

The Roots of Reform: Vegetarianism and the British
Left, c.1790-1900

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Abstract

For much of the twentieth century, the history of the Left was dominated by a Marxist historiography on the one hand, and accounts of the development of parliamentary socialism on the other. Through this, the great historical diversity of leftist thought and activity was neglected. In particular, 'ethical' and libertarian socialist ideas received little serious attention, as did the role of lifestyle politics in shaping leftist tactics and identities. This, however, has begun to change, with an increasing scholarly and public interest in such ideas, particularly regarding the politics of diet.

This thesis provides the first study of the role of the vegetarian/vegan diet within radical and leftist belief systems from the French Revolution to the socialist revival of the late nineteenth century. It explores how and why many on the Left incorporated the diet into their larger ideology, and how this developed over the period. It investigates the extent to which vegetarian-leftist ideas formed a distinct intellectual tradition, probing continuity between exponents, and assessing how far individuals were conscious of their beliefs as part of a broader contemporary, or historical, body of thought. This is based upon an analysis of the writings of numerous vegetarian-leftist individuals, both familiar and relatively unknown, situated within the changing social, political, and scientific contexts which served to shape their ideas.

Ultimately, this thesis proposes that vegetarianism has been a constant presence in the intellectual and cultural life of the British Left, and has specifically developed as part of ethical and libertarian socialist, as well as left-feminist, thought and practice. It demonstrates how the diet functioned for many leftists as a means to advance a broader set of beliefs, revealing the nature of more holistic forms of progressive thought in this period and illuminating the origins of the diet's connection to contemporary progressive politics.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author.

This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other,

University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Introduction

‘And those blokes who call vegetarianism faddish just aren’t aware of the history of ethical vegetarianism! People have always challenged the Regime of Blood!’ – Howard Williams, 1883.

In 1935, towards the end of his life, the vegetarian socialist Henry Stephens Salt looked back with gratification upon the derisory jibe of a hostile journalist that he was nothing more than ‘a compendium of the cranks’.¹ Indeed, Salt felt that this remark, although meant to insult him and dismiss his arguments, at its core accurately summed up his philosophy. As he explained, the journalist was implying that he advocated ‘not this or that humane reform, but all of them’ simultaneously.² What Salt anticipated was ‘a fusion, a compendium, of certain great causes’ that would, eventually, stimulate a progression towards a new and better world.³ His friend and fellow vegetarian socialist, Edward Carpenter, echoed this sentiment when advocating the union of socialism, vegetarianism and the women’s movement – proclaiming his belief ‘that sometime they would all converge and move as one great mighty river, which would sweep along for the purification and betterment of humanity’.⁴ Further to this, not only did they believe in the unification of progressive causes, but also argued, in the words of Salt, that not one of them could be ‘finally successful except in conjunction’.⁵

Central to their belief systems was the notion that the oppression of both humans and non-human animals was ‘inseparably connected’, and that their respective emancipations could never ‘be fully realised alone’.⁶ Partly due to their influential positions within the flourishing intellectual and organisational milieu of the British

¹ Henry S. Salt, *The Creed of Kinship* (London: Constable, 1935), p.vii.

² Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.vii.

³ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.vii.

⁴ Edward Carpenter, “The Larger Socialism”, *The Vegetarian Messenger and Health Review*, vol.7 (1910), p.167.

⁵ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.v.

⁶ Henry S. Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1921), p.122.

Left during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Salt and Carpenter have been viewed, quite rightly, as primary formulators and advocates of this variety of holistic leftist thought, which combined a concern for both human and non-human and placed the vegetarian diet at the centre of a programme of radical societal change.⁷ They were certainly not, however, the only nor indeed the first individuals to do so – a fact they themselves recognised and celebrated.

1. The Vegetarian Left: Its Ideas and Exponents

Almost a century prior to the publication of Salt's and Carpenter's writings, other radicals had already laid out a remarkably similar agenda as they cast their eyes across a rapidly changing continent. *The Cry of Nature*, the first vegetarian-radical text, emerged in 1791 in the midst of the French Revolution, written by one of its participants, the vegetarian revolutionary John Oswald. This was quickly followed by the vegetarian writings of fellow radicals, the author Joseph Ritson and the publisher George Nicholson. In the early nineteenth century, such ideas found expression through the works of Percy and Mary Shelley, as well as other members of their circle, most notably Richard Phillips and John Frank Newton. Percy Shelley's influence, in particular, was to echo throughout the history of the British Left, with his radical vegetarian writings positioning him as a figurehead for vegetarian leftists well into the twentieth century.

The diet also found a significant number of adherents amongst the followers of early nineteenth-century utopian socialists such as Robert Owen and James Pierrepont Greaves, and, through the course of the century, retained strong links with radical and reformist movements, intermingling with both Chartism and religious dissent. The late nineteenth-century 'socialist revival', which witnessed the intellectual and organisational blossoming of the British Left, was, however, where vegetarian-leftist ideas found their greatest expression. Here, Salt's writings, especially his seminal

⁷ Within this thesis the term 'leftist' should be taken to mean socialist, communist or anarchist. When talking of earlier figures, who existed prior to the formal formulation of such ideologies the term radical will be used as appropriate.

Animals' Rights (1892), were key, and offered perhaps the greatest historical exposition of vegetarian-leftist belief.

In combining vegetarian and socialist ideas in this period, Salt was joined not only by Carpenter, a noted pioneer of gay rights and sexual liberation, but by a host of other vegetarian socialists, some well-known, like George Bernard Shaw, and others less so, such as William Jupp and John Kenworthy. There was also a strong connection between socialist and suffragette women and vegetarianism, with many incorporating the diet into a larger left-feminist outlook – most notably, Charlotte Despard, Isabella Ford and Annie Besant. Collectively, these late nineteenth-century advocates represented the maturing of a body of vegetarian-radical ideas, born in the previous century, into a distinct, ‘modern’ form of left-wing ideology.

This thesis illuminates the intellectual composition and development of this ideological tradition across the period c.1790-1900, exploring the ways in which diet played a pivotal role in the societal critiques and future-visions of its formulators. Through an analysis of the interlinked and mutually reinforcing vegetarian and leftist principles of such belief systems, it reveals how numerous radicals, socialists and feminists conceived of the diet as a vital element in the achievement of larger progressive change. Fundamentally, it demonstrates the *holistic* nature of vegetarian-leftist thought, with its exponents commonly conceiving of current ‘civilisation’ as an interconnected, interdependent system of oppression and domination, which could only be combated by a similarly all-encompassing reform movement. Such a view encouraged them not only to draw connections between the various forms of exploitation and violence within human society, but also with that exercised over other animals and the natural world.

The form their solution took was a quest for, what I have termed, a ‘universal emancipation’ that sought the liberation of all living beings from all incarnations of violence, subjugation and injustice. This aimed to engender a new type of society, where humans would live harmoniously within nature both with each other and with other species, and in which human beings, both as individuals and as a collective, would be able to realise their full potential. The means of achieving this was the

widespread awakening of a ‘compassionate consciousness’ – the active practice of instinctual compassion, universally applied to all living beings, combined with freethought. Vegetarian-leftists commonly argued that the root of current civilisation’s ills was the neglect, or even suppression, of humanity’s natural benevolent impulses. Simultaneously, however, they also recognised the importance of humanity’s intellectual and cultural progress, with the development of independent reason, in particular, being indispensable in both challenging the existing order and cultivating a vision of something new. The re-joining of heart and mind thus represented the marriage of nature with the positive gains of human civilisation, enabling humanity to move forward towards a higher state of being.

Vegetarian-leftists indicated that ‘compassionate consciousness’, as an awakening of the individual and thence society, would comprehensively combat, erode and eventually overturn systemic oppression in its totality. By developing an awareness of the essential unity of all life, it would encourage the growth of a sense of all-embracing fellowship, or, as Salt put it, ‘kinship’, which would break down the barriers of class, race, gender and species upon which interlinked systems of oppression (capitalism, imperialism, patriarchy, speciesism) depended. What they sought was a transformed societal ethic – a shift from a society of predation to one of cooperation. Indeed, they saw the predatory consumption of the lives of humans and non-human animals, be it actual or metaphorical, as indicative of a society of division and exploitation. To cultivate a sense of universal fellowship would fundamentally counter this, embodying both the means and ends of their radical agitation, and laying the foundation for a new mutualistic society of peace and freedom, representative of the emancipation of all.

2. Historical Context

Western vegetarianism possesses a historical pedigree significantly older than the 1790s. Prior to the coining of the term ‘vegetarian’ in the nineteenth century, those who abstained from eating meat were often referred to as ‘Pythagoreans’ after

Pythagoras (c.570-c.495 BC), commonly cited as the father of vegetarianism.⁸ Indeed, since the ancient world, the vegetarian diet has been consistently practised and propagated by numerous individuals in the West, often in association with various forms of non-conformity.⁹ It is not surprising that those engaged in the construction of counter-cultural critiques of their society frequently adopted a diet that could be seen as challenging some of its fundamental assumptions. As Rod Preece, Tristram Stuart and others have noted, historically, vegetarianism has served as an essential means by which established political, cultural and societal orthodoxies have been assailed, and alternative modes of life and thought advocated.¹⁰

Certain critical themes within vegetarian thought – for example, non-violence or temperance – have long been present. The view of violence against animals as a foundational characteristic of a debased human society, in particular, has a significant pedigree. This has been most clearly embodied in humanity’s enduring tradition of envisaging ‘perfect’ states of existence characterised by a necessary harmony between humans and other animals; a tradition originating from Greek and Roman visions of the ‘Golden Age’, as well as the powerful Biblical symbolism of the peaceful kinship of the Garden of Eden. Notably, in terms of a more specifically ‘leftist’ tradition, the essence of this idea can also be observed in one of the earliest and most influential texts of the utopian genre: Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516).¹¹ In this attempt to describe a ‘perfect’ nation, More felt compelled to explain how bondsmen conducted the butchery of animals, as ‘the Utopians feel that slaughtering our fellow creatures gradually destroys the sense of compassion...the finest sentiment of which our human nature is capable’.¹² Obviously this is problematic in

⁸ Rod Preece, *Sins of the Flesh: A History of Ethical Vegetarian Thought* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), pp.76-116.

⁹ For general discussions see Preece, *Sins of the Flesh* and Tristram Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution: Radical Vegetarians and the Discovery of India* (London: HarperCollins, 2006).

¹⁰ Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*; Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*; James Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), p.19.

¹¹ Notably, this work has historically been considered by many on the Left as an important proto-leftist work and has been praised by Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Karl Kautsky and William Morris, amongst others. See, for example: Karl Kautsky, *Thomas More and his Utopia* (London: AC Black, 1927) and William Morris, “Foreword to *Utopia* by Sir Thomas More”, in William Morris, *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin, 2004).

¹² Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516; New York: Norton, 2011), p.50.

the sense that the animals are still killed, not to mention the presence of ‘bondsmen’. Importantly, however, it demonstrates a vital early recognition that exploitative violence undermines the benevolent potential of humanity and thus the very basis of an ideal, peaceful and harmonious society.

An agenda combining vegetarianism with a broader programme of radical political change first appeared in Britain amongst some of the proto-leftist groups and individuals during the English Civil War and Interregnum, most notably the vegan Leveller Roger Crab (1621-1680).¹³ Later in the seventeenth century, vegetarian-radical ideas found their most comprehensive early expression in the writings of Thomas Tryon (1624-1703).¹⁴ The arguments of these two men incorporated notions that would subsequently become central to later vegetarian-radical belief systems. Espousing pantheistic conceptions of God, humanity and nature through ideas regarding ‘true’ Christianity, ‘original religion’ and the unity of human and non-human, they both claimed the vegetarian diet as a fundamental element of an ideal society and argued that mankind must live the reality of ‘do unto others as you would have them do unto you’ – including within it ‘their fellow-animals’.¹⁵ Tryon, in particular, influenced by ancient Pythagoreanism, Hinduism and the writings of Jakob Böhme, was pioneering in his assertion of the rights of animals, his condemnation of their commodification and his advancement of early ecological and anti-imperial arguments.¹⁶

It was, however, as Keith Thomas and Preece indicate, the 1790s that really witnessed the birth of a fully-formed vegetarian radicalism.¹⁷ This period of

¹³ Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (1958; London: Penguin, 1990), pp.303-310; Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, pp.15-38; Roger Crab, *The English Hermite, or, Wonder of this Age* (London: Printed, and are to be sold in Popes-head Alley, and at the Exchange, 1655).

¹⁴ Thomas Tryon, *The Way to Health, Long Life and Happiness: or, a Discourse of Temperance* (London: Printed by H.C. for R. Baldwin, 1691).

¹⁵ Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution*, p.310; Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, pp.63 & 72.

¹⁶ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, pp.71-73.

¹⁷ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Penguin, 1984), p.295; Rod Preece, *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice in the Age of Bernard Shaw* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011), p.107. Later vegetarian socialists also asserted this. See Henry S. Salt, “The Humanities of Diet”, in *Humanitarian Essays; being volume iii of “Cruelties of Civilisation”*, ed. Henry S. Salt (London: William Reeves, 1897), p.7 and Henry S. Salt, *Animals’ Rights Considered in Relation to Social Progress* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1892), p.4.

revolutionary activity, infused with the multifarious intellectual changes of the Enlightenment, can be seen as a pivotal moment in the birth of modernity, as well as a critical phase of development for modern political thought, particularly that of the Left. Within the Left's own historical gaze it has certainly long been viewed, like the English Civil War before it, as a key period of intellectual and organisational ferment which provided some important roots for the great leftist 'isms of the nineteenth century – communism, anarchism and socialism. In terms of vegetarian-leftist thought this was also the case, for it was only in the context of this period that such ideas can first be perceived as forming a distinct form of ideology, expressed coherently and systematically, and by multiple individuals.

More broadly, scholars have also identified this as a significant period of transformation regarding the human-animal relationship in Britain. This could be perceived in a variety of ways, from growing attempts to defend other species via the enactment of animal welfare legislation and the establishment of organisations such as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (1824), to the dawn of new scientific theories, notably that of evolution, which threatened to knock mankind off its celestial pedestal.¹⁸ Such changes suggested that the gulf between humans and other animals was becoming narrower, and that the sphere of moral concern was progressively expanding to accommodate our increasingly evident 'fellow-creatures'.¹⁹

The period c.1790-1900 witnessed the dramatic development of both the Left and the human-animal relationship and so it is perhaps manifest why it was within this era that a form of thought seeking the emancipation of both human and non-human animals was first clearly articulated. By basing my study within this period I am able to observe the birth of a distinct intellectual tradition that has survived and grown until the present day. This, importantly, enables its contextual origins as well as the

¹⁸ See Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp.300-301; Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp.39-42 & 126-130; Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800* (London: Reaktion, 1998), pp.13-38.

¹⁹ For a discussion, see Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*; Diana Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Christine Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period Writing* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001).

ways in which it evolved over the first century of its existence to be fully apprehended and analysed. Moreover, by examining its development in relation to the wider evolution of the Left, the specific broader forms of leftist thought to which it was most closely allied are revealed.

Vegetarian-leftist ideas, embodied as an ideology of ‘universal emancipation’, can be seen as a part of multiple larger leftist intellectual traditions. In particular, there are notable connections with ‘utopian’ socialism, libertarian socialism, religious socialism and ‘ethical’ socialism, all of which similarly place a significant emphasis on ethics, emotions and individuals as important driving forces of societal change. Such leftist traditions, as well as the ideology of universal emancipation itself, were most prominent during periods of intellectual and organisational ferment for the Left, as these provided the context for a diversity of voices to be heard, and were frequently marked by a somewhat millenarian atmosphere in which barriers, boundaries and divisions of all types were challenged and holistic ideas of ‘liberation’ came to the fore. These were forms of leftist thought that more explicitly corresponded to Carpenter’s idea of ‘the larger socialism’: socialism not just as an economic theory but as a comprehensive belief system – a way of life, even a faith.

‘Scientific’ socialism, as formulated by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, increasingly dominant across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, stood to an extent in opposition to these other traditions. With its stress upon economics, class and the state, it sought to define itself against such alternative strands of leftist thought, in particular ‘utopian’ socialism – the label itself coined by Marx and Engels with pejorative intent.²⁰ Concerns such as vegetarianism and the rights of animals were frequently viewed by many Marxists as something of an annoyance, even an embarrassment, for the socialist cause.²¹ Engels referred to individuals who actively propounded such principles as ‘honest fools’, while Trotsky, in line with the

²⁰ The term was coined in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848). See also Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1892).

²¹ Preece, *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice in the Age of Bernard Shaw*, pp.135-136.

Bolshevik emphasis on masculinist violence and class war, condemned what he saw as ‘vegetarian-Quaker prattle’.²²

In Britain in the later nineteenth century, such concerns became symbolic of a division between two different types of socialism, most notably represented by the split between the Fellowship of the New Life – of which Carpenter and Salt were members – and the Fabian Society, with the former stressing the moral and spiritual nature of socialism, and the latter taking a more ‘practical’ materialist view; or, as George Bernard Shaw mockingly put it: one wished ‘to sit among the dandelions, the other to organise the docks’.²³ As Kevin Manton has demonstrated, this ‘doer-dreamer’ dichotomy was part of an attempt to dismiss the type of ‘larger socialism’ that the Fellowship advocated and in so doing has masked the fact that it *did* recognise the importance of material change in achieving societal progress, but simply viewed it as part of a mutually reinforcing relationship with individual and moral change.²⁴ The result of the growing dominance of Marxism on the one hand and on the other a labour movement which, with the birth of the Labour Party, was increasingly concerned primarily with the achievement of political power, was that from the late nineteenth century onwards alternative strands of leftist thought, such as the one explored in this thesis, were repeatedly ignored, dismissed or denigrated despite their long-standing historical roots.

3. Historiography

Scholarship has reflected these political trends; for, as Manton observes, even academic studies of such other incarnations of leftist thought are not only fewer in number but also often greeted with much unfair criticism.²⁵ Such neglect is simply

²² Friedrich Engels, “On the History of Early Christianity”, in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Marx and Engels on Religion* (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), p.322; Leon Trotsky, *The Defence of Terrorism (Terrorism and Communism): A Reply to Karl Kautsky* (London: The Labour Publishing Company and George Allen & Unwin, 1921), p.60.

²³ Quoted in Sheila Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love* (London: Verso, 2008), p.90.

²⁴ Kevin Manton, “The Fellowship of the New Life: English Ethical Socialism Reconsidered”, *History of Political Thought* 24, no.2 (Summer 2003), pp.282-304.

²⁵ Manton, “The Fellowship of the New Life”, p.283. Here, Manton cites the pioneering work of Stephen Yeo, “A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896”, *History Workshop*, no. 4 (Autumn 1977), pp.5-56.

characteristic of a broader ‘squeezing out’ of alternative leftist voices that has taken place across the twentieth century, although of course with notable exceptions, such as the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s, where forms of libertarian socialism were able to flourish. This occurrence is not particularly surprising if one considers the fact that such movements and belief systems historically have been vehemently opposed on both sides of the ideological spectrum, from the political Right and the Marxist Left.

This has largely continued into the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, albeit with the Marxist Left increasingly eclipsed by a centrist social democracy. Indeed, such strands of leftist thought and activity have been greeted with inevitable enmity from the neo-liberal establishment whilst simultaneously being viewed with suspicion, if not outright hostility, from the current ‘centre-left’ mainstream. It is important to recognise, however, that in recent years there has been an increasing move within scholarship to pay greater analytical attention to the rich diversity of leftist thought and history that lies beyond both orthodox Marxist arguments as well as narratives of the development of parliamentary socialism. Broadly, for example, there have been works by Mark Bevir and Peter Marshall on the histories of socialism and anarchism respectively, which seek to re-establish the great multiplicity of leftist thought and challenge narrow conceptions of what the Left was and is.²⁶

In addition, there has been a blossoming of feminist and ecological critical studies that have further aided in revealing and stimulating more comprehensive and intersectional forms of leftist thought. The dawn of what has been dubbed the ‘animal turn’ in the humanities has also marked an increased scholarly focus upon the relationship between humans and non-human animals, as well as the status and

²⁶ See, in particular, Mark Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), p.14 and Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (1992; London: Harper Perennial, 2008). See also David Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow: Left-Libertarian Thought and British Writers from William Morris to Colin Ward* (2006; Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2012) and Thomas Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

roles of other animals within human society.²⁷ Such studies have acted to bring non-human animals more explicitly into the Left's field of vision both academically and politically. A key example of this is the ground-breaking work of Carol Adams, whose *Sexual Politics of Meat* outlined a feminist-vegetarian critical theory and germinated a range of influential ideas regarding human-animal relations, as well as meat-eating, within patriarchal-capitalist society.²⁸ In a more historical vein, the pioneering work of Leah Leneman has provided an invaluable study of the connections between the women's suffrage movement and vegetarianism.²⁹

Similarly to non-'mainstream' forms of leftist thought and activity, vegetarianism has, however, also been relatively neglected in scholarship. As both Adams and Preece have noted, there has been a very visible trend to disregard or deride historical figures' vegetarianism, with commentary often unhelpfully simply mirroring the mocking criticisms of their contemporary detractors.³⁰ As Preece suggests, this defensive, and usually condescending, attitude tells us far more about the beliefs and assumptions of the authors than their subject.³¹ A notable example of this is Anna Plassart's article exploring John Oswald's political thought, which dismisses his vegetarianism as an 'exotic' detail of his life and thus excludes *The Cry of Nature*, his most radical and personal work, from its analysis.³² Such an approach is fundamentally flawed, for it is impossible to understand either the political radicalism or the vegetarianism of these thinkers in isolation from the other. As the thesis demonstrates, to successfully elucidate their holistic ideologies it is necessary to adopt an equally holistic scholarly approach that addresses their thought in its interconnected entirety.

