each send two members to parliament, found its expression in battles over the hustings. The popular crowd had thrown its support behind an independent candidate, Colonel Gordon, as 'there was a common belief amongst the lower orders that the Union no longer served their needs'. From the second day of polling the crowd overwhelmed the small hall where the hustings were situated and:

overpowered the few friends of the Union that made their way into it. The Blues acted upon a regular system of obstructing the voters for the union from entering the hall [...] The voters for the Union were pointed out to the Gordonites or Blues, three or four of these would surround a voter for the Union and carry him by force away from the door of the hall.⁶⁵

This group, primarily comprised of non-voters, had seized the political space and were dictating who could and could not vote at the hustings. This was not some disorganised riot but a calculated strategy. Unable to legally vote for their candidate, controlling this space was the only opportunity the unenfranchised had to influence the political process. The hustings were an exclusive political space that welcomed only those with the franchise. By occupying this site, the people of Weymouth were inserting themselves into the official structures of politics, symbolically and physically. So great was the crowd's obstruction that eventually the 6th Dragoons barricaded the town hall; those who wished to vote entering via a ladder.⁶⁶ If, as Vernon claims, this tactic of 'packing the hall' had collapsed in larger constituencies due to the moving of hustings to outdoor venues, then it was the unique nature of these small rural boroughs which empowered the crowd.⁶⁷ At Weymouth, the crowd understood both the practical and symbolic importance of the hustings to the political process. By challenging the 'Union' in this manner not only were they criticising the neglect of the local populace by the corporation, but they were also involving themselves in the previously exclusive national political process. Those who did not accept the crowd's political views were physically exiled from the community.

It was the belief that the physical environment of rural England needed to be cleansed so that political reform could occur that also encouraged assaults on the

⁶⁵ Case for Opinion on the Weymouth Parliamentary Election, *DHC*, D-FAR/B/L/1, ff. 1-3.

⁶⁶ *The Times*, 22 June 1826

⁶⁷ Vernon, pp. 89-102.

homes of electoral agents during periods of electoral violence. As noted previously, speeches from politicians such as Hunt consistently referenced national corruption as endangering and infecting rural localities. Popular crowds sought to physically prevent any infection. During the riots that followed the Dorset by-election of 1831, for example, the crowd acted upon allegations from reformers that their candidate, Ponsonby, had lost due to 'the trickery of the lawyers and the partiality of the assessor' and so 'the houses of the attorneys of Lord Ashley [...] were thus marked out as objects of violence.'⁶⁸ This 'violence' came in the form of breaking into their homes and 'destroying every document, paper and book on which they could lay their hands.' It was reported that 'the ransacking was so complete that the streets for some distance in the vicinity of these gentlemen's offices, were strewed with parchments and paper.'⁶⁹ By purposefully targeting the official documents stored within these homes the crowd was literally seizing the mechanics of state and destroying them. As in Weymouth this was an attempt to take control of the political process. Ponsonby had been defeated by the legal papers of the poll clerks and so the crowd sought to eliminate these documents. The destruction of these houses also served to drive out 'malicious influences', men who had acted dishonourably and thus failed their local obligations. Referring to one political agent the crowd's leader announced: 'the bald headed shall not pass over Blandford Bridge alive.'⁷⁰ By destroying their homes and denying them access to the town these supposedly corrupt political agents had been forcibly removed from the local community. Controlling physical place in both Blandford and Weymouth was just as meaningful as any political speech, banner or ritual. By seizing sites such as the hustings or the homes of political agents, the crowd demonstrated their belief that the current dishonourable state of British politics was unacceptable and those who supported it were no longer welcome. Rather than mindless looting or drunken inarticulate violence, for the briefest moment these rural communities could construct their own ideal political world.

The punishing of those who had failed to uphold the 'common interest' was aided by rural shaming rituals. At Bridgwater in 1832 the West Country custom of

⁶⁸ *The Times*, 20 October 1831; *Dorset County Chronicle*, 27 October 1831.

⁶⁹ John James Smith's Account of the Blandford Riots, University of Bristol Special Collections, Bristol, DM58 Pinney (Domestic) Box B4, Bundle 5, f. 1.

⁷⁰ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 22 March 1832.

'skimmington riding' or 'rough music' was deployed to protest a Tory electoral victory. The disturbance began when John Bowen, a local magistrate and anti-Reformer, arrested a man for drunkenness during the post-election revelry. Subsequently:

The crowd commenced by uttering cries of vengeance against Mr. Bowen and 'all the Blue party' [...] his premises being at that time surrounded by a mob consisting of not less than two hundred persons, most of whom were armed with large sticks, and many of them in disguise. Soon after Mr. Bowen had entered, cries were uttered by the mob 'We will have him out or pull down the premises'.⁷¹

It was revealed in court that 'one of the mob had his face blackened' whilst another was 'wearing fake curls and a dress'. Their leader was playing a bugle whilst wearing a 'large great coat, with a cape that came all around his body'.⁷² The presence of blackface, discordant music and crossdressing embed this act within the ritual structures of 'skimmington riding.' This form of communal punishment was usually reserved for adulterers or cuckolds. In its traditional setting, those accused of moral or sexual crimes were visited by a procession of villagers beating pans, blowing horns and screaming the supposed crimes of the victim. The blackened faces were not simply a disguise. Rather, the masks and costumes enabled the perpetrators to overcome their individuality and the crowd became a representation of the community. Crossdressing, similarly, not only allowed the crowd to 'act out' sexual crimes in lurid detail but also represented a damning moral judgement. Women were generally seen in rural society as the judges of moral character, and so by crossdressing during protest men attempted to adopt this power. 'Skimmington riding' was thus a form of remonstrance against those who endangered the moral code of rural society.⁷³ By performing such a ritual outside Bowen's home, the protestors were directly likening his political activities with gross sexual misdemeanours. John Bowen, and the entire Tory party, were degraded to the level of a henpecked husband or adulterous woman. Furthermore, 'skimmington riding' was also traditionally coupled with the removal of an offender from the local community. Bowen's political actions had exiled him from West Country society, much like the sexual crimes of the cuckold. The enforcement of this exile was

⁷¹ *London Evening Standard*, 20 December 1832.

⁷² 'Election Riot at Bowen's House in Bridgwater, 1832', *SHC*, DD\CLE/6/1.

⁷³ Martin Ingram, 'Ridings, Rough Music and Mocking Rhymes in Early Modern England', in B. Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 166-97; Edward Thompson, 'Rough Music Reconsidered', *Folklore*, Vol. 103, No. 1 (1992), pp. 3-26.

attempted not only symbolically through this shaming ritual but also physically. Cries of 'Down with premises!' and 'Away with the Blues!' permeated the crowd and as the night progressed many of those gathered around Bowen's home, including an increasing number dressed as women, attempted to pull down his house.⁷⁴ Bowen's home became a bridge between local ritual and national politics. The corruption of the Tories had to be cleansed, and by destroying both Bowen and his home Bridgwater could be freed from their influences.

Blackface, crossdressing and 'skimmington rides' were not impediments to national political protest but aids. Their appearance provided local protestors with protest repertoires that allowed them to express their distaste for the current state of British politics. A similar assault occurred in Poole in 1831 where the crowd specifically targeted a beer shop 'kept by a man named Hoare, who had voted for Lord Ashley'.⁷⁵ Hoare attempted to scare the crowd by firing his musket, but he was:

knocked down; and whilst down, was struck a violent blow on his arm. They then hauled him up and tumbled him about. He was led by the mob away from the house [with] a particular kind of whistle from one of the mob which was followed by a cheer and a huzza.⁷⁶

Hoare was carried through the streets as the crowd played 'rough music'. To ensure that all onlookers identified Hoare the crowd also stole his pub sign and paraded it in front of him.⁷⁷ Deploying these ritual forms invested political protests with cultural legitimacy through precedence and association.⁷⁸ 'Skimmington Riding', at its core, was a shaming ritual used to castigate a member of the community who had failed in their societal obligations and expectations. Both Bowen and Hoare had been assaulted for their support of national corruption and thus failing to uphold the expected values of the West Country. For those who participated these rituals helped perform political concerns through the language of custom. The crowds at Bridgwater and Poole were not only cleansing corruption locally, but also demonstrating their opposition to

⁷⁴ Notes of Trials Arising Out of an Election Riot, *SHC*, DD\CLE/6/1.

⁷⁵ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 20 October 1831.

⁷⁶ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 15 March 1832.

⁷⁷ William Mate, *Then and Now: Or Fifty Years Ago. Facts, Ancient and Modern, Connected with the County of Dorset and the South-West of England* (Poole, 1883), p. 102.

⁷⁸ Carl Griffin, 'Affecting Violence: Language, Gesture and Performance in Early Nineteenth-Century English Popular Protest', *Historical Geography*, 36 (2008), pp. 139-62.

contemporary political structures by likening their supporters to the dregs of rural society.

The West Country's regional identity was thus deployed in political protest as a symbol of purity and in resisting corrupting and 'foreign' influences violence was sanctioned and legitimised. This was true for not only men but also women. Popular participation in protest was much less discriminatory than official political structures and so women occasionally took leading roles in local activity. Outside the town of Lyme in 1831, for instance, a group of women stopped a party of Lord Ashley's voters: 'large stones were thrown' and 'fire-works were let off to the great danger of frightening the horses.'⁷⁹ Meanwhile, in Sherborne a 'monstrous orderly mob' headed by women surrounded the local public house and threatened to 'pull the place down' unless they were given 'charity', whereupon 'some beer was given them.'⁸⁰ Such a demand was founded not only on the paternal elites supposed obligation to help the poor but, as noted previously, the common local identification with a generous ancient yeomanry. At Yeovil in 1831, Eliza Hodges did not lack for courage when she was stopped by an officer of the Yeomanry Cavalry, and cried out: "d__n you, who are you? I did not expect to see such a set of strange fellows as you, I could lick a score of you', I said I had an order from the magistrates to clear the street; she said 'd__n you and the magistrates too'.⁸¹ Hodges' description of the Yeomanry as 'strange fellows' may have been an attempt to align these men with 'foreign' influence and her open rebellion is indicative of how quickly law and order could collapse during election season. As these examples demonstrate, the desire to enforce elite obligations and protect local communities from corruptive influences was shared by both men and women across the West Country.

It would be wrong, however, to regard the regional identity of the West Country, and its associated rituals, as merely defensive in nature. It was not some innocent Arcadian pastoral idyll that solely existed to be defended from the onslaught of metropole and modernity. These rituals and spaces were also weapons that could be used to proactively strike against local and national political structures. During the Shaftesbury election contest of 1830, for instance, local concerns regarding access to local space combined with national debates surrounding political representation. The

⁷⁹ *Dorset County Chronicle*, 6 October 1831.

⁸⁰ *Sherborne Mercury*, 19 March 1832; *The Times* 29 October 1831.

⁸¹ *Sherborne Mercury*, 9 April 1832.

election was contested by Knowles, a popular independent candidate, and Chitty, the candidate of local landlord and 'boroughmonger' Lord Grosvenor.⁸² Immediately, Knowles' campaign became focused on parliamentary reform. To the ten thousand who had gathered in Shaftesbury Knowles announced that this was a battle for 'bursting asunder the chains of political slavery.'⁸³ However, as the campaign continued a new issue arose, namely access to the local public house, the Grosvenor Arms. The inn overlooked the hustings and was owned by Lord Grosvenor; subsequently Chitty's supporters made frequent use of a specially constructed balcony that overlooked the town square. The supporters of Knowles and Reform were, unsurprisingly, denied access as the publican admitted he dared not 'risk giving offence to the Earl Grosvenor's agents, which might lead to a notice to quit.'⁸⁴ The Grosvenor Arms, therefore, was quickly becoming a local symbol for corruption and exclusive political practices. During the election campaign the issues of national reform and access to the local inn began to coalesce. During the canvass one of Knowles' supporters began railing against the 'great corrupt edifice' that was the current House of Commons. He concluded his speech by standing outside the Grosvenor Arms bellowing:

Let us storm yonder castle of corruption, and I will assist you to place the banner of freedom and independence on its summit. Now we have put on the armour of liberty let us not cast it off, till we have trodden under our feet, that double headed monster, tyranny and corruption.⁸⁵

In this speech the House of Commons, Old Parliamentary Corruption and Shaftesbury's corrupt oligarchy were all connected through this local space of exclusivity. The people of Shaftesbury could easily equate the national exclusivity of the unreformed parliament with their own local experiences. It provided a very real and understandable reconstruction of abstract political structures. The shame and annoyance of being denied access to the local inn amplified the calls for parliamentary reform. After Knowles' eventual defeat, the people followed the demands of his supporters literally and stormed the public house breaking down its doors and ransacking the bar.⁸⁶ The local state of the Grosvenor Arms represented in microcosm the national political situation.

⁸² *History of the Shaftesbury Election 1830* (Shaftesbury, 1831), pp. xii-xv, 1-11.

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 37.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 36.

⁸⁶ Captain R.J. Fawcett to Lord Melbourne, 6 August 1830, *NA*, HO 52/7, f. 269.

It was, in effect, an effigy of the House of Commons. Through acting out their concerns in this local space the people of Shaftesbury were aligning themselves with the national movement for Reform.

Rural electoral violence during the nineteenth-century should not be dismissed as the work of drunken, 'inward-facing' rustics. Between 1820 and 1832, West Country crowds used their ability to control local spaces to interject themselves in the official mechanisms of electoral politics. These political sites served as bridges between the political periphery and the metropolitan centre. By incorporating national issues into local spaces, rural people were able to assert their agency and through performance give voice to their concerns. Elections provided a period where the popular crowd could judge their representatives and superiors and assault those who they believed were corrupting their locality. In eliminating these threats, however, the rural crowd also communicated their vision of an alternate political system both locally and nationally.

In confusing the repertoires of rural political protestors with their overall aims, historians have risked parroting the arguments of the nineteenth-century political elite. Rural protests have often been envisioned as either drunken mobs or wholly concerned with local issues to the detriment of their engagement with national politics. This article, conversely, has demonstrated how elite politicians, the electorate, and the popular crowd in the South West deployed their local identities and traditions to aid their political endeavours. Rural identities, customs and rituals were not politically limiting in the slightest. Notions such as the 'West Country yeomanry' or terms such as 'foreigner' were reflexive and became enrolled in debates regarding national political concerns. Equally, in the febrile period immediately preceding the Reform Bill, national issues were adapted into local debates and understood through these local identities, rituals and attitudes. These local elements provided participants in political conflicts with regional frames of reference through which they could understand and act upon national concerns. West Country identities were also used as weapons and those who held opposing views on matters of national interest were deemed as traitors to their local community. Similarly, popular crowds could easily use the exclusive identities of the local elite to their advantage, demanding that the supposedly generous and independent West Country yeomanry fulfil their obligations.

Navickas has argued that for urban radicals 'the civic body politic represented in microcosm what the national should be.'⁸⁷ Such feelings were equally present in rural regions and extended to many different political spaces. Public houses, the hustings or even culturally significant fields were all contested by rural political protestors. Historians have often focused on the struggle for free speech rather than assemblage, but for rural protestors gaining access to certain political sites was just as important as any speech or song. Their exclusion from these spaces represented the repression of the prevailing political system. By placing themselves into these spaces, rural protestors could symbolically contest their political exclusion whilst physically reshaping local politics to a preferred form. Through the deployment of shaming rituals like 'skimmington rides' or the banishing of 'corrupt' political agents the rural crowd demonstrated that the existing practices of the political elite were no longer accepted within their local communities.

The 'West Country Scum', therefore, were not detached due to their strong regional identity and desire to protect local spaces, they were empowered. As contemporary debates continue over the relationship between Westminster and 'provincial' Britain, it is crucial that we remember that the 'local' and the 'national' are not mutually exclusive. National and local concerns are intertwined, inseparable and interdependent. A strong attachment to one's locality is not antithetical to the development of shared class or political identities. The local provides spaces to perform as well as identities, customs and rituals that lend protest cultural and political legitimacy. It is only by acting through local spaces that national change can be both imagined and implemented.



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⁸⁷ Navickas, p. 8.

Anthologies, Periodicals and the Press: Publicising Manchester Poetry in the early 1840s.

HARRY BARK

ABSTRACT: This paper takes a bibliographic approach to the engagement with and promotion of Manchester poetry within the city in the early 1840s. It focuses on two poetry anthologies produced by Manchester cultural societies (*The Festive Wreath* (1842) and *Athenæum Souvenir* (1843)) and considers the position of local poetry in the short-lived *The North of England Magazine*. The paper argues that poetry was key in negotiating an early-Victorian cultural identity for the city, as literary-minded communities sought to defy the reputation of Manchester as a site of mere industry whilst countering the growing literary and publishing dominance of London. The role of women poets within these communities is also considered, and the paper points towards potential future areas of research, beyond a bibliographic focus, that will enrich understandings of the cultural identity and negotiations of the Cottonopolis in the 1840s.

KEYWORDS: Poetry, Anthologies, Periodicals, Manchester, Gender, Regionalism



THE RAPID GROWTH of Manchester industry in the early decades of the nineteenth century meant that by the 1840s the city was widely seen as a 'centre of "modern life"'.¹ Debbie Bark considers this through a literary framework when describing Manchester in the early years of Victoria's reign as 'a centre of manufacturing and commerce [which] obscured the city's reality as an abundant producer of imaginative literature', highlighting an industrial and cultural divide that became a key aspect of Manchester literary production in the 1840s.² In their work on Manchester's periodical press, Michael

¹ Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 95.

² Debbie Bark, 'Manchester and Early Victorian Literary Culture', *Literature Compass*, 8, 6 (2011), 404-414 (p. 406).

Powell and Terry Wyke suggest the need for further research which focuses on the ways in which Manchester texts as material objects 'contributed to the creation of the different representations and identities of the Cottonopolis in the nineteenth century'.³ In this paper I will develop these areas of research to consider Manchester literary identity through a bibliographically focussed account of literary production in the city in the early years of the 1840s.

As Alexis Weedon notes, between 1801 and 1870 Manchester ranked seventh in terms of the number of book titles produced by British cities, and the 3925 titles attributed to Manchester represented only 1.63% of the 240,307 titles produced by London in the same period.⁴ The proportion of UK titles published outside of London between 1840-49 was 24.6%, a notable reduction compared to 26.9% between 1830 and 1839.⁵ Whilst Weedon places Manchester in relation to the growing London publishing hegemony, Simon Eliot considers the broader national picture in providing data for cities other than the major publishing centres of London, Oxford, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Dublin, showing that Manchester, in publishing 681 titles, was far closer to the levels of Liverpool and Newcastle (548 and 574 titles respectively) than it was to London.⁶ In applying this statistical context to material texts, particularly poetry anthologies produced by Manchester societies and groups in the 1840s, it is possible to see the literary status of Manchester being foregrounded in the city's early-Victorian poetic engagements. The statistical picture set out by Weedon and Eliot can thus be broadened through an alertness to the production, formatting and layout of published materials.

As Manchester's literary standing on a national scale receded, literary societies and their associated publications took on a responsibility for defending and promoting a poetic identity for the city, as well as engaging a reading community. One such society was the Manchester Athenæum, which sought to provide 'an institution for the benefit

³ Michael Powell and Terry Wyke, 'Charting the Manchester Tributary of the Golden Stream: Leary's History of the Manchester Periodical Press', *Manchester Region and History Review*, 17, 2 (2006), 43-62 (p. 57).

⁴ Alexis Weedon, *Victorian Publishing: The Economics of Book Production for a Mass Market, 1836-1916* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2003), p. 36.

⁵ Weedon, p. 37.

⁶ Simon Eliot, 'Patterns and Trends and the NSTC: Some Initial Observations. Part One', in *Publishing History*, 42 (January 1997) 79-104 (p. 95).

of the tradesmen, commercial assistants and apprentices, professional students, clerks, of this very populous and flourishing town', suggesting a project of intellectual development alongside a membership rooted in the industrial middle class.⁷ In producing and publishing a poetry anthology, the *Athenæum Souvenir*, which was sold at the 'Athenæum Bazaar' fundraising event at the Town Hall in October 1843, the Manchester Athenæum used poetry to establish a cultural identity for Manchester which sat alongside the city's industrial concerns. This interaction between poetry, poets and society meetings extended to other groups in the city, such as the Sun Inn group of poets who met at the Sun Inn public house on Long Millgate in Manchester during the early years of the 1840s. An anthology made up of the poetry recited at a gathering on 24 March 1842 was published as *The Festive Wreath* (1842). This anthology, along with the *Athenæum Souvenir* (1843), offers an insight into a shared cultural moment for the city as expressed through poetry, with the anthologies promoting and publicising a distinctive sense of regional poetic identity.

The *Athenæum Souvenir* and *The Festive Wreath* are material embodiments of a nascent shift in the focus and cultural identity of the city led by those who produced literary material in Manchester. As Richard Altick observes, Manchester cultural societies moved towards a literary focus in the 1840s. For example, lectures given at the Manchester Athenæum transitioned from an even split between scientific topics and other themes between 1835 and 1842 to having only 81 scientific lectures compared with 313 on 'categories of literature, "education", and the fine arts' between 1842 and 1849.⁸ The anthologies reflect the cultural missions of the groups producing them. They show how these literary-minded communities sought to encourage a specifically Manchester poetic identity through these essentially self-publicising publications that set the tone for the developing literary, publishing and poetic consciousness of the region. Whilst the individual poems and contributors to these anthologies will offer rich ground for future research, this paper offers only an initial analysis of the prefaces and title pages to these anthologies, making a claim for this paratextual material as a statement of cultural and literary intent.

⁷ *Report of the Proceedings of the Public Meeting held 28 October 1835 for the Purpose of Establishing The Athenæum* (Manchester: Taylor and Garnett, 1835), p. 20.

⁸ Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Columbia: Ohio State University Press, 1998), p. 202.

The promotion of poetic anthologies

Maura Ives suggests that there is scope in the field of bibliography to explore the 'circumstances and intentionalities of text production'.⁹ The poetry anthologies of 1840s Manchester provide a site of explanatory potential in which the intentionalities of literary and cultural societies can be connected with their material products. Moreover, a consideration of the role of poetry in Manchester periodicals and local newspapers can develop an understanding of how the modes of publicising the city's poetry reflected the methods and aims of the societies in their commitment to a cultural identity that is entwined with local poetry. Not only did the *Athenæum Souvenir* and *The Festive Wreath* anthologies advertise the projects of their respective societies, but reports in the Manchester press on the events at which the anthologies were sold also suggest a cultural investment in these literary works.

Linda Hughes draws attention to the ways in which the placement of poetry in publications reflect and embody the social and political moments that form them. Using the example of a mid-Victorian periodical, Hughes describes how 'In the April 1855 *Fraser's Magazine* [...] [Matthew] Arnold expresses the dilemma of "wandering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born" sandwiched between a serial novel and James Anthony Forde's review of *Four Years at the Court of Henry VIII*'.¹⁰ In Hughes' reading, Arnold's poetry is intertwined with the surrounding material which effects meaning: the poetry is literally positioned between the nascent world of the serial book and the 'dead' world of Henry VIII's court. This analysis – which is echoed by Mike Sanders' work on the 'intrinsic context' of poetry as having its meaning formed by surrounding material – foregrounds the importance of the formatting and placement of poetry-related material and can be usefully applied to the *Athenæum Souvenir*, *The Festive Wreath* and published material that engaged with these poetic projects to inform understandings of cultural identity in the city.¹¹ Complementing such more obviously interpretative contextual work, the bibliographer and textual critic D.F.

⁹ Maura Ives, 'A bibliographical approach to Victorian publishing', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, ed. by John Jordan and Robert Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 270.

¹⁰ Linda Hughes, 'What the *Wellesley Index* Left Out: Why Poetry Matters to Periodical Studies', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 40, 2 (2007), 91-125 (p. 92).

¹¹ Mike Sanders, 'The Chartist Text in an Age of Digital Reproduction', in *Journal of Victorian Studies*, 14, 2 (2009), 301-307 (p. 304).

McKenzie highlights bibliographic study that considers 'dissemination and readership as matters of economic and political motive.'¹² This too can be usefully applied to the ways in which Manchester publications, editors and publishers engaged in a project of local literary identity. McKenzie's claim that 'bibliography is the discipline that studies texts as recorded forms, and the process of their transmission, including their production and reception' can similarly be applied to the Manchester poetry anthologies to consider the ways in which the layout of a text influences meaning.¹³

Both the *Athenæum Souvenir* and *The Festive Wreath* were products of literary meetings in Manchester in the early 1840s and, as will be shown, the prefaces and title pages introduce the contributors and underlying aims of the texts. These paratextual attempts to culturally embolden Manchester poets resonate with the publishing concerns of the period as set out by Weedon, most notably London's 2.5% increased share of the UK published titles total in the 1840s compared with the previous decade, at the expense of cities such as Manchester.¹⁴ The desire for regional publishers to provide varied forms of poetry in an attempt to encourage a reading market in Manchester is understandable. Indeed, it was local publisher George Bradshaw who published *The Festive Wreath* for the Sun Inn group in 1842. Whilst Trefor Thomas interprets this as a philanthropic act by Bradshaw's publishing group, suggesting that the anthology serves as a 'notable example' of the 'literary and artistic interests of the firm', it is also important to acknowledge the economic and publishing context in which this decision was taken.¹⁵ Bradshaw undoubtedly had an interest in Manchester poetry, but his involvement in *The Festive Wreath* formed part of a project that sought to claim a local, and even national, prominence of Manchester literature, something that would be both culturally and financially beneficial for the publisher. In this way, the *Athenæum Souvenir* and *The Festive Wreath* can be seen as forms of advertisement in their own right. As Manchester struggled for national literary status in the period, in terms of both market-share and literary quality, these anthologies figure as physical embodiments of

¹² D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 1.

¹³ McKenzie, p. 12.

¹⁴ Weedon, p. 37.

¹⁵ Trefor Thomas, 'George Bradshaw and *Bradshaw's Manchester Journal*: 1841-1843', *Manchester Region History Review*, 17, 2 (2006), 63-73 (p. 63).

various literary (and, for the likes of Bradshaw, economic) projects. In discussing the role of advertising in bibliographical analysis, Jennifer Wicke argues that 'every cultural artifact is produced by individual makers, by institutional settings, by collective aspirations and values', and this is a useful framework through which to understand these anthologies as they embodied the 'collective aspirations and values' of the Manchester poetry producing community.¹⁶ These texts display a paratextual self-awareness of their own rootedness as a regional product, with both anthologies being printed and published in Manchester, revealing the negotiation of economic, cultural and literary interests through the layout, content and materiality of the anthologies.