While historians of the left have tended to minimise the importance of vegetarianism to their protagonists, historians of animals have sometimes failed to situate

²⁷ Harriet Ritvo, "On the Animal Turn", *Daedalus* 136, no.4 (Autumn 2007), pp.118-122.

²⁸ Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (1990; twentieth anniversary edition, London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

²⁹ Leah Leneman, "The Awakened Instinct: vegetarianism and the women's suffrage movement in Britain", *Women's History Review* 6, no. 2 (1997), pp.271-287.

³⁰ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p.142; Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, p.255.

³¹ Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, p.255.

³² Anna Plassart, "A Scottish Jacobin: John Oswald on Commerce and Citizenship", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71, no.2 (April 2010), pp.263-286.

vegetarianism as part of a broader left-wing agenda. There is certainly a methodological tendency amongst some animal scholars, such as Preece, to separate out individuals' vegetarianism and to reduce the importance of their larger leftist ideologies. There are two main reasons why this occurs. Firstly, as in the case of Preece, ostensibly broad discussions of vegetarians' wider radical beliefs frequently belie the fact that the scholar conducting the study is approaching the subject from a particular political standpoint, averse to an overtly left-wing politics. With this in mind it becomes far clearer why a scholar such as Preece, who is an apparent advocate of a modern liberal utilitarianism as well as animal rights, would wish to create distance between past thinkers' animal advocacy and their leftism. In Preece's *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice in the Age of Bernard Shaw*, for example, he erroneously attempts to position the liberal utilitarian philosopher and animal rights proponent Peter Singer as the natural intellectual successor to Salt by diminishing the role of Salt's larger leftist ideology, notably labelling it his 'innocuous socialism'.³³

Secondly, such distancing also takes place due to the simple fact that those working within Animal Studies or on the history of vegetarianism are often inclined to put too much emphasis on the specific issues with which they are concerned. In other words, despite most scholars agreeing that vegetarianism is never something which exists in ideological isolation, there is still a tendency to treat the diet as a cause all of its own. Indeed, due in part to the contemporary rise of identity politics, a key focus of Animal Studies has become the discussion of vegan theories, ideologies and identities, which are often addressed apart from larger leftist ones and within separately defined academic and activist communities. This can be seen as part of a broader political and academic trend to supplant more 'traditional' leftist outlooks and perhaps comes as a natural result of a twenty-first century Left marked by the memory of a failed statist communism and the reality of an uninspiring, and increasingly fractured, third-way social democracy. Nonetheless, this approach is mistaken, for to neglect the existence of over-arching frameworks of leftist belief is to throw the baby out with the bathwater, obscuring a fuller understanding of past

³³ Preece, *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice in the Age of Bernard Shaw*, pp.150 & 271.

belief systems, as well as undermining the potential unity of contemporary progressive movements.

Despite the neglect of the role of vegetarianism within studies of historical figures' thought, there is a growing body of scholarly works concerned more broadly with the history of the diet itself.³⁴ These, typified by Stuart's *Bloodless Revolution* and Preece's *Sins of the Flesh*, have been valuable in bringing to light a wealth of often little-known ideas and writings. They are, however, chiefly concerned with providing a general history of their overarching topics and so the analysis of specific individuals and their thought is usually fairly limited. There has also been the work of James Gregory, whose *Of Victorians and Vegetarians* offers a comprehensive investigation into the organised vegetarian movement in Britain during the nineteenth century. Gregory's is not a study concerned with 'ideologies' of vegetarianism but with the social history of such dietary movements, and thus provides a useful contextual narrative that covers a broad range of vegetarianisms, including those that are seemingly concerned primarily with 'health' and 'temperance'.³⁵

An attempt to delineate a unified 'ideology of vegetarianism' has been compellingly attempted in an unpublished doctoral thesis by Julia Twigg, its focus on 'thought' making it the work closest to my own. Twigg's study draws out many vital concepts central to vegetarian thought at large, which this thesis will also address. However, as a result of its aims, it still remains fairly broad in scope.³⁶ Building on these wider histories, I instead provide an analysis of a specific strand of overtly *leftist*-vegetarian belief – one that can be considered the most intellectually and politically penetrative form of vegetarian thought, due to both its ideological and practical

³⁴ See, for example: Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*; Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*; James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians: The Vegetarian Movement in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2007); Colin Spencer, *Vegetarianism: A History* (London: Grub Street, 2000).

³⁵ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.2.

³⁶ Julia Twigg, "The Vegetarian Movement in England 1847-1981: A Study in the Structure of its Ideology" (PhD thesis, London School of Economics, 1981). As Twigg addresses many different types of vegetarianism and broader belief systems, her work does not provide detailed analysis of *specific types* of vegetarian thought, or of individuals' thought. In addition, by beginning her study in the year 1847 she misses the vital eighteenth-century roots of vegetarian radicalism. Her work does, however, valuably highlight the significant links of vegetarianism to progressive politics.

consistency and coherence. This thesis is thus uniquely concerned with exploring the place of vegetarianism and animal advocacy within leftist thought and seeks to demonstrate its role as a crucial facet of a larger belief system.

There have been individual academic studies of most of the thinkers upon whom this thesis is centred. However, the majority of these have not been particularly concerned with the vegetarianism of their subjects or even necessarily with providing an analysis of their belief systems at large. The thinkers of the 1790s – Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson – have perhaps received the least scholarly attention. The largest treatment of any one of them remains David V. Erdman’s *Commerce Des Lumières*; a largely descriptive account of Oswald’s life, specifically his time spent in France during the Revolution.³⁷ As Erdman himself acknowledges this work does not attempt to analyse Oswald’s political thought, which ‘must await a closer study of his works in their Enlightenment context’.³⁸ In addition to this exists Rod Preece’s introduction to a modern reprint edition of Nicholson’s *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, which offers an outline of Nicholson’s life and thought.³⁹

For Shelley there exists a sizeable and diverse body of scholarship; for the purposes of this thesis, however, the most pertinent work is Timothy Morton’s *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*. This important study provides a detailed examination of the politics of diet and the body within Shelley’s thought, as well as its role in the period more broadly. Through this, Morton explores the interrelationships between the body, society and nature as well as politicised ideas of ‘consumption’ which this thesis also draws upon and discusses.⁴⁰

Regarding the two most significant vegetarian-leftist figures of the later nineteenth century – Salt and Carpenter – there have been some valuable studies concerning

³⁷ David V. Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris, 1790-1793* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986). Erdman’s work does not solely cover Oswald, it also discusses the wider activities of British radicals in Paris during the period.

³⁸ Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*, p.288.

³⁹ Rod Preece, “Introduction”, in George Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, ed. Rod Preece (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999).

⁴⁰ Timothy Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.1-12.

their lives as well as aspects of their thought. For Carpenter there is Shelia Rowbotham's substantial biography, *Edward Carpenter: A Life of Liberty and Love*, in addition to a useful collection of essays edited by Tony Brown.⁴¹ Salt, on the other hand, despite his pre-eminence within vegetarian-leftist thought, remains comparatively neglected with just one lone forty-year-old publication concerning itself with him as its central subject, George Hendrick's *Henry Salt: Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters*, which briefly outlines his life and beliefs.⁴² This thesis takes a pointedly different approach from such works in that it does not focus upon a single individual or narrow time-period. By addressing its subjects not only within their own contemporary intellectual context but also comparatively within the context of a long-standing and distinct tradition of vegetarian-leftist thought, it seeks to elucidate a richer understanding of both individuals' belief systems as well as the body of thought which they composed as a whole. As a result, this thesis redresses the balance between the studies of individuals on the one hand, and broader historical or theoretical studies concerned with vegetarianism or leftism on the other.

4. Methodology and Research Questions

The central questions which this thesis poses are: How and why did vegetarian-leftist ideas develop over this period and what was the relationship between the diet and left-wing ideology? What were the main concepts and concerns of such belief systems? What were the motivations, methods and aims of their exponents, and how did these differ? What degree of continuity was there between different thinkers, and how far were individuals conscious of their beliefs as part of a broader contemporary body, or historical tradition, of thought?

These are answered through a close analysis of the published writings of the key figures who composed this body of thought, situated within a broader exploration of the political, philosophical, cultural, religious and scientific atmospheres in which

⁴¹ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*; Tony Brown, ed., *Edward Carpenter and late Victorian Radicalism* (London: Frank Cass, 1990). See also Chushichi Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929: Prophet of Human Fellowship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁴² George Hendrick, *Henry Salt: Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1977). There is also a discussion of Salt in Preece, *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice in the Age of Bernard Shaw*, pp.144-67.

they were created. Critical and satirical material is also utilised in order to understand the reception of such ideas, and to look beyond authors' own self-perception/presentation. By carrying out such an analysis, the place of vegetarian-leftist ideas within the histories of both the British Left and animal advocacy is made clear, and the impact of this body of thought – both as an intellectual tradition as well as in terms of the legacy of individual figures – is revealed.

The individuals analysed have been selected due to the clarity and consistency with which they expressed their personal ideologies as well as their relative importance to the development of this body of thought as a whole. Their selection has also been determined by the fact that their ideas survive in print. Due to the inequalities of the period, this has meant that the vegetarian-leftist voices analysed are predominantly male and middle class. Importantly, though, although harder to access, women and members of the working class did also formulate and adhere to such belief systems, as is discussed in chapters four and six. Many lesser known vegetarian-leftist voices are, indeed, considered throughout, and by combing a broader discussion of these with a focus on more prominent and influential writers, not only are the essential themes and ideas of vegetarian leftism clearly discerned, but their relation to larger conceptions of gender and class also uncovered.

It is perhaps germane at this point to clarify why it is vegetarianism under discussion as opposed to the more ethically consistent veganism towards which recent scholarly attention has started to turn.⁴³ This is due to the fact that despite some of the individuals under discussion having viewed forms of the vegan diet as the ideal, few of them can be convincingly claimed as definitively vegan. This is partly the result of a lack of evidence regarding consistency, but mainly due to their own writings indicating either a definite vegetarianism or a belief in a gradualism which meant that their veganism was, in their societal contexts, more theoretical than actual. Some of them did, however, explicitly discuss vegan ideas and this is highlighted and discussed at various points in the thesis.

⁴³ For a notable example of such work see Laura Wright, *The Vegan Studies Project: Food, Animals, and Gender in the Age of Terror* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2015).

5. Chapter Summaries

The thesis is divided into six chapters, which trace the development of vegetarian-leftist ideas chronologically across the period, albeit with certain themes becoming more apparent at particular historical moments. Chapter One deals with the 1790s, providing a comparative analysis of the thought of Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson. This focusses on their ideas regarding human nature and ‘sympathy’, analyses their conception of human and non-human animal oppression as an interconnected system of ‘predatory consumption’ and explains the ways and means by which they expressed and acted upon their beliefs. It also examines the specific influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and the French Revolution on the development of their radicalism, and reveals the ways in which their writings, as well as contemporary perceptions of them, differed.

Chapter Two turns to the post-revolutionary period of the early nineteenth century and explores how vegetarian-radical ideas were shaped in a period defined by both Romanticism and a growing emphasis on reform. This provides an analysis of the more ‘moderate’ thought of Phillips, as well as an examination of changing conceptions of the human-animal relationship, and the connection of these to particular forms of wider progressivism, as embodied in ideas of the Romantic poets Blake, Coleridge, Byron and Wordsworth. Additionally offering a study of the beliefs of Newton and others in Shelley’s circle, this also reveals how such ideas became somewhat more inward-looking in this period.

Chapter Three provides an analysis of Percy Shelley’s vegetarian writings and their relation to his larger radical belief system. It looks especially at their connection to his pacifist and anti-imperialist views, as well as his broader early left-libertarian philosophical outlook. This also pays particular attention to the influences on his thought, notably William Godwin and Ritson, and discusses his role as an influential figure for the nascent left.

Chapter Four explores the development of vegetarian-leftist ideas through the course of the nineteenth century. It examines their connection in the first half of the century

to utopian socialist movements, with a particular focus on the ideas of Greaves, as well as broader reform movements such as Chartism. Through this both the millenarian and reformist tendencies within ethical vegetarianism are revealed. Turning its attention to the latter part of the century, it provides an analysis of the growth of vegetarian-leftist ideas during the ‘socialist revival’ of the 1880s and 1890s. This explains how and why, in this age of expanding political organisation on the left, this form of thought became genuinely popular, as well as investigating the impact of anarchistic forms of thought, as expressed by figures such as Leo Tolstoy and the American Romantics.

Chapter Five takes the form of a study of the beliefs and writings of Salt. This considers his pioneering, influential animal rights arguments as well as his formulation of a highly coherent vegetarian-left ideology, which he termed the ‘Creed of Kinship’. It also looks at his creation of the Humanitarian League, through which he attempted to embody his holistic approach to reform. In addition, the influence of evolutionary theory is considered, as well as the impact of the anarcho-communistic ideas of Peter Kropotkin, ultimately revealing Salt’s key focus on the reformulating of relationships and the importance of mutual aid.

Chapter Six explores the sexual politics of vegetarian-leftist ideas. It begins with an analysis of the thought of Carpenter, examining his concept of the ‘larger socialism’, his seminal writings on gay liberation, his ‘simple life’ philosophy and his advocacy of a new ethic of friendship. Following a comparative discussion of the ideas of the anarchist Élisée Reclus, it then looks at the vital feminist component of vegetarian-leftism. Beginning with a consideration of the association of women with animal welfare movements in the period, this goes on to analyse the links between vegetarianism and the women’s suffrage movement, and, finally the interconnections between vegetarianism, socialism and feminism in the thought of Despard, Ford and Besant.

Chapter One

A Revolutionary Diet: Vegetarianism in the 1790s

‘It is strange that the most violent republicans I know are all vegetarians...those who live on lentils and artichokes are always calling for the gore of the aristocracy and the severed heads of kings...in the political sphere a diet of green beans seems dangerous’ – Oscar Wilde, 1887.

In a prefatory note to his vegetarian tract *The Cry of Nature* (1791), the revolutionary John Oswald (c.1760-1793) tentatively, yet optimistically, contemplated the future of the human-animal relationship:

When he considers the natural bias of the human heart to the side of mercy, and observes on all hands the barbarous governments of Europe giving way to a better system of things, he is inclined to hope that the day is beginning to approach when the growing sentiment of peace and good-will towards men will also embrace in a wider circle of benevolence, the lower orders of life.¹

Produced by the influential radical publisher Joseph Johnson, and with Oswald proudly emblazoned upon its title page as a ‘Member of the Club des Jacobines’, it was a text born of the revolutionary politics of its day, but one which took its ideals further than expected.

Born in Edinburgh, Oswald had joined the British Army as a young man only to quit and wander around India. Here, influenced by Hinduism, his vegetarian-radical inclinations were first stimulated.² Later, he was swept into the milieu of British radicalism whilst working as a journalist in London. An associate of many leading radical figures, including Thomas Paine, he travelled to France to aid the Revolution,

¹ John Oswald, *The Cry of Nature; or, An Appeal to Mercy and to Justice on Behalf of the Persecuted Animals* (London: J. Johnson, 1791), p.ii.

² Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.295; Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*, p.7.

often being acknowledged as the ‘first of the Anglo-Jacobins’, and in 1793 was killed in the Vendée fighting for the rights and liberty of all sentient life.³ In proclaiming a fellowship and seeking an emancipation that extended beyond the human species, Oswald was certainly unusual. Importantly, though, he was not alone in this period in combining vegetarianism with a larger radical outlook.

The French Revolution of 1789 had galvanised progressive minds across Europe and many came to welcome the fall of old regimes and authorities – both temporal and spiritual. During this period the writings of Enlightenment thinkers as well as the hopes of older radical and religious dissenting traditions found tangible expression as ideas regarding rights, liberty, equality, fellowship and unbounded progress proliferated across political and philosophical debate. Barriers and boundaries of all kinds – class, gender, racial and religious – were challenged both intellectually and actively – from Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) to the growing movement for the abolition of slavery. ‘Emancipation’ became a theme of the age and the sphere of moral concern was beginning to expand.

This chapter explores the growth of vegetarian-radical ideas during this revolutionary decade, providing an analysis of their development, as well as their intellectual, political and cultural roots. In order to achieve this, the chapter provides the first comparative analysis ever conducted of Oswald’s writings with those of the two other published vegetarian-radicals of this period.⁴ The first of these was Joseph Ritson (1752-1803), a pioneering literary scholar, as well as a dedicated republican and atheist who decorated his home with pictures of Paine, Voltaire and Jean-Jacques Rousseau and moved in the same radical circles as his friend William Godwin.⁵ His last published work was his *Essay on Abstinence From Animal Food*

³ Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*, p.118; Joseph Robertson, *Lives of Eminent Scotsmen* (London: Thomas Boys, 1821), p.175. For a detailed narrative of Oswald’s life and a thorough discussion of biographical sources see Erdman, especially pp.12-31.

⁴ The other key radical works by Oswald under discussion are John Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain* (Paris: Printed at the English Press by Gillet, 1792) and John Oswald, *The Government of the People; or, A Sketch of a Constitution for the Universal Common-Wealth* (Paris: Printed at the English Press, c.1792).

⁵ Harris Nicolas, “Memoir of Joseph Ritson”, in *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, ed. Joseph Frank (London: William Pickering, 1833), vol. 1, pp.liv-lv; Joseph Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, ed. Joseph Frank (London: William Pickering, 1833), vol. 2, p.39. See also Marilyn Butler, *Burke, Paine*,

as a Moral Duty (1802).⁶ The second was George Nicholson (1760-1825), a publisher from Yorkshire who, although never part of the London or Paris radical scenes that Oswald and Ritson were, dedicated himself to the same causes. He published widely on subjects including anti-slavery, democratic government and popular education, and in 1801 published his pro-vegetarian *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, incorporating his previous tract *On the Conduct of Man to Inferior Animals* (1797).⁷

Very little is known about the interactions between these three men. It is clear, however, that Oswald, the first to publicly express his vegetarian-radical beliefs, was fundamental in influencing the arguments of the other two, especially Nicholson, who reproduced significant sections of *The Cry of Nature* within his own text. Ritson was unquestionably aware of Oswald, describing his life and diet in his *Essay on Abstinence*, but did not make reference to either Oswald's or Nicholson's published works.⁸ Ritson's reasons for doing this are unclear, although Stuart suggests that it may reflect Ritson's 'jealous' scholarship.⁹ Ultimately, though, from an intellectual standpoint the significance of the shared concerns, ideas and arguments expressed in their respective works transcends their limited personal interactions. Indeed, collectively, their writings formed the first coherent elucidation of a distinct form of vegetarian-leftist thought, defined in this thesis as an ideology of 'universal emancipation', that continued to expand and develop across the following centuries. By investigating the philosophical and practical relationship between their vegetarianism and political radicalism, as situated within its historical context, this

Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.203; Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, p.246.

⁶ Joseph Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food, as a Moral Duty* (London: Richard Phillips, 1802).

⁷ Rod Preece, "Introduction", in George Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.ii; George Nicholson, *On the Conduct of Man to Inferior Animals* (Manchester: G. Nicholson, 1797); George Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man* (1801), ed. Rod Preece (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999). Subsequent citations refer to this reprint of the 1801 edition unless otherwise stated.

⁸ For Ritson's description of Oswald see Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.198-200.

⁹ As Stuart clarifies in a footnote: 'It seems odd that Ritson – capable of turning up the most obscure references to vegetarians hundreds of years before – would have been unaware of the vegetarian work of a fellow Jacobin-sympathiser contemporary residing in London with several mutual acquaintances'. Stuart also provides a useful preliminary list of instances where Ritson's work appears to explicitly parallel Oswald's. Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.598.

chapter thus not only illuminates the composition of their interconnected belief systems, but also the origins of this tradition of vegetarian-leftist thought at large.

1.1. ‘A rooted repugnance to the spilling of blood’: Meat-Eating, Violence and Human Nature

Throughout the Enlightenment and the revolutionary period ideas regarding ‘nature’ remained fundamental within philosophical, political and cultural discourses, with attempts to determine what was ‘natural’ as well as humanity’s ‘nature’ itself infusing debates of all kinds. Such concepts, variously defined depending on an individual’s purposes, appeared complex and often contradictory, with the French Revolution, for example, both advanced and attacked ‘in the name of nature’.¹⁰ This was a reflection of the efforts of thinkers during this period to establish the reality of humanity’s natural state as a means of constructing either a radical critique of their society or a defence of it against the forces of revolutionary change. For in determining what was ‘natural’ for humanity, both the limitations and potentialities for future human development were established.

To construct a picture of true human nature was thus to illuminate a vision of the form society should, or could, take. For radicals and progressives a positive view led them to envisage the potential for societal improvement, even perfectibility. For conservatives and reactionaries, on the other hand, a negative view enabled them to justify hierarchy and inequality as an inevitable reflection of the principles of nature itself. This was exemplified by the influential competing views of human nature formulated by Thomas Hobbes, who negatively characterised man’s natural state as ‘poor, nasty, brutish and short’, and John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau who forwarded far more positive interpretations, offering greater optimism for those who sought, like Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson, progressive change for humanity.¹¹

¹⁰ Basil Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background: Studies on the Idea of Nature in the Thought of the Period* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1950), p.205.

¹¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, Or, The Matter, Form, and Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiastical and Civil* (London: Andrew Crooke, 1651), p.62.

Rousseau's theoretical imagining of humanity's natural state was underpinned by three key concepts. The first of these, a belief in the natural goodness of man, was exemplified by his explicit assertions in both the *Discourse on Inequality* (1755) and *Émile* (1762) – the latter a treatise on how to educate a child so that they might retain their natural benevolence – 'that man is by nature good'.¹² The second was his claim that 'in the natural order men are all equal', contending that within the state of nature there were no differences great enough to enable one man to become dependent upon another: 'nature makes neither the prince, the rich man, nor the nobleman'.¹³ The third was his argument that although the first instinct of man was for self-preservation, this was significantly moderated by a natural impulse of sympathy which caused 'an innate repugnance against seeing a fellow creature suffer'.¹⁴ Through these notions Rousseau depicted mankind's natural state as one of peaceful and harmonious relations between mankind and its natural surroundings.¹⁵

Rousseau's re-definition of man's nature had a significant influence on Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson, intimately informing their societal critiques. Oswald described his own Rousseauist view of the state of nature in *The Cry of Nature*, characterising it as a time of 'perfect equality...amongst mankind' and 'cordial harmony...between man and the lower orders of life'.¹⁶ Nicholson concurred, beginning the first chapter of his *On the Primeval Diet of Man* with an adapted version of Oswald's recently published Rousseauist depiction of this 'golden age'.¹⁷ Ritson too quoted at length 'the sensible and eloquent' Rousseau's description of mankind's original contented state and even felt it vital to the education of his nephew to send him a copy of the *Discourse on Inequality*, 'an admirable treatise, worthy of repeated perusal'.¹⁸ The notion that humanity's original benevolent nature

¹² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality* (1755), trans. Maurice Cranston (London: Penguin, 1984), p.147; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile* (1762), trans. Barbara Foxley (London: Dent, 1974), p.198.

¹³ Rousseau, *Émile*, pp.9, 157 & 197. The use of the word 'men' here indicating the pronounced belief in gender inequality present in Rousseau's thought and writings.

¹⁴ Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, p.99.

¹⁵ Kennedy F. Roche, *Rousseau: Stoic & Romantic* (London: Methuen, 1974), pp.29-30.

¹⁶ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.52 & 128.

¹⁷ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.7-8. Notably, Nicholson also named his son Emilius. Preece, "Introduction", in Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.iv.

¹⁸ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.26-29; Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol. 2, p.39.

was forever inherent held important implications for these thinkers, leading them to believe that its cultivation in the present was the key to society's future progression.

Of particular significance for all three men was Rousseau's conception of a natural sympathetic impulse, typically reflected in Oswald's claim, central to his belief system, that 'within us there exists a rooted repugnance to the spilling of blood'.¹⁹ Nicholson, too, asserted that mankind 'have a natural horror at the shedding of blood', reproducing verbatim Oswald's arguments.²⁰ Ritson's parallel claim that through 'a real passion inherent in our nature... we are born with a repugnancy to the killing, and, consequently to the eating of animals', made clear that when considering this sympathetic impulse he was thinking not only of humans.²¹ Indeed, for all of these thinkers the existence of a natural, all-embracing compassion indicated a further, foundational, aspect of the harmonious state of nature: vegetarianism.

As they all came to argue, a vegetarian diet was essential to the very viability of a society in which humans lived in harmony with each other and other species. Rousseau was first to describe this vision of humanity's natural bloodless diet: 'satisfying his hunger under an oak, quenching his thirst at the first stream...and behold his needs are furnished'.²² In support of his claims, and in keeping with the growing Enlightenment concern with scientific proof, he provided a variety of anatomical evidence concerning teeth, intestines and such like through which he sought to take 'man out of the class of carnivorous animals'.²³ Such ideas were subsequently elaborated by Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson, who each constructed detailed, multifaceted arguments asserting the unnaturalness of meat-eating and its absence during 'the early ages of mankind'.²⁴ All three drew upon a variety of

¹⁹ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.29.

²⁰ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.106.

²¹ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.219-220.

²² Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, p.81.

²³ Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, p.146.

²⁴ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.58. For Oswald's account of humanity's natural diet see Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p. 60. Oswald's account of humanity's natural diet was reproduced by Nicholson in *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.7-8. Oswald had previously expressed this idea in John Oswald, *The British Mercury* (London: J. Ridgway, 1788), p.6.

contemporary and classical sources in an attempt to convince their audience of their claims.²⁵ Despite these more orthodox elements, however, the focus of their arguments remained humanity's natural compassionate impulses, and the impossibility of a harmonious state of existence that included such a fundamental form of violence as meat-eating.

From humanity's very first Edenic imaginings through to Thomas More's foundational depiction of utopia, those who have envisaged ideal societies have frequently recognised the incompatibility of violence towards animals with the benevolent character of their human inhabitants. As the eighteenth century progressed such a notion became an increasingly voiced opinion. A common proposition was that violence against animals would quickly escalate into violence between humans. This was most famously illustrated by William Hogarth's *The Four Stages of Cruelty* (1751) (Fig.1), in which the protagonist, 'Tom Nero', moves from the abuse of animals in his youth, to the later murder of his lover. Nicholson was evidently pleased with Hogarth's depiction of a principle in which he himself believed, succinctly summarising Nero's narrative in his own work.²⁶ Ritson concurred, providing the example of the emperor Domitian who 'began his favourite pursuit with the murder of flies, and ended it with that of men: a progression perfectly natural'.²⁷

Where Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson diverged from Hogarth, however, was in understanding 'violence' to include the practice of meat-eating itself. For Oswald, the brutalising effect of a carnivorous diet for both the individual and society was a certainty: 'From the practice of slaughtering an innocent animal, to the murder of man himself, the steps are neither many nor remote'.²⁸ Indeed, Rousseau had already

²⁵ See, for example, their use of the work of the then famous vegetarian physician George Cheyne: Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.92-113; Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.50; Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.32-33 & 44-45. See also George Cheyne, *An Essay on Regimen: together with Five Discourses, Medical, Moral, and Philosophical: serving to illustrate the Principles and Theory of Philosophical Medicine, and to point out some of its Moral Consequences* (London: C. Rivington, 1740) and George Cheyne, *The Natural Method of Cureing the Diseases of the Body, and the Disorders of the Mind Depending on the Body* (London: Geo. Strahan, 1742).

²⁶ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.220.

²⁷ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.99.

²⁸ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.27.

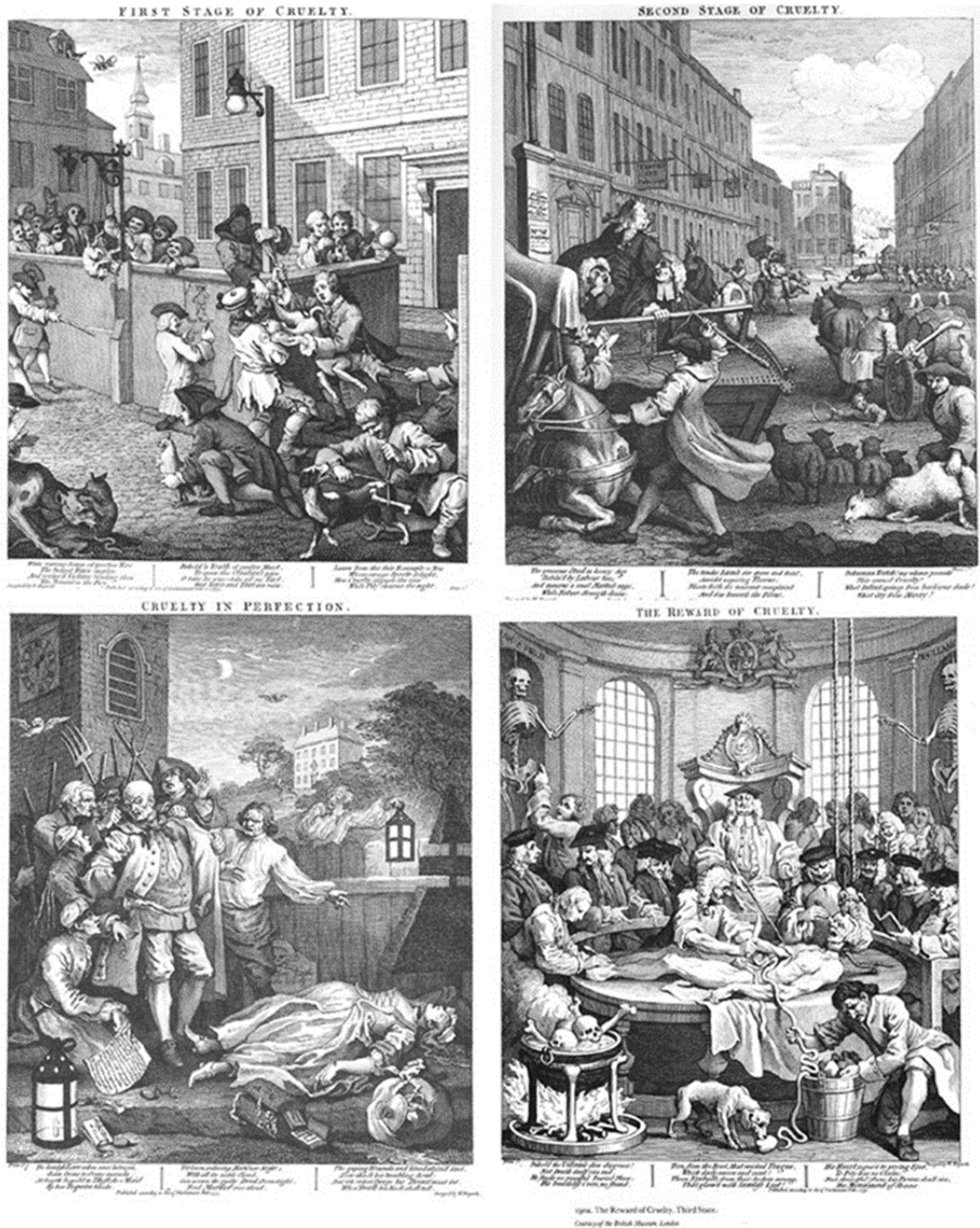


Figure 1. William Hogarth, *The Four Stages of Cruelty* by William Hogarth, engravings, 1751 (British Museum, London).

asserted that ‘meat-eaters are usually fiercer and more cruel than other men’, correlating the noted cruelty of the English with their large meat consumption.²⁹

Thus he warned in *Émile* that children should not be fed flesh, not least ‘for the sake

²⁹ Rousseau, *Émile*, p.118.

of their character'.³⁰ Ritson agreed, proclaiming that 'the barbarous and unfeeling sports of the English...all proceed from their immoderate addiction to animal food'.³¹ If a peaceable and harmonious state of nature had been dependent upon the natural vegetarian diet then it logically followed that diet itself was fundamental to the formulation of human behaviour and relations. Hence Nicholson's contrast of the lives of carnivorous beings – 'destructive', 'tormented' and forever in a 'state of warfare or disquietude' – and the 'joyful existence' of frugivorous ones.³² By introducing violence into the world, the consumption of meat had deformed man's natural character and played a fundamental role in replacing the sympathetic coexistence of the vegetarian state of nature with what these thinkers saw as the corrupted society surrounding them.

The development of this 'mean, miserable, and ludicrous life of man civilised', as Oswald termed it, had itself, in a mutually reinforcing relationship with meat-eating, acted to encourage further corruption.³³ Indeed, the growth of such a pernicious 'civilised' order had spawned organised religion, and in particular given rise to religious 'superstitions', which, stimulated by the 'gluttonous and unnatural appetites' of priests, had legitimised man's killing of animals, first for sacrifice and later for food.³⁴ Most notably, it had led to the development of a science motivated by 'unfeeling dogmas', which, through the practice of vivisection, sought 'with ruffian violence [to] interrogate trembling nature', 'plung[ing] into her maternal bosom the butcher knife'.³⁵

Modern science provided perhaps the clearest illustration for these thinkers of the centrality of the subjugation of animals to the erosion of natural sympathy and the broader spread of violence in society. This was well exemplified by Oswald's description of 'barbarian' scientists who, seeking to disprove his vegetarian

³⁰ Rousseau, *Émile*, p.118.

³¹ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.88.

³² Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.33-34.

³³ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.66.

³⁴ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.69-73; Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.102-123; Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.24.

³⁵ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.32.

arguments, held up the dissected ‘entrails of man’ himself in order to proclaim: ‘behold the bowels of a carnivorous animal’.³⁶ Through this, Oswald depicted the utter degradation that had occurred to the natures of these pioneers of civilisation through their involvement in a ‘nefarious science’ based upon animal slaughter, which, ultimately, had led them even to ‘violate the human form’.³⁷ This condemnation was specifically directed against the ideas and practices of those who subscribed to the Cartesian view of animals as mechanistic, unfeeling beings, which, Oswald claimed, served to induce ‘a callous insensibility’ in the human heart.³⁸ The notion that modern men of science had become ‘inured to blood’ exemplified the effect that these three men believed a carnivorous civilisation had had upon the sensibilities of those most intimately involved in its progression.³⁹

It was not, however, only those that stood, like priests and vivisectionists, ‘butcher knife’ in hand at the forefront of civilisation, who had become complicit in the spread of thoughtless violence. Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson perceived that in an increasingly urbanised society, the majority of people had become able to distance themselves, via the advent of professional butchery and slaughterhouses, from the act of killing.⁴⁰ This had served to both normalise the slaughter of animals and to conduct it on an unprecedented scale, for, as Oswald explained, ‘on the carcass we feed, without remorse, because the dying struggles of the butchered creature are secluded from our sight’.⁴¹ Indeed, if the consumers of meat were forced ‘with [their] own hands, to assassinate the animals we devour’ they would inevitably ‘throw down...the knife’.⁴²

As Nicholson asserted, it was ‘the present stage of *polished* life’ that had habituated humans into committing ‘acts of outrage and depredation’ and led them to ‘abandon

³⁶ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.33.

³⁷ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.32-33. For Nicholson’s critique, see Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.175-176.

³⁸ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.4-5.

³⁹ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.183.

⁴⁰ Butchers themselves were viewed by Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson as amongst the most degraded of men. See: Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.182-187; Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.29-30; Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.132-35.

⁴¹ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.30.

⁴² Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.30.

every refined feeling and sensibility'.⁴³ Oswald therefore proclaimed that the rise of civilisation had turned by 'frequent repetition' the violent and unnatural act of meat-eating into 'an unfeeling habit'.⁴⁴ Importantly, through enabling and encouraging meat consumption civilisation had eroded the natural impulse of sympathy and freed humanity 'from every tender link...from every lovely prejudice of nature'.⁴⁵ The consumption of animals' flesh had been fundamental to the birth of civilisation, which, in turn, had both masked and normalised this most unnatural practice, allowing it to proliferate. Meat-eating and an ever-'advancing' corruptive civilisation thus formed a symbiotic relationship that acted to debase the natural impulse of sympathy, which then resulted in the further growth of these two evils. This conception of a vicious circle of human 'progress' served to demonstrate humanity's estrangement from both its own compassionate nature and from nature itself.

1.2. 'The Cry of Nature': Vegetarianism and the Revival of Sympathy

With this conception of Europe's 'civilisation' in mind it is little wonder that Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson frequently looked to examples from 'uncivilised' parts of the world to further their arguments for radical change. Seeking to prove humanity's original peaceful union with the rest of nature, they related reports of explorers who arrived in uninhabited lands to be met by friendly and fearless animal natives – tragically yet to understand that no creature was 'so wantonly and malignantly cruel' as 'civilised' man.⁴⁶ Stimulated by a burgeoning body of travel narratives, such notions of 'natural society rediscovered' were common tropes in much utopian literature of the period.⁴⁷

Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson all used examples from the non-European world to demonstrate that where the 'pernicious arts' of civilisation had not yet permeated,

⁴³ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.98.

⁴⁴ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.150.

⁴⁵ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.78.

⁴⁶ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.50. For discussions of these instances see, for example, Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.145-47 and Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.222.

⁴⁷ Gregory Claeys, *Utopias of the British Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.xi & xvii.

the vegetarian diet remained prevalent.⁴⁸ Oswald, having travelled in India, particularly admired the Hindu peoples, who, he believed, through their vegetarianism, had retained the ‘lovely prejudices of nature’ and so continued to live in a society devoid of ‘the baneful effects of subsequent refinement’.⁴⁹ Ritson similarly depicted the Bedouin: ‘content with his milk and dates...[he] has shed no blood’ and thus has ‘preserved a humane...heart’.⁵⁰ Both compared the current corrupted state of society to idealisations of far-off lands in order to demonstrate that ‘civilised’ humanity had abandoned its peaceful, benevolent nature and instead embraced a negative mode of violent, carnivorous existence.

The principal importance of these accounts, however, was in their suggestion of a remedy and a means by which people could begin to overturn such corruption. As it struck at the root of civilisation and moved humanity closer to its natural sympathetic state, these thinkers presented the vegetarian diet as a vital way in which the very structures of society could begin to be altered. Their radical public encouragement of vegetarianism was, again, fundamentally grounded in their positive conception of human nature, specifically their belief in human perfectibility. Their view that a sympathetic and benevolent nature was forever present and thus possible within human beings led them to believe that mankind had the potential for almost boundless improvement, if only it would throw off the shackles imposed upon it by a callous civilisation perpetuated by ‘Aristocracy and Priestcraft’.⁵¹ Vegetarianism played a fundamental role in this all-important restoration of the natural impulse of sympathy, for, as Nicholson suggested, never could there be a ‘golden age regained’ unless those who argued for the brutalising carnivorous diet, those ‘opposers of compassion’, were thoroughly refuted.⁵²

⁴⁸ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.78-9.

⁴⁹ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.78-9. Ritson also praised the Hindu peoples: Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.208-215.

⁵⁰ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.126-27.

⁵¹ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.45.

⁵² Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.99 & 224.

As Rousseau claimed, civilisation had only ‘been able to corrupt but not able to destroy’ humanity’s natural sympathetic impulse.⁵³ Indeed, Oswald still perceived ‘the vestiges of that amiable sympathy...even in this degenerate age’ and, in particular, observed that ‘a long...disuse [had] not...altogether choke[d] up’ mankind’s ‘channels of sympathy’ for other animals.⁵⁴ Such ‘vestiges’ were certainly becoming increasingly visible as the eighteenth century progressed. The intellectual advances of the Enlightenment had begun to redefine the human-animal relationship and an apparently more favourable view of the animal world had started to emerge. Scientific developments, particularly in the field of comparative anatomy, undermined long-standing claims of humanity’s uniqueness and as the Cartesian view, too, began to erode, an increasing emphasis was placed upon the capacity of other animals for sensation, feeling and even a degree of reason.⁵⁵ This new evidence for the biological similarity of mankind to other animals, as well as for their expanded mental and sensory capabilities, was absorbed by Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson and incorporated into their writings.⁵⁶ For these three men it appeared that the scientific advances of the period had begun to bridge the divide between species.

For Oswald and Ritson, a vehement atheism further strengthened this idea of a ‘narrowing gap’. Ritson, for example, enlisted recent scientific discoveries in order to disprove man’s status as a ‘lord of creation’, in possession of ‘that right which he boasts to have received from his god’ to ‘torment and devour’ the rest of the animal world.⁵⁷ Most strikingly, he provided a discussion based upon the influential work of Lord Monboddo regarding the similarity between humans and orangutans, through which he asserted the common biology and origins of these ‘two animals’.⁵⁸ Oswald similarly sought to rebuke humanity’s divinely justified self-aggrandisement, asserting that natural man would ‘never dream that...[he]...was so much more noble,

⁵³ Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, p.79.

⁵⁴ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.45 & 52.

⁵⁵ Turner, *Reckoning with the Beast*, p.4; Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, pp.129-130.

⁵⁶ See, for example, Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.113-118; Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.11-21; Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.107-154.

⁵⁷ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.39.