The unsigned preface and anonymous editing of the *Athenæum Souvenir* affirms its purpose of providing a 'literary home' for the people of Manchester whilst also alluding to the need for sales in order to resolve the 'legacy of bygone misfortunes'¹⁷ (which, as Michael Rose describes, refers to the debts of the Athenæum society that were 'kept down only by the proceeds from the bazaars or lavish soirees'¹⁸). As Gérard Genette argues, the paratextual importance of prefaces up until the middle of the nineteenth century is found in its predominant purpose of presenting an 'argument of usefulness' and the role of the preface in the *Athenæum Souvenir* follows this tradition.¹⁹ The promise of the 'usefulness' of the anthology in terms of being a 'home' for local poetic originality and quality (and to a lesser extent, financial contribution) is a dominant feature. This sense is developed through the distinction in the preface between the three types of contributor in the anthology: those 'already esteemed as worthy of the high meed of praise and distinction which adopts them as national', others of 'less celebrity', and 'occasional writers, residing in Manchester and the neighbourhood'.²⁰ The preface makes clear the integration of the national with the local yet does not specify which contributors fall into each category. Particular

¹⁶ Jennifer Wicke, *Advertising Fictions: Literature, Advertisement, & Social Reading* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 16.

¹⁷ *Athenæum Souvenir* (Manchester: J. Gadsby, 1843), p. vi.

¹⁸ Michael E. Rose, 'Culture, Philanthropy and the Manchester Middle Classes', in *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Cultural Production and Social Policy in Victorian Manchester*, eds. A.J. Kidd and K.W. Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), p. 111.

¹⁹ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 200.

²⁰ *Athenæum Souvenir*, p. v.

contributors will no doubt have been recognised as 'national' or otherwise by contemporary readers, but the preface promotes those 'occasional' local writers on an equal footing with the national names. Whilst acknowledging the national status of some of these Manchester writers, the preface brings together lesser-known and entirely local poets to promote a more inclusive picture of the city's poetic output.

The preface to *The Festive Wreath* similarly reaffirms the literary project of the group that produces it. Unlike the *Athenæum Souvenir*, *The Festive Wreath* has a named editor, and the paratextual contribution of John Bolton Rogerson, himself an active poet in the Sun Inn group of poets, ensures that the preface retains a sense of representing the collective values of the group and their claims for 'usefulness' in terms of their meetings and the anthology itself.²¹ What is particularly notable about the preface to this anthology is its evident desire to situate the work within the city both culturally and historically. The preface opens with a history of the site on which the Sun Inn stands, dating back to 1422, and suggests the setting of their meeting 'possesses a charm from its antiquity and the associations connected with its neighbourhood'.²² This is followed by a reproduction of a report from the *Manchester Guardian* of the meeting that led to the anthology as well as situating the Sun Inn building itself in relation to the house in which 'the celebrated novelist, William Harrison Ainsworth, was born'.²³ In this way, the Cottonopolis, a city of seeming immediate relevance to the early-Victorian industrialisation, is contextualised on a far wider historical scale whilst retaining a sense of contemporary importance as the anthology is assimilated into the cultural currency of the nationally-known Ainsworth. In promoting the anthology, the preface situates the 'friendly bond' that defines the Sun Inn group within a wider claim for the city in historical and, more pressingly, cultural terms.²⁴

The prefaces of each anthology justify the existence of the societies and the materials they produce, framing and infusing the poems in the *Athenæum Souvenir* and *The Festive Wreath* with an appeal to, and promotion of, a poetic identity and

²¹ John Bolton Rogerson was a notable Manchester poet of the period. Around time of *The Festive Wreath* he had had two poetic collections in circulation (*Rhyme, Romance and Revery* (1842) and *'A Voice From the Town', and other poems* (1842)).

²² *The Festive Wreath*, ed. John Bolton Rogerson (Manchester: Bradshaw & Blacklock, 1842), p. iii.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

community. This ensures that the poetry which follows stems from, and provides evidence of, poetic worth and excellence in the city. The prefaces ultimately shape the anthologies as texts of self-promotion, beyond the stature of individual poets, to become cultural advertisements on behalf of the city itself.

The role of gender in anthologising Manchester's poetry

In thinking about these Manchester anthologies, and the related materials of the societies that produced them, considerations of gender come to the fore. Although the percentage of women involved in the UK book-producing labour force increased from 12% to 20.5% between 1844 and 1851, a marginalisation of female poets seems to underpin the poetic communities forged in 1840s Manchester.²⁵ Even though in his address to the Manchester Athenæum in 1844, Benjamin Disraeli asserted that female membership was a key part of the successes of the society, the integration of women was limited.²⁶ This is evident in the anthologies, with *The Festive Wreath* including four female contributors out of the total of nineteen (21.5%), and their contributions taking up just 10.2% of the pages dedicated to poetry. The *Athenæum Souvenir* is remarkably similar in its gender divide, with 20% of contributors being women (six of the thirty) though 21.4% of space for poetry being given to the work of women.

Joseph Weir Hunter emphasised a similar trend in his reflections on Manchester cultural societies of the 1840s, and suggested that it was the potential to 'step outside the circle of domestic cares, and discuss masculine topics in a masculine atmosphere' that led to many of the literary developments in the city, with the exclusively male clubs such as the Athenæum positioned as 'inseparably connected' with literary success in the period.²⁷ Kathryn Gleadle draws on research into the rule books and reports of the Athenæum society to highlight gender segregation within the Manchester Athenæum, noting that 'despite the glowing publicity that surrounded the admission of women to the Manchester Athenæum, they were not actually granted full membership', and were

²⁵ Simon Eliot, *Some Patterns and Trends in British Publishing 1800-1919* (London: The Bibliographical Society, 1994), p. 93.

²⁶ 'Address of Mr Disraeli, 3 October 1844', in *Manchester Athenæum. Addresses 1835-1885* (Manchester: Manchester Athenæum, 1888), p. 10.

²⁷ Joseph Weir Hunter, 'The Clubs of Old Manchester', in *Papers of the Manchester Literary Club*, 2 vols., ed. John H. Nodal (Manchester: A. Ireland & Co., 1876), I, p. 7.

instead permitted to subscribe to a reduced membership allowing use of the library and admission to lectures only, whilst being excluded from sitting on committees.²⁸ The six women writers contributing to the *Athenæum Souvenir* therefore had no voice in deciding how the funds that they helped to raise would be used. Similarly, at the Sun Inn meeting of 1842, from which *The Festive Wreath* was produced, women were also excluded. A report in the *Manchester Guardian* of meetings at the Sun Inn prior to March 1842 describes the poetic gathering as consisting of 'about 30 gentlemen.'²⁹ Debbie Bark notes that female poets were 'excluded from the public gatherings at the Sun Inn', drawing on Martha Vicinus' account of Isabella Varley,³⁰ a female poet with work published in *The Festive Wreath*, who 'hid behind curtains to hear her poem read to the company'.³¹

This provides valuable context when addressing the Manchester anthologies as material offshoots of the literary projects and broader literary attitudes of the Sun Inn group and the Manchester Athenæum. The marginalised role of female poets within the Sun Inn group was reflected in the textual layout of the preface to *The Festive Wreath*. This provides an insight into what McKenzie terms the 'social processes of transmission' of the text: the structural and visual format of the anthologies are underpinned by the gendered values and projects of the society from which they came.³² Male and female contributors are likewise segregated across the pages reproduced in the report from the *Manchester Guardian* on the 30 March 1842 which sees 'Upwards of forty' attendees listed, with the male contributors being noted in what appears as a priority on page iv.³³ The final sentence of this paragraph on the following page then lists all female supporters and poetic contributors together: 'During the evening, communications were also read from Miss Isabella Varley, Mrs. Caulton, Mrs E. S. Craven Green (of Leeds), and Miss Eliza Battye'.³⁴ The female poetic voice is not

²⁸ Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831-1851* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1995), p. 147.

²⁹ 'Provincial Intelligence', *Manchester Guardian* (12 January 1842), p. 2.

³⁰ Debbie Bark, 'Manchester and Early Victorian Literary Culture', p. 412.

³¹ Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth-Century British Working-Class Literature* (London: Barnes and Noble, 1974), p. 160.

³² McKenzie, p. 13.

³³ *The Festive Wreath*, p. iv.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. v.

entirely stifled, yet it is nonetheless reduced, as the two lines dedicated to female contributors out of the twenty-six line paragraph, or indeed out of the total of forty-eight lines given to the 'Poetic Festival' section of the preface, visually and textually segregates and reduces the contribution of women to the anthology.

A Manchester poet of the period who offers an insight into the work of female poets in relation to these literary societies and the material texts relating to them is Ann Hawkshaw. Hawkshaw was a name of relative poetic reputation in the period, having two volumes of poetry published in the 1840s, poems reprinted in the Manchester Press and her poem 'Life's Dull Reality' published in the *Athenæum Souvenir*. Although Hawkshaw does not feature in *The Festive Wreath*, Debbie Bark notes that her 1842 collection *'Dionysius the Areopagite', with other poems* opens with 'Introductory Stanzas', which is dated 25 March 1842, the day after the Sun Inn meeting.³⁵ Moreover, the poem is signed with her 'Manchester' location, reaffirming her own position within the cultural landscape of the city. As references to Sun Inn meetings are made in the *Manchester Guardian* in the months leading up to March 1842, it is likely that Hawkshaw would have been aware of the meeting and the literary project of the group.³⁶ It therefore seems probable that Hawkshaw's dating of the 'Introductory Stanzas' is an acknowledgement both of the actions of the group, and of her isolation from it as a female poet.³⁷ Rather than contribute to an anthology that represents a poetic project from which she is physically excluded, her 'Introductory Stanzas' can be seen as an implicit contribution. Whilst many of her poems in the *Dionysius* collection are lengthy (the title poem 'Dionysius the Areopagite', for instance, covers two thousand five hundred lines across fifty-eight pages), the poem dated 25 March 1842 is made up of six stanzas of six lines, a format in keeping with *The Festive Wreath* anthology. The dating of Hawkshaw's poem speaks to the publicity of the Sun Inn group in the local press and as a result Hawkshaw becomes caught up in Manchester's poetry-producing and -publicising network. The dating of 'Introductory Stanzas' also suggests that reports

³⁵Debbie Bark (ed.), *The Collected Works of Ann Hawkshaw* (London: Anthem Press, 2015), p. xxi.

³⁶ The 'Local & Provincial Intelligence' section of the 12 January 1842 issue of the *Manchester Guardian* (p. 2) is an example of this publicity, in a report on the 'friendly meeting of poets and friends of poetry' at the Sun Inn.

³⁷ Ann Hawkshaw, *'Dionysius the Areopagite', with other poems* (London: Jackson and Walford, Manchester: Simms and Dinham, 1842), pp. iii-iv.

of poetry-producing groups and events in the city in newspapers such as the *Manchester Guardian* were a key part of ensuring a public awareness of the poetic identity and activities of the city.

The work of Manchester's women writers in relation to the city's anthology-producing poetic communities of the 1840s merits further research. The recent recovery of Ann Hawkshaw's work stands as a valuable example of individual poetic activity from a woman writing in the city that was both contained within and positioned on the margins of Manchester's poetic renaissance in the early 1840s. The promotion of Hawkshaw's poetry in the local Manchester press offers a useful case study to open out questions around the negotiation of an industrial and literary identity in Manchester in the 1840s.

The North of England Magazine

Andrew Hobbs' study of the relationship between local press and poetry publishing suggests that 'there were five million poems published in the English provincial press during the nineteenth century', with around 70% of the publications he sampled including poetry.³⁸ This implies that publishing and poetry, especially in a regional context, are significantly interconnected. Yet the exclusion of poetry from the *Wellesley Index* database – because, according to editor Walter Houghton, it would 'have added an enormous number of worthless items' – has resulted in regional poets and poetry being doubly marginalised: firstly in the database and, consequently, Victorian studies more generally.³⁹ The ways in which the Manchester press engaged with poetry, in terms of the responses to, and apparent cooperation with, the projects of the Manchester Athenæum and the Sun Inn group in contemporary newspaper reports, as well as attitudes towards local poetry in periodicals such as *The North of England Magazine*, allows poetic considerations to be repositioned as key to Victorian cultural and literary studies, as well as enriching an understanding of the transmission of poetry in 1840s Manchester.

³⁸ Andrew Hobbs, 'Five Million Poems, or the Local Press as Poetry Publisher, 1800-1900', *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 45, 4 (2012), 488-492 (p. 488).

³⁹ Walter E. Houghton et al., eds., *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900*, 2 vols (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), II, p. xvi.

Published in December 1842, in between the publication of *The Festive Wreath* and the *Athenæum Souvenir*, volume II number XI of *The North of England Magazine* provides particular insight into the ways in which poetry was publicised to a reading community in 1840s Manchester. *The North of England Magazine* was a short-lived periodical, running between February 1842 and September 1843, with contemporary reviews suggesting that the 'avowed object' of the publication was 'the elevation of provincial literature'.⁴⁰ The editors' 'Concluding Address' in the final issue suggested that 'a time would come when the word "London" on the title-page would not be essential to successful publication' but, as the economic failure of the periodical suggests, 'it has not yet arrived'.⁴¹ The treatment of poetry in *The North of England Magazine* during its brief existence reflects such an attitude and ultimately resonates with the approach to poetry seen in the newspaper publicity given to the Manchester Athenæum and Sun Inn group. When reflecting on the publication of *The Festive Wreath*, Weir Hunter equates the talent of those involved in the anthology with 'those who slumber [...] in Westminster Abbey', as Manchester's poetry is positioned alongside London equivalents as well as the implied London-centric literary canon.⁴² The city's poetry was caught between the assertion of self-identity and a struggle to define itself against London. Hence, whilst *The North of England Magazine* editors came to claim in their 'Concluding Address' that they could not overcome the publishing force of London, their attempts to engage with and promote Manchester's literary talents provide a valuable insight into the cultural project of the city's poetry in relation to its industrial reputation as opposed to the publishing force of the capital.

Manchester literary culture is a prominent feature of the 'Literary Notices' section in the December 1842 issue of the publication. A review of Ann Hawkshaw's *'Dionysius the Areopagite', with other poems* is the lead review of the section, and it is significant that Hawkshaw's work is the only reviewed text that is listed with a Manchester publisher, Simms and Dinham. Hawkshaw is also claimed as a representative of Manchester in the review, being described as 'an honour to our good old Town', a comment that seems to reaffirm her links with Manchester and the city's literary and

⁴⁰ Joseph Weir Hunter, 'The Clubs of Old Manchester', p. 28.

⁴¹ 'Concluding Address', *The North of England Magazine, and Bradshaw's Journal*, 3, 10 (September 1843), p. 283.

⁴² Weir Hunter, p. 27.

publishing activity.⁴³ Whilst the work itself is praised, there is a clear sense that it is the geographical identity of the text that necessitates the primary focus placed upon it. Alongside the review of *'Dionysius the Areopagite', with other poems*, the surrounding articles in the 'Literary Notices' section reflect the difficulty of balancing a literary and industrial Manchester identity. The preceding piece provides a report on an event held by the Liverpool Mechanics' Institution, where a number of new technical and industrial innovations were displayed, and the enthusiasm of the review in declaring that 'We most heartily rejoice this triumph' reaffirms the centrality of such activity and industrialism to the identity and success of the region.⁴⁴ The review of Hawkshaw as the first item in the following section, and, indeed, on the same page of the publication, connects industrial identity with the literary pride espoused for the Manchester poet. 'Literary Notices' is followed by the closing section of the issue titled 'The Manchester Market', where the city is assessed in industrial and economic terms, with reports on the production and sale prices of various Manchester products. The literary section of the publication is significant in its attempt to affirm a cultural and literary character to Manchester, yet ultimately, in this publication, industry dominates. The review of Hawkshaw's work is itself aware of the spatial limits of the 'Literary Notices', acknowledging that 'It was our wish to notice this unpretending work at more length, but time and space are our masters'.⁴⁵ The surrounding industrial and market sections compress the space allotted to literature and the self-aware nature of the constraints of space and formatting in the review invokes a sense of limitation in the face of a constricting industrial theme. The cultural project of Manchester therefore had to work within the dominant industrial mode of the city and the treatment of literature throughout the issue shows the complex relationship that the Manchester literary, publishing and periodical community negotiated between an industrial and literary identity.

Conclusion

Various literary-minded communities in Manchester during the 1840s were engaged in the promotion of local poetry. A collective, and coordinated, production of

⁴³ 'Literary Notices', *The North of England Magazine*, 2, 11 (December 1842), p. 122.

⁴⁴ 'Liverpool Mechanics' Institution', *The North of England Magazine*, p. 121.

⁴⁵ 'Literary Notices', *The North of England Magazine*, p.1 22.

material surrounding poetic projects such as *Athenæum Souvenir* and *The Festive Wreath* anthologies show a network of poetry-promoting and Manchester-promoting groups and institutions that were working in defiance of the reducing national significance of the city in literary terms. Furthermore, activities within and outside of these networks by women poets indicates a productive and engaged broader cultural atmosphere in the city and this is certainly an area that merits further research. The ways in which the Manchester press engaged with poetry, in relation to the Manchester Athenæum and the Sun Inn group, allows poetic considerations to be positioned as key to enriching an understanding of Manchester's cultural identity in the 1840s as it sought to promote and publicise the Cottonopolis as a region of literary significance and identity beyond merely industrial associations. The recent publication of Andrew Hobbs' *A Fleet Street in Every Town* indicates the current research interest in decentralised journalism and writing in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴⁶ Hobbs' study foregrounds the end of Stamp Duty taxation in 1855 as a catalyst for thriving provincial newspaper cultures, yet explorations of local and regional cultural activity in the years leading up to 1855 can connect the vitality of cultural and regionally-minded projects such as those of early-1840s Manchester with the provincial journalism that Hobbs explores in the second half of the century.

In this paper I have used bibliographic approaches (in McKenzie's sense) as a means of contextualising Manchester poetic communities active in the 1840s. However, there remains fruitful work to be done in recovering the lives and work of individual poets whose contributions to poetic anthologies in the city were so vital in the formation of regional and cultural identity.



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⁴⁶ Andrew Hobbs, *A Fleet Street in Every Town: the Provincial Press in England 1855-1900* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018).

Old Age, Regionalism and the 'North-South' Divide in Late Victorian and Edwardian England

TOM HERITAGE

ABSTRACT: In late Victorian and Edwardian England, contemporaries argued that older people (or, those aged sixty years and over) in particular had greater employment opportunities, stronger familial ties and were less reliant on welfare in northern than in southern England. This paper discusses whether opportunities were indeed better for older people living in northern England. Using nineteenth-century census datasets for two English 'southern' and 'northern' counties, it will examine the labour force participation rates of older people, the rates on welfare and the extent of familial support. Overall, prospects were generally greater for older people living in the 'northern' counties. However, their fortunes varied within the counties based on particular districts. Also, women were more disadvantaged in terms of poverty and the labour market than men, irrespective of region. As will be shown, more research is needed into the history of older people through a regional perspective, especially for northern England.

KEYWORDS: Old age, Regionalism, 'North-South' Divide, Poverty, Employment, Family.



INTRODUCTION

THE IDEA OF a 'North-South' divide, often used by today's social commentators to denote the growing prosperity of southern England compared with the economic decline of the north, is rooted in history.¹ The 'North-South' divide is multi-faceted: a concept which has been used to explain the changing development of local government,

¹ I would like to thank Dr Andrew Hinde and Dr David Clifford for their advice, guidance and support towards this article. I also wish to thank the audience at the Southampton Centre for Nineteenth-Century Research Conference on 'Regionalism across the World in the Long-Nineteenth Century' in September 2018 for their comments when an early version of this paper was presented.

farming techniques, literature and industry.² The definition of a 'North-South' divide is also ever-changing: in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, it was northern England that was considered the most prosperous region. The association of the north with industrial towns and the relatively higher wages of miners and textile workers, compared with agricultural workers in the South, resulted in many migrating to the mining and textile districts in order to improve their lives.³ Based on its historical significance, this paper will discuss the 'North-South' divide with reference to older people (those aged sixty years and over) and their varying fortunes in terms of state-funded welfare provision, support from their extended family and employment patterns in late Victorian and Edwardian England. When historians examine older people in the long-nineteenth century, most studies have focused on southern England, especially on the elderly living in poverty (or, to quote nineteenth-century parlance, 'pauperism') under the old welfare system of the New Poor Law.⁴ As a result, we often view older people in history through the prism of the experiences of the poor in southern England. It would be interesting to see how far the situation for older people differed in northern England. However, a historiographical reassessment of old age through the 'North-South' divide in Victorian England is lacking, although there is an awareness of a 'North-South' divide in terms of the proportions generally that lived in poverty.⁵ This article aims to address this lacuna by investigating the 'North-South' divide in late Victorian and Edwardian England in the context of older people. First, the origins of a 'North-

² John England, *In My Life* (Rothersthorpe: Paragon Publishing, 2006), p. 159; Helen M. Jewell, *The North-South Divide: The Origins of Northern Consciousness in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), pp. 1-10.

³ Robert Woods, *The Population of Britain in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 22-3.

⁴ For a study of workhouses in Hampshire, see Andrew Hinde and Fiona Turnbull, 'The Populations of Two Hampshire Workhouses, 1851-1861', *Local Population Studies*, 61 (1998), 38-53. For Kent, see David G. Jackson, 'The Medway Union Workhouse, 1876-1881: A Study based on the Admissions and Discharge Registers and the Census Enumerators' Books', *Local Population Studies*, 75 (2005), 11-32. However, for studies of workhouse populations in northern England, see Lewis Darwen, 'Workhouse Populations of the Preston Union, 1841-61', *Local Population Studies*, 94 (2014), 33-42 and Alistair Ritch, 'English Poor Law Institutional Care for Older People: Identifying the "Aged and Infirm" and the "Sick" in Birmingham Workhouse, 1852-1912', *Social History of Medicine*, 27 (2014), 64-85.

⁵ Steve King, *Poverty and Welfare in England 1700-1850: A Regional Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 141-2.

South' divide, as expressed by contemporaries in the long-nineteenth century, are outlined. Second, a discussion of the dimensions of the 'North-South' divide, especially with regards to old age, is re-examined. Third, questions are proposed that form the objectives of this article, before discussing the use of transcribed population census datasets that allow us to answer our questions. Fourth, data on fifty-five districts in four counties across regions in England are presented on the changing proportions of older people recorded as paupers, the rates of those recorded in employment and the percentages receiving familial support through co-residence with their offspring. In the process, it will be shown that while pauperism was higher in southern districts, familial support and employment patterns were generally more prominent in northern England.

Definitions of the 'North-South' Divide in the Long-Nineteenth Century

Victorian contemporaries held different definitions of the 'North-South' divide. As exemplified by Elizabeth Gaskell in her 1855 novel *North and South*, her perception of the North was of prosperity brought on by the Industrial Revolution, comprised of capitalist manufacturers and their poverty-stricken workers. This was compared with the blissful and communal rural idyll of the South, based on paternalism from the ruler to the ruled.⁶ Politician James Caird went beyond the excesses of industry and its consequences to focus on regional wage differences, arguing in 1852 that agricultural workers in the North received higher wages than in the South. This was because labourers in the North worked in close proximity to districts where the mining and manufacturing industries predominated. Competition between agriculture and industry over the demand for labour meant that the manufacturing industry in particular added 37 per cent to the wages of agricultural labourers.⁷

Old age is indirectly mentioned in a survey of agricultural wages in mid-Victorian England, first written by Arthur Wilson Fox for the *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* in 1903. He argued that northern men 'were not pauperised by the old Poor Law system, nor underfed'.⁸ He further adds that Northerners had the intellectual and economic

⁶ Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South*, ed. by Patricia Ingham (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1995) pp. xii-xxviii.

⁷ James Caird, *English Agriculture in 1850-51* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1852), p. 511-3.

⁸ Arthur Wilson Fox, 'Agricultural Wages in England during the Last Fifty Years', *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 66, 2 (Jun., 1903), 273-359 (p. 318).

capacity to invest in their children's education. In return, they 'endeavour to preserve their parents in old age from the stigma of pauperism'.⁹ Wilson Fox does not explain how the old age of parents was preserved. Instead, he describes the self-reliance of Northerners, using rhetoric that was redolent of the eugenics movement that permeated some sectors of Victorian intellectual enquiry:

Their wages have been sufficient to enable many of them to save money and start on small farms. Scores of farmers in the North, or their fathers before them, have been farm servants. They have been right away through from the beginning of last century a finer race, physically and intellectually, than the Southerner, as every report and book bears testimony, and to-day they are still a splendid race [...] Which is the better race to breed from now, the Northerner, or the Southerner?¹⁰

Social commentator Charles Booth had written in his 1894 publication *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* that a 'North-South' divide in the distribution of poor relief existed in late Victorian England. While 28.6 per cent of those aged sixty-five years and over in eastern England received outdoor relief (or relief in people's own homes), this applied to only 13.4 per cent in northern England.¹¹ He concluded that thrift, or the greater proportion of those saving for their old age, was a reason why northern England was less likely to rely on the Poor Law. Rather vaguely, he also ascribed 'the character of the people' in the North as an explanation for the lower proportions of older people on relief there.¹²

Historiographical Perspectives on Old Age in Northern and Southern England

Historians have also agreed with contemporaries of the Victorian period that the fortunes of older people differed among regional lines. However, most historiographical commentary on this issue has been limited and has focused mainly

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 318-9. See also Richard A. Soloway, *Demography and Degeneration: Eugenics and the Declining Birthrate in Twentieth-Century Britain* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1995), pp. 18-37.

¹¹ Charles Booth, *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1894), p. 344; George Boyer and Timothy P. Schmidle, 'Poverty among the Elderly in Late Victorian England', *The Economic History Review*, 62 (2009), 249-78.