⁵⁸ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.13-14. For an account of Monboddo’s ideas see E.L. Cloyd, *James Burnett, Lord Monboddo* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).

or that he drew his origin from a purer source...than the animals in whom he saw a resemblance so complete'.⁵⁹

As Preece has highlighted, 'the customary grounds for treating humans as superior and entitled to superior consideration' were usually religious or else predicated on the possession of supposedly 'human' faculties such as reason.⁶⁰ For Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson, it was thus vital to both refute the central belief of organised Christianity that mankind was on an entirely different plane to the rest of creation, as well as to demonstrate that animals *were* actually in possession of a great range of intellectual capabilities and broader sensibilities.⁶¹ Of significant relevance, therefore, were the numerous eighteenth-century scientific and philosophic theories which implicitly challenged traditional religious teaching regarding the nature and status of humanity as well as its relation to other animals – from Linnaean taxonomy to the Rousseauist 'state of nature'. These provided Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson with greater scope to support and publicly express their views concerning animals and encouraged their belief that a greater sense of fellowship between humans and other animals was becoming increasingly recognised.

Occurring simultaneously with these changes in the intellectual landscape, there arose in this period a cultural, literary-based, 'cult of sensibility' which espoused an emotive and seemingly sympathetic view of animals as 'feeling beings'. Typical examples of this were found in the works of poets such as James Thomson and Alexander Pope, notably the latter's depiction of the playful lamb who 'licks the hand just raised to shed his blood'.⁶² As Keith Thomas suggests, regardless of whether such expressions of apparent sympathy were simply poetic sentiment, they nevertheless demonstrated a growing unease towards the mistreatment of animals.⁶³

⁵⁹ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.54. For Oswald's use of the work of Monboddo see Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.14, 88, 92, 101-102 & 113.

⁶⁰ Preece, *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice in the Age of Bernard Shaw*, p.270.

⁶¹ For their arguments regarding animals' mental faculties see, for example, Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.118-119; Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.107-154; Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.234.

⁶² Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Man" (1734), *Alexander Pope*, ed. Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.274, Epistle I, stanza 3, line 84.

⁶³ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p.294.

For Oswald, therefore, even if not designed to effect a change in their position, poetry's ability to 'excite the sympathetic tear' on animals' behalf meant that it still had a significant role to play in forwarding the cause of human-animal fellowship.⁶⁴

If, as Rousseau suggested, 'the pity we feel for others is proportionate...to the feelings we attribute to the sufferers', then the growing view of animals as feeling beings, far closer to humanity than previously thought, had profound implications for their treatment and place within human society.⁶⁵ Indeed, it was in this period that the criteria for inclusion in the sphere of human moral concern became increasingly dependent upon the subject's capacity to feel. This philosophic development was most famously expressed by the utilitarian Jeremy Bentham in 1789: 'the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?'.⁶⁶ Prior to this, however, Rousseau had already firmly established that because animals share 'in our nature by virtue of [their] sensitivity' men are 'bound by a certain duty towards them', for 'a quality which is common to beast and man ought to give the former the right not to be uselessly ill-treated by the latter'.⁶⁷

Oswald clearly echoed this notion as he urged his readers to 'learn to recognise and respect in other animals the feelings which vibrate in ourselves'.⁶⁸ Nicholson, too, added that due to humanity's 'similarity of affections, sensations, and propensities' with other animals, mankind's 'sympathy should...be strongly and zealously exerted in their favour; we should...cultivate harmony and peace...with them, as humanity and morality suggests we should our own species'.⁶⁹ The growing emphasis upon the prevention of the suffering of fellow feeling beings had become widespread within society at large by the end of the century, with previously neglected groups such as

⁶⁴ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.11. Reproduced in Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.206. See also Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.65-67 and Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.177-178.

⁶⁵ Rousseau, *Émile*, p.186.

⁶⁶ Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (London: T. Payne, 1789), p.309.

⁶⁷ Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, p.71.

⁶⁸ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.82. Preece wrongly ascribes this quote to Nicholson, who had reproduced it in his own work: Preece, "Introduction", in Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.liii.

⁶⁹ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.107.

criminals and slaves, as well as animals, receiving newfound humanitarian attention.⁷⁰ The intellectual and cultural atmosphere of the late Enlightenment had evidently encouraged the belief of Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson that humanity's kinship with other animals was becoming increasingly recognised. It was within this apparently favourable context that they sought to further stimulate the re-emergence of humanity's natural sympathetic impulse by publicly condemning, what Ritson termed, 'the diabolical practice of devouring your fellow creatures, as pigs and geese undoubtedly are'.⁷¹

For political radicals in this period the notion of a 'fellow creaturehood' with other animals potentially held significant implications that went well beyond a mere acknowledgment of a common capacity to feel and to suffer. By the 1790s the rights of man were in the minds and mouths of many and, prompted by thinkers such as Rousseau and Paine, their vindication had become fundamental to the radical cause. Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson certainly positioned themselves as champions of, what Oswald termed, these 'indefeatable rights of man' and made them central to their writings.⁷² In the minds of these three men, as well as Rousseau, however, such rights did not now only apply to humanity.

Within his arguments for the moral consideration of animals, Rousseau had asserted that they should now also 'have a share in natural right'.⁷³ Nicholson, likewise, came to claim that animals had a 'natural right to an unpainful enjoyment of life...as great as that of man' as well as an 'inherent right of freedom'.⁷⁴ He insisted that cruelty to animals must be punished 'simply as such', not just when it constituted an offence against human 'property'.⁷⁵ As Oswald urged, humanity had a rights-based 'bond to acknowledge' with the rest of the animal world and so should not be 'satisfied with extending to man alone the moral scheme...[leaving]...every other species...unfeelingly abandoned'.⁷⁶ All three thinkers envisaged both humans and

⁷⁰ Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, p.184.

⁷¹ Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol 1, p.39.

⁷² Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.22.

⁷³ Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, p.71.

⁷⁴ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.178 & 201. Ritson forwarded the same notion: Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol. 1, p.47.

⁷⁵ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.203.

⁷⁶ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.3-4.

other animals as part of one community of feeling beings who were, consequently, *all* worthy not only of sympathetic consideration but also certain rights.

Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson's perception of a growing revival of humanity's natural sympathetic impulse thus remained central to their understanding of the evolving intellectual and political context within which they lived. Indeed, it had been, at least in part, the atmosphere of this period that had encouraged them to formulate a sympathetic language and symbolism within which to frame their arguments. This was notably seen in the highly emotive composition of Oswald's *The Cry of Nature*, as exemplified by its emotionally compelling frontispiece (Fig.2). This image was explained by Oswald as depicting a mother deer, alongside an embodiment of Mother Nature herself, both weeping for their 'darling of nature', a young fawn, whom 'the butcher's knife hath laid low' and was 'now stretched in gore upon the ground'.⁷⁷

The use of such language and imagery was due to the purpose that these men had given their writings which was, as Oswald's title explicitly suggested, to '*appeal*' to the sympathy of their readership. The fact that sympathy is fundamentally grounded in emotional impulses, appeared to suggest to them that an emotive appeal was vital in stimulating their readers' dormant sympathy. Indeed, if an emotive sympathetic instinct was inherent internally within the human being - 'from the texture of the human heart arises the strongest argument on behalf of the persecuted creatures' - then it was through such an emotive appeal to the 'very bowels...fraught with mercy, and entwined with compassion' that they hoped people might finally 'yield to the combined evidence' of their senses and look upon the killing of animals 'with abhorrence'.

They thus encouraged their readers to re-open their channels of sympathy via listening to, what they termed, the voice, or *cry*, of nature.⁷⁸ Fundamental to this 'cry' was a belief in the existence of a form of sympathetic communication between humans and other animals rooted in a primeval language of emotive sounds and

⁷⁷ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.36-37.

⁷⁸ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.38.



Figure 2. James Gillray. Frontispiece from John Oswald's *The Cry of Nature*, 1791 (British Library, London).

expressions: 'the tremor of desire, the tear of distress, the piercing cry of anguish, the pity-pleading look, expressions that speak the soul with a feeling which words can but feebly convey'.⁷⁹ These thinkers stated that they had been moved by this 'universal language' through which they had heard the cries of the oppressed animals and been 'pierced by the incessant shrieks of [their] suffering innocence'.⁸⁰ As one contemporary wrote of Ritson: 'I could mention a hundred instances of [his]

⁷⁹ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.57-58. Reproduced in Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.107. For Ritson's discussion of 'the cry' see Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.33, 99 & 217-219.

⁸⁰ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.220; Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.80.

unaffected feeling for the sufferings of the brute creation – *their groans entered his soul*.⁸¹

As Oswald suggested in the title of *The Cry of Nature*, he was speaking ‘*on behalf of*’ the animal world. ‘The suffering brute’, as Nicholson put it, ‘can neither utter the name of his oppression...nor bring an action against the barbarous injustices of unfeeling man’ and so it was the task of ‘the sympathising few’ of humanity, sensitive to the cries of animals, to agitate in their favour.⁸² As Timothy Morton suggests, reformers of this period often constructed an interaction between the voice of nature and the figure of the reformer who subsequently heard it and perceived ‘the voice of their own humanity within [it]’.⁸³ For these thinkers, therefore, the ‘cry’ of actual animals fed into a more metaphorical conception of a broader ‘cry’ of nature which served not only as a collective voice of the subjugated natural world but also as the voice of humanity’s own inherent sympathetic impulse: Nature’s ‘voice of mercy which speaks from the bottom of my heart’.⁸⁴

By urging their readers to follow their example in responding to the compassionate cry of nature, Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson were calling them to action. They had identified sympathy as the primary means of effecting political and societal change, for, as Rousseau had suggested, ‘it is *feeling* that leads us to action’.⁸⁵ It was this active sympathy which united these thinkers’ vegetarianism and political agitation, for together they formed sympathy’s expression as radical emancipatory action. Centrally, these men reasoned that if the revival of natural sympathy was to succeed in ending oppression in its totality, anything that retarded it, such as meat-eating, could not continue to exist. By removing the violence and exploitation engendered by the carnivorous diet, vegetarianism was thus inescapably vital in re-opening the channels of humanity’s inherent compassion, which would, ultimately, act to end the tyranny that civilisation exercised in unison over both humans and non-human animals.

⁸¹ Nicolas, “Memoir of Joseph Ritson”, p.lxix. Emphasis added.

⁸² Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.2 & 56.

⁸³ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.27.

⁸⁴ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.44.

⁸⁵ Rousseau, *Émile*, p.146. Emphasis added. Oswald echoed this notion, Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.56.

1.3. ‘Shall the field support no living thing except the victims of your gluttony?’: The System of ‘Predatory Consumption’

1.3.1. The Interconnection of Human and Animal Oppression

Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson believed that by abandoning its true nature humanity had sunk both itself and the animal world into ‘one common ruin’.⁸⁶ Indeed, they perceived that all forms of tyranny and oppression stemmed from the same source, that of a corrupting carnivorous civilisation and its erosion of the natural impulse of sympathy. As Oswald proclaimed:

Hence arose prisons, palaces, pyramids, and all those other amazing monuments of human slavery; hence the inequality of ranks, the wasteful wallow of wealth...the abject front of poverty...and hence, impelled by perverse ambition and insatiate thirst of gain, we [continue to] break through all the barriers of nature.⁸⁷

All three writers not only viewed violence towards animals and humans as interconnected, but considered both to form part of a fundamentally interlinked system of structural oppression. This, they argued, would require an equally all-encompassing holistic solution to overturn it – the aforementioned re-opening of the channels of a universal sympathy.

With echoes of Rousseau’s famous declaration that ‘man was born free, [yet] everywhere...is in chains’, Ritson wrote that ‘Man, who is everywhere a tyrant or a slave, delights to inflict on each sensible being within his power the treatment he receives from his own superiors: as the negro revenges the cruelty of his owner upon the innocent dog’.⁸⁸ Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson viewed present society as a hierarchical system which entrenched itself by making each person in some regard both a persecutor and a victim, spreading an ethos of division, exploitation and

⁸⁶ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.67-68. Also quoted by Nicholson in *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.9.

⁸⁷ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.66-67. Also quoted by Nicholson in *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.9.

⁸⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1762), trans. Christopher Betts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.45; Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.100.

cruelty through every layer of human life. Similarly to Ritson's example of the slave and the dog, Nicholson exemplified this through his description of the treatment of cart horses by poor rural and urban workers: 'there is no mercy, or feeling, or compassion...[to be found in]...the conduct of our petty tyrants of the whip'.⁸⁹

Although critical of much of the cruel behaviour of the 'low' classes of mankind, Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson all recognised that it was from the grand tyrants themselves – the monarchs, ministers and aristocrats – that the tide of corruption flowed. As Oswald asserted:

Instead...of recognising that kindly principle of union which nature has infused into our bosoms, we find everywhere established a system of violence, which, founded on a proud spirit of domination...rises up in a progressive Babel of oppression, till it reaches in royalty the very summit of wickedness.⁹⁰

It was the elites of human society who most fervently advanced the spread of tyranny, for, as Nicholson suggested, from those 'inflated by wealth...[and] devoted to sensual gratifications...no share of humanity can be expected'.⁹¹ Indeed, those who sat atop the despotic system of oppression were taken as its chief representatives and so their personal characters and behaviours were seen as demonstrative of its larger ethos and operation.

Importantly, the actions of the elite exhibited how exploitation and cruelty characterised their relationship with both humans *and* non-human animals, as Ritson illustrated, for example, through an anecdote of George III riding three horses to death for his own expediency.⁹² Revealingly, Ritson used a similar description of the subjugation of horses at the hands of human elites to summarise the *modus operandi* of the system of oppression as a whole:

⁸⁹ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.162.

⁹⁰ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.40.

⁹¹ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.223.

⁹² Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.91-92.

[Its] creed...is that a few men...born with boots and spurs...have a right to bridle, saddle and harness the rest, and ride or drive them with as much gentleness or violence as they see occasion.⁹³

Ritson thus suggested that this was a despotism that was exercised indistinguishably over humans and animals alike, for, like George III's horses, both were driven with an unremitting brutality to satisfy the unfeeling rapacity of those elites who stood at the reins.

The hunting culture of the elite provided a key example of this common oppression, for this 'savage amusement' not only snatched the lives of non-human animals but also formed a conscious 'perversion of feeling', designed to prepare men to slaughter their own species on the field of battle in wars which benefitted the rich alone.⁹⁴ A further embodiment was the eighteenth-century enclosure of common land, as this simultaneously took the land from the people, pushing them into economic hardship and dependency upon the employment of new landowners, and sought to satisfy the meat consumption of the richer classes. This, in particular, provided an explicit representation of the predatory and exploitative relationship between the elite on the one hand and the lower classes and non-human animals on the other; as Oswald declared: 'shall the field support no living thing except the victims of your gluttony?'⁹⁵

For Oswald, in facilitating the enclosures, the House of Commons was 'a den of thieves', who for the benefit of the rich sat 'plotting in their midnight conspiracies' both 'the murder of the innocent' and 'the ruin of the fatherless and the widow'.⁹⁶ Those unjustly privileged 'grovelling sons of gain' who sat on its benches became in his eyes 'bullock-contractors [and] slave-merchants' who used their ill-gotten power to defend their 'barbarous' interests against those of both the human and animal oppressed.⁹⁷ Tellingly, in addition to characterising the ruling elite specifically as 'bullock-contractors' Oswald also came to represent the British people themselves as

⁹³ Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol. 1, p.209.

⁹⁴ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.190; Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.6; Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.92-93.

⁹⁵ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.49.

⁹⁶ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.20.

⁹⁷ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.24.

an explicitly bovine incarnation of ‘John Bull’. In a subversion of the popular conception of this figure of beef-eating patriotism, Oswald instead sought to bestow the symbolic title of ‘John Bull’ upon the collective embodiment of the people themselves as an actual bullock whom the political elites, for the sake of their own avaricious appetites, had deceived into offering itself for sacrifice.⁹⁸ As the enclosures had demonstrated to Oswald, both real bulls and the labouring classes must have their throats slit, albeit the former actually and the latter metaphorically, in order to satisfy the greed of the elite.

All three thinkers frequently symbolised the oppression of humans by reference to that of animals. Oswald, for example, spoke of the criminal, compelled by hunger, as being dragged through the streets ‘like a sheep doomed for slaughter’, of the navy’s ships as ‘royal slaughter-houses’ for those pressed into serving in the wars of the rich, and of the governance of Britain as the representation of the ‘flock’ by the ‘wolves’.⁹⁹ The use of animal metaphor was, of course, deeply culturally engrained and was certainly prevalent within broader contemporary radical discourses concerning human oppression.¹⁰⁰ What differentiated Oswald’s use of such language, however, was that for him its implications went beyond mere metaphor. His imagining of oppressed humans as interchangeable with oppressed animals was an explicitly critical recognition of the common systemic violence exercised over them both.

This ultimately led to his common representation of *all* manifestations of oppression as forms of carnivorous predation, through which the elites ‘fatten[ed] on [the] distress’ of their human and/or animal victims.¹⁰¹ Indeed, he came to dub Britain’s oppressive governance ‘the Tyger Despotism’, after the infamously cruel and bloodthirsty carnivore of contemporary popular imagination.¹⁰² Those who

⁹⁸ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, pp.42-43.

⁹⁹ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, pp.6-7 & 15.

¹⁰⁰ See, for example, Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.35.

¹⁰¹ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.15.

¹⁰² Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.30. As Diana Donald notes, the tiger ‘was described by every eighteenth-century writer on zoology as the cruellest [and] bloodiest...of creatures’: Donald, *Picturing Animals in Britain*, p.76. It seems even Oswald could not escape prejudicial characterisations of certain species.

composed its voracious elite were similarly characterised as ‘the monster Aristocracy’, which extended its ‘ten thousand fangs’ and sucked ‘from every pore of the people a never-ceasing stream of blood’.¹⁰³ Due to his crowning position, however, it was the king himself whom Oswald classed as the pre-eminent ‘devourer of the people’, for it was in his name that the predatory exploitation of both humans and non-human animals was perpetuated.¹⁰⁴

1.3.2. Imperialism and Commodification

Oswald’s critique of the king and the elite led into a broader critique of imperialism and commodification.¹⁰⁵ All three writers utilised a symbolism of predation in their attacks upon the all-encompassing tyranny that they believed the growth of empire, especially Britain’s, served to spread across the world. As Oswald explained, for both humans and non-human animals, exploitative imperialism was limitless in its rapacity: ‘the most remote corners of the globe are ravished of their inhabitants’ in order placate the ‘gluttony’ of civilised man, whilst ‘agonising nature is tortured by his ambition’ in trying ‘to supply the demands of his perverse appetite’.¹⁰⁶ Nicholson similarly denounced this ‘vanity and exquisite voraciousness’ of the ‘civilised’ imperial nations, who sought to ‘discover in the bulk, or taste, or smell, or beauty of every creature...an incentive to murder’.¹⁰⁷

As this suggests, these writers recognised that imperialism had served to further commodify the animal world and consequently exacerbated the breakdown of the ‘ties of kindred’ between humans and other animals.¹⁰⁸ Oswald, therefore, spoke with more than symbolic meaning when referring to the spoils of empire as having added a ‘feather to the wings’ of civilised man’s vanity.¹⁰⁹ For, as Nicholson

¹⁰³ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, pp.30-31. See also: Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.16.

¹⁰⁴ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.33.

¹⁰⁵ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.97.

¹⁰⁶ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.76. Reproduced in Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.155-156. Rousseau had also asserted this notion: Rousseau, *Émile*, p.153.

¹⁰⁷ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.6. Reproduced in Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.10.

¹⁰⁸ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.156.

¹⁰⁹ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.76.

clarified, the actual feathers of exotic birds, as well as the furs and skins of other animals, worn with pride by the wealthy of Britain, had been ‘obtained by outrages against nature...and compassion’.¹¹⁰ Ritson, likewise, presented the case of the beaver, a creature deserving of ‘tears of admiration and pity’, who was persecuted with ‘unmerciful rapaciousness’ as part of an enormous trade in the creatures’ pelts established by ‘the most polished nations of Europe’.¹¹¹ These writers thus merged the symbolism of predation into a broader narrative of consumption and commodification in which the progression of ‘civilisation’ was seen to have transformed other animals into mere products, as opposed to fellow creatures, to be utilised or devoured by the wealthier classes of Britain.

Just as nature itself had been commodified via the enclosure of common land, non-human animals were no longer free and independent beings but instead formed part of (elite-controlled) human ‘property’. Following in the footsteps of Rousseau, and anticipating a central contention of much subsequent leftist argument, Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson considered the institution of property, of which land and ‘prey’ had formed the first embodiments, responsible for introducing inequality and conflict into the world.¹¹² They believed, in Rousseau’s words, that ‘the law of property and inequality’ had ‘destroyed natural liberty’ through its subjugation of the majority by an inflated few who had transformed their original violent ‘usurpation into irrevocable right’.¹¹³ Such a system of private property had served to ‘debauch the people’ and permanently ‘disturb the peace of society’ as it eroded humanity’s natural inclination to form cooperative communities and sympathetic relationships.¹¹⁴ Based solely upon the advancement of iniquitous private gain, and still most intimately concerned with appropriating, or *consuming*, both the lands of others and animal ‘products’, the growth of imperialism had acted to perpetuate the exploitative inequalities upon which civilisation had been founded.

¹¹⁰ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.157.

¹¹¹ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.101.

¹¹² Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, pp.109 & 122; Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.87-88.

¹¹³ Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, p.122; Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.16.

¹¹⁴ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.15.

Significantly, following his discussion of the spread of imperialism as having caused the natural world to ‘bleed at every pore’, Nicholson highlighted the fact that the ‘merciful Hindoo’, antithetical to civilised man, was also oppressed by the very same tyrannical empire.¹¹⁵ As Oswald had suggested, a predatory imperialism was exercised over *all* the inhabitants of the besieged lands beyond European ‘civilisation’. Ritson, for instance, related how European colonists in Africa, simultaneous to their slaughter of native animals, likewise killed indigenous humans in tremendous numbers for the sake of their own profit or even ‘pleasure’.¹¹⁶ For these writers, however, it was slavery, that ‘vile’ institution ‘which murders the peace of the world’, that provided the ultimate example of the dual sacrifice of humans and non-human animals to the ‘ruthless jaws’ of imperial ‘gluttony’.¹¹⁷

Together, animals and native peoples had become commodities whose lives were consumed by Western elites. Nicholson, talking of honey and sugar production by bees and black slaves respectively, thus argued:

A sympathising person, when invited to a sweetened repast, will reflect whether it has been produced at the expense of thousands of lives, or obtained from the sacrifice of the liberty, happiness, and existence of his fellow men; and, if the appetite can be luxuriously feasted only on these conditions he will disdain to become a partaker.¹¹⁸

Both honey, frequently acquired in this period by the killing of the bees, and slave-grown sugar were extracted via a common tyranny which sought to satisfy the greed of civilised man.¹¹⁹ In the face of this quintessential example of interconnected systemic exploitation, Nicholson encouraged his readers to adopt the all-encompassing solution of re-awakening their inherent compassion in order to become the ‘sympathising’ individuals who would no longer consume this ‘produce

¹¹⁵ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.10-11 & 156.

¹¹⁶ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.234-235.

¹¹⁷ Oswald, *The British Mercury*, p.53; Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.97.

¹¹⁸ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.182.

¹¹⁹ Eva Crane, *The World History of Beekeeping and Honey Hunting* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p.448.

of tyranny, robbery, and murder’ and thus undermine the very basis of civilisation’s system of predation.¹²⁰

As Ritson indicated, the first predatory inequality that had been created by civilised man, and which had begun the erosion of natural sympathy, was the commodification and subsequent consumption of animals’ flesh.¹²¹ It was from this act that other forms of violent exploitation had flowed and so it was by rejecting such a system of exploitative consumption – fundamentally via vegetarianism but also through the boycott of imperial goods – that the whole body of oppression may be assailed.¹²² For these writers human slavery, ‘that abominable violation of the rights of nature’, was not an isolated evil.¹²³ It was, instead, one of the many manifestations of a gluttonous tyranny through which a privileged few sought to grow fat on the miseries of the human and animal multitude. For Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson, therefore, the fact that the many thousands of exotic animals captured, imprisoned and exported to the menageries and parlours of Europe travelled and died on the very same ships that transported human slaves, would have provided more than mere symbolism in its explicit demonstration of the conjoined oppression faced by humans and other animals; companions under the tyrannous yoke of imperialism.¹²⁴

1.3.3. The Role of Religion and the Language of Cannibalism

All three of these writers believed that organised religion, by which they generally meant mainstream Christianity, had played a fundamental role in the establishment of a despotic and carnivorous civilisation. Oswald argued that religious doctrine had

¹²⁰ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.209. Nicholson also characterised such tyrannical produce as being ‘steeped...in the blood of our fellow-creatures’ (p.210). Such symbolism was common in abolitionist discourses of the period, particularly in the context of the 1792 sugar boycotts. For a discussion see Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawaks to Zombies* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp.88-95.

¹²¹ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.89. This had also been alluded to by Rousseau: Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, p.110.

¹²² Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.89.

¹²³ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.89.

¹²⁴ Louise E. Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots: Exotic Animals in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), pp.27-28. For a useful discussion of historical, contemporary and theoretical interconnections between human slavery and the oppression of non-human animals see Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (New York: Mirror Books, 1996).

served to legitimise the superiority and exploitative prerogative mankind enjoyed over other animals, including the permission to eat their flesh. Simultaneously, it had provided an army of ‘menacing ministers’ who, again protecting the same hierarchical system, sought ‘to justify [the] oppression’ of the great mass of human beings themselves.¹²⁵ As Oswald explained, ‘despotic princes have need of cruel gods to sanction their oppressions’ and so ‘slavery and superstition’ had necessarily become ‘twin sisters’.¹²⁶ Ritson, a fellow atheist, concurred, proclaiming that ‘Superstition is the mother of Ignorance and Barbarity’.¹²⁷ Nicholson, despite his religious inclinations remaining unclear, likewise acknowledged the role of organised religion in sacrificing many hundreds of thousands of human lives to the advance of despotism and condemned the same ecclesiastically sanctioned oppression of animals, as embodied, for example, by the corrupt and hypocritical ‘reverend sportsman’ who spent his time ‘slaying the innocent and peaceful tenants of the fields’.¹²⁸

As Oswald asserted, the dogmas of organised Christianity had made mankind into ‘the heaven-deputed despot of every creature’.¹²⁹ This initial, religiously-justified, inequality of species had subsequently enabled human elites to assert themselves as similarly sanctified tyrants over the great mass of humans who, likewise, stood beneath them in the hierarchy that they sought to legitimise via the same ‘divinely ordained’ authority that they had previously claimed for man over the ‘lesser’ animals. Ritson characterised this expansive development of religiously-backed oppression through his discussion of the role of the priest in the original growth of meat-eating: after a while his ‘luxurious appetite called for variety’ and so having ‘devoured the sheep [he] was now desirous to masticate the shepherd’.¹³⁰ This symbolic cannibalism was a representation of the way in which organised religion had been intimately involved in the extension of a predatory tyranny from the animal world to the human one.

¹²⁵ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.69-73; Oswald, *The British Mercury*, pp.17-18.

¹²⁶ Oswald, *The British Mercury*, p.129.

¹²⁷ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.102.

¹²⁸ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.191.

¹²⁹ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.77.

¹³⁰ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.102.

In part, by characterising the oppression of humans as ‘cannibalism’, Ritson was taking the notion of ‘stages of cruelty’, as illustrated by Hogarth, to its ultimate carnivorous extreme by implying that the consumption of the flesh of animals led to that of humans.¹³¹ However, more importantly, he was also demonstrating that because humans and animals were ‘fellow creatures’, subjugated by the same predatory elite, the ‘consumption’ of either, whether actual or metaphorical, could be characterised as inherently ‘cannibalistic’. Ritson thus came to label his vegetarianism as ‘anti-canibalical principles’, which ultimately sought to ensure that civilisation’s pervasive ‘jaws of gluttony’ would one day be forever shut.¹³² Nicholson, too, made use of this supreme predatory symbolism, characterising the carnivorous despotic elites as being ‘formed of the materials of a cannibal’.¹³³

As an early nineteenth-century biographer explained of Oswald, the continued practice of eating animals’ flesh was, in his mind, only one manifestation of that system of ‘savage voraciousness which leads tyrant man [even] to sacrifice, in various ways, his own species to his inordinate appetites’.¹³⁴ The predatory ‘consumption’ of life – be it actual or metaphorical – could be seen as the ultimate form of subjugation. Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson’s observation of this certainly provided them with a powerful symbolism. Indeed, for them, it was an accurate reflection of the very real despotism that was exercised by civilisation’s cannibalistic elites, as part of a hegemonic system of hierarchical predatory consumption, or, as they might have phrased it, ‘savage voraciousness’, that corrupted the lives of both its proponents and its victims.

1.3.4. Establishment Ideology and Animal Welfare

The existence of a hierarchical and predatory ‘ideology’ of the elite, against which Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson defined their own belief systems, can certainly be

¹³¹ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.124-145. Oswald also put forward this notion: Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.27-28.

¹³² Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol. 1, p.51.

¹³³ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.223.

¹³⁴ Robertson, *Lives of Eminent Scotsmen*, p.174.

perceived in the actions and arguments of establishment figures during this period. For instance, it is true that the teachings of organised mainstream Christianity in Britain provided the key intellectual grounding for the subordination of animals and, in particular, for counter-vegetarian arguments.¹³⁵ In addition, these same religious dogmas were fundamental to the foundation and defence of a social structure that was built upon a belief in the inevitability and desirability of natural hierarchy. As Diana Donald explains: ‘the notion of natural hierarchy...[was]...crucial both to the traditional concept of human-animal relations and to [the] acceptance of inequalities in human society itself’.¹³⁶ ‘A challenge to the former’, therefore, ‘was a threat to the latter’, and so, for those who supported the established order, the radical vegetarian arguments of Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson posed a potentially existential danger.¹³⁷ The conservative children’s author, and leading promoter of ‘kindness to animals’, Sarah Trimmer, expressed this concern as she declared that claims for animals’ rights were part of an egalitarian ‘levelling system’ designed to tear civilisation asunder.¹³⁸ In terms of Oswald’s, Ritson’s and Nicholson’s arguments, she was evidently correct.

These three writers and their establishment detractors both recognised that they were defending two respective political, social and moral systems that fundamentally opposed one another. What the latter viewed as a divinely ordained monarchy overseeing an organically hierarchical society, the former conceived of as a barbarous usurpation of natural equality and the imposition of a virtual slavery upon the great mass of humans and non-human animals. For Britain’s establishment, the word ‘civilisation’ alluded to European humanity’s advancement and superiority over foreign ‘savages’, the ‘brute beasts’ and the natural world itself. For Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson, it signified despotic oppression, mankind’s debasement and a detachment of individuals from their sympathetic impulses that served to erode peaceful and cooperative human and human-animal relationships.

¹³⁵ See: Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, pp.215-226.

¹³⁶ Diana Donald, *The Art of Thomas Bewick* (London: Reaktion, 2013), p.154.

¹³⁷ Donald, *The Art of Thomas Bewick*, p.154.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Donald, *The Art of Thomas Bewick*, p.154.

A good illustration of this ideological clash was provided by the reactionary Whig politician William Windham, who, in the House of Commons in 1802, defended bull-baiting specifically as an *alternative* to ‘Jacobinism’.¹³⁹ For him, traditional English blood sports were an integral part of a system of life against which radicals were positing a fundamentally opposite alternative. His defence of bull-baiting was thus central to a larger defence of the social order, for ‘habits long established among the people [were] the best fitted to resist...schemes of innovation’.¹⁴⁰

Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson’s key arguments were also expressed in specific reaction to cultural manifestations of establishment ideology, such as bull-baiting, which acted to maintain its precepts as societal orthodoxy. Their condemnation of blood sports, in particular, sought to address the ‘hunting cult’ of the British upper-classes, which claimed the practice as an important preparation for war between men and served as a visual display of elite dominance over the natural world; a dominance which became ever more explicit as a growing British imperialism sought, via big-game hunting, to demonstrate its superiority over the ‘great beasts’ and native peoples beyond Britain’s shores.¹⁴¹ For Windham, too, the link between violent dominance over animals and that over humans was a certainty: ‘the counties of Lancashire and Staffordshire, where the practice of [bull-baiting] principally prevailed...were known to produce the best soldiers for the army’.¹⁴² As his parliamentary opponent Richard Sheridan observed: if Windham desired the people to be ‘servile, he would teach them to be cruel. If he wished to induce them to submit to a system of government by barracks and bastilles, he would encourage bull-baiting’.¹⁴³

Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson’s arguments were also a reaction to the embodiment of English national identity as the fat and carnivorous figure of ‘John Bull’. This

¹³⁹ *The Parliamentary History of England*, vol.36 (London: Hansard, 1820), pp.833-834. For a discussion of Windham see Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, pp.81-87.

¹⁴⁰ *The Parliamentary History of England*, vol.36, p.834.

¹⁴¹ John M. MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp.10 & 47.

¹⁴² *The Parliamentary History of England*, vol.36, p.840.

¹⁴³ *The Parliamentary History of England*, vol.36, p.853.

symbolism of a hearty beef-fed English every-man, far removed from the reality of the great bulk of undernourished poor, was central to the political culture of this period and sought to conjure an image of Britain as a wealthy, martial and masculine nation.¹⁴⁴ It served as an assertion of Britain's carnivorous superiority not only over its imperial dominions but also other European nations, such as the 'effeminate' vegetable-eating French or the Irish, whose dependency on the potato 'was a sign of lower civilisation'.¹⁴⁵ For the British elites too, therefore, both actual and symbolic predation were the quintessential expressions of their most highly developed form of civilisation, the only difference being that they viewed predation and hierarchy as positive and natural.

Oswald may have characterised the upper-classes as the 'devourers of the people' but images of the elite, particularly the British and French monarchies, as bloated carnivorous consumers already proliferated at this time.¹⁴⁶ As the typical popular caricature in figure 3 illustrates through its depiction of the Prince of Wales – reclining with his expansive gut after gorging on a joint of meat – the notion that wealth and dominance were represented and expressed by an excessive and conspicuous predatory consumption was widely recognised. In his radical vegetarian arguments Nicholson could thus quote the assertion of the famous naturalist the Comte de Buffon, neither a political radical nor a vegetarian, that:

the man of wealth places his glory in consuming; he prides himself in destroying more in one day, at his table, than would purchase a comfortable repast for several families...Many are they who pine with hunger and droop with toil, to gratify the immoderate appetite...of such a man.¹⁴⁷

Indeed, Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson were certainly far from being the only individuals to critique the iniquitous gluttony of the elite in this period. Neither were they alone in agitating on behalf of the animal world, for, as noted, the turn of the nineteenth century witnessed the growth of a much broader public animal welfare movement.

¹⁴⁴ For an exploration see Ben Rogers, *Beef and Liberty: Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation* (London: Vintage, 2004).

¹⁴⁵ James Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.14; Preece, *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice in the Age of Bernard Shaw*, p.128.

¹⁴⁶ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.303.

¹⁴⁷ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.158.



Figure 3. James Gillray. *A Voluptuary under the horrors of Digestion*, engraving, 1792 (British Museum, London).

Grounded largely in liberal reformism or Christian paternalism, this movement adhered to some of the same general ideas regarding animal cruelty contained within the writings of Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson.¹⁴⁸ Importantly, however, both the problems and solutions regarding the treatment of animals envisaged by these three radical writers were vitally distinct from those of this more mainstream cause. Most fundamentally, their arguments for the emancipation of their ‘fellow creatures’ from human violence and exploitation were just one element, albeit pivotal, in their larger quest to radically reformulate the structures of society along compassionate, democratic and cooperative lines. The mainstream animal welfare movement was not seeking such a radical societal or political change, but was instead concerned

¹⁴⁸ Most notably, it adhered to the Hogarthian ‘stages of cruelty’ notion that animal abuse would lead to violence and discord within human society. See Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.130-135.

largely with the *mitigation* of animals' suffering rather than the abolition of the exploitative hierarchical relationship that existed between humans and other species.¹⁴⁹ Reformist figures may have supported the better treatment of animals, as well as that of subjugated humans, but frequently, like the famous abolitionist William Wilberforce, they also vehemently defended the established order and sought to suppress radical attempts to unseat it.¹⁵⁰

By the time of the creation of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) in 1824, of which Wilberforce was a founding member and whose mission statement rejected 'all visionary and over-strained views', the exclusion of radical agendas, such as Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson's, from 'respectable' reformist animal advocacy had become explicit.¹⁵¹ In particular, the vegetarian diet, seemingly viewed as too subversive, was frequently discouraged as unjustified and excessive.¹⁵² Vegetarianism, specifically, therefore, became a key differentiation between these two groups within animal advocacy, for it fundamentally demonstrated that while the radicals were seeking to end the system of oppression in its totality, the mainstream reformers were largely concerned with curtailing the 'misuse' of still inherently 'inferior' beings – limiting the abuses of a power which they nevertheless believed was natural and correct.

The SPCA focussed almost entirely on campaigning against forms of animal abuse associated with the lower classes, for this would have no negative consequences for the stability of the established social order. On the contrary, it was hoped that the latter would be bolstered by the former's encouragement of a temperate and biddable working class.¹⁵³ Conversely, radicals such as Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson, directed their arguments against activities such as elite blood sports and, primarily,

¹⁴⁹ See, for example, Preece, *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice in the Age of Bernard Shaw*, pp.99-100.

¹⁵⁰ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, p.133. Wilberforce was opposed to the advancement of workers' rights, particularly the formation of trade unions, opposed an inquiry into the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, and spoke against the involvement of women in political life. See William Hague, *William Wilberforce: The Life of the Great Anti-Slave Trade Campaigner* (London: Harper Perennial, 2008), pp.250, 254-256, 286, 440-442 & 487.

¹⁵¹ Quoted in Kean, *Animal Rights*, p.36.

¹⁵² Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, p.264.

¹⁵³ Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.134-135.

meat-eating and thus went, as Carol Adams phrases it, for ‘the jugular of the upper-class’.¹⁵⁴ By entirely rejecting the subjugation and consumption of non-human animals they explicitly challenged the exploitative hierarchies and divisions that underpinned society at large and upon which the power, privilege and survival of the engaged elites ultimately depended. It is, then, apparent that what clearly differentiated these writers’ animal advocacy was that it formed part of a broader holistic radical political programme. Their arguments – concerned with the ‘emancipation’ of all sentient life – were not only significantly divergent from mainstream ideologies but also stood starkly apart even from those of individuals who appeared to be engaged in the promotion of similar progressive causes.

1.4. ‘May the benevolent system spread to every corner of the globe’: The French Revolution

1.4.1. The Impact of Revolution

Despite Rousseau’s influence upon the thought of Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson he did not share their perfectibilist conclusions. Indeed, he doubted the possibility of overturning humanity’s corruption, commenting that when writing his novel *Julie* he ‘entirely forg[ot] the human species...[and] invented societies of perfect beings, whose virtues were as celestial as their beauty’.¹⁵⁵ For Rousseau, the vegetarianism of his heroine stood as one of the many natural virtuous practices that supposedly lay beyond his reach as an irreconcilably corrupted man who, having ‘destroyed [his] original simplicity forever’, could ‘no longer nourish [himself] on herbs and nuts’.¹⁵⁶ Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson’s belief in the *present achievability* of a peaceful and egalitarian society, based upon a reawakened herbivorous universal sympathy, thus marked the vital divergence between their thought and Rousseau’s. This belief was grounded in their notion that individuals, by enacting their principles in both private life and public action, could progress larger radical societal change in the here and

¹⁵⁴ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p.153.

¹⁵⁵ Rousseau, quoted in Maurice Cranston, *Noble Savage: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1754-1763* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p.32.

¹⁵⁶ Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality*, p.153.

now. It was, however, also vitally stimulated by the revolutionary developments of the period.

The dawn of the French Revolution in 1789 can be characterised as the moment when the Enlightenment ‘age of thought’ gave way to an ‘age of action’, providing tremendous encouragement to those who sought radical political change, and inspiring the growth of a plethora of perfectibilist and millenarian speculations regarding the possible ‘renewal of society’.¹⁵⁷ Certainly, it was Oswald’s observation of events in France that led him to hope that ‘the future progress of the revolution’ would ultimately ‘restore to our children the felicities of the Golden Age’.¹⁵⁸ Fundamentally, the Revolution provided Oswald with a belief that foundational change was now imminently possible, and, that an even greater ‘grand revolution’ could soon cause civilisation’s ‘system of sanctioned robbery’ to ‘vanish’ in its entirety.¹⁵⁹ Ritson concurred, asserting that ‘we can hope for nothing but [the revolution’s] success’ for it ‘promises *everything*’.¹⁶⁰

Compelled by the Revolution and its emancipatory potential, both Oswald and Ritson travelled to its epicentre: Paris. Oswald threw himself into the radical political circles of the city, becoming a significant revolutionary figure in his own right.¹⁶¹ Ritson visited in 1791 as an observer, and was ‘highly gratified’ with what he saw, ‘rejoic[ing] at seeing a theory I had so long admired reduced to practice’.¹⁶² As this implies, the revolutionary climate did not so much serve to engender these writers’ core beliefs but placed them within a context in which they could be developed and propagated.¹⁶³ Most importantly, it provided the intellectual conditions necessary to inspire them to compose and publish their radical-vegetarian works, with Oswald,

¹⁵⁷ Jon Mee, “Millenarian Visions and Utopian Speculations”, in *The Enlightenment World*, ed. Martin Fitzpatrick (London: Routledge, 2004), pp.536-538.

¹⁵⁸ Oswald, “The Government of the People”, p.295.

¹⁵⁹ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.45.

¹⁶⁰ Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol 2, p.63. Emphasis added. See also Nicolas, “Memoir of Joseph Ritson”, pp.xlviii-xlix, liii, liv-lv; Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol 1, pp.193, 202-204, 208-209 & vol 2, pp.42-43.

¹⁶¹ For a full account see Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*.

¹⁶² Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol 1, pp.203 & 208.

¹⁶³ Oswald became a vegetarian whilst in India: Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.295. Ritson had become a vegetarian at the age of nineteen: Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.201-202.

for instance, producing *The Cry of Nature* in 1791, when the Revolution was in full swing.