¹² Booth, pp. 24, 425.

on the elderly poor. George Boyer and Timothy P. Schmidle, using Charles Booth's data, have found that the workhouse test, or the proportions on relief inside workhouses, was negatively associated with the rate of old age pauperism in northern districts. As a result, the poor were deterred from applying for outdoor relief due to the prospect that they would have been institutionalized.¹³ This may explain why poor relief was distributed less in northern England than in the South.

The Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (CAMPOP) have also discussed the importance of the New Poor Law in the treatment of elderly people. David Thomson points to the high proportions of older people that received weekly allowances of outdoor relief in the southern county of Bedfordshire.¹⁴ Conversely, familial support for older people was fairly limited; about 40 per cent of older people aged sixty-five years and over in selected southern counties lived with at least one child, a figure that has not been established elsewhere.¹⁵ Through samples of population census data, Marguerite Dupree reveals that familial assistance to older people aged sixty-five years and over was greater in the North than in the South through an examination of the 57-58 per cent of older people throughout mid-Victorian Stoke-on-Trent that co-resided with at least one of their offspring.¹⁶ Coupled with Michael Anderson's seminal study of the family in nineteenth-century Preston, where over two-thirds of older people co-resided in 1851, it is clear that familial support was a defining feature of the welfare of older people in the North.¹⁷ By contrast, reliance on the Poor Law was more prominent in southern districts. Overall, there was a binary divide in welfare provisions, drawn across lines of North and South.¹⁸

¹³ Boyer and Schmidle, pp. 265-6.

¹⁴ David Thomson, 'The Welfare of the Elderly in the Past: A Family or Community Responsibility?', in *Life, Death and the Elderly: Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Margaret Pelling and Richard M. Smith (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 194-221 (pp. 203-5).

¹⁵ David Thomson, 'Welfare and the Historians', in *The World We Have Gained: Essays Presented to Peter Laslett*, ed. by Lloyd Bonfield, Richard M. Smith and Keith Wrightson (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1986), pp. 355-78 (p. 364)

¹⁶ Marguerite W. Dupree, *Family Structure in the Staffordshire Potteries, 1840-1880* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 328.

¹⁷ Michael Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 139.

¹⁸ Dupree, p. 328.

Questions and Source Materials

It remains to be seen how far the 'North-South' divide extends to the labour force participation rate of older people, or those that were recorded as living with their offspring in simple, extended and multiple household arrangements.¹⁹ Most of the scholarship that goes into depth on the social history of older people, such as Nigel Goose's research on Hertfordshire, tends to examine the plight of older people in southern England, with northern England somewhat excluded apart from Dupree and Anderson's research.²⁰ From this, how far is our understanding of the history of older people in the long-nineteenth century governed by our knowledge of southern trends? Using large-scale data sources, can we conduct a quantitative assessment of the 'North-South' divide? Answers to these questions have been limited by the inaccessibility of 'big data' on various nineteenth-century resources. One is the census enumerators' books (CEBs) that survey the entire population of Victorian England and Wales. When it comes to our understanding of older people in the long-nineteenth century, conclusions from the CEBs by Anderson and Dupree have been based on sampling techniques. However, the recently released Integrated Census Microdata datasets (I-CeM) have successfully transcribed the original CEBs into digital formats which enable larger-scale research into the populations of the past. It contains 210 million individual entries and 45 million households disseminated from the original CEBs recorded between 1851 and 1911. As a result, the 100 per cent coverage of older people in an

¹⁹ 'Simple' households consist of a married couple, a married couple with their offspring, or a widowed person with their offspring. 'Extended family' households are identical to the 'simple' family system (which excludes 'simple' households where married couples lived by themselves) but with the addition of one or more relatives. 'Multiple family' households contain two or more family units connected by kinship and by marriage. For more information, see Peter Laslett, 'Introduction', in *Household and Family in Past Time* ed. by Peter Laslett and Richard Wall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 1-90 (pp. 28-30). Additional household arrangements (for example, 'solitary' and 'no conjugal family unit' households) are outlined in Appendix 2.

²⁰ Nigel Goose, 'Workhouse Populations in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Case of Hertfordshire', *Local Population Studies*, 62 (1999), 52-69; Nigel Goose, 'Poverty, Old Age and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England: The Case of Hertfordshire', *Continuity and Change*, 20 (2005), 351-84. For Bedfordshire, see Samantha Williams, *Poverty, Gender and the Life-Cycle under the English Poor Law, 1760-1834* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2013); for south-west England, see Samantha A. Shave, *Pauper Policies: Poor Law Practice in England, 1780-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

occupation or in various household arrangements can be examined across northern and southern England.²¹

While it is possible to survey the elderly population nationally, we examine all the men and women aged sixty years and over in four counties, in order to assess the 'North-South' divide through an appropriate regional context. As a result, this paper selects two 'northern' counties, Cheshire and the Yorkshire West Riding, and compares them with two counties to the south of England, Hertfordshire and Hampshire. They were chosen due to the diverse nature of industry and agriculture that exists within the counties, such as the silk trade located in Stockport, Cheshire, the steel industries in Sheffield, Yorkshire and the coastal areas that make up Birkenhead in Cheshire and Christchurch and Portsmouth in Hampshire.²² Data from the periods of 1891 to 1911 are analysed via fifty-five Superintendent Registration Districts (SRDs), thirty-five of which are in southern England. Appendix 1 provides some contextual information on the economic characteristics of each SRD, as defined by Charles Booth in his analysis of Poor Law Unions in *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (1894).²³ The counties and SRDs selected have a good command of rural and urban SRDs, as well as manufacturing and trading districts, 'half-rural' market towns and residential/coastal characteristics.

The numbers of elderly men and women that form the population of SRDs provide a springboard into analysing the percentages receiving poor relief as recorded in another important nineteenth-century resource. The House of Commons published biannual reports on the numbers of men and women receiving indoor and outdoor relief, which are available in the Parliamentary Papers archive. They only record data from 1 January and 1 July from 1858 to 1912.²⁴ Older people are defined by their

²¹ As outlined in Edward Higgs et al, *Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM) Guide*, 2nd edn (Essex: University of Essex, 2013), pp. 1-3.

²² For more information on Victorian Stockport, see R. Burr-Litchfield, 'The Family and the Mill: Cotton Mill Work, Family Work Patterns and Fertility in Mid-Victorian Stockport', in *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1978), ed. by Anthony S. Wohl, pp. 180-96; on nineteenth-century Sheffield, see Melvyn Jones, *The Making of Sheffield* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 2013), p. 106.

²³ Poor Law Unions and Registration Districts (SRDs) were usually coterminous in the period we are examining.

²⁴ Mary MacKinnon, 'The Use and Misuse of Poor Law Statistics, 1857 to 1912', *Historical Methods*, 21 (1988), 5-19.

subcategorization in the 'non-able-bodied' and 'lunatics' category, as opposed to the adult 'able-bodied' population, the latter generally defined as those aged fifteen to fifty-nine years.²⁵ The numbers that received indoor and outdoor relief on 1 January in a census year can be tallied against the numbers of elderly men and women as recorded usually around three to four months later on census night. For example, in the Southampton Poor Law Union on 1 January 1891, there were 424 men and 750 women recorded as receiving indoor and outdoor relief under the 'non-able-bodied' and 'lunatic' categories. As there were 1,690 men and 2,449 women aged sixty years and over, living in Southampton SRD on census night 5 April 1891, it can therefore be estimated that 25.1 per cent of men aged sixty years and over, and 30.6 per cent of women in the same age range, received poor relief on 1 January 1891.²⁶ This method can be repeated for 1 January 1901 and 1911.

Analysis

A rank order of the percentages of men and women aged sixty years and over estimated to have received indoor and outdoor relief on 1 January 1891 comprises Table 1a. The five highest and five lowest percentages by SRD are presented. For both men and women, the five highest all belong to Hertfordshire and Hampshire SRDs, whereas the four lowest are situated in Cheshire and the Yorkshire West Riding. However, only 8.7 per cent of elderly men and 9.7 per cent of elderly women in Christchurch, Hampshire, were estimated to have received poor relief. Christchurch is interesting in that it was a residential coastal district which, in 1891, commanded one of the highest proportions of elderly men described in the occupational column as 'retired' in the

²⁵ The ratio of specified older paupers to 'non-able-bodied' paupers was constant throughout the mid-Victorian period; Mackinnon concludes that 'not-able-bodied and old-age pauperism can be used as interchangeable terms', p. 9. Evidence from surviving outdoor relief lists that record all recipients with specified ages in the parish of Alton, Hampshire from 1880 to 1881 shows how only ten of the ninety-two paupers receiving outdoor relief and categorized as 'non-able-bodied' were under the age of sixty years. Nobody categorized as 'able-bodied' was aged sixty years and over. Data available at Hampshire Archives and Local Studies, Outdoor Relief Lists for Alton District No. 1, October 1880-March 1881, PL3/2/81, Alton parish. The inclusion of 'lunatics' was a precautionary measure, since there was no clear idea of any age distinction in the definition of 'lunatics', as there was in the 'able-bodied', suggesting that some older people were present in the 'lunatics' category.

²⁶ Parliamentary Papers, 1890-1891, LXVIII.393, *Pauperism (England and Wales). Return (B.) Paupers Relieved on 1st January 1891*, pp. 14-18.

census. Overall, 18.3 per cent of elderly men in Christchurch were enumerated as 'retired', compared with 13.3 per cent in Hampshire.²⁷ Retirement in the nineteenth-century meant something quite different to today's definitions, in that retirement in the census meant somebody that voluntarily exited the workforce through their savings, not always at a fixed age.²⁸ Most of the retired men there were army officials, perhaps originally based in Aldershot Garrison, established in 1854 as a permanent training camp for the British Army.²⁹ Royal Artillery units were stationed in Christchurch.³⁰ For elderly women, Christchurch was home to the highest proportions described as 'living on own means', at 35.8 per cent.³¹ This meant that income was being received outside of employment and of poor relief, perhaps through dowries, savings and charity.³² In fact, the percentages of men in Christchurch described as 'retired', at 18.3 per cent, and the proportions of women that relied on additional means other than poor relief, at 35.8 per cent, eclipse the percentages of men and women receiving poor relief, at 8.7 per cent and 9.7 per cent respectively.

Even when allowing for those that may have received relief outside 1 January 1891, the rates of male relief recipients are still lower than that of the male 'retired', and the rates of female paupers lower than that of women 'living on own means'.³³ This is

²⁷ Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1891.

²⁸ This argument contrasts with Paul Johnson's view that '[at] the beginning of the [twentieth century] to be old and out of work was synonymous with being poor for all but a very small minority of middle- and upper-class people'. See Paul Johnson, 'Parallel Histories of Retirement in Modern Britain,' in *Old Age from Antiquity to Post-Modernity* ed. by Paul Johnson and Pat Thane (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 211-25.

²⁹ Murray Rowlands, *Aldershot in the Great War: The Home of the British Army* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 2015), p. 18.

³⁰ As located in <http://www.historychristchurch.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/royal-artillery-men> (accessed 10 February 2019).

³¹ Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1891.

³² See Eilidh Garrett for changing definitions of those 'living on own means' across the 1891-1921 CEBs: E. Garret, 'The Dawning of a New Era? Women's Work in England and Wales at the Turn of the Twentieth-Century', *Women's Work in Industrial England: Regional and Local Perspectives* ed. by Nigel Goose (Hatfield: Local Population Studies, 2007), pp. 314-62, (p. 362).

³³ The numbers of men and women receiving indoor and outdoor relief on 1 January 1891 were multiplied by 1.12 to provide an estimate of the relief received all year. This means that 9.8 per cent of men and 10.9 per cent of women in Christchurch are estimated to have received poor relief all year. The figure used for multiplying is half of 2.24, used to convert the day-count numbers recorded in the Parliamentary

Table 1a - Rank order of the five highest and lowest estimated percentages of men and women aged sixty years and over on indoor and outdoor relief, four English counties, 1 January 1891

			Male	Male	% M
RANK	SRD	County	Poor	60+	Poor
1	Bishop's Stor.	Herts	303	1047	28.9
2	Southampton	Hants	424	1690	25.1
3	Romsey	Hants	131	530	24.7
4	Hertford	Herts	174	708	24.6
5	Basingstoke	Hants	220	905	24.3
51	Ecclesall Bier.	Yorks	288	3239	8.9
52	Christchurch	Hants	131	1501	8.7
53	Altrincham	Ches	187	2187	8.6
54	Skipton	Yorks	125	1509	8.3
55	Settle	Yorks	45	659	6.8
ENGLAND			11949	73995	16.1

			Female	Female	% F
RANK	SRD	County	Poor	60+	Poor
1	Fordingbridge	Hants	143	358	39.9
2	Bishop's Stor.	Herts	454	1199	37.9
3	Ware	Herts	351	943	37.2
4	Hertford	Herts	303	824	36.8
5	Hemel Hemp.	Herts	270	793	34.0
51	Wirral	Ches	160	1310	12.2
52	Altrincham	Ches	319	2710	11.8
53	Ecclesall Bier.	Yorks	442	4302	10.3
54	Christchurch	Hants	217	2231	9.7
55	Settle	Yorks	42	643	6.5
ENGLAND			19501	89050	21.9

Notes. Includes men and women aged sixty years and over. The 'poor' are based on the 'non-able-bodied' and 'lunatic' populations contained in the parliamentary papers. Numbers in 'England' include all SRDs in 1891 (n = 55).

Sources. Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1891; Parliamentary Papers, 1890-1891, LXVIII.393, *Pauperism (England and Wales). Return (B.) Paupers Relieved on 1st January 1891.*

Papers to estimated year-counts. For more information, see George Boyer, "Work for their prime, the workhouse for their age": Old Age Pauperism in Victorian England', *Social Science History*, 40 (2016), 3-32 (fn. 9, p. 12).

far from the national perspective that pauperism was strongly associated with the elderly population in the late Victorian period.³⁴ It also shows that not all southern SRDs contained high proportions of elderly male and female paupers; their rates clearly reflect what was seen in some northern districts.

There is in fact a neat association in 1891 between the old age dependency ratio (OADR), which is the numbers of persons aged sixty-five years and over per one-hundred people aged fifteen to sixty-four years, and the proportions of those aged sixty years and over receiving indoor and outdoor relief. In the ten SRDs with the lowest OADRs, all based in Yorkshire and Cheshire, bar Christchurch SRD in Hampshire, the pauperism rates of men and women combined ranged from 9.7 per cent to 20.7 per cent. In twelve SRDs with the highest OADRs, mostly concentrated in Hampshire and Hertfordshire, the proportions in pauperism ranged from 15.6 per cent to 33.7 per cent.³⁵ Therefore, the northern counties had relatively few elderly people to support, whereas in districts where older people were relatively numerous, greater proportions of older people received relief. It appears that the Board of Guardians treated the elderly poor more generously than would have been the case if the percentages of elderly people in the district were small.³⁶ Therefore, the willingness by the Board of Guardians to issue poor relief to older people was predicated on local and regional demographic patterns.

Table 1b presents the situation for the elderly male and female poor in 1901. There is a general 'North-South' divide presented as Settle in Yorkshire still contained the lowest proportions of men and women on relief. Despite this, Pontefract nearby housed the highest proportions. Out of fifty-five SRDs, it was the district with the largest increase in the proportions of older people receiving relief between 1891 and 1901. It was also the district with the highest percentage of elderly men that were working in

³⁴ Booth, pp. 419-20, although Booth defines the elderly population as sixty-five years and over, rather than sixty years, which would inflate the percentages of older people recorded as paupers.

³⁵ Data on the old age dependency ratios for 1891 is produced by the 'Atlas of Victorian Fertility Decline Project', led by Alice M. Reid, with funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ES/L015463/1), using an enhanced version of data from Kevin Schürer and Edward Higgs, Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM), 1851-1911 [data collection], UK Data Archive, Colchester, Essex (2014). Available on the Populations Past website in online map format at https://www.populationspast.org/eld_work_a/1891/#6/53.035/-7.124 [Accessed 31 January 2019].

³⁶ Thomson, 'The Welfare of the Elderly', pp. 203-4.

the mining industry in 1901, at around 17 per cent.³⁷ The situation in Pontefract may reflect what went occurred in South Wales, as argued by Ben Curtis and Steven Thompson. They comment that contemporaries described the strenuous conditions of mining as causing a premature ageing of the working population. Miners left face-work and were relegated to a role at the pit head.³⁸ This downward occupational mobility may have resulted in a reduction in wages, hence dependence on poor relief. The occupation-specific mortality of elderly men would have left many of their spouses widowed and reliant on little other than familial support and the Poor Law, hence the 39.9 per cent of elderly women on relief.³⁹

By 1911, we find that the percentages of elderly men and women on indoor and outdoor relief had fallen dramatically to 10 per cent for men and 12.7 per cent for women (Table 1c). We can see that the 'North-South' divide was retained even after the introduction of an influential social policy. The Old Age Pension Act of 1908 was a significant factor in the reduction of old age pauperism. Older men and women received a higher allowance from the old age pension than from outdoor relief: the maximum amount of pension for single applicants being five shillings weekly.⁴⁰ This caused a reduction in the disparity of the percentages receiving poor relief between the four counties. For example, Kingsclere in Hampshire joins nearby Christchurch by ranking number fifty-one in the percentages of elderly women that received poor relief. In general, the range in the rates of pauperism across the four counties converged by 1911. For elderly men in 1891, the lowest rate of 12.8 per cent in Cheshire and the highest rate of 22.3 per cent in Hertfordshire were recorded as paupers; in 1911, only 9.1 per cent in Cheshire and 12.3 per cent in Hertfordshire belonged to that category. For women in 1891, the Yorkshire West Riding had the lowest proportion of elderly paupers, at 17.3 per cent, compared with 29.2 per cent in Hertfordshire. By 1911, 10.5 per cent of the Yorkshire West Riding's elderly women were paupers, alongside the 15.6 per cent

³⁷ Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1901.

³⁸ Ben Curtis and Steven Thompson "This is the Country of Premature Old Men": Ageing and Aged Miners in the South Wales Coalfield, c. 1880-1947', *Cultural and Social History*, 12 (2017), 587-606.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 596.

⁴⁰ Pat Thane, *Old Age in English History: Past Experiences, Present Issues* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 226-7; Chris Gilleard, *Old Age in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: Ageing under the Union* (London: Springer Nature, 2017), pp. 70-1.

Table 1b - Rank order of the five highest and lowest estimated percentages of men and women aged sixty years and over on indoor and outdoor relief, four English counties, 1 January 1901

			Male	Male	% M
RANK	SRD	County	Poor	60+	Poor
1	Pontefract	Yorks	552	1827	30.2
2	Fareham	Hants	247	856	28.9
3	Royston	Herts	358	1327	27.0
4	Southampton	Hants	494	2038	24.2
5	Stockbridge	Hants	80	342	23.4
51	Ecclesall Bier.	Yorks	426	4162	10.2
52	Keighley	Yorks	232	2318	10.0
53	Wetherby	Yorks	64	708	9.0
54	Altrincham	Ches	203	2505	8.1
55	Settle	Yorks	41	579	7.1
ENGLAND			13287	83407	15.9
			Female	Female	% F
RANK	SRD	County	Poor	60+	Poor
1	Pontefract	Yorks	776	1946	39.9
2	Hatfield	Herts	151	399	37.8
3	New Forest	Hants	253	697	36.3
4	Berkhamsted	Herts	288	820	35.1
5	Fareham	Hants	323	979	33.0
51	Wirral	Ches	190	1589	12.0
52	Ecclesall Bier.	Yorks	668	5637	11.9
53	Altrincham	Ches	359	3256	11.0
54	Droxford	Hants	67	660	10.2
55	Settle	Yorks	55	647	8.5
ENGLAND			22117	103823	21.3

Notes: Includes men and women aged sixty years and over. The 'poor' are based on the 'non-able-bodied' and 'lunatic' populations contained in the parliamentary papers. Numbers in 'England' include all SRDs in 1901 (n = 55).

Sources: Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1901; Parliamentary Papers, 1901, LXIV.231, *Pauperism (England and Wales). Half-yearly Statements.*

Table 1c - Rank order of the five highest and lowest estimated percentages of men and women aged sixty years and over on indoor and outdoor relief, four English counties, 1 January 1911

			Male	Male	% M
RANK	SRD	County	Poor	60+	Poor
1	Southampton	Hants	951	4269	22.3
2	Stockbridge	Hants	64	341	18.8
3	Ware	Herts	181	1012	17.9
4	Andover	Hants	142	864	16.4
5	Pontefract	Yorks	394	2435	16.2
51	Skipton	Yorks	104	1905	5.5
52	Keighley	Yorks	143	2704	5.3
53	Christchurch	Hants	175	3864	4.5
54	Altrincham	Ches	119	3163	3.8
55	Settle	Yorks	19	681	2.8
ENGLAND			10606	105968	10.0

			Female	Female	% F
RANK	SRD	County	Poor	60+	Poor
1	Southampton	Hants	1473	5583	26.4
2	Ware	Herts	334	1301	25.7
3	Stockbridge	Hants	99	388	25.5
4	Hemel Hemp.	Herts	233	1051	22.2
5	Royston	Herts	349	1594	21.9
51	Kingsclere	Hants	33	539	6.1
52	Skipton	Yorks	113	2183	5.2
53	Settle	Yorks	33	728	4.5
54	Christchurch	Hants	276	6318	4.4
55	Altrincham	Ches	152	4060	3.7
ENGLAND			16827	132195	12.7

Notes: Includes men and women aged sixty years and over. The 'poor' are based on the 'non-able-bodied' populations contained in the parliamentary papers. Data on 'lunatics' are not available for 1911. Numbers in 'England' include all SRDs in 1911 (n = 55).

Sources: Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1911; Parliamentary Papers, 1911, LXIX.627, *Pauperism (England and Wales). (Half-yearly Statements). Return (in part) to an order of the Honourable the House of Commons, dated 17th May 1911; - for copy of statement of the number of paupers relieved on the 1st day of January 1911, and similar statement for the 1st day of July 1911 (in continuation of Parliamentary Paper, no 242 of session 1910).*

Hertfordshire.⁴¹ This indicates that the 'North-South' divide in the proportions of older people on poor relief was slowly collapsing by 1911, although old age pauperism was still more prominent in southern districts.

It is interesting how the same SRDs appear in the five highest and the five lowest rates of old age pauperism in 1891, 1901 and 1911. For example, Southampton SRD is in the top five throughout Tables 1a-c, while Settle and Altrincham (the latter renamed as Bucklow from 1901) consistently had very low pauperism rates. This may be based on the occupational composition of working men aged fifteen to sixty-four years. The Populations Past website, which also uses I-CeM data, has recorded the proportions of working men in eight social class variables as defined by the Registrar General in the 1911 census reports.⁴² The proportions were examined for all the 'five highest' and 'five lowest' pauperism districts for the periods in which they appear for both elderly men and women in Tables 1a-c. Districts that had the five lowest pauperism rates out of the fifty-five SRDs were more likely to contain working men in 'professional', 'non-manual skilled', 'manual skilled' and 'textiles' work. Contrastingly, districts having the five highest pauperism rates contained a higher proportion of working men in 'manual semi-skilled' and 'manual unskilled' work, as well as working as 'miners' and as 'agricultural labourers.' Although not all 'high pauperism' SRDs contained a high proportion of agricultural labourers, Southampton SRD commanded the second highest rates of 'manual unskilled' workers out of all the SRDs in 1891, and the highest rates for 1901 and 1911. A lower proportion of agricultural labourers, while integral to the economy in the 'five highest' pauperism districts, were found in the 'five lowest' pauperism SRDs. This was also the case for SRDs that Charles Booth considered agricultural in character, such

⁴¹ The poor relief data for 1 January 1891 contain a breakdown of 'lunatics' receiving relief by gender, but this is lacking in the data recorded in the Parliamentary Papers for 1 January 1911, suggesting that the decline in elderly pauperism rates is partially down to the lack of gender-specific data on 'lunatics' in 1911. As a result, the 'lunatic' categories were excluded in 1891 in order to enable a more reliable comparison of the 1891 data with 1911. A convergence was still identified in the changing rates of elderly pauperism for both men and women in the counties specified between 1891 and 1911.

⁴² A detailed guide to the eight social class variables originally defined by the Registrar General in 1911 and the results of the proportions of working men recorded in these variables by SRD is located at <<https://www.populationspast.org/sc1/1861/#7/53.035/-2.895>> [Accessed 8 February 2019]. Data on the eight social class variables for 1891-1911 is produced by the 'Atlas of Victorian Fertility Decline Project'.

as Skipton and Settle SRDs.⁴³ It is interesting that in 1891, a greater proportion of male workers aged sixty years and over in Skipton and Settle were farmers than agricultural labourers, which is reflected in other Yorkshire and Cheshire districts not present in Tables 1a-c.⁴⁴ This may reflect regional agricultural patterns in that northern districts were mainly characterized by smallholdings, run by farmers without relying on the rural 'proletariat' more commonly seen in southern England.⁴⁵ In other words, the high degree of pauperism in the southern English districts is partly explained by the higher presence of agricultural labourers and other lower-skilled workers in southern SRDs, compared with the relatively higher-skilled workers in the North. The regional variations in the agrarian economy is one important factor as to why there was a 'North-South' divide in old age pauperism.

The labour force participation rate of elderly men and women can be assessed through the raw CEB data for the first time. Table 2 presents the results for the four English counties of our sample in 1891 and 1911. The rates for men are very high, as they include those that were recorded in an occupation but described as retired and also account for those resident in institutions. However, for men in both periods, there is evidence of a 'North-South' divide in favour of the northern counties. In both periods, the Yorkshire West Riding had the highest proportion of male labour force rates. The participation of older men in the mining industry of Pontefract SRD and the steel-based metal industries of Ecclesall Bierlow and Sheffield SRDs also account for the relatively high labour force high rate. Most elderly male workers in the steel trade participated in file cutting and as spring-knife, or penknife, cutlers.⁴⁶

In terms of women, there is no evidence of a 'North-South' divide in labour force rates, with Cheshire and Hertfordshire containing the highest labour force rates. Female workers in Cheshire benefitted from the silk weaving textile industry and domestic service.⁴⁷ Hertfordshire in general had relatively high female labour force rates compared with the rest of England, in that women of all ages participated in the proto-

⁴³ See Appendix 1 for a guide to Charles Booth's economic classifications for Skipton and Settle SRDs.