Though uninvolved with the Revolution itself, Nicholson too had been deeply influenced by the revolutionary discourse regarding natural rights and placed the quest for their universal vindication at the heart of his arguments. In addition, he frequently and admiringly quoted at length the explicitly revolutionary Oswald and even adopted the vegetarian diet during the early stages of the Revolution, around the year 1790.¹⁶⁴ His work expressed many of the Revolution's themes and concerns and, like Oswald's and Ritson's, also adopted much of its language and symbolism. When speaking of the caging of birds, for example, he asserted that 'the feathered warblers are imprisoned in a Bastille in miniature...barred from their...inherent right of freedom'.¹⁶⁵ Unlike typical revolutionary imagery, however, which frequently used the freeing of animals to represent human emancipation, Nicholson was not speaking allegorically, but referring to the actual oppression of birds themselves.¹⁶⁶ As this demonstrates, Nicholson used the Revolution to frame his own arguments regarding the liberation of animals. Indeed, the Revolution provided these writers with both a political and intellectual context as well as a language and symbolism within which they could construct a radical dialogue that took its ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity to their ultimate ends in the form of an ideology of universal emancipation.

This was particularly noticeable in terms of the very universalism central to their belief systems, for the Revolution's language of universal brotherhood and internationalism suggested to them the dawn of an increasingly expansive sympathy. For Oswald this was especially true due to his membership of the Cercle Social, a notable proto-leftist group within the revolution, which sought as its mission the

¹⁶⁴ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.223.

¹⁶⁵ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.201. Ritson put forward a similar notion: Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, pp.100-101.

¹⁶⁶ For a discussion of the symbolic role of animals during the Revolution see Robbins, *Elephant Slaves and Pampered Parrots*, pp.206-230.

envelopment of ‘all peoples into a single family of love and humanity’.¹⁶⁷ Through ‘ever widening circles’ this radical club desired an end to all forms of oppression and attempted to begin this process via efforts to support and join with its revolutionary ‘Anglo-Franc’ brothers in Britain.¹⁶⁸ The opening of these fraternal channels of sympathetic cooperation between the radicals of Paris and London became an important preoccupation for Oswald.¹⁶⁹ In a speech to the Jacobin Club in August 1792 he proclaimed that such internationalist unity was necessary if a revolution of Europe and eventually ‘of the human race’ was to be achieved.¹⁷⁰ For Oswald, the radical fraternity that the Revolution fostered ultimately represented the potential beginnings of something much greater – an ever-expanding fellowship that would look beyond humanity itself.

As Ritson recognised, the French Revolution had brought about ‘the dissemination and establishment of those sacred and fundamental principles of liberty and equality’, that had encouraged these writers to actively propagate such concepts on behalf of all sentient life.¹⁷¹ Their works were, consequently, densely saturated with words and phrases from the revolutionary lexicon. Importantly, with the dawn of the Revolution, there came not only the growth of such a language of radicalism but also a heightening of emotional tone, felt within much writing of the period.¹⁷² This was certainly noticeable in the works of Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson, although it was most prominent in the highly emotive post-1789 writings of Oswald.¹⁷³ Oswald’s impassioned mode of expression was, in part, a reflection of his work’s purpose as a necessarily emotive appeal to his readers’ innate sympathy. By comparing his radical vegetarian tract to the later ones of Ritson and Nicholson, however, it becomes apparent that the revolutionary context of its composition also played a vital role in prompting him to frame his arguments with such an intensity of feeling.

¹⁶⁷ Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*, p.117. For an exploration of the Cercle Social see Gary Kates, *The Cercle Social, the Girondins, and the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

¹⁶⁸ Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*, pp.75 & 138-140.

¹⁶⁹ Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*, pp.187-212.

¹⁷⁰ John Oswald, quoted in Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*, p.203.

¹⁷¹ Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol 1, p.209.

¹⁷² Willey, *The Eighteenth Century Background*, p.209.

¹⁷³ These being *The Cry of Nature*, the *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain* and “The Government of the People”.

Oswald penned his radical works during the Revolution itself and thus they partly served, like most revolutionary literary exhortations, as an immediate call to arms, which inherently required an emotive impetus. Ritson and Nicholson, on the other hand, did not publish their treatises until after the Revolution had come to a disappointing close and so there was no longer any urgent need for such strong agitative encouragements. More significantly, however, by this time the reactionary British establishment had proclaimed themselves vindicated and popularised the notion that supposedly ‘excessive outpourings’ of emotion went hand in hand with a dangerous and bloody Jacobinism that was not welcome on their shores.¹⁷⁴

Ritson, in particular, thus attempted to distance himself from accusations of such over-wrought emotional language, at least in part ‘to keep myself out of Newgate’.¹⁷⁵ Nicholson too, appeared to attempt to negate such charges and often spoke through Oswald when seeking to passionately express his most radical arguments.¹⁷⁶ Despite this, however, the nature of their works – designed as they were to promote an unbounded compassion – meant that they still contained a distinctly emotional dimension. Indeed, the constraints imposed upon their mode of expression by a changing political context did not cause these two writers to fundamentally deviate from the core ideological concepts originally outlined by Oswald.

1.4.2. Theory into Practice: The Awakening of Compassionate Consciousness

For Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson it was the way in which they put their beliefs comprehensively into action that differentiated them from contemporaries. While many professed revulsion ‘at the shedding of blood...yet eagerly’ continued to ‘feed on the carcase[s]’ of dead animals, these three men sought fundamental structural change and the reformulation of society along compassionate and cooperative lines.¹⁷⁷ This, they believed, was dependent upon the dawn of a popular ‘awakening’

¹⁷⁴ Chris Jones, *Radical Sensibility: Literature and Ideas in the 1790s* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.16-18.

¹⁷⁵ Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol 2, p.7. See also p.47.

¹⁷⁶ These are too numerous to list, but several notable instances have been highlighted during the course of the chapter.

¹⁷⁷ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.98-99.

of both heart and mind in unison. Despite their emphasis on the role of sympathy and emotion, these writers firmly adhered to the notion that ‘compassionate consciousness’ – the combination of a universal compassion *and* freethought – provided the cure for society’s ills and argued that the iniquity and debasement of current ‘civilisation’ was the result of the suppression of humanity’s benevolent impulses and the *separation* of reason from emotion – not reason itself.

Throughout their respective works they stressed the need for individuals to ‘yield to the *combined* evidence’ of their senses, ‘to the testimony of conscience and common sense’, and frequently represented the advancement of an independent reason, free from existing dogma, superstition and habit, as vital in overturning a system in which the elite had ‘corrupted the understanding of the people’ by ‘interpos[ing] between them and the prospect of their rights, the dark clouds of accumulated prejudices’.¹⁷⁸ Unthinking and unfeeling ‘habit’, in particular, was presented as the primary protector of a culture of flesh-eating: ‘a practice at which human nature, when divested of the habits and prejudices of society, would not fail to revolt’.¹⁷⁹ As Oswald suggested, without a simultaneously emotional and intellectual popular awakening (i.e. the growth of a widespread compassionate consciousness) the nation would remain devoid of ‘every natural criterion of right and wrong’ and the people would continue to live within a menacing smog of stupefaction, unaware even of ‘whether they are oppressed or not’.¹⁸⁰

For Oswald and, at least initially, for Ritson the revolution in France had embodied this all-important awakening. As Oswald declared: ‘The late glorious revolution in France’ had enabled ‘the public sentiments [to] swell above the narrow bounds which Aristocracy and Priestcraft had prescribed to their course’ and so now ‘the human soul awakes from a long lethargy’.¹⁸¹ Ritson’s personal observations of the

¹⁷⁸ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.37. Emphasis added. Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.51. See also Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, pp.24 & 45.

¹⁷⁹ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.57. See also: Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.124; Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.98; Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, pp.10 & 150.

¹⁸⁰ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.31.

¹⁸¹ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.45.

Revolution echoed this conception, as he praised the newly unleashed intellectual independence and political awareness of the people of Paris: ‘As to modern politics, and the principles of the constitution, one would think that half the people...had no other employment than to study and talk about them’.¹⁸² For these two writers, the Revolution had acted to stimulate a unified enlightenment of heart and mind – ultimately manifested as a radical active fellowship – that provided a pathway towards the achievement of a truly universal emancipation: ‘May the benevolent system spread to every corner of the globe’.¹⁸³

Due to the opposition of entrenched privilege, Oswald believed that if mankind were ever to ‘arrive at [this] age of gold’ it must unavoidably pass through an armed revolutionary ‘age of iron’.¹⁸⁴ Typically, he explained this necessity as part of a reassertion of unity:

By the fraud of arming the parts against the whole, the general liberty was overthrown, let us therefore, arm the whole to overturn the usurpation of the parts.¹⁸⁵

Here, Oswald was describing the violence used by a self-proclaimed elite to subjugate the majority and the need for this to be overturned through collective action and the engendering of a self-aware ‘whole’. Its bodily undertones, however, also echoed his wider arguments regarding the ‘fraud’ of the artificial emotionally-detached ‘reasoning’ that had overthrown the unity of heart and mind, as well as that of the habitually engrained custom of flesh-eating – forever at war with humanity’s innate ‘rooted repugnance’. With this emphasis on resolving internal division, it is unsurprising that Oswald conceived of the ideal political system as a harmonious body, in which, he explained, the ‘heart[s] of the people’ and the deliberations of their ‘head[s]’ (in the form of a National Assembly) would operate in concord, finding expression through the ultimate authority of their collective ‘arm’, ‘made up of the united arms of all citizens’.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸² Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol 1, p.204.

¹⁸³ Oswald, *The Cry of Nature*, p.81. Oswald, “The Government of the People”, pp.292-295.

¹⁸⁴ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, pp.52-53. See also Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*, pp.99-100.

¹⁸⁵ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, p.52.

¹⁸⁶ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, pp.56-57.

There is, of course, a long tradition of imagining political systems as harmoniously functioning bodies, although usually for the purpose of presenting hierarchies as organic and congruous. Here, though, Oswald instead imagined a unified egalitarian body, governed by collective agreement, whose constituent parts collaborate with rather than confound one another. In Oswald's conception, if the head (a government) were to operate without the sanction of the heart (the people), citizens could only be compelled to live by its 'suggestions' through the use of direct or structural 'violence'.¹⁸⁷ In other words, Oswald indicated that the disunity of 'heart' and 'mind' in the political sphere – just as within the individual – created the space within which rapacious egotism could flourish. The Revolution, through its creation of compassionate, critical and collaborative individuals as well as through its promotion of democratic government, thus presented the opportunity to restore the harmony of both the individual body and the body politic.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, however, times had abruptly changed, Oswald was dead and apparently so were many of his revolutionary dreams. Although he reiterated Oswald's wish for 'the benevolent system' to envelop the world, Nicholson acknowledged that in the present state of society the adoption of such a system now seemed a 'far distant' prospect.¹⁸⁸ Despite this, however, he continued to believe that an 'awakening' of 'independent and sympathising minds' was still possible.¹⁸⁹ Instead of viewing it, like Oswald, to be dependent upon the success of the Revolution, though, he now, in the immediate post-revolutionary period, saw its accomplishment as dependent upon gradualist, reformist means.

Specifically, Nicholson believed that the 'hope of reformation' arose 'from the intelligent, less corrupted, and younger part of mankind', more able to 'think for themselves'.¹⁹⁰ He therefore stressed the critical and compassionate education of children, who must no longer be 'bred up in the principle of destroying life',

¹⁸⁷ Oswald, *Review of the Constitution of Great Britain*, pp.56-57.

¹⁸⁸ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.224. Preece wrongly ascribes this quote of Oswald's ('May the benevolent system spread to every corner of the globe') to Nicholson: Preece, "Introduction", in Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.liii.

¹⁸⁹ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.224.

¹⁹⁰ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.215.

currently such ‘a disfiguring character of our nation’.¹⁹¹ As evidenced not only by his writings on vegetarianism and the treatment of animals but also by his progressive educational publications designed for popular consumption, he sought to aid in moulding such individuals who would, like himself, ‘become proof against the sneers of unfeeling men, exhibit uniform humanity, and impress on others...[their]...arguments and motives’.¹⁹²

Reflecting the broader growth of a reformist atmosphere in early-nineteenth century Britain, Nicholson also highlighted the key role progressive legislation could play in establishing the rights of both oppressed humans and non-human animals and also indicated its vital function in the broader reformulation of society, arguing that ‘the manners of a people are materially affected by the laws...under which they live’.¹⁹³ Ritson, too, recognised the important task of the ‘reflective individual’ in spreading such an intellectual and emotional enlightenment, his written work, like Nicholson’s, evidently intended to stimulate such a reformation of the individual mind.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, as an early biographer asserted, in addition to his compassionate propensities, Ritson was ‘a man daring to think for himself, to declare his opinions, and to speak the truth’, in other words he himself was a quintessential independent and sympathising mind.¹⁹⁵

Ultimately, regardless of the impact of the changing revolutionary context, Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson all believed in the mutually reinforcing developmental relationship of individual and societal change, recognising the interdependence of material, political, legislative and educational change with that of the individual. Vitaly, they acknowledged that a comprehensive and permanent reformulation of

¹⁹¹ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.215.

¹⁹² Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.224. Nicholson was a pioneer of such progressive self-improving literature, see Harriet Guest, *Unbounded Attachment: Sentiment and Politics in the Age of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.114-115. Notable examples of his popular progressive educational works are: George Nicholson, *Juvenile Preceptor: or, A course of Moral and Scientific Instructions* (Poughnill: G. Nicholson, 1805); George Nicholson, *Extracts on Education, selected and arranged from the most popular writers* (Stourport: G. Nicholson, c.1807/08) & George Nicholson, *The Advocate and Friend of Woman: Compiled from Various Authors* (Poughnill: G. Nicholson, 1805).

¹⁹³ Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, pp.203-205. See also p.199.

¹⁹⁴ Ritson, *An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food*, p.53.

¹⁹⁵ Nicolas, “Memoir of Joseph Ritson”, p.lxxx.

society could only ever be based upon the widespread intellectual and emotional awakening of individuals; for, it was the mass of ordinary citizens who composed society and thus it was ultimately they who inherently had the power to define its moral system and its essential structures. Their detractor William Windham also appeared to recognise this, perceiving that those ‘Jacobins’ who had been unsuccessful in their revolutionary endeavours now sought to ‘reform the manners of the common people instead’ thereby ‘opening their minds to dangerous schemes of political innovation’ that could threaten the very foundations of Britain’s hierarchical society.¹⁹⁶ Facing the dawn of an uncertain new century, Ritson and Nicholson hoped that this would indeed be the case.

1.5. ‘Unparalleled Effrontery’: Receptions

In 1803 the caricaturist James Sayers produced a satirical depiction of Joseph Ritson – an image which now stands as the only known portrait of any one of the three vegetarian radicals discussed in this chapter (Fig.4). The existence of this caricature, rich in symbolism, provides a neat reflection of both the reality and contemporary perception of Ritson’s character and also, by extension, those of other vegetarian radicals of the period. In it, Ritson stands in his study surrounded by his anarchic vegetables, the radical roots of his revolutionary banquet, while a contented bull – no longer destined to become ‘the Roast Beef of Old England’ – takes his place at his brother’s table and munches happily on some leafy cabbage.

Sayers’ image serves not only to highlight Ritson’s desire to end humanity’s separation from other animals and the natural world, but also his attempt to challenge the foundational divisions upon which a predatory hierarchical society depended. Hence, it also makes allusions to Ritson’s atheism (the *Atheist’s Pocket Companion* sits in his coat and a cocked Bible sits on his shelf under a label reading ‘Old Romances’) and his republicanism (as suggested by the frog that sits in front of him, the string of onions by the window and the pot of ‘Gall’, punning on Gaul, in which he dips his quill). Indeed, as Stuart asserts, the very purpose of this image was to

¹⁹⁶ Donald, *The Art of Thomas Bewick*, pp.151-152.

mock Ritson's 'three-pronged attempt to level the hierarchies of politics, nature and religion' – his republicanism, vegetarianism and atheism.¹⁹⁷



Figure 4. James Sayers, *Joseph Ritson*, etching, published by Hannah Humphrey, 1803 (National Portrait Gallery, London).

Through this caricature, Sayers sought to demonstrate that Ritson's efforts were deeply misguided and that predation and hierarchy were natural, inevitable and necessary. To illustrate this, next to the window crouches a starving cat (a 'higher' animal), chained next to a copy of the author's *Essay on Abstinence*, prevented from eating the rats (lower orders of life), who instead freely gnaw on a bundle of tallow candles. Within this scene, Sayers attempted not only to highlight the absurdity of preventing a natural relationship of hierarchical predation, but also the manifest

¹⁹⁷ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.365.

hypocrisy of Ritson utilising other substances procured from animals' bodies. Indeed, it is not just the candles that point to the double standards of Ritson's seemingly ill-considered beliefs, but also the goose-feather quill which he dips into his pot of 'gall'.

Such a hostile view of Ritson was certainly reflected elsewhere, most notably by the Whig politician Henry Brougham. In a review of 1803, Brougham lambasted Ritson's *Essay on Abstinence*, treating with 'disgust, pity, contempt, laughter, [and] detestation' the 'inconsistency and folly' of his beliefs.¹⁹⁸ Most particularly, he echoed Sayer's caricature in mocking Ritson's inability to detach himself from the supposedly inevitable violence of existence, referring to the materials by which he produced his texts:

The liquid in which they flow derives its properties from the destruction of the harmless insect...the tube which performs the operation, is torn bleeding from the plumes of [the] bird...[and] the oil which is wasted to illuminate the...process, is a damning proof of the long-protracted torments and inhuman butchery of the great leviathan, the lord of the deep.¹⁹⁹

The vegetarian Ritson's 'harangues against destroying animal life' were, therefore, 'ushered into the world on the spoils of the slain'.²⁰⁰

Though motivated by hostility, Brougham raised an apposite point regarding ethical consistency and even gave voice to the possibility that a vegan diet could be the only logical outcome of such radical vegetarian arguments, talking of 'the devouring of eggs' as 'the procuring of abortions' and 'the consumption of milk' as 'the starving of calves'.²⁰¹ Ritson himself had privately considered such questions, writing to his nephew in 1782 that 'eggs are henceforward to be considered an animal food', but

¹⁹⁸ Henry Brougham, "Art. XIII. An Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food as a Moral Duty. By Joseph Ritson. 8vo. London. Phillips. 1802" (review), *The Edinburgh Review, or Critical Journal* (April 1803), pp.128 & 136.

¹⁹⁹ Brougham, Review of "Essay on Abstinence", p.132.

²⁰⁰ Brougham, Review of "Essay on Abstinence", p.132.

²⁰¹ Brougham, Review of "Essay on Abstinence", p.131.

Brougham took the argument to extremes in his bid to expose Ritson's absurdity, commenting that:²⁰²

Every drop of water that quenches our thirst, or laves our bodies, contains innumerable insects, who are sacrificed to our necessities and comforts...From the first to the last gasp of our lives, we never inhale the air of heaven, without butchering myriads of sentient and innocent creatures.²⁰³

Brougham's insincere reasoning enabled him to claim that 'murder' is 'the action which...we most constantly perform' and so it cannot be deemed 'unnatural or criminal' to eat meat, for this only 'swell[s], by an imperceptible voluntary addition, the catalogue of necessary enormities'.²⁰⁴ Ritson and his diet were thereby damned, due to both his inability to entirely escape the animal products upon which his society was based, and also his 'inconsistency' in defending cows and pigs, whilst failing to consider microscopic insects.

Brougham's vitriolic review of Ritson's text can certainly be seen as a reaction to the perceived 'threatening' nature of the reforms that he advocated. As with Sayers, Brougham's real issue was not with Ritson's vegetarianism, but with his desire to level hierarchies. This was exposed by Brougham's indication that he was happy to engage in a discussion regarding the health benefits of a benign de-radicalised vegetarianism, but that when it came to Ritson's 'blasphemous' claims that meat-eating was both immoral and criminal, he drew the line.²⁰⁵

Ultimately, for Brougham, the most outrageous episode in this 'unparalleled effrontery' came when Ritson committed 'nothing worse than treason' through his commentary on the murderous activities of the huntsman-monarch.²⁰⁶ In many ways, this was a fitting end for Brougham's review, for the vegetarian, atheist, republican Ritson was, very clearly, preaching a multifaceted 'treason' against the oppressive orthodoxies of his day. This notion of Ritson the traitor – a breaker of inviolable boundaries and an enemy of established hierarchy and human supremacy – led him

²⁰² Ritson, *The Letters of Joseph Ritson*, vol. 1, p.40.

²⁰³ Brougham, Review of "Essay on Abstinence", p.130.

²⁰⁴ Brougham, Review of "Essay on Abstinence", p.130.

²⁰⁵ Brougham, Review of "Essay on Abstinence", pp. 128-129 & 135.