⁴⁴ Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1891.

⁴⁵ See Leigh Shaw-Taylor, 'The Rise of Agrarian Capitalism and the Decline of Family Farming in England', *Economic History Review*, 65 (2012), 26-60.

⁴⁶ Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1891.

⁴⁷ Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1891.

Table 2 - Labour force participation rate of men and women aged sixty years and over, four English counties, 1891 and 1911

MEN %	1891			1911		
COUNTY	Lab	60+	% Lab	Lab	60+	% Lab
Cheshire	19983	21966	91.0	26127	29779	87.7
Hampshire	20886	24998	83.6	29261	36876	79.3
Hertfordshire	8022	9167	87.5	10580	12324	85.8
Yorkshire	16343	17864	91.5	24151	26989	89.5
ENGLAND	65234	73995	88.2	90119	105968	85.0

WOMEN %	1891			1911		
COUNTY	Lab	60+	% Lab	Lab	60+	% Lab
Cheshire	6016	26181	23.0	7242	37840	19.1
Hampshire	6112	30875	19.8	7486	46861	16.0
Hertfordshire	2554	10983	23.3	2627	15799	16.6
Yorkshire	3698	21011	17.6	4954	31695	15.6
ENGLAND	18380	89050	20.6	22309	132195	16.9

Notes: Includes men and women retired, 'formerly' in an occupation and recorded in institutions such as workhouses and asylums. Numbers in 'England' include the combined rate of all four counties in 1891 and 1911.

Sources: Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1891 and 1911.

industrial cottage trade of straw plait manufacturing and hat making. This industry declined by 1911 owing to foreign imports, explaining the decrease in Hertfordshire's labour rates between 1891 and 1911.⁴⁸ Likewise, the silk trade also collapsed in Cheshire owing to imports from France.⁴⁹ Sometimes the 'North-South' divide in the fortunes of older people fail to acknowledge the situation of women, particularly as their dependence on the Poor Law was higher than for men across all English counties. As

⁴⁸ Nigel Goose, 'The Straw Plait and Hat Trades in Nineteenth-Century Hertfordshire', *Women's Work in Industrial England: Regional and Local Perspectives* ed. by Nigel Goose (Hatfield: Local Population Studies, 2007), pp. 97-137.

⁴⁹ François Crouzet, *The Victorian Economy*, trans. by Anthony Forster (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1982), pp. 220-1.

the data indicate, dependence on poor relief was partly down to the limited proportions of elderly women recorded as having an occupation.

There were also regional variations in the proportion of older people by household structure. Based on a Household Structure Classification devised by CAMPOP in the 1970s, and subsequently applied into twenty-two separate codes by I-CeM (and outlined in Appendix 2), we can combine the numbers of older people who belonged to the majority of the codes to construct the percentage of those who lived with at least one of their offspring.⁵⁰ Inhabitants of a household where their offspring were present belong to codes 320-599. Table 3 confirms the argument by Marguerite Dupree that familial support was a more important resource for the elderly in northern than in southern England.⁵¹ Keighley appears along with Nantwich and Northwich in Cheshire as three of the districts with the highest proportions of co-residence between elderly women and their offspring. For women, there was a relatively higher mean age at first marriage in Keighley SRD than in the rest of England, since there was a high proportion of women in employment, mainly in the worsted trades.⁵² Data for 1891 show that there was a higher female mean age at marriage in Keighley SRD's three sub-districts than in England and Wales overall.⁵³ It was not only the textile towns where women may also have not left home and rushed into marriage. According to Joseph Day, girls in southern districts were also expected to leave home to become domestic servants. However daughters in the manufacturing districts of England were more likely to be employed in the textile mills while still living with and looking after their parents in their old age.⁵⁴ Therefore, there was no need for female textile workers to prioritize

⁵⁰ Higgs et al., p. 235.

⁵¹ Dupree, p. 328.

⁵² Eilidh Garrett, 'Before Their Time: Employment and Family Formation in a Northern Textile Town, Keighley, 1851-81' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sheffield, 1986), p. 122.

⁵³ The female mean age at marriage in Keighley SRD's three sub-districts in 1891 was 27.9 years in Bingley, 27.3 years in Haworth and 26.5 years in Keighley, compared with between 25.5 years and 26.0 years in England and Wales. Data produced by the 'Atlas of Victorian Fertility Decline Project,' available in online map format at https://www.populationspast.org/f_smam/1861/#6/53.035/-7.124 [Accessed 29 January 2019].

⁵⁴ Joseph Day, 'Leaving Home in 19th Century England and Wales: A Spatial Analysis', *Demographic Research*, 39 (2018), 95-135, (p. 112).

Table 3 - Rank order of the five highest and lowest percentages of men and women aged sixty years and over living with at least one of their offspring, four English counties, 1891

			Male	Male	% Male
RANK	SRD	County	w/off.	60+	w/off.
1	Birkenhead	Ches	1802	2943	61.2
2	Keighley	Yorks	1262	2066	61.1
3	Ecclesall Bier.	Yorks	1944	3239	60.0
4	Northwich	Ches	970	1626	59.7
5	Altrincham	Ches	1302	2187	59.5
51	Christchurch	Hants	741	1501	49.4
52	Kingsclere	Hants	244	498	48.5
53	Stockbridge	Hants	185	384	48.2
54	Watford	Herts	598	1354	44.2
55	Whitchurch	Hants	118	273	43.2
ENGLAND			40369	73995	54.6
			Female	Female	% Fem.
RANK	SRD	County	w/off.	60+	w/off.
1	Keighley	Yorks	1501	2360	63.6
2	Northwich	Ches	974	1647	59.1
3	Nantwich	Ches	1309	2230	58.7
4	Birkenhead	Ches	2365	4064	58.2
5	Stockport	Ches	2746	4739	57.9
51	Kingsclere	Hants	221	505	43.8
52	Fordingbridge	Hants	156	358	43.6
53	Whitchurch	Hants	125	293	42.7
54	Christchurch	Hants	921	2231	41.3
55	Watford	Herts	724	1868	38.8
ENGLAND			45873	89050	51.5

Notes: Includes men and women aged sixty years and over. Based on those in codes 320-599 of the I-CeM Household Classification system, comprising those in simple households with their offspring, extended households and multiple households. Numbers in 'England' include all SRDs in 1891 (n = 55).

Source: Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1891.

marriage from an early age, resulting in retention in the parental household as their parents aged.

Birkenhead, Keighley and Northwich SRDs are also found in the five highest rates of co-residence between elderly men and their offspring. Conversely, for both men and women, Kingsclere, Christchurch, Whitchurch and Watford SRDs have four of the five lowest co-residence rates. Elderly men in SRDs with low co-residence rates were more likely to reside as lodgers, particularly in Christchurch and Watford SRDs, which may have been havens for retirement in the suburbs. Also, elderly men in low co-residence SRDs were more likely to live with their spouses alone than in households with spouses and their offspring combined.⁵⁵ This is especially the case in the predominantly rural Kingsclere and Whitchurch SRDs. It may reflect the migration of young adult offspring out of rural areas for better prospects in towns and cities. Furthermore, the exit of adult offspring from the parental household had occurred at a crucial stage when individuals approached their old age.⁵⁶ Overall, while older people in southern England were more likely to rely on the Poor Law, those in northern England were more likely to maintain contact with their offspring. From this, Arthur Wilson Fox is generally right to argue that northern populations 'preserved their parents' old age from the stigma of pauperism'.⁵⁷

Conclusions

This article has shown how the use of 'big data' to reassess evidence derived from the sampling techniques of previous research has managed to uncover regional variations in the prospects of older people towards the end of the long-nineteenth century. Between late Victorian and Edwardian England, older people in southern England were more likely to rely on poor relief, whereas a greater proportion of those in northern England co-resided with their offspring. Also, the labour force rates of elderly men were greater in the northern counties, although no 'North-South' divide was found for elderly women. It seems that proposing a 'North-South' divide based on the behaviour and prospects of people is too rudimentary an idea, in the past or in the present day. Elderly women were more disadvantaged than men in terms of their limited role in the labour market, which, in turn, led to extreme poverty. The 'North-

⁵⁵ Integrated Census Microdata datasets, 1891.

⁵⁶ Peter Laslett, 'Family, Kinship and Collectivity as Systems of Support in Pre-Industrial Europe: A Consideration of the "Nuclear-Hardship" Hypothesis', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988), 153-75, (p. 160).

⁵⁷ Wilson Fox, p. 318.

South' divide was perceived by the Victorians through a male bias. Also, there were wide variations in the proportions on poor relief within the counties. For example, unlike many southern SRDs, Christchurch in Hampshire contained a low proportion of men and women on poor relief. In this district, there was a substantial rate of elderly men and women that voluntarily retired from the workforce and relied on additional means of income other than poor relief. Also, the mining district of Pontefract had a high pauperism rate which differed widely from nearby agricultural Settle in Yorkshire.

Although there are exceptions to the idea that there was a 'North-South' divide in late Victorian and Edwardian England, it is generally true that employment patterns, poor relief entitlement and familial support differed through a regional context. It was not the case that the rate of pauperism was lower in northern SRDs simply because they were northern. Variations in the proportions of working men recorded by social class is one important factor, particularly in the higher proportions in southern districts that were recorded as agricultural labourers, and the greater rates of higher-skilled farmers in northern districts. Also, the higher percentages of older people recorded as paupers in southern districts are explained by their greater presence in proportion to the population, compared with the lower ratios of people aged sixty-five years and over per one-hundred aged fifteen to sixty-four years in the North. Despite our initial findings, further investigation is required as to the conclusion that older people in northern England tended to have different outcomes to those in the South. Further data is required for northern counties, in order to develop a more nuanced understanding of the 'regionalism' of old age. This will then go beyond a reliance on national-based perceptions of life in old age, where ideas about 'the North' and 'the South' are reduced to crude generalisations.

Overall, it is clear that we need a local and regional history of old age, in the vein of recent studies about women's work and child labour.⁵⁸ The 'regionalism' of old age is severely limited and such assessments on why poverty among older people was low in northern counties allows us to see old age in a different way. This will allow us to refine the concept of old age in English history.



⁵⁸ *Women's Work in Industrial England*, ed. by Goose; *Childhood and Child Labour in Industrial England: Diversity and Agency*, ed. by Nigel Goose and Katrina Honeyman (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

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Appendix 1

Profile of Fifty-five SRDs Examined in this Article, their Representative Counties and their Economic Classifications Defined by Charles Booth.

SRD	County	Charles Booth Economic Classification Group of Poor Law Unions (1894)
Altrincham	Cheshire	Half Rural. Residential
Birkenhead	Cheshire	Provincial Urban. Manufacture and Trade
Chester	Cheshire	Half Rural. Residential
Congleton	Cheshire	Half Rural. Manufacture
Macclesfield	Cheshire	Half Rural. Manufacture
Nantwich	Cheshire	Half Rural. Manufacture
Northwich	Cheshire	Half Rural. Manufacture
Runcorn	Cheshire	Half Rural. Shipping
Stockport	Cheshire	Mostly Urban or Semi-Urban. Manufacture
Wirral	Cheshire	Half Rural. Residential
Alresford	Hampshire	Rural and Mostly Rural. Agriculture/Town (1)
Alton	Hampshire	Half Rural. Agriculture and Town
Alverstoke	Hampshire	Provincial Urban. Residential
Andover	Hampshire	Rural and Mostly Rural. Agriculture/Town (2)
Basingstoke	Hampshire	Half Rural. Manufacture
Catherington	Hampshire	Rural or Mostly Rural. Agriculture (2)
Christchurch	Hampshire	Mostly Urban or Semi-Urban. Residential
Droxford	Hampshire	Rural or Mostly Rural. Agriculture (2)
Fareham	Hampshire	Half Rural. Shipping
Fordingbridge	Hampshire	Rural or Mostly Rural. Agriculture (1)
Hartley Witney	Hampshire	Half Rural. Residential
Havant	Hampshire	Half Rural. Shipping
Isle of Wight	Hampshire	Mostly Urban or Semi-Urban. Residential
Kingsclere	Hampshire	Rural or Mostly Rural. Agriculture (1)
Lymington	Hampshire	Half Rural. Shipping

SRD	County	Charles Booth Economic Classification Group of Poor Law Unions (1894)
New Forest	Hampshire	Rural or Mostly Rural. Agriculture (1)
Petersfield	Hampshire	Rural and Mostly Rural. Agriculture and Town
Portsea Island	Hampshire	Provincial Urban. Residential
Ringwood	Hampshire	Rural or Mostly Rural. Agriculture (1)
Romsey	Hampshire	Rural and Mostly Rural. Shipping
South Stoneham	Hampshire	Mostly Urban or Semi-Urban. Residential
Southampton	Hampshire	Provincial Urban. Residential
Stockbridge	Hampshire	Rural or Mostly Rural. Agriculture (1)
Whitchurch	Hampshire	Rural and Mostly Rural. Manufacture
Winchester	Hampshire	Half Rural. Residential
Berkhampstead	Hertfordshire	Half Rural. Agriculture and Town
Bishop's Stortford	Hertfordshire	Half Rural. Agriculture and Town
Hatfield	Hertfordshire	Rural or Mostly Rural. Agriculture (2)
Hemel Hemp.	Hertfordshire	Half Rural. Manufacture
Hertford	Hertfordshire	Half Rural. Agriculture and Town
Hitchin	Hertfordshire	Half Rural. Agriculture and Town
Royston	Hertfordshire	Rural and Mostly Rural. Agriculture/Town (2)
St Albans	Hertfordshire	Half Rural. Manufacture
Ware	Hertfordshire	Half Rural. Agriculture and Town
Watford	Hertfordshire	Mostly Urban or Semi-Urban. Manufacture
Doncaster	Yorkshire	Half Rural. Mining
Ecclesall Bierlow	Yorkshire	Mostly Urban or Semi-Urban. Residential
Goole	Yorkshire	Half Rural. Shipping
Keighley	Yorkshire	Mostly Urban or Semi-Urban. Manufacture
Pontefract	Yorkshire	Mostly Urban or Semi-Urban. Mining
Ripon	Yorkshire	Half Rural. Agriculture and Town
Settle	Yorkshire	Rural or Mostly Rural. Agriculture (1)

SRD	County	Charles Booth Economic Classification Group of Poor Law Unions (1894)
Sheffield	Yorkshire	Provincial Urban. Manufacture and Trade
Skipton	Yorkshire	Half Rural. Manufacture
Wetherby	Yorkshire	Half Rural. Residential

Note: Altrincham SRD was later renamed Bucklow SRD in 1901, although, when discussing 1901 and 1911, 'Altrincham' is retained for reasons of continuity.

Source: Charles Booth, *The Aged Poor in England and Wales* (London, 1894), pp. 56-104.

Appendix 2

I-CeM Household Structure Classification System

Code	Household Type
0	Those in 'private' households In households unrelated to the head (e.g. servants, lodgers, boarders, visitors)
110	Solitary, widowed
120	Solitary, single
210	No conjugal family unit, with siblings
220	No conjugal family unit, other relatives
310	Simple, married alone
320	Simple, married with offspring
330	Simple, widowers with offspring
340	Simple, widows with offspring
350	Simple, others with offspring
410	Extended, upwards
420	Extended, downwards
430	Extended, laterally
440	Extended, combinations of above
510	Multiple, secondary disposed upwards
520	Multiple, secondary disposed downwards
530	Multiple, on one level
540	Multiple, frèrèche
550	Multiple, combinations of above
599	Unclassifiable multiple households
699	Other unclassifiable households
999	Institutional Resident

Notes: Inhabitants of a household where their offspring are present are grouped in codes that are underlined in the column marked 'Code'.

Source: Edward Higgs and others, *Integrated Census Microdata (I-CeM) Guide*, 2nd edn (University of Essex, 2013), p. 235.

A Dialogic Reverberation between Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (1878) and Shen Congwen's *Long River* (1938-45)

YUEJIE LIU 刘月洁

ABSTRACT: Evidence shows that an influence study between Thomas Hardy and Shen Congwen is not as fruitful as a parallel study. With this in mind, this paper adopts Qi Shouhua's revision of Mikhail Bakhtin's theory of 'dialogic reverberations' to explore the shared dialectic between Nature and culture, shown through the use of both naïve and poetic languages, common to both Hardy and Shen's regional novels. The mediations between these two kinds of languages in the narratives and characterisations in Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (1878) and Shen's *Long River* (1938-45) dissolves the dichotomy between Nature and culture and connects modernity with a re-enchanted Nature. Through close comparison, this paper argues that the dialogic reverberations between these two writers reveal more about their novels than an analysis that reads the literature of each author in isolation.

KEYWORDS: Thomas Hardy, Shen Congwen, comparative literature, Nature



AS REGIONAL WRITERS, Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) and Shen Congwen (1902-1988) both believe the particular could gesture toward the universal: through their representation of particular locales, namely Wessex and Xiangxi (West Hunan), both authors ultimately share what they believe to be universal concerns about the human condition in the face of modernity. In this respect, the particularity of the regional settings of their novels are of vital importance to the dialectic between Nature and culture upon which both authors maintain a focus, as a universal question at the core of both late-Victorian England and early modern China. Sudhir Dixit notes that Hardy, 'while depicting his characters and their inner-relationship with the setting, rises much above the narrow bounds of regionalism.'¹ Similarly, Jeffery Kinkley comments that Shen's Xiangxi novels 'interpret rural life in modern China as a whole, and even the existential plight of

¹ Sudhir Dixit and Alka Saxena, *Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (New York: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2001), p. 52.

twentieth-century man.² In order to build upon these ideas put forward by Dixit and Kinkley, and to extend beyond influence studies, this paper provides a comparative study that explores Hardy's and Shen's representation of Nature in their regional novels and examines how they address the roots of regional cultures and an encroaching modernity.

There is no evidence to suggest that Hardy ever visited China, and it is unlikely that his limited knowledge of Chinese culture was based upon fact. During the nineteenth century, perceptions of China—however erroneous—stemmed from the West's desire to construct the East, or the 'Orient,' as 'Other' and therefore as inferior to the West. China therefore became a repository for the qualities that the West wanted to disassociate with themselves, such as exoticism, decadence, sensuality, laziness, with these ideas ultimately rendering the people of China as void of individuality. It is these misconceptions that permeate literature of the nineteenth century. In Chapter Seven of *The Woodlanders* (1887), for example, Giles encounters, at a sale of trees and faggots, his fellow woodland men 'who on that account could afford to be curious in their walking-sticks'.³ The distortion of woodbine into walking-sticks is then related to an anecdote of Chinese culture, where it is stated that 'the Chinese have been said to mould human beings into grotesque toys by continued compression in infancy.'⁴ In 1891 and 1903, Hardy wrote two letters to Arthur Moule who worked as archdeacon in middle China, saying that he believed Moule's book *New China & Old* would sell widely because 'the subject of mission work in China has come to the front again,'⁵ and about Eastern religion he comments that '[i]t seems to me that the peoples of the East are so much older in religion than we of the west, that they must view our teaching thereon with something of the amused surprise of elders towards children's news & theories.'⁶ On 19th February, 1904, Hardy wrote a letter to the editor of *The Times* in response to the comments about his *The Dynasts* (1903): 'Sir, your critic has humorously conducted his discourse away from his original charge against *The Dynasts* into the quaint and

² Jeffrey C. Kinkley, *The Odyssey of Shen Congwen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), p. 4.

³ Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (1887; London: Penguin Classics, 1986), p. 94.

⁴ Hardy, *The Woodlanders*, pp. 94-5.

⁵ Richard Little Purdy and Michael Millgate eds., *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy, Volume Three: 1902-1908* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 79.

⁶ Purdy and Millgate, I, p. 243.

unexpected channel of real performance by means of fantoccini, Chinese shadows, and other startling apparatus.⁷ A famous Chinese poet as well as Shen's friend, Xu Zhimo (1897-1931), visited Hardy at Max Gate in July, 1925, and Hardy asked him about the language and rhyme of Chinese poetry, about which he had little knowledge, and suggested that Chinese writers could try using English or French.⁸ By contrast, Shen read extensively about Western literature and he admired Charles Dickens.⁹ There is no evidence that he read Hardy, but translations of Hardy's works were quite popular in China in the 1920s so it is possible that Hardy was known to Shen.¹⁰ Moreover, it was Xu who introduced Hardy to Chinese readers. It is therefore unlikely that Xu never talked with Shen about his literary hero, and although no evidence has been found, it is likely that Shen read Xu's criticism and translations of Hardy which were published in major literary periodicals.¹¹

The model of 'dialogic reverberation' in Qi Shouhua's article on the comparative studies between Hardy and several modern Chinese writers offers a methodological approach with which to frame to this paper's comparison of Hardy and Shen. Drawing upon this approach allows this paper to foreground the shared concerns about 'connection' in two intricately inter-related periods of cultural history. Qi exemplifies the style of comparisons between Hardy and several modern Chinese writers in noting that: '[i]f the "kinship" between Hardy and Xu Zhimo has visible "veins" that can be traced, more or less, most other published articles interlinking Hardy and Chinese authors are in the broad sense of "dialogic reverberations" as postulated by Mikhail Bakhtin.'¹² According to Sigmund Ongstad, for Bakhtin, the term dialogue is '[u]sed as a metaphor for the general dynamics of aspects of utterances as compared to the static, closed

⁷ Harold Orel ed., *Thomas Hardy's Personal Writings* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1967), p. 144.

⁸ Han Shishan ed., *Complete Works of Xu Zhimo* (Beijing: Tianjin Peoples Publishing House, 2005), pp. 209-18.

⁹ See Shen Congwen, *Autobiography* (Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 1981).

¹⁰ He Ning, 'Hardy and China', *Foreign Literary Criticism*, 1 (1999).

¹¹ Xu's translations and studies of Hardy were mainly published on *Crescent Moon*, a literary journal he established with other writers in 1928 and was editor-in-chief until he died in 1931. Xu actually visited Hardy at Max Gate in 1926 and published a recollection article 'An Afternoon with Hardy' on his journal *Crescent Moon* (Volume One, Issue One, March 1928).

¹² Qi Shouhua, 'Anxiety, Angst, and the Search for Hardy's Chinese Tw[a]in', *Literature Compass*, Vol. 3., 2016, p. 153.

nature of sentences.¹³ Qi borrows from Bakhtin the term 'dialogic reverberations' to refer to comparative studies that can achieve a dialogue between literatures, but he neglects the potential of a comparative study between Hardy and Shen.

Building upon this potential, this paper focuses on the shared dialectic between Nature and culture which is present in both Hardy's *Return of the Native* and Shen's *Long River*. Postcolonialism and ecocriticism, two critical theories that concern the dichotomy between the self (the coloniser/Humanity) and the other (the colonised/Nature), are suggestive but inadequate to capture the reciprocity between Nature and culture that Hardy and Shen ultimately express through literature.¹⁴ In these novels, the dichotomy of the self and the other dissolves, becoming instead a dialectic between culture and Nature which makes use of poetic and naïve languages respectively. The 'naïve' refers to a sensory language that is largely based on rustic sensibilities and is rich in physical experience and impressions; the 'poetic' language, on the other hand, is abstract and attempts to comprehend the metaphysics and aesthetics of life. The dialectic between Nature and culture can be viewed as a dialectic between an unconscious, impressionist state and a conscious, reflective manner of writing in these novels. The way Hardy and Shen mediate between these two kinds of languages shows an attempt to connect the concrete with the abstract, and to retrieve connections between humanity and Nature when both are facing the alienation of modernity.

Raymond Williams's criticism of Hardy centres on a dichotomy between the customary and the educated which can be compared with the dialectic between Nature and culture that I raise in this paper. Williams insightfully points out that the problem of Hardy's style can relate to the unconsciously customary and the consciously educated languages of Tess, suggesting that, '[t]he truth is that to communicate Hardy's experience neither language would serve, since neither in the end was sufficiently articulate: the educated dumb in intensity and limited in humanity; the customary

¹³ Finn Bostad, Craig Brandist, Lars Sigfred Evensen and Hege Charlotte Faber (eds.), *Bakhtinian perspectives on language and culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 76.

¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the limited nature of postcolonial and ecocritical approaches to the comparative study between Hardy and Shen, see Yuejie Liu, 'Nature and Humanity: A Comparative Study between the Regional Novels of Thomas Hardy (1840-1928) and Shen Congwen (1902-1988)' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southampton, 2019).

thwarted by ignorance and complacent inhabit.’¹⁵ The combination of and the transitions between these two languages, however, can achieve compelling outcomes which will be demonstrated in my textual analyses. For Williams, Hardy stresses traditions and unchanged landscapes because they are part of the structure of his feeling; nevertheless, Nature is overridden by social relations which are shown by changes within rural communities. Although Williams contributes significantly to a contextual understanding of the economic and social aspect of Nature in Hardy’s novels, he rather ignores the poetic and philosophical aspect of Hardy’s writings about Nature. Following Williams’s Marxist criticism of Nature in Hardy, Terry Eagleton asserts it is through the body that Hardy achieves a transition between objective experiences and subjective consciousness: ‘[i]t would hardly exaggerate the novel’s purpose to say that the body itself becomes a mode of symbolic interpretation—a transitional point between the objective reality of Nature and purely subjective consciousness.’¹⁶ For Eagleton, the body is not only the focal point for the rapport between mind, body and environment but also ‘the socially visible aspect of men and women’, where there is an alienation between identity and society, or between ‘inward and objective modes of knowledge.’¹⁷ This is in line with Williams’s dualism of the customary and the educated. Through their Marxist analyses of Hardy therefore, Williams and Eagleton suggest that Nature is only important when it reveals alienated human conditions and it is always overridden by social relations. For Hardy, however, Nature means more.

Williams rightly observes that Hardy ‘sees as a participant who is also an observer [and that] this is the source of the strain,’¹⁸ whereas for Eagleton, ‘[t]he tension, rather, is in his own position, his own lived history, within a general process of change which could come clear and alive in him because it was not only general but in every detail of his feeling observation and writing immediate and particular.’¹⁹ Building upon these critical frameworks, I argue that Hardy and Shen deal with this strain and tension between the unconscious participant state of the ‘native’ and the reflective observer

¹⁵ Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970), p. 107.

¹⁶ Terry Eagleton, ‘Thomas Hardy: Nature as Language,’ *Critical Quarterly*, 13, 2 (1971), p. 157.

¹⁷ Eagleton, p. 160-161.

¹⁸ Williams, p. 110.

¹⁹ Williams, pp. 111-2.

state of the narrator (and writer) with a mediation between the naïve and the poetic languages, through which they search for connections of the two positions and try to dissolve the dichotomy between Nature and culture.

Both Hardy and Shen have claimed a rustic idiosyncrasy and sensibility which they relate to a native sense of belongings. In a letter to Richard Doddridge Blackmore in 1875 Hardy mentions: '[l]ittle phrases of nature which I thought nobody had noticed but myself were continually turning up in your book—for instance, the marking of a heap of sand into little pits by the droppings from trees was a fact I should unhesitatingly have declared unknown to any other novelist till now.'²⁰ Hardy attributes this shared knowledge to their shared origins in the West of England. Hardy claims in another letter to Kegan Paul in 1878 that his choice of residence in a London suburb is due to a careful consideration of his compatibility with the city: '[w]e might have ventured on Kensington, but for such utter rustics as ourselves Tooting seemed town enough to begin with.'²¹ These personal writings show that Hardy considers himself, even after his urban trainings as an architect, as thoroughly rustic. In the preface to *Selected Works* (1936), Shen also insists on his native Xiangxi identity and confronts his middle-class urban readers with his incompatibility with the city:

I am truly a countryman, which I do not mean to boast nor dispraise—a countryman as usual has a rooted rustic idiosyncrasy, with love and hate, grief and joy in their distinct forms, which are totally different from those of city dwellers. He is reserved, stubborn, earthy, not without sharp wit, but not treacherous. He is always earnest about things but may be too earnest so that he sometimes becomes clumsy and foolish.²²

Shen writes in response to criticism of his rural novels: 'I felt particularly isolated. There were too few countrymen. [...] Currently, though we have writers with a rustic background in China, most of them flatter your interests and attract your attention for career "success". There are not many countrymen who would remain so of their own accord.'²³ Similarly, after the popularity of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876) was not as successful, and Hardy was uneasy about writing what the public deemed a rustic story: '[h]e perceived [...] that he was committed by

²⁰ Purdy and Millgate, I, p. 38.

²¹ Purdy and Millgate, I, pp. 57-8.

²² Zhang Zhaohe (ed.), *Complete Works of Shen Congwen*, Volume Nine (Beijing: Beiyue Literature and Art Publishing House, 2002), p. 3. All translations in this paper are by the author unless otherwise stated.

²³ Zhang, IX, p. 6.

circumstances to novel-writing as a regular trade, as much as he had formerly been to architecture; and that hence he would, he deemed, have to look for material in manners in ordinary social and fashionable life as other novelists did. Yet he took no interest in manners, but in the substance of life only.²⁴ By 'the substance of life', Hardy may refer to Nature, as he notes in a similar expression 'a going to Nature' in 1882:

As, in looking at a carpet, by following one colour a certain pattern is suggested, by following another colour, another; so in life the seer should watch that pattern among general things which his idiosyncrasy moves him to observe, and describe that alone. This is, quite accurately, a going to Nature; yet the result is no mere photograph, but purely the product of the writer's own mind.²⁵

This contrast between manners and the substance of life corresponds to the dialectic between culture and Nature in the works of both writers. After nearly two decades in major Chinese cities,²⁶ Shen still exclaimed: 'I discover that my life survives in the city as an empty shell. Like in a wasteland, all the intellectual seeds that have commercial values or the conceptual seeds that have moral values in the urban society cannot take roots and grow in me.'²⁷ On 21st August, 1888, Hardy writes about a similar confusion in his diary: '[t]he literary productions of men of rigidly good family and rigidly correct education mostly treat social conventions and contrivances—the artificial forms of living—as if they were cardinal facts of life.'²⁸ The focus on the manners of urban and cultivated life confuses Shen and Hardy, which generates a melancholia about the incompatibility of modern culture and rural identity. This melancholia is echoed in Hardy's 'native', Clym Yeobright. Both Hardy's *The Return* and Shen's *Long River* are stories about 'the return of the native', and both texts also demand an engagement with the same question: how possible is a spiritual return in the face of modernity? Although, for Clym, the answer is a grim one, as authors, Hardy and Shen achieve a kind of return by reimagining their homelands. A comparison between these two novels can locate a productive tension between the naive and the poetic languages as crucial

²⁴ Michael Millgate (ed.), *The Life and Work of Thomas Hardy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1984), p. 107.

²⁵ Millgate, *The Life*, p. 158.

²⁶ Shen had lived and taught in Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Qingdao, and Kunming when he published *Candle Flickering* (Shanghai: Cultural Life Press, 1941) from which this note is taken.

²⁷ Zhang, XII, p. 23.

²⁸ Millgate, *The Life*, p. 222.

to Shen and Hardy's idea of what the novel can achieve; and a close reading of characterisations and rituals in these two novels can reveal their searching for connections with a re-enchanted Nature.

Long River begins with a description of local tangerine orchards as they appear through the seasons, sometimes from a local perspective, sometimes from a traveller's:

The trees are not high and are a colour of thick greenness all year round. In summer, the blossoms are white and small, and are so fragrant that they can make you 'drunk.' After the frost's Descent in September, the fruits amongst the branches are contrasted by the heavy frost so that they appear even more yellow and bright, like beams of sunlight if looking from afar. When the picking season comes, piles and piles of them can be seen everywhere along the little wharfs, like heaps of fire.²⁹

Here, Shen executes shifts between an observation of the local agricultural circle, from the vantage point of local knowledge, and a poetic description that associates tangerines with sunshine and fire, arguably issuing from a traveller's perspective. The poetic language, however, does not seem to interfere with a local temperament nor alienate a stranger from local Nature. The narrator continues after several scenes about the exchanges between the local orchard owner and a traveller:

Two thousand years ago, Qu Yuan, the outcast from the state of Chu, rode in a little white boat and sailed upstream along the River Yuan, and he must have seen such tangerine trees and so wrote 'Ju Song' ('Ode to the Tangerine'). Although the local living conditions changed more or less over the course of two thousand years, people and trees still lived by the earth, attached to the soil on both sides of the river; throughout the changes of seasons and weathers, the old died and went back to earth, and the new was born and grew as if all out of the soil.³⁰

During the Warring States Periods (1042BC-223BC), the Hunan Province was part of the state of Chu which nurtured the well-known ancient Chinese poet Qu Yuan (about 340BC-278BC). 'Ju Song' is from his poem collection *Jiu Zhang (Nine Chapters)* and is a typical example of a classical Chinese lyrical poem that sings the praises of things. The use of this nostalgic reference to an earlier moment in literary history triggers a poetic imagining of Xiangxi and connects the past with the present. The transition from the previous scene with its dialogues between the native and the traveler to this poetic

²⁹ Zhang, X, p. 10.

³⁰ Zhang, X, p. 12.

depiction of those living on this piece of land achieves a connection between the naïve and the poetic.

In *The Return*, such shifts between the naïve and the poetic languages are also salient. In a passage depicting the calm winter on Egdon Heath, human loneliness and human connections with non-human beings are captured in a comic tone: 'any man could imagine himself to be Adam without the least difficulty, they attracted the attention of every bird within eyeshot, every reptile not yet asleep, and set the surrounding rabbits curiously watching from hillocks at a safe distance.'³¹ Here, Hardy illustrates a reversed relationship between the traditional human observer and the non-human participant, and the narrator describes how characters are observed by bird, reptile, and rabbits—naïve sensibilities that are attached to the locale, in a poetic language that is only discernible to the narrator. Instead of alienation, the rich reciprocity between the human and non-human world highlights connections between humanity and Nature. Similarly, when Mrs. Yeobright returns from her rejected visit to Clym and Eustacia, in contrast to her physical and emotional exhaustion, 'the intermittent husky notes of the male grasshoppers from every tuft of furze were enough to show that amid the prostration of the larger animal species an unseen insect world was busy in all the fullness of life.'³² This animated microcosm of insects contrasts with the emotional turmoil caused by the rejection and the dying physical life of Mrs. Yeobright, yet what is shown is an order of Nature that renders all organisms equal rather than alienating human life from Nature. In both occasions, a poetic language that distances the observer is at work, and a reconciliation is achieved by this shift between sensory experiences and a poetic view.

In the opening scene of the novel when Thomasin is carried back in Venn's van to her aunt's home from her failed wedding, Venn takes a rest during the trip and surveys the scene. Given the later development of the plot, it may be deduced that Venn is concerned with the destiny of Thomasin's marriage to Wildeve; what comes next, however, is not Venn's further plan but the narrator's observation of Nature:

To do things musingly, and by small degrees, seemed, indeed, to be a duty in the Egdon valleys at this transitional hour, for there was that in the condition of the heath itself which resembled protracted and halting dubiousness. It was the quality of the repose

³¹ Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (1878; Macmillan, 1985), p. 115.

³² Hardy, *The Return*, p. 267.

appertaining to the scene. This was not the repose of actual stagnation, but the apparent repose of incredible slowness. A condition of healthy life so nearly resembling the torpor of death is a noticeable thing of its sort; to exhibit the inertness of the desert, and at the same time to be exercising powers akin to those of the meadow, and even of the forest, awakened in those who thought of it the attentiveness usually engendered by understatement and reserve.³³

This passage is set on an evening in November near Rainbarrow, where Eustacia lives, and, in this respect, what Hardy is depicting here resembles the hibernation of animals: the repose, the slowness, the torpor of death, and the inertness. Although human activities, particularly in such a rural area, are slowed by the season, it seems here that human thinking is also slowed down as in a reciprocity with Nature. The narrator uses a poetic language to describe a holistic world where everything is under the same force of the winter torpor, including human feelings. Following this paragraph is a description of Egdon in Venn's naïve language – an impressionistic view that illustrates distinct temporality: '[t]he scene before the reddleman's eyes was a gradual series of ascents from the level of the road backward into the heart of the heath. It embraced hillocks, pits, ridges, acclivities, one behind the other, till all was finished by a high hill cutting against the still light sky.'³⁴ In these transitions of perspectives and languages, Hardy shifts from the burden of human thoughts to Nature's rhythm, and thus establishes connections between humanity and Nature.

The first notable shared feature of both Hardy and Shen's regional novels, then, is that Nature, instead of being a backdrop, seems to have an agency of its own and can also form part of a reciprocal relationship with the characters. Both authors write long passages about Nature even before the characters are introduced. Hardy once sent the manuscript of *The Return of the Native* (1878) to John Blackwood, publisher of *Blackwood's Magazine*. Blackwood politely declared himself unable to place it in the near future and complained that Hardy had spent too long on the opening scenes 'without a thread of light to throw an interest round the rugged figures' and that 'there is hardly anything like what is called Novel interest.'³⁵ The publisher's complaint implies that 'nature' is not a legitimate subject for what is called 'Novel interest'.

³³ Hardy, *The Return*, p. 37.

³⁴ Hardy, *The Return*, p. 37.

³⁵ Frank B Pinion, *Thomas Hardy: art and thought* (London: Springer, 1977), p. 178

One distinct feature of both *The Return* and *Long River* is the seasonal structure of the plot which in turn introduces agricultural communities' association with rituals. Chapter One of *Long River*, 'Human Beings and the Land', echoes *The Return's* Chapter One 'A Face on which Time makes but Little Impression', as both are dedicated to elaborating the local environment and customs. By placing both in a central position from the beginning of the novel, Hardy and Shen declare them to be their 'Novel interest'—a re-enchantment of the relationship between humanity and Nature. John Paterson suggests that '[t]o Hardy, Nature was its own excuse for being. It was what his Angel Clare would call "actualised poetry," a poetry whose beauty and splendour were expressions not of an eccentric art or a socialised imagination but of natural objects in themselves.'³⁶ A representation of Nature that refuses to alienate it is shared by both Hardy and Shen and is rooted in their rustic sensibilities.

In 1878, the year that *The Return* was published, Hardy notes his understanding of the new aesthetics of his times with examples from art: 'as I wrote at the beginning of *The Return of the Native*—that the beauty of association is entirely superior to the beauty of aspect, and a beloved relative's old battered tankard to the finest Greek vase. Paradoxically put, it is to see the beauty in ugliness.'³⁷ Another note by Hardy in January 1887 elaborates on this new aesthetics:

The exact truth as to material fact ceases to be of importance in art--it is a student's style—the style of a period when the mind is serene and unawakened to the tragical mysteries of life; when it does not bring anything to the object that coalesces with and translates the qualities that are already there—half hidden, it may be—and the two united are depicted as the All.³⁸

And on 5th August 1888 he notes again: '[t]o find beauty in ugliness is the province of the poet.'³⁹ For Hardy, this aesthetics is 'new' because it departs from the Victorian tradition of realism in imaginative literature and rejects an objectification of Nature—the new aesthetics is about a dissolution of the dichotomy between Nature and culture. Xiao Jiwei argues for a similar aesthetics in Shen's works suggesting that whilst he was

³⁶ John Paterson, 'Lawrence's Vital Source: Nature and Character in Thomas Hardy', *Nature and the Victorian Imagination* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1977), p. 456.

³⁷ Millgate, *The Life*, p. 124. *The Return* was serialised on *Belgravia* from January to December in 1878, and this note was recorded on April 22nd, 1878.

³⁸ Millgate, *The Life*, p. 192.

³⁹ Millgate, *The Life*, p. 222.

'[a]ttuned to the traditional aesthetic sentiment that emphasizes the cosmic-universal meaning of nature, his writing is however too unruly to be labelled classicist; its spirit unmistakably modern, it nonetheless deviates from social realist aesthetics that became the hallmark of Chinese literary modernity'.⁴⁰

As a novelist, Hardy deploys this new aesthetics through an atavistic representation of Egdon Heath: 'Civilisation was its enemy; and ever since the beginning of vegetation its soil had worn the same antique brown dress, the natural and invariable garment of the particular formation. [...] We seem to want the oldest and simplest human clothing where the clothing of the earth is so primitive.'⁴¹ The personification of Egdon in *The Return* demonstrates a synchronisation between the heath and the age—'[i]t was at present a place perfectly accordant with man's nature—neither ghastly, hateful, nor ugly; neither commonplace, unmeaning, nor tame; but, like man, slighted and enduring; and withal singularly colossal and mysterious in its swarthy monotony.'⁴² The development of anthropology in the late-Victorian age cast a spotlight on ancient cultures. Hardy quotes from Schlegel in his notebook: '[t]he deepest want & deficiency of all modern Art lies in the fact that the Artists have no mythology,'⁴³ which expresses a yearning for a mythological past before the dualism of nature and culture had been established. Michael Zeitler traces Hardy's readings of Edward Burnett Tylor, Andrew Lang, and Walter Pater while he was writing *The Return* and affirms an 'anthropologically informed representation of Wessex' in the novel.⁴⁴ Hardy writes on December 18th, 1890:

Mr E. Clodd this morning gives an excellently neat answer to my question why the superstitions of a remote Asiatic and a Dorset labourer are the same; 'The attitude of man', he says, 'at corresponding levels of culture, before like phenomena, is pretty much the same, your Dorset peasants representing the persistence of the barbaric idea which confuses persons and things, and founds wide generalisations on the slenderest

⁴⁰ Jiwei Xiao, 'Nature, Woman and Lyrical Ambiguity in Shen Congwen's Writing,' *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, 67, 1 (2013), p. 47.

⁴¹ Hardy, *The Return*, p. 33.

⁴² Hardy, *The Return*, p. 33.

⁴³ Lennart A. Björk ed., *The Literary Notebooks of Thomas Hardy*, Volume One (London: Springer, 1985), p. 15.

⁴⁴ Michael A. Zeitler, *Representations of Culture: Thomas Hardy's Wessex & Victorian Anthropology* (Peter Lang, 2007), p. 72.

analogies.' (This 'barbaric idea which confuses persons and things' is, by the way, also common to the highest imaginative genius--that of the poet.)⁴⁵

For Hardy, there are obvious synergies between Wessex and Eastern cultures, and through his propensity to personify Nature in *The Return*, as seen in the personification of Egdon Heath, Hardy does confuse 'persons and things', which he suggests is the highest imaginative tool of the poet. Hardy adds the observation to his note that the 'barbaric idea which confuses persons and things' connects atavistic beliefs with poetic imaginations. Therefore, by illustrating Egdon Heath and its links with an undeveloped state of civilisation, Hardy demonstrates not how outdated but how vital it is: '[t]he instincts of merry England lingered on here with exceptional vitality, and the symbolic customs which tradition has attached to each season of the year were yet a reality on Egdon,'⁴⁶ and this reading is amplified by Zeitler's suggestion that Hardy reimagines Wessex as a living connection to the roots of a mythopoeic culture.⁴⁷ Deriving from Zeitler's study of Hardy's relationship with Victorian anthropology, I argue that Hardy as a novelist makes the readers 're-feel' myth rather than the scientific discourse of anthropology, re-enchanting readers with connections to a primitive past through his characterisation of Eustacia Vye and Diggory Venn and his representation of the seasonal rituals of bonfires.

Eustacia's energy, paralleled with that of Egdon Heath, challenges it; however, sometimes Eustacia seems to be reconciled to Egdon's power and becomes integrated with its inner passion. For example, in the scene where Eustacia dances with Damon Wildeve at a village festival, fantastical senses override their sense of social norms:

There is a certain degree and tone of light which tends to disturb the equilibrium of the senses, and to promote dangerously the tenderer moods; added to movement, it drives the emotions to rankness, the reason becoming sleepy and unperceiving in inverse proportion; and this light fell now upon these two from the disc of the moon. All the dancing girls felt the symptoms, but Eustacia most of all.⁴⁸

This scene can be interpreted as an illustration of Eustacia's unconscious compatibility with Egdon – both of them contain a sensual vitality that can liberate spirits from social order and the regained passion between Eustacia and Wildeve during the dance

⁴⁵ Millgate, *The Life*, p. 241.

⁴⁶ Hardy, *The Return*, p. 347.

⁴⁷ Zeitler, p. 70.

⁴⁸ Hardy, *The Return*, p. 245.

facilitates their elopement. Unlike others, Eustacia's dancing is viewed by the narrator as rebellious— 'back into old paths which now doubly irregular,' as the personified rebellious Egdon Heath challenges the aesthetics of the age: to see beauty in ugliness is to see through the alienation of modern society and restore a connection with the mythological past.⁴⁹

Diggory Venn is another mythological character: his redness serves as a vivid mark. Expressions relating to his redness are associated with sin and crime--the 'bloodcoloured figure', 'the mark of Cain', but clearly Hardy has another idea: he finds a beauty and nostalgia in this redness.⁵⁰ Hardy allies the reddleman's way of living with aesthetics—'the poetry of existence', 'a sublimation of all the horrid dreams', and 'imagination'—although it might be about the ugly and dark, as suggested by the words 'horrid' and 'bogeys'.⁵¹ In contrast, the new era of Egdon - where modern culture and mythology are at odds with one another - is filled with modern inventions, and can be much less imaginative and distinct. Its idiosyncrasy is lost and the new epoch is faceless in its uniformity and a threat to regional identity. Venn is the most mobile character in the novel. It is through Venn's view and movement that the narrator and the reader explore Egdon. In the following episode, sensibilities that arise from local knowledge are revealed through Venn's point of view: '[t]hough these shaggy hills were apparently so solitary, several keen round eyes were always ready on such a wintry morning as this to converge upon a passer-by. Feathered species sojourned here in hiding which would have created wonder if found elsewhere'; then a traveller's point of view is added by the narrator:

A traveller who should walk and observe any of these visitants as Venn observed them now could feel himself to be in direct communication with regions unknown to man. Here in front of him was a wild mallard—just arrived from the home of the north wind. The creature brought within him an amplitude of Northern knowledge. Glacial catastrophes, snowstorm episodes, glittering auroral effects, Polaris in the zenith, Franklin underfoot—the category of his commonplaces was wonderful. But the bird, like many other philosophers, seemed as he looked at the reddleman to think that a present moment of comfortable reality was worth a decade of memories.⁵²

⁴⁹ Hardy, *The Return*, p. 245.

⁵⁰ Hardy, *The Return*, p. 91.

⁵¹ Hardy, *The Return*, p. 91.

⁵² Hardy, *The Return*, pp. 98-9.

Here, the narrator is less of an observer as he is the object of observation. As the first sentence suggests, the birds are observing the passers-by. This demonstrates that there is another layer of observation or witness between characters, the narrator, and the non-human world; a world in which the narrator tries many times to mingle his view. In this passage, then, two threads emerge: Venn is a traveller being observed by the non-human world as well as the narrator, however, a communication is also described between Venn and his native environment, which renders the narrator and readers as alienated strangers. The return of the mallard, from Venn's perspective, is a sensory and seasonal experience; from the narrator's perspective, however, it carries more meanings and universal connections. In this way, the seeming alienation is reconciled by uncovering these connections, and the narrative structure, with its complex points of view, yields more than a novelised anthropology. Thus, the myth of a reciprocity between humans and Nature is revealed.

Long River also shows the vitality and connections within Nature that can be found in traditional Xiangxi culture. Shen writes in the preface to *Long River* that:

Having been away from my hometown for eighteen years, everything seems different when my boat enters Chen River basin. Superficially, everything has made a progress; deeply, if observed carefully, a tendency towards decay is contained within the change. Most obviously, the traditionally preserved rural virtue of integrity and simplicity is nearly extinct. What replaces it is a vulgar view of life that flaunts venality and has been cultivated successfully by practical society in the last two decades. Though superstitions have been knocked down, morality and the sense of right and wrong are lost as well.⁵³

Compared with modern degradation, the seasonal rituals of the old way of life hold more beauty for Shen. In *Long River*, local religion is shown as a fetishistic belief in Nature facilitated through seasonal rituals and a pervasive supernatural belief: '[n]o matter how plain and innocent their life is, they still manage to keep an exotic emotion: either the local legends and tales lead them to a beautiful and gentle wonderland, or, by believing in gods, they find a way to deal with all kinds of misfortunes.'⁵⁴ Shen notes the emotional release and a kind of imaginative enablement through performing local rituals: 'Although non-religious', Yaoyao's family follow local festivals and taboos, and 'from these circumstances they obtain a merry and solemn emotion of liberation.'⁵⁵

⁵³ Zhang, X, p. 17.

⁵⁴ Zhang, X, p. 21.

⁵⁵ Zhang, X, pp. 44-5.

This valuing of rituals as constitutive of landscape and place is conveyed as rooted in the native sensibilities of Wessex and Xiangxi, confronting a loss of the sense of belonging in modern society that both Hardy and Shen personally expressed. The image of fire is used as a specific illustration of this valuing of rituals in both novels—in *Long River*, it is the burning of straw; in *The Return*, it is the bonfires. In both novels, fire is linked with mythological or religious rituals. For *The Return*, bonfires are more than dramatic settings or signal lights between Eustacia and Damon—they are marks of Egdon's old mythological past which foreground seasonal rituals. For *Long River*, the ethnic minority Miao culture in Xiangxi is reputed to embrace a worship of the god of fire, Zhu Rong, whom they believe to be an ancestor of their tribe.⁵⁶ Therefore, the repetitive images of burning fires can be viewed as reminders of an ancient belief in Xiangxi. On seeing the fire, Manman, the old sailor and now gatekeeper of the local ancestral temple, perceives something but fails to articulate it:

He seems to have perceived something that belongs to the destiny of the local future, but he could not tell what exactly it is, nor does he really understand. When he arrives at the Maple Col and looks at the Turnip Brook, which is veiled by the night mist, as if asleep, there are only several dots of flickering lights amongst the thin wood. Downstream there are also few lights. The brook sounds aloud in the silence of the night. Over the distant mountain is a patch of wild burning, extending and dancing, on and off. The old sailor stands on the steps of the temple and says to himself: 'The good fortune is leaving! What is coming comes, I fear nothing!'⁵⁷

At the end of the last chapter when the village opera is finished, the narrator follows Yaoyao's perspective and describes the lively scene of people's departure at the harbour. Then the narrator turns to a fire over the mountain, where '[t]he reddish violet wild burning over a distant mountain is blown by the wind and glowing more and more fervently,' and Manman, watching the same direction, comments that 'the burning has been there for over ten days—it seems to be endless.'⁵⁸ This view initiates a debate between Yaoyao and Manman about the endurance of beauty. Yaoyao compares the burning of the fire to the sun and argues that 'beautiful things should be there forever'; Manman, seeing through Yaoyao's innocence and idealism, says: 'Beautiful things will

⁵⁶ Chen Zhaozhao, 'Research on Zhu-Rong: The Mythical Legend and the Connection with the Worship in Fire', *Chia Nan Annual Bulletin*, No. 30 (2004), p. 438.

⁵⁷ Zhang, X, pp. 106-7.

⁵⁸ Zhang, X, p. 168.

never last long.⁵⁹ This melancholic aesthetics can also be found in Shen's other fiction, as well as in his personal writings, where he states repeatedly that '[b]eauty always makes people melancholic, yet still it is appreciated.'⁶⁰ Xiangxi's past and an encroaching modernity converge on these descriptions and imaginations of fire: the flickering flame can be either the passion of a remnant culture or a prophecy for the weakening of the vitality of such culture under the threat of modernisation.

In *The Return*, the recurring bonfire represents Wessex's pagan past: 'it is pretty well known that such blazes as this the heathmen were now enjoying are rather the lineal descendants from jumbled Druidical rites and Saxon ceremonies than the invention of popular feeling about Gunpowder Plot.'⁶¹ The bonfire can also be viewed as a ritual that reveals a permanent ethos of rebelliousness against the seasonal frame of the novel, connecting the past with the present:

Moreover to light a fire is the instinctive and resistant act of man when, at the winter ingress, the curfew is sounded throughout Nature. It indicates a spontaneous, Promethean rebelliousness against the fiat that this recurrent season shall bring foul times, cold darkness, misery and death. Black chaos comes, and the fettered gods of the earth say, Let there be light.⁶²

The bonfire portrays Egdon Heath as poised between both the atavistic and the civilised. The eye contact with birds, fires and bonfires in these novels capture fluid moments of vision that associate the present with a mythological past. In revealing the connections between them, Hardy and Shen call for a new aesthetics of re-enchantment and imagination. The beauty of Hardy's and Shen's regional novels lies in an obliteration of the modern tendency to objectify 'landscapes' (the word indicates an anthropocentric view) and to alienate Nature; instead, their narrative demonstrates the interdependence between human culture and Nature.