²⁰⁶ Brougham, Review of "Essay on Abstinence", p.135.

to be further characterised by Brougham as a misanthrope, who had sided with the ‘lesser’ animals. Brougham, in fact, went as far as to mock Ritson’s protestations on behalf of the animal world by transforming the writer himself into a member of the class of ‘vermin’ that he so defended: ‘Hear how this puny worm lifts its feeble cry, to arraign the order of nature’.²⁰⁷

Unfortunately for Ritson, his waspish, pugnacious temperament, meant that charges of misanthropy readily stuck. Robert Nares’ scathing review of Ritson’s *Essay* in the *British Critic* spoke of his ‘envenomed warfare with the whole human race’, while Sir Harris Nicholas, in a comic poem, suggested that ‘For quadruped, for bird, for fish he feels’, but that when it came to his fellow-humans: ‘Man, cries Ritson, man’s alone my game! On him I make a most delightful dinner!’²⁰⁸ It was not meat-eaters, therefore, who were ferocious and cannibalistic, but the traitorous Ritson. Indeed, in Sayer’s caricature, Ritson’s carving knife and fork are no longer used to serve up the bull, now his associate, but are instead plunged into the bosom of his literary rival, Thomas Percy, whose picture lies upon the ground.

The de-legitimising tropes of ‘inconsistency’, ‘impiety’ and ‘treachery’ employed by these critics frequently coalesced in accusations of aggression and misanthropy as a favoured means of attack. This was clearly seen in Brougham’s vilification of Oswald:

A maniac who sought the massacres of Paris...[yet]...was zealous to avoid even the sight of blood: a wretch who would not kill a tiger, but died unsated in his thirst for human blood!²⁰⁹

This brings back to mind the quip of Oscar Wilde’s, from the beginning of this chapter, regarding vegetarians’ calls for ‘the severed heads of kings’, especially in light of the (uncorroborated) claim that Oswald led the guard which surrounded Louis XVI on his way to the guillotine.²¹⁰ While Wilde’s comment was a mere witticism, however, designed to gently poke fun at the connection between vegetarianism and (overwhelmingly pacifistic) leftist politics at the end of the

²⁰⁷ Brougham, Review of “Essay on Abstinence”, p.135.

²⁰⁸ Quoted in Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.369.

²⁰⁹ Brougham, Review of “Essay on Abstinence”, p.134.

²¹⁰ Erdman, *Commerce Des Lumières*, p.245.

nineteenth century, Brougham's assertions were designed to entirely discredit Oswald's politics of 'universal benevolence' by painting him as a monstrous, hypocritical figure, who loved beasts but revelled in spilling the blood of men.

As well as demonising radical vegetarians for their association with revolutionary violence, critics also questioned their sanity. Ritson, who appeared to suffer from some form of mental ill-health towards the end of his life, was a prime target for such indictment. Nares delighted in attacking him in this vein, using Ritson's apparent breakdown preceding his death to vindicate Nares' own acrimonious portrayal of his character and work:

It is said that [Ritson] was found naked, at midnight, in the court of his inn, with a large clasp-knife in one hand, and a copper kettle in the other, on which he was exercising his impotent fury.²¹¹

The charge of 'madness' made against Ritson, particularly in relation to his radical-vegetarian arguments, remains today, with the revised edition of his entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography* still making the claim that his *Essay on Abstinence* was the result 'incipient insanity' and that it consists of nothing more than the 'opinions of quacks and cranks'.²¹² Defensive accusations of 'inconsistency', 'misanthropy', 'madness' and 'eccentricity', thus continue to obscure serious debate.

As Adams has highlighted regarding reactions to vegetarianism, both historic and contemporary: 'defensiveness through trivialisation is the first conventional gambit which greets threatening reforms'.²¹³ Indeed, the desire to trivialise vegetarian arguments was/is an ever-present tactic of the diet's detractors. Imagined situations of barren islands inhabited solely by a chicken and a vegetarian mingle with protestations regarding the necessity of lions eating gazelles, the unavoidability of inadvertent insect death and the potential sensitivities of cabbages, in order to avoid seriously addressing vegetarian arguments. Such attempts to de-legitimise also echo

²¹¹ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, pp.366-367.

²¹² Stephanie L. Barczewski, 'Ritson, Joseph (1752-1803)', *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), accessed 12th July 2016, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/search?q=joseph+ritson&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearchtrue>

²¹³ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p.124.

through the criticisms of other subversive movements – witness, for example, the claims of ‘inconsistency’ made against the anti-capitalist demonstrator holding a smartphone or, as Adams suggests, the experience of the feminist met with assertions such as ‘men need liberation too’ or ‘does my wife (do I) look oppressed?’²¹⁴

The decision to ignore or denigrate historical figures’ vegetarianism within both scholarly and popular works highlights this enduring trend.²¹⁵ Despite their rather frosty reception from some, however, the recent re-emergence of past vegetarian voices has gathered apace, as the diet has steadily grown in its number of adherents as well as in its prominence within public and academic discourse. Even within the latter, though, prejudices still remain and an implicitly negative view of a politically radical vegetarianism has persisted. This is evidenced, for example, as discussed in the introduction, by the work of Rod Preece, which displays a tendency to downplay the radical/leftist politics of historical vegetarians.

Notably, Preece champions Nicholson above both Oswald and Ritson as the ‘primary representative of this era’ of animal advocacy, for, as Preece acknowledges, Nicholson, due to his lack of both revolutionary activity and atheism, as well as his more reformist agenda, was the *least overtly radical* of these three writers and so, it seems, fits more easily with Preece’s interest in contemporary animal ethics – something deliberately disassociated from words such as ‘communism’, ‘socialism’ and ‘anarchism’ and instead presented within the framework of a liberal, vaguely de-politicised, progressivism.²¹⁶ It is telling that when choosing the most ‘relevant’ of these three writers to modern scholarship, Preece is quickest to reduce the importance of the revolutionary Oswald, asserting that ‘to read Nicholson is already to know...Oswald’.²¹⁷ This is not the case, for Nicholson only quoted particular sections of Oswald’s *The Cry of Nature* and, importantly, did not reference his

²¹⁴ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, pp.124-125.

²¹⁵ Adams, in *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, provides a good discussion of this, providing numerous contemporary examples.

²¹⁶ Preece, “Introduction”, in Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.lxv.

²¹⁷ Preece, “Introduction”, in Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man*, p.lxv. This notion is particularly questionable in light of the fact that Preece frequently wrongly ascribes, often important, quotes of Oswald’s to Nicholson.

broader radical political works, and so the arguments that these contain, as well as their interconnections with his animal advocacy, would remain completely unknown to those who only engage with Nicholson's text. Perhaps, though, this is the point.

Likewise, it would appear that the contemporary critics of these three men also found Nicholson's beliefs far more palatable than those of Oswald and Ritson. Indeed, the 'respectable' Nicholson was commonly praised for his 'humanity of disposition', while Oswald and Ritson, who made their revolutionary and atheistical inclinations widely known, were frequently condemned as 'detestable...impious' Jacobin 'maniacs'.²¹⁸ It was, therefore, when the vegetarian diet stood explicitly as part of a larger, politically radical belief system which challenged the status quo, fervently questioning (and rejecting) many of the fundamental assumptions upon which society is based, that it met with its most hostile reception.

1.6. Towards A Universal Emancipation: Conclusions

During the 1790s, the arguments of Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson came to form a coherent body of vegetarian-radical ideology, distinctly characterised by its combination of a concern for the oppression of both humans and non-human animals. This was based upon a view of all forms of violence as interconnected and interdependent. Such a conception served to knit together their animal advocacy, in particular their vegetarianism, and their political radicalism, and led them to argue for a holistic 'universal emancipation', which would end the interconnected system of oppression in its entirety.

Underlying their belief systems was a perception of a benevolent, harmonious and herbivorous human nature which had been corrupted by the progression of an emotionally-detached carnivorous 'civilisation'. This had resulted in the creation of an iniquitous, avaricious and despotic society, conceived by these writers as a system of hierarchical predatory consumption, by which a privileged elite maintained themselves through the violent exploitation of the great mass of humanity, non-

²¹⁸ Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, p.241; Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, pp.310-311 & 366-367.

human animals and the natural world itself. Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson argued, therefore, that a better future could only be achieved if humanity rediscovered its original sympathetic impulse. They recognised that if this was to succeed then anything that impeded it, such as meat-eating, could not continue to exist. Thus, by removing the foundational violence and exploitation engendered by the carnivorous diet – the first inequality created by civilised man – vegetarianism became inescapably vital in reawakening an all-encompassing compassion that would end systemic tyranny and aid not only in the creation of a fellowship of humankind, but also a universal kinship of humans and non-human animals.

In addition to the awakening of humanity's innate compassion, Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson also recognised the necessity of bringing about an intellectual enlightenment that would encourage the questioning of habit, superstition and prejudice. It was thus the widespread engendering of a 'compassionate consciousness' upon which the regeneration of the world ultimately depended. These writers indicated that an active all-inclusive compassion combined with a critical intellectual independence, would lead to a simultaneously *emotional and rational* awareness of the interconnectedness/fellowship of all living beings and thence to a realisation of the necessity of a universal emancipation.

Ultimately, these writers believed that the awakening of a compassionate consciousness was reliant upon the individual, whose personal transformation mutually developed with that of society. This notion led them to comprehensively act upon their own personal sympathetic impulses, characterised as a response to the emotive 'cry' of the oppressed, by both publically propagating their beliefs as well as by actively *living* them – their vegetarianism being the most notable example. The French Revolution appeared to provide the intellectual and political climate that prompted them to action and, indeed, suggested to Oswald and Ritson the birth of a radical sympathetic consciousness of ordinary citizens. By the turn of the nineteenth century, however, a new non-/anti-revolutionary context had made it apparent that such a salvational intellectual and emotional change must now instead be sought solely through reformist means.

Chapter Two

‘The lamb misused breeds Public Strife’: Romanticism and Reform

‘I hail thee *Brother*, spite of the Fool’s Scorn!’ – *To A Young Ass*, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1794.

Despite being decidedly unconventional, the vegetarian texts of Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson did not find themselves entirely alone on radical and reformist shelves. As the nineteenth century unfolded, the works of these men came to sit within an expanding community of volumes penned by other progressively-minded animal advocates. Late-eighteenth-century writings denouncing animal abuse by reformers such as Thomas Young, Samuel Pratt and John Lawrence, were, by the 1820s, joined by those of Richard Phillips and Lewis Gompertz.¹ The sentiments they conveyed echoed through the speeches made in the House of Lords by Thomas Erskine, as he argued the case for Britain’s first piece of animal cruelty legislation.² Collectively, such efforts reflected an apparent favourable shift in attitudes towards non-human animals in this period, as well as a greater appetite for practical reform. This served to contribute to the growth of a cultural and intellectual atmosphere more conducive to the development of vegetarian ideas. Indeed, regardless of the fact that such individuals adhered to a liberal reformist (as opposed to leftist) politics, and that very few of them actually advocated a vegetarian diet, in asserting the *rights* of animals

¹ Thomas Young, *An Essay on Humanity to Animals* (London: T. Cadell, W. Davies and W.H. Lunn, 1798); Samuel Jackson Pratt, *Humanity, or the Rights of Nature, a Poem; in Two Books* (London: T. Cadell, 1788); John Lawrence, *A Philosophical Treatise on Horses, and on the Moral Duties of Man towards the Brute Creation* (London: T.N. Longman, 1796-98); Richard Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy; or, a New System of Practical Ethics* (London: printed for the author, 1826); Lewis Gompertz, *Moral Inquiries on the Situation of Man and of Brutes* (London: printed for the author, 1824).

² His most notable speech, made in 1809, was published twice in the same year (once, unsurprisingly, by Phillips): Thomas Erskine, *The Speech of Lord Erskine in the House of Peers, on the Second Reading of the Bill for Preventing Malicious and Wanton Cruelty to Animals* (London: Richard Phillips, 1809) and (Edinburgh: printed for Alexander Cawrie, 1809).

they still advanced a far bolder agenda than conservatives (embodied in 1824 by the SPCA), whose sole focus on ‘welfare’ reflected a keen desire to uphold natural and social hierarchies, as well as to foster a pious, orderly, and benign working class.³

Although still highly marginal, a somewhat disparate community of vegetarians became increasingly discernible during this period. Many were inclined towards broader radical (or at least liberal reformist) beliefs and activities, some were religious dissenters such as the three hundred strong congregation of the Bible Christian Church (founded in Salford in 1809 by the Swedenborgian William Cowherd), while others were members of the middle class concerned primarily with health, prudence or temperance. Timothy Morton speculates that, in addition to the vegetarian radicals, there was a modest yet publicly visible body of vegetarians in the early nineteenth century, possibly numbering in the thousands.⁴ If, as Morton suggests, ‘parody is a good test of cultural dissemination’, then the existence of contemporary critiques and satires, which either gently mocked or vociferously ridiculed the diet, served to further demonstrate this vegetarian presence.⁵

Some of the most well-known vegetarians were to be found within the circle of Percy Shelley, including Ritson and Phillips, as well as the families of John Frank Newton and Harriet Boinville, who, under the influence of the physician and champion of the fleshless diet, William Lambe, practised a ‘back-to-nature’ lifestyle which, in addition to vegetarianism, involved simple living, communalism and, apparently, nudism.⁶ It was, indeed, this group who Thomas Jefferson Hogg, Percy Shelley’s undergraduate companion and later biographer, came to wryly label: ‘the vegetable church of Nature’.⁷ Discussions of vegetarianism were widespread amongst Shelley’s associates, with figures such as William Godwin and Lord Byron

³ Of those named above only Phillips and Gompertz were vegetarian.

⁴ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, pp.16-17; Timothy Morton, “Nature and Culture”, in Timothy Morton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁵ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.30.

⁶ Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, pp.249-250; Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.133; Thomas Jefferson Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (London: Edward Moxon, 1858), vol. 2, pp.288-291.

⁷ Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, vol. 2, p.469.

even becoming occasional practitioners of a meat-free regimen.⁸ It was, however, Shelley himself for whom vegetarianism became a most pressing concern, and whose vegetarian writings ultimately led him to become not only one of the most influential figures in the history of the diet, but also in the more specific cause of ‘universal emancipation’.

Before turning to Shelley, though, it is first vital to examine the wider context of vegetarianism in the early nineteenth century, in order to explore how vegetarian-radical arguments developed during this period. This chapter, therefore, investigates the thought of other vegetarians with whom Shelley had contact, explores the intellectual and cultural currents present within Romanticism which acted to shape discourses surrounding both diet and animals, and considers broader contemporary radical political themes and concepts which commingled with vegetarian ideas and debates. This begins with a consideration of Richard Phillips, whose neglected writings concerning vegetarianism and animal rights highlights a less radical (but nevertheless related) form vegetarian-progressive politics than that promoted by either Oswald, Ritson, Nicholson or Shelley. It then offers a discussion of animal advocacy explicitly in relation to Romanticism, assessing the discourses of ‘emancipation’, ecology and nature in the writings of William Blake, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. Finally, it analyses the writings of Lambe and Newton, looking at their ideas regarding moral and physical ‘health’ and their allusions to a ‘frugivorous’ ideal.

Some of these writers have to date received relatively modest scholarly attention. In the case of Phillips, comparatively little scholarship exists beyond a couple of brief general introductions and an article concerning his didactic publishing endeavours.⁹ This chapter thus provides the largest treatment of his thought, politics, and,

⁸ Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, pp.250 & 260-261.

⁹ John Issitt, “Introducing Sir Richard Phillips”, *Paradigm*, no. 26 (October 1998), pp.25-29; Thomas Seccombe, revised by M. Claire Loughlin-Chow, “Phillips, Sir Richard 1767-1840”, *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2008), accessed 2nd December 2017, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22167?rskey=Z13ye0&result=1>; Alan Rauch, “Preparing ‘The Rising Generation’: Romanticism and Richard Phillips’ *Juvenile Library* 1800-1803”, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 15, no.1 (1991), pp.3-27. See also Phillips’ mention in Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.33 and Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, pp.262-263.

particularly, diet, that has yet been produced. In contrast, in dealing with ‘Romanticism’, there are a multiplicity of well-established fields to contend with. Regarding the place of animals within Romantic-period writing, Christine Kenyon-Jones, through her work *Kindred Brutes*, has given an insightful overview, looking at literary, poetic, juvenile, didactic, political and scientific texts in order to explore the role of animals in human culture, as well as the human-animal relationship at large, during the period.¹⁰ Perhaps most pertinent for this chapter, though, beyond the work of Morton, is the analysis of the intersections between Romantic concerns with ‘emancipation’ and ‘ecology’ provided by Kevin Hutchings’s *Romantic Ecologies*. This combines post-colonial and eco-critical approaches to ‘shed light on two different but related aspects of the “culture of mastery” that embodied Britain’s dominion over both colonised peoples and the natural world, offering a useful basis for considering the links between radical ideas and animal advocacy in the period.¹¹ More widely, Romantic ‘ecological’ arguments have preoccupied numerous other works of eco-criticism, such as those of Onno Oerlemans and Jonathan Bate.¹² As both Hutchings and Morton have highlighted, however, the attempt of some such studies to position ‘green’ (environmentalism) as an ‘anti-ideological’ alternative to ‘red’ and ‘blue’ (left and right) has offered a somewhat limiting approach; one which can be seen as analogous to the studies of vegetarianism/veganism which seek to view the diet as separate from broader social concerns, political causes and ideological agendas.¹³

The scholarship surrounding Lambe and Newton largely consists of the work of those dealing with the history of vegetarianism (notably Morton and Stuart), in

¹⁰ Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*.

¹¹ Kevin Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies and Colonial Cultures in the British Atlantic World, 1770-1850* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), p.14.

¹² Onno Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2002); Jonathan Bate, *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1991).

¹³ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.219-220, Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies*, pp.13-19. See also P.M.S. Dawson, “The Empire of Man: Shelley and Ecology”, in *Shelley: Poet and Legislator of the World*, ed. Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996) and Bate, *Romantic Ecology*.

addition to some wider analyses of their philosophical and medical thought.¹⁴ Still useful in shedding light on the ideas and practices of Newton and his circle are the contemporaneous works of Thomas Jefferson Hogg and Thomas Love Peacock, who cast ironical yet nevertheless revealing eyes over their associates. Hogg's *Life of Shelley* (1858) provided one of the earliest accounts of the Shelley circle, while a character (Mr. Escot) based on Newton in Peacock's novel *Headlong Hall* (1816), discussed with comedic vigour his adherence to a vegetarian philosophy typical of its members.¹⁵

It is true that Hogg's work is often unreliable, and usually presented a version of events favourable to himself.¹⁶ Despite this, however, his somewhat satirical, yet affectionate, portrayal of his other-worldly companions, is invaluable in capturing the general culture and philosophy – the *feel* – of this group. Indeed, as discussed elsewhere in this thesis, satirical, or even critical, contemporary commentaries were often adept at revealing the ideological implications that were commonly attached to the personal practices and modes of self-presentation of particular groups. In foregrounding what they considered to epitomise their subject, they frequently depicted the very visible, personal, everyday, (not to mention mockable), manifestations of an ideology. In so doing they illuminated meanings that were created and understood equally by adherents, detractors, and society more broadly – in the process reinforcing the perceived interrelation of particular ideas and practices even further.

¹⁴ Most notably, Emily Paterson-Morgan, "The Bloodless Church: Dualist Asceticism and Romantic Vegetarianism", in *Romantic Sustainability: Endurance and the Natural World, 1780-1830*, ed. Ben P. Robertson (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016), pp.95-114.

¹⁵ Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*; Thomas Love Peacock, *Headlong Hall* (London: Printed for T. Hookham, 1816). The character of Mr. Toobad in Peacock's *Nightmare Abbey* (1818) was also similarly based on Newton. Thomas Love Peacock, *Nightmare Abbey* (London: Printed for T. Hookham, 1818).

¹⁶ Theresa Kelley, "Life and Biographies", *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, ed. Timothy Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2006), p.33.

2.1. ‘Was the world made for the many, or the few?’: The ‘Practical Ethics’ of Richard Phillips

2.1.1. Phillips’ Politics

Richard Phillips (1767-1840), a member of Godwin’s radical milieu, was the publisher of both Ritson’s vegetarian *Essay on Abstinence* and Erskine’s parliamentary speech condemning animal cruelty.¹⁷ He was also a social reformer, a republican (who, in 1793, had been imprisoned for selling Paine’s *The Rights of Man*) and the founder of *The Monthly Magazine*, a notable platform for radical criticism, whose contributors included Godwin, Holcroft, Blake and Coleridge.¹⁸ In addition, Phillips was an animal advocate and a vegetarian, who considered the diet as part of a broader programme of individual and societal reform.¹⁹ Indeed, he appended his vegetarian exhortations to his reformist work *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy; or, A New System of Practical Ethics* (1826), a book of maxims presented in the style of a prince’s mirror addressed to various influential members of society – from magistrates, to journalists and priests – the purpose of which was to uproot the ‘many mischievous prejudices which retard the improvement of society’, and to instead inculcate a ‘devotion to truth’ deduced from individual reason.²⁰

This reflected Phillips’ belief that ‘the future condition and happiness of the human race’ was dependent upon ‘the establishment of a Spirit of Free Enquiry’ that would rebuff existing pernicious customs.²¹ In particular, he contended that if ‘The Rights of Man’ were to be re-asserted in the face of ‘overwhelming usurpations’, then the insidious constructed ‘authority’ upon which these were based must be boldly

¹⁷ As indicated in Godwin’s diary they met regularly, sometimes together with Ritson. “Philips, Sir Richard”, *William Godwin’s Diary*, Bodleian, Oxford, accessed 10th December 2017, <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/people/PHI01.html>.