The tension between the native and the cultivated identities that is core to the representation of Clym can also be noticed in *Long River*. This tension allows Hardy and Shen to be positioned in an interesting dialogue with one another about the alienated native self in the face of modernity. *Long River* is an unfinished novel written between

⁵⁹ Zhang, X, p. 169.

⁶⁰ Zhang, XII, p. 107.

⁶¹ Hardy, *The Return*, pp. 40-41.

⁶² Hardy, *The Return*, p. 41.

1938 and 1942.⁶³ When he began it, Shen had just returned from his second trip to his hometown Fenghuang after he first left Xiangxi in 1921. He wrote a number of short stories and essays about the changes that happened to Xiangxi after his long leave; and he already had an idea of writing another novel about these changes when he wrote *The Border Town* (1934), a major literary success. Sheng writes:

I plan to provide the readers with a comparison', he stated, 'I will write another work about the civil war in the last two decades and its impact on farmers [...] I will write about the worries and fears of common people during the changes through which this nation has been brought to an unknown destiny by history.⁶⁴

Shen repeats his blueprint in the preface to *Long River*. 'I will continue *The Border Town* in another work to write about the distortion of the characteristics and soul of local farmers and their loss of simplicity in the last two decades.'⁶⁵ Changes to traditional agricultural life and the impact of modernisation on local communities, material as well as mental, are themes for *The Return* and *Long River*. In *The Return*, sympathy is shown towards Clym's dilemma in the narrative: '[i]n consequence of this relatively advanced position, Yeobright might have been called unfortunate. The rural world was not ripe for him.'⁶⁶ In her article on Victorian anthropology and *The Return*, Patricia O'Hara comments:

Like Victorian anthropology, *The Return of the Native* contemplates the cultural journey from primitive infancy to civilised maturity. But where anthropology plotted an upward, progressive 'nobler tendency of advancing culture', which made the past legible and the future possible, *The Return of the Native* offers no such sureties. Its meditations on the cultural past and present lead only to dislocations—to a condition analogous to that of the returned native, Clym Yeobright, last seen as a man of 'less than thirty-three', suffering from a 'wrinkled mind'.⁶⁷

⁶³ This is according to the editorial note in *Complete Works* (Volume Ten, p.2). American Chinese scholar David Der-wei Wang claimed that it was in fact written at the end of 1939 or beginning of 1940 and first serialised in 1943. The first separate edition was published in 1945 by the Wenju Press in Kunming, and another edition in 1948 by Kaiming Bookstore Press in Shanghai. In Shen's own autobiographical notes (Jishou University Journal, 1988, Volume Two) he only recorded the 1948 edition.

⁶⁴ Zhang, VIII, p. 59.

⁶⁵ Zhang, X, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Hardy, *The Return*, p. 171.

⁶⁷ Patricia O'hara, 'Narrating the native: Victorian anthropology and Hardy's the return of the native', *Nineteenth Century Contexts*, 20, 2 (1997), p. 158.

This contradiction between a physical return of the 'native' and the impossibility of a spiritual return is elaborated by the two writers' mediations between the two kinds of languages. For Hardy and Shen, the difficulty of writing about the 'native' not only lies in the reluctant adaptation to an increasingly cosmopolitan modern culture but also in the tense but productive movement between abstract language and their intense sensibilities towards Nature. Nature in their works is autonomous, and language is simultaneously too concrete (naïve) and too abstract (poetic), thus a combination of the naïve and the poetic languages reflects both language's assertion of its own distinct mode of representing Nature and a simultaneous recognition that Nature's autonomy is too irreducible to be accurately articulated by either language. Xiao Jiwei comments about Shen: 'At the core of [...]his regionalist universalism is a lyrical ambiguity derived from his distinctive approach to nature.'⁶⁸ Xiao defines this 'lyrical ambiguity' as 'a certain loss of self in the other as well as an effort to sustain an aesthetic distance between the two.'⁶⁹ This comment echoes that of Williams's criticism about the narrator in Hardy's novels being participant and observer at the same time: the immersion and distance offered by these two positions create a unique mediation where Hardy and Shen combine a naïve and a poetic language to link the 'native' with the poetic and to deal with the alienation posed by modernity on Nature.

Qi concludes his article that the search for dialogic reverberations or intertextual confluences between Hardy and Chinese authors 'can be seen as emblematic of the anxiety or angst on the part of many Chinese as their country, in its uneasy march towards modernity, continues to seek and redefine its place among the world's civilisations.'⁷⁰ In this way, Hardy and Shen's regional novels can both be regarded as what Qi called 'emblematic of [...] anxiety or angst'. This is due to their dealings with the traditional and at times ancient roots of regional cultures and an encroaching modern society. A dialogue is generated between the two authors through their shared deployment of a dialectic between Nature and culture, which continually surfaces in both novels and which both authors utilise in order to search for connections rather than alienations.

⁶⁸ Xiao, p. 43.

⁶⁹ Xiao, p. 45.

⁷⁰ Qi, 'Anxiety, Angst, and the Search for Hardy's Chinese Tw[a]in', p. 158.



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The Dilemma of William Carleton, Regional Writer and Subject of Empire

BARRY SLOAN

ABSTRACT: William Carleton's *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* has long been recognised as one of the key nineteenth-century Irish literary texts and the masterpiece of a figure whose influence has extended to modern Irish writers such as John Montague and Seamus Heaney. *Traits and Stories* has been valued both for its vitality, humour and tragi-comedy and also as a unique record of the changing lives of the rural Catholic population in Ulster in the early years of the century. The circumstances of Carleton's own life also changed profoundly after he left Co Tyrone and sought to make his way as a writer among the Protestant literary class in Dublin. The implications of his decision to leave the Catholic church in favour of the established Protestant Church of Ireland have been of particular interest to critics who are divided in their views of the importance of this on his representations of Irish peasant life. This article focuses especially on the two longest commentaries Carleton wrote on his own work - the Preface to the first series of *Traits and Stories* published in 1830 at the beginning of his career, and the much more extensive Introduction to the definitive 'new edition' of the collected *Traits and Stories* of 1844, when he was an established literary figure. Using these texts, and making references to some of the stories, the article examines how they reveal the tensions between Carleton's sense of himself as an Irishman with a strong regional identity rooted in the north of country, and also as a colonial citizen of the British empire. It considers the importance of this dual awareness in his conception of his own position as a writer and on the way in which he presents his work with an eye not only to Irish readers, but to an English audience.

KEYWORDS: peasantry, region, Ulster, colonialism, religion, history.



WHEN THOMAS DAVIS declared in 1845 that 'No other peasantry have had their tale so well told as the Irish by this Ulsterman', William Carleton, and that 'No man, who does not know the things he tells, knows Ireland', he unwittingly laid down claims that have

essentially been endorsed in numerous subsequent judgements of the writer's work.¹ John Wilson Foster, for example, has called Carleton the 'first and foremost novelist of the Irish peasantry' whose writing 'can be said to have fathered Ulster fiction in the process of fathering important strains in Irish fiction generally'. For Terry Eagleton, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* is the 'premier work of the century's literature' in Ireland.² For some, including Thomas Flanagan, Carleton's significance is less as a writer of fiction than as a social historian, a view which perhaps finds its most extreme formulation in Margaret Chesnutt's assertions that he 'must be read primarily as an exponent of a vanished culture and way of life', and that 'questions of literary or artistic quality are largely irrelevant.'³ In contrast to this dismissive judgement, Eagleton has explored how features of Carleton's writing often regarded as problematic or unsatisfactory – for example, the multiplicity of narrative styles, the enjambement of different rhetorics, or the seemingly far-fetched and clumsy plots – are better understood as symptoms of the historical and political context in which he was working and the lack of available models of Irish fiction.⁴ David Krause has also examined Carleton's narrative practices, rebutting the claim that however great the power of particular episodes in his books, he is unsuccessful as a novelist. For Krause, there has been a repeated critical failure to recognise how Carleton's 'comic vision with tragic implications' is grounded in his innovative freedom from conventional narrative structures which, he claims, anticipates Bakhtin's 'carnivalistic view of fiction'.⁵

¹ Thomas Davis, 'Carleton' in *Thomas Davis: Memoir, Essays and Poems* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1945), pp. 111-112.

² John Wilson Foster, *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1974), p. 1 and Foreword, n.p.; Terry Eagleton, 'Form and Ideology in the Anglo-Irish Novel' in *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 207.

³ Thomas Flanagan, *The Irish Novelists 1800-1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957); Margaret Chesnutt, *Studies in the Short Stories of William Carleton* (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1976), p. 140.

⁴ Eagleton, 'Form and Ideology in the Anglo-Irish Novel', passim pp. 145-225. See also, for example, Marjorie Howes, 'Literary Religion: William Carleton' in *Colonial Crossings* (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2006), pp. 24-35.

⁵ David Krause, *William Carleton the Novelist* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2000), pp. 5-6. It should be noted that John Wilson Foster gestured towards the perspective Krause adopts in an important footnote in *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction*. He wrote: 'I would suggest that [Carleton] ought to be studied first and foremost as a comic writer; the crowded canvas, static characters, the curve

However, while critics have acknowledged the significance for Carleton's work of his regional background, and his position as both an Irishman and a subject of the British Empire, less has been made of the interplay between these two formative influences. The following discussion, which relates particularly to *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* and to the Preface and Introduction Carleton wrote for the 1830 and 1844 editions respectively, focuses on the importance of that interplay for his work and in shaping his conception of his own role as an artist.

Although the island of Ireland has often been taken as a region within the British Isles as a whole, the province of Ulster has likewise been regarded as a distinct region within Ireland on a number of counts. One geographer describes Ulster as 'a natural region' centred on 'the four river basins of the Foyle, Bann, Erne and Lagan together with the Tirconnail country in Donegal'.⁶ But Ulster is also individuated by the historical, cultural and religious consequences of the confiscation of land originally held by the native Catholic population to reward Scottish Protestant supporters of the Williamite campaigns in the late seventeenth century and to subdue further Catholic insurgency. This 'plantation' created the largest concentration of Protestants in Ireland, most of whom were further distinguished from their co-religionists elsewhere in the country by their adherence to Calvinistic Presbyterianism. The sectarian divisions that have bedevilled community relationships ever since, and which are embedded in the landscape, language, literature and culture of Ulster, are a legacy of that strategy. So, too, is the statelet of Northern Ireland artificially created by the Government of Ireland Act (1920) out of six of the nine counties in the province to appease the Protestant Unionist population when British rule ended in the rest of the country.

Yet while it may be relatively easy to suggest the rationale for seeing Ulster as a region within Ireland, the larger question of what characterises regional writing has proved more challenging for scholars. K.D.M. Snell helpfully proposes that it is 'fiction

of the protagonists' careers from low to high, the just distribution of deserts in the *dénouements*: all these suggest the genre of comedy. Furthermore, all those prefaces, affidavits, footnotes, supporting evidence, didactic interruptions of the narrative belong to a fiction in which the distinction between fact and fiction is blurred. ... The intrigues and conspiracies of his plots are the machinery of comedy but also the desperate struggle of a hungry and oppressed people.' (p. 17)

⁶ T.W. Freeman, *Ireland: A General and Regional Geography* (London: Methuen, 1972) cited in John Wilson Foster, 'Radical Regionalism' in *Colonial Consequences: Essays in Irish Literature and Culture* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1991), p. 279.

set in a recognisable region, and which describes features distinguishing the life, social relations, customs, language, dialect, or other aspects of the culture of that area and its people'.⁷ As will be shown, William Carleton's stories incorporate all of these features. Furthermore, his work is imbued with 'a strong sense of local geography, topography or landscape', which is also mentioned by Snell as typical of regional writing.⁸ In her descriptive survey of Carleton's work, Eileen A. Sullivan locates him as 'a remarkable regional writer' whose 'literary kingdom [was] in Ulster and Meath', while more recently Thomas B. O'Grady has noted how the opening paragraphs of the first of the *Traits and Stories*, 'Ned M'Keown', 'act as a doorway into the world – a world both literal and literary – that Carleton has inscribed indelibly in the twenty fictional narratives that constitute his major opus.'⁹

Specific, identifiable circumstantial details are not the only hallmarks of regional writing, however, as Ian Duncan reminds us: 'from the beginning this kind of [regional] space is framed in an elegiac relation between imaginative or sympathetic belonging and historic exile', he writes.¹⁰ In Carleton's case, while his early life was spent in his native place, once he had departed from it he became no more than an occasional visitor, and yet the vibrant content and energy of his stories, and many of their most potent thematic concerns, were generated by memories rooted in his formative years. The power and process of such associative memory are vividly evoked in a passage from 'The Party Fight and the Funeral' where the narrator, returning to his home place on foot and by moonlight after a long absence, reflects on how:

... there is a mystery yet undiscovered in our being, for no man can know the full extent of his feelings or his capacities. Many a slumbering thought, and sentiment, and association reposes within him, of which he is utterly ignorant, and which, except he

⁷ K.D.M. Snell (ed.), *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland 1800-1990* (Cambridge: CUP, 1998), Introduction, p. 1.

⁸ Snell, Introduction, p. 1

⁹ Eileen A. Sullivan, *William Carleton* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), p. 31 and p. 66; Thomas B. O'Grady, 'Reading the Lay of the Landscape in William Carleton's "Ned M'Keown"', *New Hibernia Review*, vol. 14. No. 2, Samradh/Summer 2010 (pp. 133-144), p. 133. It is worth noting that the most recent list of townlands in the barony of Clogher still contains many of the names found in Carleton's stories – see <<https://www.townlands.ie/tyrone/clogher2>> [Accessed 13/3/2019] Likewise, place names and topographical features mentioned by Carleton are often readily identifiable.

¹⁰ Ian Duncan, 'The Provincial or Regional Novel' in Patrick Brantlinger and William B. Thesing (eds), *A Companion to the Victorian Novel* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002) (pp. 318-335), p. 322.

come in contact with those objects whose influence over his mind can alone call them into being, may never be awakened, or give him one moment of either pleasure or pain. ... The force of association ... was powerful; for as I advanced nearer home, the names of the hills, and lakes, and mountains, that I had utterly forgotten, as I thought, were distinctly revived in my memory; and a crowd of youthful thoughts and feelings, that I imagined my intercourse with the world and the finger of time had blotted out of my being, began to crowd afresh upon my fancy. The name of a townland would instantly return with its appearance; and I could now remember the history of families and individuals that had long been effaced from my recollection.¹¹

This testifies to the speaker's discovery of the unforeseen capacity of a once familiar but long abandoned landscape to reanimate knowledge and emotions previously assumed to be lost forever, but which he suddenly realises are still embedded in his memory. Although much may have changed both for the returning native himself and within the community he starts to recollect, this remembrance of the place as he once knew it affirms how life elsewhere has not erased the regional history that underpins his identity and, at least by implication, highlights the losses incurred by his migration. From this perspective, it becomes clearer why, as we will see, in many of the footnotes to his stories, Carleton names the original people who lie behind particular characters and insists on the veracity and accuracy of details of rural Ulster life as he had known it in his youth.

Cairns Craig offers another angle on this dynamic between landscape and memory which he, too, sees as fundamental to regionalism. 'It is on the basis of [the] fusion of a particular environment with the particularity of the mind "possessed" by it that regionalism came to be founded', he observes: 'the territory of a particular region is a blank until infused by a memory which brings it to life by being stimulated to the recollection of its past.'¹² The opening of another of Carleton's stories, 'The Poor Scholar', is both illustrative of this process of 'infusing' a landscape with particularity through the act of recapitulating its past in comparison with its present, and also brings us directly into the world of the author's boyhood:

One day about the middle of November, in the year 18---, Dominick M'Evoy and his son Jemmy were digging potatoes on the side of a hard, barren hill, called Esker Dhu. The

¹¹ William Carleton, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (Dublin: W. Curry, 2 vols, 1844; facsimile reprint, Gerards Cross: Colin Smythe, with a preface by Barbara Hayley, 1990), vol. 1, p. 186.

¹² Cairns Craig, 'Scotland and the Regional Novel' in Snell (ed.), *The Regional Novel* (pp. 221-256), p. 243.

day was bitter and wintry, the men were thinly clad, and as the keen blast spread across the hill with considerable violence, the sleet-like rain which it bore along, pelted into their garments with pitiless severity. The father had advanced into more than middle age; having held, at a rack-rent, the miserable waste of farm which he occupied, he was compelled to exert himself in its cultivation, despite either obduracy of soil, inclemency of weather. The day, however, was so unusually severe, that the old man began to feel incapable of continuing his toil. ... The father paused to take breath, and supported by his spade, looked down upon the sheltered inland which, inhabited chiefly by Protestants and Presbyterians, rich and warm-looking under him.

'Why thin,' he exclaimed to the son – a lad about fifteen, - 'sure I know well I oughtn't to curse yez, anyway, you black set! an' yit, the Lord forgive me my sins, I'm almost timplted to give yez a volley, an' that from my heart out! Look at thim, Jimmy agra – only look at the black thieves! how warm an' wealthy they sit there in our own ould possessions, an' here we must toil till our fingers are worn to the stumps, upon this thievin' bent.'¹³

The plight of the M'Evoy's, condemned to eke out a living on poor mountain soil with a view of the prosperous fields in the valley far below, confronts them with both a visual and an experiential reminder of the history of the expropriation of Catholic land and of the displacement of the native population in this region. Their story, at once individual and typical, is inseparable from the landscape in which it is located where the legacy of the forceful imposition of colonial power in the past has been reflected in the lives of subsequent generations down to Dominick and Jemmy M'Evoy themselves. The scene also endorses the idea that 'the particular geography of a place can operate as a determining force in the lives of its inhabitants', affecting not only the material condition of their lives, but their attitudes and relationships.¹⁴

How, then, do these factors have particular significance for William Carleton and his fiction? Born in the townland of Prillisk, near the small town of Clogher in Co. Tyrone, probably in 1794, Carleton was the fourteenth and youngest child not of a peasant, as he asserted on occasion, but of a smallholder. Thus, although the family may not have had much social standing, nor were they among the poorest members of their community. The Clogher valley itself was relatively prosperous, and Carleton's life there prior to his departure for Dublin around 1817 coincided with 'a period of rapidly growing

¹³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, vol. 2, pp. 257-258.

¹⁴ O'Grady, 'Reading the Lay of the Landscape', p. 134.

population, of prolonged corn boom, of a vibrant flax industry and of developments in communication'.¹⁵ It was a society in which old traditions, customs and superstitions were commonplace, and where Irish was still widely spoken, although it was already under pressure that would become irresistible with the advent of the National Schools where instruction was all through English.¹⁶ The area was frequently the scene of violent sectarian incidents perpetrated by both the newly formed Protestant Orange Order, which was militantly anti-Catholic, and Catholic Ribbonmen who carried out acts of agrarian terrorism against Protestant farmers. One of Carleton's earliest memories recounted in his unfinished and posthumously published *Autobiography* (1896), and given fictional form in his novel, *Valentine M'Clutchy* (1845), was of a night-time raid on the family home by Orangemen allegedly searching for hidden weapons during which one of his sisters was physically assaulted. In addition, Carleton's boyhood coincided with heightened tensions in the country during and after the unsuccessful rising of the United Irishmen in 1798 against British rule in Ireland. The origins of the author's own rejection of violence and revolutionary politics may partly lie in his memories of these experiences.

In short, Carleton's youth was passed in a community which retained strong links to the past and was periodically disrupted by longstanding internal tensions rooted in its history, but which was also starting to change, and would be altered further by major events that affected the country as a whole over the course of his lifetime. These include the dissolution of the Irish Parliament in 1800, Catholic emancipation (1829), the spread of formal education and decline of the hedge schools, the impact of famine and emigration, the influence of the nationalist Young Ireland movement in the 1840s, the growth of more authoritarian Catholicism from the middle of the century, and the increasing erosion of the Irish language and native Irish culture. Even by the time he turned to fiction in the late 1820s, Carleton knew that the kind of people and lives he was representing in his stories were already passing into history, and this fact is fundamental to any consideration of him as a writer with a strong regional identity.

Moreover, just as that world was in transition, so Carleton's own life is marked by a series of profound and unsettling transitions: he was the country boy with a local

¹⁵ Jack Johnston, 'Carleton's Clogher' in Gordon Brand (ed.), *William Carleton: The Authentic Voice* (Gerards Cross: Colin Smythe, 2006) (pp. 108-124), p. 108.

¹⁶ This issue is central to Brian Friel's play, *Translations* (1990) which is set in a hedge school in the 1830s.

reputation for feats of physical prowess who made his home in the city and aspired to be a literary man; he swapped the north for the south and abandoned the Catholicism of his family for the Protestantism of the established Church of Ireland.¹⁷ Educated in the hedge schools of Tyrone, and at one time intended for the priesthood, he eventually wrote novels with introductory appeals to leading English politicians to address Ireland's problems, and he became the recipient of a belated literary pension towards the end of his life. As Foster has remarked: 'Carleton has paid the critical price in Ireland for straddling more often than any other writer the deep divisions that lie like geological faults across the Irish, and particularly the Ulster, psychic landscape.'¹⁸ The impact and cost of those 'deep divisions' are nowhere more apparent than in the introductory pages he wrote to *Traits and Stories* which reveal his tricky negotiations with his region, his country and his own position as a subject of empire.

Carleton's emergence as a writer resulted from his friendship with Rev. Caesar Otway, whom he met in Dublin. An evangelical Church of Ireland clergyman and the founder of two publications, the *Christian Examiner* (1826) and the *Dublin Penny Journal* (1832), Otway was an influence in Carleton's conversion to Protestantism, and published his first story, 'A Pilgrimage to Patrick's Purgatory' in the *Christian Examiner* and *Church of Ireland Gazette* in April 1828. Based on the author's youthful experience of a pilgrimage to Station Island in Lough Derg, it is marked by the beliefs of his mentor and was moulded to serve the purposes of Protestant evangelicalism by mocking the superstitions of Catholics and the alleged unscrupulousness of their priests. According to Otway himself, 'its success was decisive and instantaneous; it was rapidly followed by the story of "Father Butler", which appeared in the same periodical under the same signature of Wilton. From that hour the biography of Mr Carleton is in the annals of our

¹⁷ Carleton's change of church has attracted much attention, with critics divided in their views on whether this was a matter of conviction or an opportunistic move on the part of a man seeking to establish himself in Dublin (Protestant) literary society, but who remained a Catholic at heart. Marjorie Howes suggests that the question has been so prominent because Carleton's status as an ethnographer is at stake: 'If scholars conclude that Carleton is in some fundamental way an anti-Catholic writer, then his portraits of the Catholic country people begin to look increasingly like condescending stereotypes. If, on the other hand, scholars argue that he remained loyal to Catholicism on the sentimental level, a level usually characterized as emotional, unconscious, or paradoxical, it becomes possible to recuperate a kind of anthropological accuracy in his works.' ('Literary Religion: William Carleton', p. 27.)

¹⁸ Foster, *Forces and Themes in Ulster Fiction*, p. 17.

literature.¹⁹ A revised version of the first story, retitled 'The Lough Derg Pilgrim' and with the more lurid anti-Catholic elements toned down, later appeared in *Traits and Stories*. It is unclear whether the changes reflect a moderation of Carleton's own views or a determination to take control of his story, but the salient point is that it indicates how from the outset he was at the centre of pressures to make his fiction serve particular vested interests. He published a number of other pieces in periodicals over the next two years, but the first series of *Traits and Stories* appeared anonymously in 1830 and was well received. This was Carleton's real break-through publication, and he consolidated his achievement with a second series three years later, subsequently noting that 'not only were his volumes stamped with an immediate popularity at home, where they could be best appreciated, but [they were] awarded a very gratifying position in the literature of the day by the unanimous and not less generous verdict of the English and Scottish critics.'²⁰

In his preface to the 1830 volume, Carleton is at pains to establish a number of points which display an ambiguous combination of self-confidence and self-doubt, and perhaps a need to justify himself and his work to prospective readers: it as if he anticipates that his audience will find his stories alien and implausible. To this end he immediately begins with a defiant pre-emptory strike against any challenge to the veracity of the subject-matter, announcing that his material is authentically Irish – 'drawn by one born amidst the scenes he describes – reared as one of the people whose characters and situations he sketches' – and also original, especially in its regional specificity. 'The Author assumes', he declares:

'that in the ground he has taken, he stands in a great measure without a competitor; particularly as to certain sketches, peculiar, in the habits and manners delineated in them, to the Northern Irish. These last ... are characteristically distinct from the Southern or Western Milesians, as the people of Yorkshire are from the natives of Somerset; yet they are still as Irish, and as strongly imbued with the character of their country.'²¹

Carleton then positions himself as the interpreter of Irish history and regional community relations for the benefit of potential readers who 'perhaps may be sceptical

¹⁹ 'Caesar Otway on William Carleton' in Brand (ed.), *William Carleton The Authentic Voice* (pp. 17-28), p. 21.

²⁰ Carleton, 'Introduction' to *Traits and Stories* (1844), vol. 1, p. vi.

²¹ William Carleton, 'Preface' to the First Edition of *Traits and Stories* (1830), reprinted in Brand (ed.), *William Carleton The Authentic Voice* (pp. 9-11), p. 9.

as to the deep hatred which prevails among Roman Catholics in the north of Ireland, against those who differ from them in party and religious principles'.²² He reminds them of the consequences of the Ulster plantation for the indigenous population whom he describes as 'this race, surrounded by Scotch and English settlers', hiding 'amongst the mists of their highland retreats', amongst whom 'education, until recently, had made little progress; superstition and prejudice, and ancient animosity, held their strongest sway, and the Priests, the poor pastors of a poorer people, were devoid of the wealth, the self-respect, and the learning, which prevailed among their better endowed brethren of the South.'²³

From here Carleton moves to explain his cultural and moral aims. After first denying, in his phrase, 'subserviency to any political purpose whatever', he insists that his characters are represented with integrity and without any desire either to demonise or to idealise them, claiming that he has 'exhibit[ed] them as they really are', showing their vices, errors and superstitions, but also their candour, affection and faithfulness.²⁴ Then, in an overt display of flattery to the British establishment, he expresses the pious hope that:

'his own dear, native mountain people may, through the influence of education, by the leadings of purer knowledge, and by the fosterings of a paternal government, become the pride, the strength, and support of the British empire, instead of, as now, forming its weakness and reproach'.²⁵

The apparent volte face here highlights the dilemma of a writer who is aware of himself both as the native of a region and as a colonial subject, and also of the tension between these two positions. This arises through the ironic and paradoxical implication that it will be through casting off many of the very characteristics which distinguish the Irishness of the subjects of his stories – and which may make them interesting to readers – and by developing lives more congruent with approved imperial standards and aspirations, that northern Irish Catholics will acquire status and win respect among the English.

²² Carleton, 'Preface', p. 9.

²³ Carleton, 'Preface', p. 9. One might note in passing that there is no evidence of hostility towards the Catholic priesthood here. Indeed, the northern priests appear to be doubly oppressed – first, by anti-Catholicism and secondly by their relatively disadvantaged status compared with other Irish priests.

²⁴ Carleton, 'Preface', p. 10.

²⁵ Carleton, 'Preface', p. 10.

The dilemma is even more pronounced in the much longer introduction to the 'New Edition' of *Traits and Stories* published in 23 parts between 1842 and 1844, and then in two volumes in 1844. Here Carleton presented the definitive version of what he now somewhat disingenuously called 'the two unpretending volumes by a peasant's son' which had made him a leading Irish writer and had already appeared in a number of reprints and editions in the 1830s.²⁶ The status of the 'New Edition', which went through eleven impressions until 1870, is suggested by several important features. Apart from making revisions and adding the introduction which is his most extensive commentary on his own work, Carleton included numerous notes on Irish life, customs, beliefs, superstitions, religious practices and idioms: for instance, he glosses terms such as '*doodeen*' ('a short pipe'), '*yellow-legs*' ('a kind of potato') and '*gosther*' ('idle talk – gossip'), and provides English equivalents for Irish phrases which proliferate in his characters' speech.²⁷ Examples of these include: "*acushla agus asthore machree*" ('The very pulse and delight of my heart'), "*Manima Yea agus a wurrah*" ('My soul to God and the Virgin'), and "*Shudorth, a rogarah*" ('This to you, you rogue').²⁸ Other annotations are more personal: Shane Martin and Jemmy Tague, two of the party gathered in Ned M'Keown's house were, respectively, 'a rollicking, fighting, drinking butcher' and 'a good-humoured fellow, well-liked, and nobody's enemy but his own. Shane was called Kittogue Shane from being left-handed'; and Paddy Mellon, a very minor figure in 'The Battle of the Factions' was apparently 'the most famous shoemaker in the parish', although, Carleton adds, 'I am bound in common justice and honesty to say that so big a liar never put an awl into leather'.²⁹ Many of these notes have, as it were, a narrative life of their own, as do the extensive descriptions of landscapes and of cottage interiors within the stories, and they bear out Eagleton's perception that 'the populist authenticity, and the rhetorical play for the British reader' in *Traits and Stories* 'are not as antithetical as they may seem: simply to describe Irish popular life is to cater

²⁶ William Carleton, 'Introduction' to *Traits and Stories* (1844), vol. 1, p. vi.

²⁷ The first two words come from 'Ned M'Keown', and the third from 'Larry M'Farland's Wake', *Traits and Stories*, vol. 1, p. 7 and p. 10 respectively.

²⁸ The first phrase comes from 'Shane Fadh's Wedding', the second from 'The Party Fight and the Funeral' and the third from 'Phelim O'Toole's Courtship' in *Traits and Stories*, vol. 1, p. 79 and p. 190, and vol. 2, p. 227 respectively.

²⁹ See 'Ned M'Keown' and 'The Battle of the Factions' in *Traits and Stories*, vol. 1, p. 6 and p. 123 respectively.

to the anthropological curiosity of the outsider, which is why Carleton can relaxedly allow himself long passages of naturalistic observation which do little to promote the plot'.³⁰ The volumes were enhanced by etchings and woodcuts by eighteen well-known contemporary artists, including Phiz, Sibson, Macmanus, Wrightson and Lee, and they were published not only in Dublin by William Curry, but in London by William S. Orr.

Carleton's tone throughout the introduction shows how his confidence had grown since the first publication of his work. He is less defensive against potential criticism and now proudly projects the Irish peasantry as colonial citizens – 'an important and interesting part of the empire' – which contrasts with his earlier, more tentative view of their standing.³¹ He also declares that his first purpose is 'to prepare the minds of his readers especially those of the English and Scotch' – for the stories that follow, and this restated ambition to reach a wider audience on the British mainland is now linked to other aspirations.³² In particular, Carleton wants to contest stereotypical notions of the Irish as ridiculous both in character and language and he goes to some length to defend them against charges of stupidity, arguing that: 'The language of our people has been for centuries, and is up to the present day, in a transition state. The English tongue is gradually superseding the Irish ... This fact, then, will easily account for the ridicule which is, and I fear ever will be, heaped upon those who are found to use a language which they do not properly understand.'³³ The hybrid language spoken by many of Carleton's Clogher valley neighbours, and in other parts of Ireland, and which runs through much of the dialogue in his stories, is therefore not to be conflated with stupidity or foolishness, but understood as a consequence of colonial history. As might be expected in this pitch for a more sympathetic reception in England, Carleton takes an upbeat view of the ongoing development of Anglo-Irish relations in an age of scientific and industrial progress which has promoted better communications: 'Thus has mutual respect arisen from mutual intercourse, and those who hitherto approached each other with distrust, are beginning to perceive, that in spite of political or religious prejudices ... the truthful experience of life will in the event create nothing but good-

³⁰ Eagleton, 'Form and Ideology in the Anglo-Irish Novel', p. 207.

³¹ Carleton, 'Introduction' to *Traits and Stories*, vol. 1, p. i.

³² Carleton, 'Introduction', p. i.

³³ Carleton, 'Introduction', p. ii.

will and confidence between the countries.³⁴ These words highlight the conservatism of Carleton's politics and his determination to present himself as an exemplary subject of the empire, but the unintended irony of their publication on the eve of the great Irish famine of the 1840s is also undeniable.

Carleton does not regard the transitional state of language as the only source of English prejudice towards the Irish. 'For nearly a century we were completely at the mercy of our British neighbours,' he writes, 'who probably amused themselves at our expense with the greater licence, and a more assured sense of impunity, inasmuch as they knew we were utterly destitute of a national literature.'³⁵ Furthermore, he maintains that the former lack of publishing opportunities in Ireland led the most gifted writers to become 'absentees' in London where they were assimilated into the English literary tradition. Carleton's choice of the word 'absentees' is notable in this context, being the term commonly used for Irish landowners living extravagantly in English society funded by the expropriation of their tenants at home. Again, however, he takes an optimistic view of recent developments, highlighting especially the importance of the *Dublin University Magazine* founded by the lawyer and politician, Isaac Butt, in 1832.³⁶ In his opinion, this periodical had assisted in the birth of 'a national spirit that rose above the narrow distinctions of creed and party', creating a 'neutral spot' where 'the Roman Catholic Priest and the Protestant parson, the Whig, the Tory and the Radical, divested of their respective prejudices, can meet in an amicable spirit.'³⁷ The liberating potential of such a collaborative forum should not be underestimated, because it cut across the political and religious differences that so often polarised Irish society and inhibited Irish cultural coherence in the face of colonial influences. It is therefore unsurprising that Carleton predicts that the *Dublin University Magazine's* influence will advance the spread and appeal of literature, and, through its 'spirit of candour and generosity ... produce a most salutary effect among the educated classes of all parties, and consequently among those whom they influence'.³⁸ The importance

³⁴ Carleton, 'Introduction', p. iv.

³⁵ Carleton, 'Introduction', p. v.

³⁶ The *Dublin University Magazine* had regularly published Carleton's work, and his new edition of *Traits and Stories* was dedicated to Isaac Butt.

³⁷ Carleton, 'Introduction', p. vii.

³⁸ Carleton, 'Introduction', p. vii.

he attaches to redressing the lack of a national literature is in tune with the ideal of change through cultural nationalism promoted by Thomas Davis, editor of the Young Ireland movement's paper, the *Nation*, in this period. Crucially, Carleton accepts his own role and responsibility as a writer to contribute to this initiative, and the connection that emerges here between regional representation in his stories and the attempt to establish a national literature is particularly notable.

In a similar vein later in the century, W.B. Yeats chose to introduce a selection of *Stories of Carleton* (1889) as part of his own project of cultural nationalism, loftily declaring that 'The history of a nation is not in parliaments and battle-fields, but in what the people say to each other on fair-days and high days, and in how they farm, and quarrel, and go on pilgrimage. These things has Carleton recorded.'³⁹

By presenting Carleton as a custodian of the nation's past as well as a writer of fiction, Yeats not only reiterated the view of Thomas Davis, but that of the author in his own commentary: almost half of the 24 page introduction to *Traits and Stories* is devoted to an autobiographical account of his family background, upbringing and early experiences with the explicit intention of establishing his credentials as the recorder and interpreter of Irish character and rural life. In particular, he writes of his parents, each of whom, in Marjorie Howes' words, 'embodies a different conception of the peasantry and Irish folklore'.⁴⁰ His mother's reputation as a singer in Irish and as a renowned exponent of traditional keening for the dead links her to a receding culture, while his father's fluency in Irish and English, his prodigious memory, and his capacity as a seanachie or story-teller preserve the past and enable him to pass on the intimate regional history that so richly furnished his imagination. Recalling the rich variety of residual Irish stories and traditions in his home area, Carleton wrote that:

'even in my early youth, even beyond the walls of my own humble roof, they met me in every direction. It was at home, however, and from my father's lips in particular, that they were perpetually sounding in my ears. ... As a teller of old tales, legends and historical anecdotes he was unrivalled, and his stock of them was inexhaustible'.⁴¹

³⁹ W.B. Yeats, 'William Carleton', reprinted in W.B. Yeats, *Representative Irish Tales* (1891; Gerards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1979), with a Foreword by Mary Helen Thuente, p. 363.

⁴⁰ Howes, 'Literary Religion: William Carleton', p. 25.

⁴¹ Carleton, 'Introduction', p. ix.

This, he claims, was of 'peculiar advantage to me in after life, as a literary man' because it:

'enabled me in my writings to transfer the genius, the idiomatic peculiarity and the conversational spirit of the one language into the other, precisely as the people themselves do in their dialogue, whenever the heart or imagination happens to be moved by the darker or better passions.'⁴²

Joep Leerssen has also noted how Carleton used the account of his family to 'hallmark the value and authenticity of his tales', adding that in 'set[ting] up his parents as the very prototypes of ideal folklore subjects', he contributes to the process whereby the Irish peasantry began to be perceived not as the 'pauperized, brutish and sullen dregs of a dead old culture, full of disaffection and hatred for their new rulers', but as subjects of 'cultural interest'.⁴³ In Leerssen's words: 'They come to be seen, in Romantic, Grimm-like fashion, as the repository of quaint superstition and primordial folk and fairy tales.'⁴⁴ This is helpful in defining Carleton's own interstitial position between his remembered close world of his rural youth and the metropolitan, literary, Protestant world with its wider horizons and reach into urban and English markets where he lived his adult life without ever being fully assimilated into it. As the 'historian' of his people and a contributor to the making of a 'national literature', he is also quite consciously constructing that history and literature in a way that seeks to invoke authentic regional knowledge, experience and memories, and at the same time involves a canniness about what he needs to do to achieve literary and commercial success on a larger stage and with a wider and non-domestic audience.

Carleton has been an exemplary figure for more recent Irish writers, too. He was an important influence on the fiction of Benedict Kiely, whose *Poor Scholar* (1947) remains the definitive biography of the writer, while for the poet, John Montague, Carleton and his characters were almost touchable presences in his own boyhood in the 1930s. 'For a youngster growing up on the edge of the Clogher Valley the stories of William Carleton were not fiction, but fact', he wrote;

⁴² Carleton, 'Introduction', p. ix.

⁴³ Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), p. 163; p. 162.

⁴⁴ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p. 162. Leerssen takes this point further, seeing Carleton as a forerunner of numerous other nineteenth-century Irish writers who published collections of legends, stories and tales (e.g. Samuel Lover, Anna-Maria Hall, Speranza Wilde) and of folklorists such as Crofton Croker, Jeremiah Curtin, William Larminie and Douglas Hyde – see pp. 162-164.

'gradually one learnt the genealogy of the various houses, gathered a hint of the intricate law-cases and local feuds, saw Orange drummers practising before a tin-roofed lodge. There were people still alive who could remember Anne Duffy, the original of all his gentle heroines, the blind fiddler Micky MacRory, and in a famous fight at (sic) barn-dance only thirty years before two whole townlands had battered away until dawn was breaking, and there were no more untouched skulls.'⁴⁵

Although Montague's poetry embraced universal themes and drew upon his extensive experience of living in the United States and France, as well as his belief in the internationalism of literature, it also remained deeply embedded in the very landscape and regional history that had previously invigorated Carleton's imagination.⁴⁶

The inspirational influence of Carleton also extended to the most famous Irish writer of recent times, Seamus Heaney, who imagined his fellow Ulsterman and literary forebear as one of the ghosts he encounters on the road to Lough Derg in his long poem, 'Station Island'. In this seminal work, Heaney explores his passage from his own strongly regional origins in Co. Derry with which he never lost touch, and from religious, political and cultural pressures and expectations that his predecessor would have recognised and understood, to muster the courage required of a writer with aspirations to universality. The ghost is 'an aggravated man' – impatient and confrontational, suspicious of 'something ... defensive' in the poet's smile, but his parting advice simultaneously reflects Heaney's estimate of Carleton and the lesson that he takes from his example:

'... you have to try to make sense of what comes.
Remember everything and keep your head.

...

We are all earthworms of the earth, and all that
has gone through us will be our trace.'⁴⁷

In a variety of ways, therefore, the case of William Carleton is persuasively illustrative of, first, the enduring power and stimulus a particular region may give the creative

⁴⁵ John Montague, 'Tribute to William Carleton', *The Bell*, vol. xvii, no. 1, April 1952; reprinted in Brand (ed.), *William Carleton The Authentic Voice* (pp. 87-93), pp. 91-92. 'The Party Fight and the Funeral' in *Traits and Stories* vol. 1 recounts the kind of fight described by Montague.

⁴⁶ This is perhaps particularly true of Montague's major volume, *The Rough Field* (1972), a sequence of poems which offers an historical meditation on Ulster.

⁴⁷ Seamus Heaney, 'Station Island' in *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (London: Faber and Faber, 1990), p. 166; p. 167; p. 168.

imagination. Second, his work shows that a regional writer may also be a national writer, and that regionalism is not of necessity 'a shrinking from the world' but may be 'a starting-point from which to reach out to wider horizons' – a perception which is reflected in the work of other Irish writers whose own development was touched by Carleton's example.⁴⁸ And finally, we see in the writer's introductory reflections the anxieties and tensions generated not only by the transitions that shaped his own life, but by the obligation he felt to explain and justify Irish character in the face of his country's colonial history and in the hope of replacing English ignorance and contempt towards the natives of its oldest colony with more compassionate understanding and a will to address their grievances.



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⁴⁸ Robin Marsh, 'Carleton, John Hewitt and Regionalism' in Brand (ed.), *William Carleton The Authentic Voice* (pp. 393-410), p. 396.

Review: Karin Koehler, *Thomas Hardy and Victorian Communication: Letters, Telegrams and Postal Systems* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 260pp. ISBN 978-3-319-80490-3, £79.99.

ELEANOR SHIPTON

IN 1839, THE the passing of the Postal Reform Act would usher in the long-awaited 'Uniform Penny Post', which came into effect five months before Thomas Hardy's birth in 1840. This reform made the post office 'omnipresent in the daily lives of the Victorians, with local post offices, post boxes, and stamps [...] serving as tangible reminders of its ceaseless operations'.¹ Thus the letter as a site of individualism and self-expression, closely connected to the inception of the eighteenth-century novel, was challenged by the ubiquity of the government-run post office.² Advocated by Rowland Hill as a democratising, nation-making communication system, and by Elizabeth Barrett-Browning 'as the most successful revolution since the "glorious three days" of Paris', the penny post had significant and traceable impacts upon the Victorian literary imagination.³ Karin Koehler's monograph meticulously analyses this impact through the countless letters, notes, envelopes and missives in Hardy's fiction; she demonstrates Hardy's investment in lettered communication as a site through which to explore and expound the broader themes of his work, including questions of selfhood, the personal and collective, sexual politics, and the experience of rural life.

Thomas Hardy and Victorian Communication (2016) is split into nine chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. These analyse an extensive, and ambitious, range of Hardy's fiction, including major works such as *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), as well as critically-overlooked texts, such as *A Laodicean* (1881), and his short stories and poems.⁴ In her introduction, Koehler presents a comprehensive overview of the changes generated by the penny post in 1840, both in terms of the rhetoric surrounding the democratisation of postage and its

¹ Karin Koehler, *Thomas Hardy and Victorian Communication: Letters, Telegrams and Postal Systems* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), p.5-6.

² Koehler, p.8-9.

³ Koehler, p.4, 7, 3.

⁴ Koehler, p.16.

place in the cultural imagination. Koehler builds upon and originally contributes to recent scholarly research into the significance of the post office in nineteenth-century literature, including Elizabeth Meadows and Jay Clayton, Richard Menke, Laura Rotunno, and Kate Thomas. Koehler's monograph is unique in using this cultural materialist approach with a focus on one author, which provides the reader with an in-depth and sustained analysis of the importance of lettered communication across Hardy's literary works. Furthermore, she offers a significant contribution to Hardy scholarship; previous scholarship, she decisively argues, has not treated letters in Hardy's fiction seriously: the numerous letters that appear in his fiction 'are more than conventional plot devices [...] they are significant sites of engagement with the cultural, social, and psychological concerns at the heart of Victorian texts'.⁵ Her chapters consider the social and cultural implications of letter writing, including the repercussions of the shift from oral tradition to written culture on rural communities; the sexual double standards and the letter's implication in rights to privacy; the letter's (in)ability to represent authentic human identity; self-determination; and the implications of those left at the margins of the communication network.

Koehler's second chapter explores how Hardy's fiction challenged the rhetoric of equality, solidarity, and a new national community fostered by proponents of the penny post. Through her analysis of moments of written and oral communication in *The Trumpet-Major* (1882), *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), Koehler shows that, whilst Hardy's novels convey the important educational, social and cultural advances facilitated by the penny post, they also indicate 'a communal spirit for which an ever more networked society has not yet devised an adequate alternative'.⁶ In chapter three, Koehler utilises her cultural materialist approach in order to show Hardy's engagement with 'the double standard at the core of Victorian sexual politics', which granted men the freedom of privacy, but systematically denied it to women.⁷ Koehler shows how Eustacia Vye, along with Elfride Swancourt and Lucetta Templeman, in *The Return of the Native* (1878), *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1872) and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* respectively, are punished in 'their pursuit of self-fulfilment' through correspondence, as this very pursuit violates patriarchal

⁵ Koehler, p.11.

⁶ Koehler, p.42.

⁷ Koehler, p.53.

notions of female identity.⁸ Chapter four analyses the portrayal of the self in *Desperate Remedies* (1871), *Two on a Tower* (1882), *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876), and *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874). Though slightly more glancing in her analysis here—the number of texts make it difficult for Koehler to consider each in depth—she convincingly demonstrates Hardy's preoccupation with the ability of the letter to represent human identity. In these texts, she argues, 'Hardy insists that words on paper [...] have a permanence that necessarily clashes with the fluidity and mutability of human experience'.⁹

The next chapter focuses on a single text, *Jude the Obscure* (1895); here Koehler repositions the significance of letter-writing in this novel, and examines how Jude Fawley and Sue Bridehead use letters to negotiate and control the parameters of their 'respective romantic and sexual desires'.¹⁰ Rather than bringing these two characters closer together, Koehler demonstrates that Sue utilises the form of the letter to distance herself from Jude, and to resist patriarchal male control.¹¹ Here, Koehler's cultural materialist approach allows her to shine further light on the role of sexual politics in Hardy's novels; as the chapter proceeds to untangle Sue's written-self from that displayed in-person, Koehler demonstrates that, though Sue is able to freely articulate herself in letters, her dependence on this medium to convey her true feelings becomes symptomatic of her repression.¹² Chapter six considers Hardy's 'Novels of Ingenuity', *Desperate Remedies* and *A Laodicean*, and the positive and negative possibilities of an increasingly connected world. By placing these texts in comparison, she shows how the postal network in *Desperate Remedies* is vulnerable to manipulation due to its very uniformity and efficiency, while the space of the telegraph in *A Laodicean* allows the novel's female characters to express their independent subjectivities whilst 'protected from male interference'.¹³ She argues that in Hardy's 'Novels of Ingenuity', in which he was especially interested in modern structures and technologies, communication networks 'throw into relief concerns about the possibility of self-determined agency'.¹⁴

⁸ Koehler, p.74.

⁹ Koehler, p.80.

¹⁰ Koehler, p.23.

¹¹ Koehler, p.113.

¹² Koehler, p.116.

¹³ Koehler, p.146.

¹⁴ Koehler, p.133.

Chapter seven is perhaps Koehler's most persuasive chapter. Through the course of her original and thought-provoking analysis of missing and unread letters in *Jude the Obscure*, *The Woodlanders* (1887) and *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Koehler shows how Hardy turns these plot devices into 'poignant symbol[s] for the powerlessness and voicelessness of those born into the [...] wrong class and sex'.¹⁵ She re-reads the three letters written to Angel Clare by Tess, arguing that they become key symbols of Tess's loneliness, voicelessness and isolation.¹⁶ As her argument progresses, Koehler contests that, just as Hardy confronts Victorian sexual hypocrisy by challenging his readers to view Tess as pure regardless of her sexual experience, he becomes an accomplice in the 'denial of Tess's subjectivity'.¹⁷ As Tess's letter disappears under the rug, her narrative is completely excluded from a discourse framed and interpreted by men. Hardy's novel, she persuasively argues, simultaneously denounces and perpetuates the alienation of Victorian women from self-expression and -representation.¹⁸ In her last chapter, Koehler considers the 'epistolary ghosts' in Hardy's short story 'On the Western Circuit' and his poetry. She argues that the spaces between 'the correspondents' expectations and desires, their respective romantic and erotic fantasies' develop a life of their own, and become infused with meanings and signification beyond those originally anticipated by the correspondents, or indeed the external reader.¹⁹ Importantly, Koehler concludes here that lettered communication more often ends in 'division rather than connection', suggesting 'that [the] possibilities for meaningful interpersonal connection are fragile and ephemeral'.²⁰

Koehler comprehensively explores the possibilities of further avenues of research into lettered communication in Hardy's fiction in her conclusion, demonstrating the strength of her knowledge of the field and the significance of this project. Koehler's deft combination of close textual analysis and cultural materialism, as well as her attention to the wider themes of Hardy's works, indicates how a cultural materialist approach can provide new avenues of research in relation to broader concerns of nineteenth-century

¹⁵ Koehler, p.159.

¹⁶ Koehler, p.171.

¹⁷ Koehler, p.176.

¹⁸ Koehler, p.177.

¹⁹ Koehler, p.195.

²⁰ Koehler, p.208, 207.

literature, such as the representation of time, embodiment, and the British Empire.²¹ *Thomas Hardy and Victorian Communication* is a comprehensively-researched and readable monograph. It persuasively demonstrates Hardy's use of lettered communication as an intentional literary device that furthered his literature's plea for social and cultural change. Koehler's cultural materialist approach not only makes this an important addition to Hardy scholarship, but also provides a methodologically compelling book for any scholar with an interest in communication technologies and their impact and legacies in the literary imagination.



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²¹ Koehler, p.212-213.

Review: Bennett Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 365pp. ISBN 978-1-107-02044-3, £90.00.

ROGER HANSFORD

REFLECTING INTERDISCIPLINARY TRENDS in Victorian Studies, musicology, and the humanities generally, Bennett Zon's book offers new contexts for understanding an array of historical individuals, from the early ethnomusicologists Carl Engel and Sourindro Mohun Tagore, to the plainchant apologist Reverend Henry Formby.¹ Zon's biographical groundwork gives him good ammunition to assess why Victorian musicology did not defeat contemporary claims of Britain being a 'Land without Music', and he usefully outlines the history of this epithet.² Victorian Britain was already known as a music culture on the defensive: as Zon summarises, increasing secularisation was placing popular music and instrumental genres in competition with more traditional religious vocal repertoire.³ The re-evaluation of musical life and musicology in this monograph presents some possible reasons for the derogatory maxim's pertinence and survival: shortcomings in Victorian music history and music biography, together with a concert culture that was too London-centred, and in which – despite previous efforts by Purcell and Dunstable – foreign music dominated.⁴ Zon acknowledges the background of musico-literary research into nineteenth-century culture; while not alone among humanities scholars who investigate Victorian science, he significantly extends readers' understanding by drawing theories of evolution into musicology, where he interrogates Victorian history and biography to draw significant conclusions.⁵ Providing

¹ Note the growth during the last decade of academic journals combining arts and sciences: *Music and Science* (established 2019); *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research* (est. 2017); *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities* (est. 2015); *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* (est. 2011); *Journal of Literature and Science* (est. 2008).

² Bennett Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p.222–5 & p.237–8.

³ *Ibid.*, p.175.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.222–4, p.248.

⁵ Some examples of existing publications in this area (not all by musicologists) include: Ruth Solie, "'Tadpole Pleasures': *Daniel Deronda* as Music Historiography,' in *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 2004), pp.153–86; Delia da Sousa Correa, *George Eliot, Music and Victorian Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003);

a model for structuring studies of the nineteenth century according to influential contemporary scientific theories, Zon's monograph is well-organised, clearly argued, and entertaining to read, immersing the reader in Victorian literary culture.⁶

Non-Darwinian Theoretical Framework

Thus in place of the older image of the evolutionary *ladder*, unidirectional and culminating in an evident (human) pinnacle, the newer Darwinian thinking substituted the *tree*, branching in various directions that were unpredictable and potentially infinite in number.⁷

Zon's research for some time has been aimed at the cultural-historical implications of science and disciplinarity.⁸ As he explains in *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, a distinction between Charles Darwin's notoriety and the specific content of his publications can be 'difficult to disentangle in the evolutionary vortex of Victorian culture'.⁹ Appearing against a backdrop of other 'developmental models', Darwin's theory of evolution showed that random elements dictated survival, meaning notions of a teleological development of species were in fact non-Darwinian.¹⁰ As far as studies of Victorian culture reflect its zeitgeist, Zon distances himself not only from Darwinian approaches undertaken before the theoretical watershed, but even from 'inadvertently

Phyllis Weliver, *Women Musicians in Victorian Fiction: Representations of Music, Science and Gender in the Leisured Home* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); and Alisa Clapp-Itnyre, 'Sexual Songs and Darwinian Dances: The Eroticism and Repression of Folk Music in the Novels of Thomas Hardy', in *Angelic Airs, Subversive Songs: Music as Social Discourse in the Victorian Novel* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002), pp.149–182.

⁶ For a noteworthy precedent to Zon's eclectic approach, see Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Glassworlds: Glass Culture and the Imagination, 1830–1880*, rpr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁷ Solie, "Tadpole Pleasures": *Daniel Deronda* as Music Historiography', p.156.

⁸ See Zon's co-editorial work with Bernard Lightman: *Evolution and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) and *Victorian Culture and the Origin of Disciplines* (forthcoming). One of Zon's recent book chapters is 'Evolution' in Daniel Whistler's *The Edinburgh Critical History of Nineteenth-Century Christian Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017).

⁹ Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, p.13. See also Bennett Zon, 'The "Non-Darwinian" Revolution and the Great Chain of Musical Being', in Bernard Lightman & Bennett Zon, eds, *Evolution and Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.196–226.

¹⁰ Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, p.11–12.

non-Darwinian' approaches.¹¹ Zon introduces his 'purposefully non-Darwinian' study by stating:

In my case this undertaking represents a conscious development from purely historical evolutionary interests found in *Music and Metaphor in Nineteenth-Century British Musicology* (2000) and *Representing Non-Western Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2007) to the more overtly theorized non-Darwinian position of this book.¹²

Although Zon adopts a theoretical approach in contrast to his earlier books and to other scholars of evolutionary thought, the links to his previous research are clearly maintained, as shown by citations of his own work within the 2017 bibliography.¹³

Progressive Contents: The Great Chain of Being

Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture is organised around a central, non-Darwinian understanding of Victorian evolutionary science: the Great Chain of Being. This ancient concept took different organisms of nature, from the simplest to the most sophisticated examples, and arranged them in sequence from lowest to highest. Zon follows the Great Chain, structuring his account of Victorian musico-scientific interactions by dealing first with animals, then primitive humans, then children, then humans of artistic genius and finally God and the transcendental.¹⁴ Zon looks to Arthur O. Lovejoy – whose ideas from *The Great Chain of Being* (1936) are allowed to 'freely permeate' Zon's book – and Lovejoy is referenced in Zon's Introduction and Epilogue, giving the Great Chain what Zon calls an 'inherent circularity'.¹⁵

Chapter 1 (Zoomusicology) uses music to dispel supposed myths of deep antagonism between science and religion, considering Victorian zoology as embodied in zoo and museum layouts and how this reflected contemporary ideas concerning

¹¹ Ibid., p.11–15. A key text of influence was Peter J. Bowler's *The Non-Darwinian Revolution: Reinterpreting a Historical Myth* (Baltimore, MA. & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

¹² Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, p.14–15.

¹³ Bennett Zon, *Representing Non-Western Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2007); Martin Clayton & Bennett Zon, eds, *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s–1940s: Portrayal of the East* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Bennett Zon, *Music and Metaphor in Nineteenth-Century British Musicology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000); Bennett Zon, *The English Plainchant Revival* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, p.357–8.

¹⁴ Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, p.20–41.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.4.

animal responses to music. A particular focus is the study of birdsong and how Victorian scientists and theologians often shared common ground when interpreting its transformative musical powers. This chapter establishes the Great Chain of Being as a theory linking animals, humans and the spiritual world; however, Zon is not alone among scholars who discern music's associations with the metaphysical in romantic culture, including metaphorical portrayals of avian creatures as sirens.¹⁶ Chapter 2 (Ethnomusicology) shows the influence of evolutionary theories on early comparative musicology in Britain, although it is not – and does not purport to be – the most detailed among histories of ethnomusicology.¹⁷ While Darwin's concept of 'common descent' made all human races equal, British society harboured imperial ambitions generally more favourable towards Spencerian Social Darwinism, in which some societies were seen as less evolved and therefore musically inferior to the Western classical tradition. However, Zon shows how Charles Samuel Myers' understanding of variation would steer Victorian ethnomusicology towards its relativist turn.

In Chapter 3 (Folk Musicology), Zon examines the way E.B. Tylor's doctrine of 'survivals' influenced how folklore was defined by the Folk-Lore Society, and communicated in the organisation of early folk song collections. Zon re-interprets the work of Cecil Sharp – traditionally subject to harsh Marxist critique – within his own closer reading of the song collector and editor's intentions to read folk song itself as part of an evolution of music. Thus Zon helpfully re-opens scholarly discussion about nineteenth-century folk song, dating the origin of the term to an anonymous *Athenaeum* article of 1847, which contradicts Alisa Clapp-Itnyre's point that folk song collections appeared from the early 1800s¹⁸. Zon's readers are impoverished by his omission of work by Matthew Gelbart, who traces a gradual movement beginning in the eighteenth century towards the establishment of separate folk and art music

¹⁶ Roger Hansford, "'Her Voice is Hovering o'er my Soul": Siren Singers and Received Intersections in Fiction and Song, 1830–1850', in *Figures of the Imagination: Fiction and Song in Britain, 1790–1850* (Abingdon & New York: Taylor & Francis, 2017), pp.179–226.

¹⁷ For a more comprehensive account of the development of ethnomusicology, see Bruno Nettl, *Nettl's Elephant: On the History of Ethnomusicology* (Urbana, Springfield & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

¹⁸ Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, p.119; Clapp-Itnyre, 'Sexual Songs and Darwinian Dances,' p.150.

categories by c.1850, so it remains for future studies of folk song and evolution to bring Gelbart's scholarship into play.¹⁹

Zon's Chapter 4 (Music Pedagogy) draws on some familiar aspects of music education in Victorian Britain, with over-reliance on Bernarr Rainbow's *The Land without Music* (1967), but in the context of theories of evolution and contemporary views of childhood. At this point the importance of 'recapitulation' in nineteenth-century thought is introduced, which Zon explains as 'the biological relation of the individual to the whole'.²⁰ This chapter highlights the influence of recapitulation on educational theories – piano and vocal pedagogy, including Tonic Sol-fa, are examined in the light of philosophies by key educationists: Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, Friedrich Froebel and Herbert Spencer. Teachers' specific concerns to move learners from initial basic concepts to higher artistic appreciation, morality and Christian fulfilment brought the Great Chain of Being into a particular educational context, in addition to its associations with ontogenies and phylogenies of music and musicians.

Ruth Solie, like Zon inspired by Peter Bowler (1988), has already acknowledged that Victorian historiography was influenced by an expanding but often 'confused' understanding of evolutionary processes that heavily inflected historical writing, social science and arts criticism in the age that firmly wanted to believe in 'progress'.²¹ In Chapters 5 (Music Biography) and 6 (Music History) of *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, Zon's focus moves to British composers as higher organisms of the Great Chain. Examining methodological agendas and examples of biographies and music histories up to and including the nineteenth century, Zon explains how British publications addressed the 'Land without Music' claim and to what extent they were successful. Although music at the time was understood to harbour redemptive or moral qualities and – under the influence of texts such as Reverend H.R. Haweis' *Music and Morals* (1871) – to be reaching its developmental apogee, the product of highly-evolved

¹⁹ Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of "Folk Music" and "Art Music": Emerging Categories from Ossian to Wagner* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), especially p.10 & p.111–49.

²⁰ Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, p.222. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines biological recapitulation as, 'the appearance during embryonic development of successive forms resembling those of the organism's evolutionary predecessors', and musical recapitulation as 'part of a movement [in sonata form] . . . in which themes from the exposition are restated'. Della Thompson, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 9th edition. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.1145.

²¹ Solie, "'Tadpole Pleasures": *Daniel Deronda* as Music Historiography', p.156.

beings, British composers had failed to compete successfully against their continental counterparts.²² Zon concludes that Victorian composer biographies – ‘the work of Edward Holmes, C. Hubert H. Parry and others, tracing the process of biographical transformation from Carlylean Great Man to Spencerian Fittest Survivor’ – did not address the ‘Land without Music’ critique and neither did they follow the Darwinian rejection of recapitulation, failing to understand that individual lives could not necessarily portray a picture of national greatness.²³ Zon explains how Victorian music history, focused on notions of genius, creation and invention, looked back to a glorious British musical past as part of what he terms an ‘apologetic’ approach in contrast with developmental models from general history in the period.

In Chapter 7 (Music Theology), Zon culminates his study by taking readers to the top of the evolutionary Great Chain, to God himself, only to supplant the deity in his Epilogue with the ultimate philosophical superiority (after Walter Pater) of music and musicology. Considering the immanence of human originality in liturgical music – the way genres such as oratorio, plainchant and hymns embodied Christological theology – Zon’s chapter explores the relative and absolute in Victorian musical culture, specifically their relation to contemporary concepts of spiritual progress. Zon suggests that the emotional quality of music, which could elicit in humans a ‘feeling of divine oneness’, was a factor for Christians when, ‘[i]n scientific terms the (relative) ontogeny of Jesus recapitulates the (absolute) phylogeny of Christ’.²⁴ In this chapter, clearly influenced by Zon’s understanding of plainchant in its theological context, and despite a disappointingly superficial gloss on hymns and Elgar’s *Dream of Gerontius*, liturgical music is treated as mediator between theology and science to show how evolutionary theories permeated Victorian society.

Like the Great Chain of Being, the content and organisation of Zon’s book has a genuine sense of progression: a graded series of topics is arranged systematically, moving incrementally as if ascending from the simplest organisms to the most complex, spiritually-complete and sophisticated forms of being. From the inherent potentiality of ideas generated at the lowest levels – whether through chance, fitness or aspiration – the fructification and achievement of the finale is reached, a truly eschatological

²² Zon, *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture*, p.209–210.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.192, p.224.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.267–8.

conceptual destination. Music's qualities of communication, emotional engagement, universality and transcendence, although far from absent in previous scholarly discourse, are brought to the fore. Through music, Zon's series of liminal figures – songbird, savage, folk musician, child, musical genius, national hero, and deity – are linked to create a narrative not merely of upgrowth and improvement but succession, recurrence and reappearance. *Evolution and Victorian Musical Culture* portrays a society in which music was integral to the spiritual progress and interconnectedness of all its participants. Zon argues that notions of historiography and scientific progress were infused within Victorian literary culture – which he exhibits in all its plenitude – to depict organic change but also residual remnants, progressive trajectories and recapitulatory cycles.



BIOGRAPHY: Roger Hansford's research interests revolve around nineteenth-century romanticism, particularly keyboard and vocal music in Victorian Britain and their literary contexts. At University of Southampton, Roger was among the early supporters of the Southampton Centre for Nineteenth-Century Research, and a teaching assistant for the undergraduate course 'Materials of Music History, 1500–1900'. He has presented papers at the Biennial Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music, the Biennial Conference on Music in Nineteenth-Century Britain, and at University of Southampton's 'Other Voices Study Day'. Roger holds a Post-Graduate Certificate in music education, and gained distinction for his MMus in Musicology, including the analytical project 'Narrative Structure in Chopin's Ballades: Large-scale Romantic Works and the "Problem" of Sonata Form'. His doctoral research attracted funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council and led to the 2017 monograph *Figures of the Imagination: Fiction and Song in Britain, 1790–1850* (Taylor & Francis).

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Review: 'Regionalism Across the World in the Long Nineteenth Century'. Southampton Centre for Nineteenth Century Research Conference, University of Southampton, 19 – 21 September 2018.

SOPHIE WELSH

THE STUDY OF space and place, especially within nineteenth-century studies, has received considerable attention over the last two decades.¹ Regionalism, or the conception and mythology of regions, is a fundamental way in which people have situated themselves within national and global spaces, particularly as regions were being variously bounded and blurred over the course of the long nineteenth century. The Southampton Centre for Nineteenth-Century Research's conference in September 2018 contributed to this field by presenting papers which explored the social, political, cultural and economic factors which contributed to the growth and characteristics of regionalism. The conference was interdisciplinary and international both in its range of speakers, and in the panels and regions chosen for the papers, which also crossed disciplinary and geographical boundaries. The panels were divided into travel and tourism, gender, politics, empire, regions and nations, the West Country, print networks and literature, but several prevalent themes concerning regionalism crossed the boundaries of these panels in a way which was pertinent to the theme of the conference. These themes included, but were not limited to, the regional in opposition to the central, the globality of regions, and the ways in which regional spaces and identities are constructed.

The construction of regionalism was the subject, for example, of the talk given by the keynote speaker. According to Matthew Townend, the scholarly and popular medievalist enthusiasms of many Victorians were directed towards local or regional ends.² It was hugely enlightening, therefore, that the keynote speech, given by Dr Fiona Edmonds, medieval historian and Director of the Regional Heritage Centre at Lancaster University, offered a historiography of nineteenth-century medieval scholarship. As Andrew Hinde's conference paper, which applied a 'long view' approach in discussing

¹ Isobel Armstrong, 'Space as Experience and Representation in the Long Nineteenth Century', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 17 (2013), p.1.

² Matthew Townend, 'Victorian Medievalisms', in *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Poetry*, ed. by Matthew Bevis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 170.

the regional patterns of Victorian England and Wales, also argued, Edmonds contended that we must look further back in history to understand regional formations and nineteenth-century ideas of regionalism, particularly as the Victorians themselves were so concerned with searching their medieval pasts to delineate regional identities. Her paper, 'The Myth of Regions? Nineteenth-Century Interpretations of Northern England's Medieval Past' revealed the ways in which many British regions lacked permanent boundaries, a point demonstrated by maps from several different sources and historical periods to establish how the spaces of Britain had been variously divided and regionalised according to different perspectives. She consequently argued that as regional landscapes lacked a degree of integrity and uniformity, they were dependent on nineteenth-century myth-making through interpretations of local medieval histories. The fact that so much collective effort was put into constructing and reinforcing regionalism in the nineteenth century, and that it lay at the heart of the medievalist revival movement as Townend contends, suggests that regionalism was a fundamental way in which Victorians conceived not only of national and global spaces, but also of their own selfhood within those larger arenas.

Regionalism therefore merits further consideration to fully situate its importance within Victorian studies. The papers given at this conference all contributed to this effort. It was particularly striking that many heterogenous papers in their discussions of regionalism highlighted a binary of regional purity in opposition to metropolitan corruption. For example, Katie Holdway, Angelique Richardson, Leonard Baker and Margu rite Corporaal all presented in different panels, yet each cited this binary as one of the ideas behind nineteenth-century regionalism. Regionalism in this form is in part responding to anxieties over modern industrialisation threatening historic agriculturalism, as the papers given by Holdway and Richardson suggested. Other papers which explored this binary expanded on the idea of an authentic regionalism or a conception of regions as embodying true national character. In his paper entitled 'West Country Scum: Nineteenth-century National Politics, Local Ritual and Space in the English South-West,' Baker highlighted the attitude from counties such as Somerset and Dorset towards 'foreign Tories' who were defined as such not by their geographical locations but by their actions. Baker here cited the self-conscious idea of regions as sites of moral purity in opposition to the metropole as a source of corruption. Corporaal also argued that Irish regions, especially in the west, were interpreted as sites which

expressed an authentic national character from which many Irish had become disconnected through English cultural imperialism. In this case, the imperial centre, rather than simply a metropolitan one, has a corrupting influence on national character which must necessarily be rediscovered in remote regions. In the nineteenth-century, as these two papers show, regions were politicised to various ends, including working towards nationalist purposes. This discussion more broadly illuminated the anxieties at the heart of some regionalist writings which saw the modern industrialisation of the centre as a corrupting influence on the idealised purity of remote, rural regions within the wider context of globalisation.

However, as this dichotomy sets up London, or the centre, as the opposite of the regional, it ignores the unique regionalism of the metropole itself. This is problematic in the field of Victorian Studies because many nineteenth-century novelists, such as Charles Dickens or George Gissing, were understanding and constructing the unique characteristics of the expanding region of London within other frameworks of nineteenth-century regionalism. It is refreshing, therefore, that this binary understanding of the metropolitan and the provincial was not the only method of defining regionalism across the conference papers, and that this possible reduction of regionalism was challenged, for example, by Daniel Brown's paper on 'Macaulay's New Zealander' which treated London as a region in his exploration of Victorian assumptions about its cultural geography. Angelique Richardson's paper also revealed that the dichotomy between metropolitan corruption and regional purity was not consistent across treatments of regionalism by nineteenth-century writers, through her comparative analysis of Sarah Grand and Thomas Hardy's depictions of regional spaces. Whilst Grand's regionalism lacks economic specificity and material reality in order to create a myth of pure rural England, Hardy's regionalism reveals rural spaces to be historically specific rather than naturally organic and highlights local individualism in order to challenge the nostalgic idolisation of rural spaces particularly prevalent towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Another way in which the idea of the purity of regions was challenged across the conference was to situate regions within the global and to investigate the real and ideological networks which connected regional spaces to wider spaces. In her paper on 'The New Woman in Britain and the Arab World at the fin de siècle,' Asma Char argued that freedom of movement across boundaries in the Arab World prior to the Sykes-

Picot Agreement in 1916 and the Balfour Declaration in 1917 enabled a united Arab regional identity to emerge. The regional Arab identity, Char argues, superseded other identities and allowed the New Woman movement to develop through inter-regional marriages, the periodical press and access to Western education which aided the transfer of feminist ideologies across global spaces. Char's paper also demonstrated how, in the global sphere, groups of countries can be treated as regions.

Along this strain, other papers discussed the fluidity of regional borders and the system of networks across the world in the nineteenth century which worked within and across regions. David Finkelstein, for example, explored the transglobal network of typographical trade unions, while Eleanor Shipton argued that the growth of the national postal network relied on diverse regional communities. Laura Cox's paper drew a thought-provoking comparison between Georgina Grove's challenge of the boundaries of form (such as diary entries and travel writing) and her freedom of movement across the boundaries of various spaces. One could therefore also read from Cox's paper a parallel between Grove's diary passages and her physical passages across spaces through global networks which helped to shape various regional identities.

One way in which people in the nineteenth century conceptualised and negotiated regional landscapes was to construct fictional regions. In her analysis of Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* alongside Shen Congwen's *Long River*, Yuejie Liu revealed some of the ways regional spaces are constructed, for example through maps, specific local ecology, and particular myths, the latter of which was also emphasised by the keynote speech, as has been mentioned above. In another panel, Katie Holdway used Isobel Armstrong's recent model of spatial theory in her analysis of George Gissing's *Demos* to push our understanding of why regional spaces were constructed in nineteenth-century fiction. Gissing, she argued, uses regional space as a stage on which to dramatize the artificiality of class relations and explore potentialities of agency. This leads us to thinking about how regional landscapes are in turn used to construct identities. Jonathan Memel, for example, demonstrated how Florence Nightingale's historical identity is being re-read in regional terms, particularly emphasising her connection to the East Midlands. This self-conscious construction of regional identity is part of an AHRC-funded project 'Florence Nightingale Comes Home for 2020' on which Memel is currently a Research Fellow, and further emphasises the

understanding that nineteenth-century conceptions of selfhood were often understood regionally.

Regionalism, the papers at the conference argued, was therefore fundamentally a way of understanding and constructing one's place and identity within an expanding conception of global space in the nineteenth century. The interdisciplinary nature of the conference reflected the idea of regions as interdependent, and how wider national and global spaces and networks help to construct regional identities. The variety of papers, presenting multiple narratives of regionalism, demonstrated the elusiveness of the term 'region' and regionalism more broadly, by revealing that, in the nineteenth century, regions were understood in some cases as separate, secluded spaces which are 'bounded and mappable' and in others as networked, global spaces with permeable boundaries, depending on whose construction of selfhood was under discussion.³



BIOGRAPHY: Sophie Welsh is a first-year PhD student in English at the University of Exeter and University of Southampton working on Hardy, Wessex and the Wider World. Her academic interests lie in space and place, historiography, and archives. She is the recipient of an AHRC SWW DTP Collaborative Doctoral Award and so aside from her project on Hardy's Wessex landscape she also works with her sponsors, the Dorset County Museum and Dorset History Centre, in public engagement.

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³ Penny Fielding, 'Regionalisms', in *Late Victorian into Modern*, ed. by Laura Marcus, Michèle Mendelssohn, and Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 293.

Romance, Revolution & Reform Issue 2: Resistance

Issue 2 of our journal, on the theme of resistance, is due out in January 2020. If you are interested in submitting an article for that edition, please do get in touch. Full details about our Call for Submissions are below. The closing date for first drafts is 23rd June.

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Romance, Revolution and Reform Call for Submissions: Resistance

Resistance runs like a current through our society, and our past. For better and for worse, resistance has risen to challenge change at vital turning points in history; it has caused internalised struggles within individuals or communities; and has led to the creation of new societies and political orders. Yet whilst resistance is associated with conflict, and upheaval, it also manifests itself in historiographical, political and cultural discourses. These revealing, often fraught contexts offer an opportunity for rich scholarly discussion and are particularly pertinent to the long-nineteenth century: an era in which clashes between rapid change and fierce resistance were apparent in literature, politics, economics, conflict, music and the arts, becoming a part of the very social and cultural fabric of the epoch.

RRR is an interdisciplinary research journal for the Humanities and Social Sciences in the long Nineteenth Century (1789-1914). It works with the Southampton Centre for Nineteenth Century Research, to promote rigorous scholarly discussion into the period. RRR adopts an instantaneous open access publication policy and welcomes papers from researchers at any stage in their career. RRR's editorial board is led by postgraduates, with support from academics, and particularly seeks to support PGRs, whilst employing a rigorous double-blind review process by the most appropriate experts.

Papers are invited of between 4,000 and 8,000 words on any aspect of resistance during the period. Potential topics could include resistance within and between communities; resistance to systems or ideals; discussions of scholarly consensus and debate; conflict; or resistance through cultural media, including literature, music, art, and languages. We also welcome reviews of up to 1,500 words discussing recent publications, conferences, exhibitions or other events engaging with the long-nineteenth century.

The closing date for submissions is 17:00 on Sunday 23rd June 2019.

To submit an article or review, please email RRR@soton.ac.uk

Closing Statement

ZACK WHITE
(Editor-in-Chief)

It is a huge privilege to close this inaugural issue of *Romance, Revolution & Reform*. From the journal's genesis to the publication of Issue 1 has been an eighteen-month odyssey, which at every turn has embodied the Duke of Wellington's claim that 'all the business of war, and indeed all the business of life, is to endeavour to find out what you don't know by what you do'. I hope that you will feel, as I do, that *RRR* is not only a worthy initiative, but that this issue emphatically demonstrates the value and viability of the ambitious vision which underpins our work. Certainly, from my perspective, working with scholars, both established and emerging, from a wide range of disciplines, and seeing their fascinating research develop into high quality articles has been as rewarding as it has been inspiring.

However, this is, of course, only the beginning of what I trust will be a long and happy life for *RRR*. In the coming months, we will be developing our network, which already covers two continents, even further. A number of fascinating books are currently being reviewed for the next issue, and we are already in discussion with scholars about publishing their work. If you have a concept for an article which you would like to discuss with the editorial team, I would urge you to get in touch. The supportive environment which we pride ourselves on providing for our authors starts from the very earliest stages of the process.

The *RRR* team will also be expanding the research environment that surrounds the journal. In the coming weeks we will be developing a monthly bulletin, in which we will provide updates on nineteenth-century related events and developments across the humanities. If you would like to include something in this bulletin, which could range from a CfP for a conference or advert for an event, to details of funding opportunities and even job openings, then be sure to email us.

On 22nd May, following a generous funding award by the University of Southampton's Festival of Doctoral Research, we will be proudly working in association with the Southampton Centre for Nineteenth Century Research (SCNR) to hold a

research symposium on 'Resistance'. The SCNR will be holding further events throughout the year, including roundtable discussions, evening lectures and PGR forums. You can find out more at www.southampton.ac.uk/scnr/index.page.

To stay up to date with *RRR* news, you can sign up to our mailing list by emailing rrr@soton.ac.uk, and follow us on twitter (our handle is @rrrjournal). For more information about forthcoming events and exciting opportunities you can also check our website (www.rrrjournal.com), where you will also be able to find full details of our policies, including our mission statement, GDPR compliance, submission handling policy, guidelines for submission, and complaints procedure.

As Editor-in-Chief, I cannot close the first issue of *RRR* without thanking my brilliant editorial board. *RRR*'s genesis was a long and complex process. Though, as the inaugural Editor-in-Chief, I am enormously proud of how the journal has been able to establish a unique identity, I am under no illusion that it has only done so thanks to the continued support of my team. Whilst, in truth, every member of the board is deserving of thanks, there are a few who I would particularly like to single out. Firstly, Professor Mary Hammond (our Lead Academic Editor) who embraced my ambitious vision when I first discussed the concept of *RRR* with her in October 2017 and who has been forthright in her support ever since. Professor Andrew King has brought his boundless energy to the editorial board and offered a wealth of sage advice, which has significantly improved the way in which we operate. Emma Barnes has been an ongoing and enthusiastic advocate of the journal, and has invested huge amounts of her time to ensure that the journal has been published on schedule. It would also be remiss of me not to mention Dr Andy Hinde, who at one stage offered to fund the journal's website himself in order to protect our founding principle of Open Access, and Dorothy Byatt, who patiently appraised our policies and recommended a myriad of alterations to increase the rigour of our practices. Finally, but really most importantly, I want to pay tribute to the journal's Deputy Editor and co-founder Katie Holdway. In literally hundreds of hours of meetings and complex negotiations she has demonstrated a tenacity and patience which few can match. It is no exaggeration to say that without her, *RRR* would never have emerged into the light.

Zack White

April 2019