¹⁸ Issitt, “Introducing Sir Richard Phillips”, pp.25-29; Secombe, “Phillips, Sir Richard”; Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.33; Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, pp.262-263.

¹⁹ Phillips became a vegetarian around 1780, at the age of thirteen. Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.350.

²⁰ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.xvi-xix.

²¹ Richard Phillips, *A Morning’s Walk from London to Kew* (London: J. Adlard, 1817), p.viii; Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.xv.

challenged.²² As declared in the preface to his earlier work, *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew* (1817), a social critique in the guise of a domestic travel narrative, the result of his own personal resolve 'to think for himself' was that 'his conclusions on many important topics' were at distinct 'variance with existing practices.'²³ This included the subject of diet. For, like previous vegetarian radicals, Phillips considered meat-eating to be a deeply pernicious societal habit, part of a larger body of injurious custom which had simultaneously 'hardened [people's] hearts against sympathy for the sufferings' of their fellow beings and fostered the 'intellectual darkness' that had enabled such tyrannies to flourish.²⁴

The notion that 'prejudice' and 'custom' formed a fundamental barrier to social progress, essential to the maintenance of despotisms, was widespread throughout radical arguments of the period, as well as Enlightenment discourse more broadly. So too was a belief in the power of a liberating freethought, characterised as 'reason', through which individuals would release themselves from ignorance and superstition, ultimately enabling a larger societal advance. Such ideas regarding the perpetual improvement of mankind through the diffusion of knowledge, particularly via print and progressive education, were embodied in the philosophy of Godwin: 'Sound reasoning and truth, when adequately communicated, must always be victorious over error'.²⁵

The Godwinian notion that in to order change the structures of society, one must simply change the opinions of the people, was shared by many, including Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson. These three men consistently railed against the malignant forces of habit and tradition, championing the emancipatory potential of a sympathetic reason, spread through agitative, educative or literary endeavours. Phillips, too, resolutely adhered to such ideas, arguing for the provision of free universal education and public libraries.²⁶ 'Untaught man', he asserted, was the

²² Phillips, *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, p.viii.

²³ Phillips, *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, pp.iv-v.

²⁴ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.349 & 354.

²⁵ William Godwin, *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin*, ed. Peter Marshall (London: Freedom Press, 1986), p.61.

²⁶ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.60 & 115-116.

unfortunate ‘patient of the circumstances by which he is surrounded’ – to ‘promote education, free enquiry, and truth’ was to enable the people to alter these circumstances, to divest themselves of ‘the continuous errors of previous ages’, and to instead cultivate a more equitable society characterised by wisdom and justice.²⁷

Central to this process of enlightening change was a belief in the transformative capability of, what has been termed, ‘print magic’, defined as ‘a faith that print could liberate mankind simply by bringing ideas into printed circulation’.²⁸ Phillips, like many radically-minded individuals, reflected such an expectation, as demonstrated not only through his arguments themselves but also his very conscious efforts to publish ‘practical’ and ‘useful’ works which sought to communicate to readers the ‘truths of which he himself felt a thorough conviction’.²⁹ Importantly, however, despite Phillips’ apparently radical desire to transform society through the ‘vivifying energy’ of a rational ‘spirit of free enquiry’, his agenda was, in many ways, far *less* ‘radical’ than Oswald’s, Ritson’s, Godwin’s or Shelley’s.³⁰ Indeed, as Michael Scrivener highlights, many radicals of the period focused largely on political issues as opposed to economic or social ones, and were often ‘not opposed to capitalism or inequality’, at the most simply favouring ‘certain kinds of welfare legislation and different taxation policies’.³¹ Godwin’s and Shelley’s ideologies, forerunners of later anarchist and socialist forms of thought, in particular, thus stood significantly to the left of the radicalism of many of their contemporaries, including Phillips, whose arguments were shaped predominantly by ‘Whig liberalism, moderate reform, and Paineite or utilitarian republicanism’.³²

Phillips’ works embodied such a liberal reformist agenda, explicitly addressed, as they were, to more privileged members of society, urging them to *ameliorate* the

²⁷ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.49-50.

²⁸ Jon Mee, *Print, Publicity, and Popular Radicalism in the 1790s: The Laurel of Liberty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p.8.

²⁹ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.ix & xvii-xviii; Phillips, *A Morning’s Walk from London to Kew*, p.viii.

³⁰ Phillips, *A Morning’s Walk from London to Kew*, p.viii.

³¹ Michael Scrivener, *Radical Shelley: The Philosophical Anarchism and Utopian Thought of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), p.9. Paine was a notable example.

³² Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, pp.8-9.

conditions of the less fortunate, whilst acknowledging that ‘the arrangements of society may require, as a condition of civilisation’ some ‘moderate inequalities’.³³ The glowing dedication at the beginning of his *Golden Rules* to Simón Bolívar – figurehead of the movements for the independence of Latin American states from colonial rule – as well as his great admiration for the United States of America, exemplified the general thrust of his politics.³⁴ Indeed, Phillips was centrally concerned with the causes of democratic government, civil and religious liberty, and the freedom of the press.³⁵ He also had something of a utilitarian streak, often stressing the importance of the pursuit of individual happiness, but also the necessity of weighing personal pleasures against societal pains.³⁶

Phillips’ analysis of society and his approach to reform were very much reflective of this. He recognised the role of property as the basis of societal conflict and held a strident hostility to the grotesque poverty which surrounded him.³⁷ Simultaneously, however, he still accepted the existence of differences in individual wealth and power, and defended property, commerce and even empire as quintessential features of an advancing civilisation. He believed in what was ‘possible and practicable’ within the context of an imperfect society; a society characterised by the ‘warfare of its members’, whose arrangements had been created through a perpetual ‘conflict of feelings and interests’, and in which ‘the crafty’ inevitably ‘rule[d] the simple’.³⁸ ‘The object of laws and morals’ was thus ‘to ameliorate’ this situation, with the hope that a happier world might result.³⁹ His ultimate aim was therefore simply to *reduce* iniquity through the elimination of privation and ignorance, whilst essentially leaving social structures intact.

³³ Phillips, *A Morning’s Walk from London to Kew*, pp.103 & 129.

³⁴ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.iii-viii. With regard to Phillips’ admiration of the USA, see, for example, Richard Phillips, *Four Dialogues Between an Oxford Tutor and a Disciple of the Common-Sense Philosophy, relative to the Proximate Causes of Material Phenomena* (London: Sherwood, Jones & Co., 1824), pp.iii-vi.

³⁵ Phillips apparently advocated a form of universal male suffrage, see *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.110-111. See also his sections on ‘Civil Liberty’ and ‘Religious Liberty’, pp.107-116 & pp.117-129, respectively. For Phillips’ views regarding freedom of press, see, for example, pp.iv & 113.

³⁶ Phillips, *A Morning’s Walk from London to Kew*, pp.ix-x; Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.42-43 & 63.

³⁷ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.38-39 & 54-55.

³⁸ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.209-210, 213 & 222.

³⁹ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.38.

Phillips' suggestions regarding the alleviation of poverty were typical of such a sympathetic, yet modest, liberal reformist approach. He did, however, still maintain a radical edge, recognising the primary cause of poverty to be the landless insecurity and alienation of the working masses – their labour constantly cheated of its reward by the 'avarice' of wealthy landowners and capitalists, and even boldly posed the pivotal leftist question: 'Was the world made for the many, or the few?'⁴⁰ The expression, though, of his intentions as an 'ameliorating' attempt to 'diminish the contrast' between men, to 'render the comfort of the poor...compatible with' the 'enjoyment' of the rich, as well as his belief that reform was accomplished largely through 'benevolent' legislation and philanthropy, provided a more politically moderate grounding.⁴¹ His positive conception of the role of an (improved) system of workhouses in the relief of poverty certainly alluded to a somewhat accepting view of an inequitable status quo, and through his particular proposal to separate 'the aged and unfortunate poor' from 'the improvident and vicious poor' he even came to endorse established conservative notions, which sought to categorise impoverished individuals as either 'deserving' or 'undeserving' of 'assistance'.⁴² Such ideas clearly demonstrated the boundaries of Phillips' radicalism. Those contemporaries who stood to his left would have been unlikely to share such views, and would certainly not have taken heart from witnessing the inmate of a workhouse exclaim gratefully of their 'providers': "God bless 'em, they're noble gentlemen".⁴³

2.1.2. Phillips' Vegetarianism

Phillips' animal advocacy and vegetarianism need to be seen against the backdrop of these broader liberal reformist ideas and arguments. Phillips believed that the path to the improvement of society was enlightened education and legislation. This

⁴⁰ Phillips, *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, pp.127-128; Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.103 & 240.

⁴¹ Phillips, *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, pp.102-105; Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.55.

⁴² Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.237. In his proposal for the financing of workhouses Phillips offers significantly less space and money for latter category (pp.237-238).

⁴³ Phillips, *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, p.108.

stemmed, in part, from his Hobbesian view of human nature, which encouraged a belief in ‘the necessity of strong laws...to prevent [men] from fighting and destroying one another’.⁴⁴ It was also a reflection of his belief that societal change occurred through the reformation of individuals, and his consequent faith in the ‘increasing intelligence...of the rising generation’, the primary task of whom was to engage in a ‘constant war’ with the ‘bigoted and obsolete opinions’ of the previous one.⁴⁵

Phillips’ view of bull-baiting provided a perfect illustration of this, for he envisaged the suppression of such practices as a central occupation for an ‘enlightened legislator’, who should, additionally, turn his positive attentions to encouraging the growth of ‘associations for the extension of every kind of useful knowledge’.⁴⁶ As this suggests, Phillips’ animal advocacy was, in some ways, allied to contemporary mainstream arguments for animal welfare, stressing the negative effects of (particularly lower-class) cruelty to animals on both the human character and society at large: ‘all such practices as hunting, shooting, fowling, fishing, badger-baiting, cock-fighting, bull-baiting...deprive men of that sympathy and sense of mutual justice...which are essential to the happiness of society’.⁴⁷ Phillips thus ‘extended his code of sympathy to the brute creation’ partly because not to do so would be incompatible with the inclinations of ‘rational, reflecting, and conscientious, beings’.⁴⁸

This was further reflected through a discourse of ‘civilisation’, found throughout his writings, which positioned vegetarianism as part of a rational, benevolent progress. This formed an explicit rejection of a cruel, backward ‘savagery’, and presented such reform as a kind of elevation, defined in opposition to some of those towards whom Phillips was apparently sympathetic: non-human animals and non-European native peoples. For Phillips, ‘carnivorous men, unrestrained by reflection or sentiment,

⁴⁴ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.61.

⁴⁵ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.46. For Phillips’ stress upon the importance of education see, for example, pp.331-332.

⁴⁶ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.103.

⁴⁷ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.354-355.

⁴⁸ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.xv & 350.

refine *even on the cruel practices of the most savage animals*’ applying ‘their resources of mind...to prolong the miseries of the victims of their appetites, skinning, roasting and boiling animals alive...torturing them without reservation or remorse’.⁴⁹ Such base ‘carnivorous propensities’, characterised by ‘a total want of...humane sentiments’, belonged to ‘the hyena, the tyger, the vulture’ – and afforded ‘no worthy example’ for civilised man.⁵⁰ Neither, too, did the ‘practices of savages, and of savage ancestry, in killing and eating animals’.⁵¹ These, claimed Phillips, were not entitled to any more respect than ‘the practice of cannibalism among some black tribes in the British colonies’, for whom ‘so forcible [was] custom, that the laws of civilisation against murder appear[ed] to be insufficient in deterring’ them.⁵² Through such arguments, Phillips correlated carnivorousness with beastliness and barbarism in an attempt to persuade his readers of vegetarianism’s important role in the onward march of civilisation.

This civilising discourse did, however, noticeably conflict with some of the broader reasoning that lay behind his vegetarianism. In particular, his belief in the essential unity, not only of all peoples, but of all life on earth, seemed to jar somewhat with his moral elevation of a certain ‘civilised’ section of humanity. Indeed, Phillips frequently stressed the overwhelming commonality of human beings, arguing that ‘all members of the human family should remember, that the human race is...but as one totality’, for all descend from a common ancestry and share the same basic feelings, desires and needs.⁵³ His extension of this notion beyond the human species was expressed in a similar way:

Our senses, our pains, our diseases...our respiration and sleeping, our sexual propensities, our love of offspring, our youth, maturity, decrepitude, are all common to entire animal nature.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.350. Emphasis added.

⁵⁰ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.350.

⁵¹ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.353-354.

⁵² Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.354.

⁵³ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.52-53.

⁵⁴ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.59.

He even argued that the essential capacity to reason was something ‘likewise possessed by all sentient creatures’.⁵⁵ Human ‘pride’, he continued, ‘may take alarm at this truth, but pride and truth are often at variance’, and its recognition in this instance would serve to inculcate a vital ‘lesson of universal sympathy’.⁵⁶ Above all, it was his ideas regarding the fundamental interrelationship of both humans and other species that Phillips cited as the underpinning for a doctrine of ‘universal love’.⁵⁷ Bearing in mind, however, his acceptance of inequality, as well as his racist and deprecatory mentions of non-white and animal others, it is perhaps most accurate to view this doctrine as an exhortation to exercise an expansive benevolence within an intrinsically unified, yet in some ways apparently inescapably divided, world.

Phillips’ doctrine of ‘universal love’ was further based upon a belief that mankind’s ‘characteristic definition’ was that of ‘*sympathetic animal*’, ‘his highest gratification’ being found in ‘doing good’ and ‘conferring happiness’.⁵⁸ Despite Phillips’ Hobbesian inclinations regarding human nature, he thus also placed a great faith in the inherent human impulse of compassion, similarly to the Rousseauist vegetarian radicals who had come before him. Likewise, he cited his ‘utter and unconquerable repugnance’ to the killing of animals and the ‘devouring [of their] flesh’ as stemming from such sympathetic impulses, and, consequently, as the primary impetus of his vegetarianism.⁵⁹

Phillips believed that such an instinctive ‘abhorrence’ was common to all of humanity, but was simply masked by custom and deceit. This masking was achieved through the avoidance of the intrinsic violence of meat-eating, specifically the separation and disassociation of the dinner table and the slaughter house, which enabled individuals ‘to forget, the living endearments or dying sufferings of the creature’.⁶⁰ Further, he argued that the human stomach was so naturally ‘averse to the remains of dead animals, that few could partake of them if they were not

⁵⁵ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.59.

⁵⁶ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.59.

⁵⁷ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.53.

⁵⁸ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.55.

⁵⁹ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.349.

⁶⁰ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.351.

disguised and flavoured by culinary preparation’, except, that is, those ‘savages’, in thrall to ‘barbarous’ custom, who were able, quite happily, to ‘kill and eat on the spot the quivering warm flesh of their victims’.⁶¹

Through this Phillips urged his readers to re-awaken their imaginative sympathetic faculties, to bring the brutality and violence of meat-eating back into view. He implored that when witness to ‘a splendid banquet’, it was the observer’s duty to ‘consider the dying sufferings of the victims, the interesting feelings destroyed, [and] the excess of pain over pleasure’.⁶² Similarly, he asserted that when they ‘view a noble mansion, filled with gaiety and luxury’, it was crucial to ‘reflect on the privations of cottages, on the half-crown a day on which adjacent families must subsist, on all the means by which the establishment is sustained’.⁶³ Like Nicholson’s meditations on honey and sugar production, or Oswald’s anger over the enclosures (which Phillips also mentions), these were encouragements to acknowledge the centrality of both human and non-human animal exploitation in the maintenance of luxury. The consequence of readers’ sympathetic reflection upon such realities would, it was hoped, prompt them to ‘moderate [their own] pleasures accordingly’.⁶⁴

Phillips presented his call for individuals to yield to their ‘moral and mental convictions’ as an elevating, *civilising*, process – ‘emancipating [themselves] from the sensual and selfish instincts which govern the human race’.⁶⁵ Despite this process being rooted in inherent sympathetic impulses, therefore, the presence of more malignant inclinations in the human character appeared to indicate that its success would ultimately depend upon personal enlightened moral reflection as part of a broader societal intellectual advance. It was the obstructive *backwardness* of ‘custom’ that had continuously acted to nurture the darker side of human nature, hardening ‘hearts against...[the] sufferings’ of others, and making man ‘the

⁶¹ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.351-352.

⁶² Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.63.

⁶³ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.63.

⁶⁴ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.63-64. For Phillips’ commentary on the privations created by the enclosures see p.243.

⁶⁵ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.349.

merciless tyrant of the whole animated creation', and so it was primarily through reasoned argument and educated benevolence that this collective dullness might successfully be dispelled.⁶⁶ Phillips viewed vegetarianism as an integral part of this attempt to cultivate a new humane and civilised order, defined as a rejection of both primitive 'savagery' and contemporary habitual ignorance and cruelty. Violence towards animals formed one of the most fundamental manifestations of such benighted barbarism, and so its decisive renouncement offered an important step towards social regeneration.

In addition to this discourse of civilisation, elevation, and progress, however, was a further, perhaps more essential, underpinning to Phillips' vegetarianism: basic religious morality. As with others explored in this thesis, a concept central to Phillips' arguments was the golden rule of true religion, which was, in his words: 'Do nothing to any sentient or suffering being which you would feel to be cruel or unjust towards yourself'.⁶⁷ Phillips' Christianity, upon which he remarks throughout his works, appears to be his overarching guide; although, as the atheism of others reveals, to follow this fundamental moral tenet was certainly not dependent upon any formal adherence to a Judeo-Christian faith. Indeed, Phillips himself was often critical of the failings of contemporary organised Christianity in Britain, highlighting its perversion of Jesus' teachings and questioning its role in the maintenance of an exploitative and stupefying status quo:

Is religion in the pulpit but a plausible means of palliating the crimes of statesmen?...Would it now be possible...to crucify Jesus, for teaching truth and practicing virtue?...Yes!...there never was a country, nor an age, in which artful misrepresentation could be more successfully practiced than at this day in Britain!⁶⁸

Such a condemnation of the oppressive hypocrisy and corruption of the established church perhaps serves to bring Phillips' radicalism back into the foreground; for, in tandem with a critique of the manipulation of both the press and the education system in the interests of a moneyed elite, he offered a more back-to-basics

⁶⁶ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.354.

⁶⁷ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.42.

⁶⁸ Phillips, *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, pp.294-295.

interpretation of Christianity, one which stressed ideas of mutuality and fellowship bound up with the figure of Jesus, as often favoured by both religious and political dissenters.

Undoubtedly, this form of religious belief, with its emphasis on genuinely *practised* selflessness and compassion, held obvious potential radical, egalitarian or even communistic implications. For Phillips, an adherence to a doctrine of ‘do unto others’ universally applied, led him not only to a progressive politics, primarily concerned with improving the state of the poor, ending the proliferation of wars, and fighting the suppression of liberty, but also to a determined defence of ‘the helpless animal creation’.⁶⁹ This reflected his understanding that societal attitudes and behaviours stemmed in part from a shared morality, or, indeed immorality – as did the very form society took. An all-embracing justice thus characterised the good society, just as a divisive injustice characterised the bad. Phillips illustrated the nature of the latter by revealing the careless selfishness that lay in common behind the activities of some of his supposedly upstanding contemporaries:

Perhaps he is some sharp attorney, who inflames disputes, and exasperates the wealthy against the indigent;...perhaps a magistrate, who sends men and women to gaol in sport; perhaps a butcher, who whistles a tune while he cuts throats...a sportsman, who kills for diversion...[or] a minister, who makes war to please his master, or to increase his patronage.⁷⁰

Here, his association of magistrates with huntsmen, and of ministers with butchers again demonstrated his radical edge. More than anything, however, it encapsulated his frustration with a nation that he considered to be blighted by thoughtless cruelty, driven in large part by an engrained systemic injustice, perpetuated via the ‘habitual’ self-interest of the upper classes.

This allusion to widespread moral failure, or lack of virtue, as a pivotal common cause of society’s manifold iniquities, highlighted, in particular, Phillips’ strong tendency to individualise social reform – to make it about personal morality and

⁶⁹ Phillips, *A Morning’s Walk from London to Kew*, p.295. For his views regarding war, see *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.215-216.

⁷⁰ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.68.

behaviour, especially that of the those in positions of relative power. In this context an appeal to a religious humanitarian ethic, stressing the interconnection of life and notions of ‘universal love’, made sense. So did calls for rational argument and enlightened education, for these bound individual improvement – both moral and intellectual – to that of society. Indeed, Phillips’ definition of both the personal and societal ideal was one which stressed the reformation of the individual as the basis of both internal and collective concord:

Happiness is the result of a healthy and well-working system of organisation, combined with accordant actions and re-actions from nature and society...Happiness, in a word, is the harmony of the body and mind with nature and society.⁷¹

Taking into account, however, his view of the world as unavoidably imperfect, such ideas can, perhaps, be read more as a means by which an individual could find their own peace via the development of personal enlightenment and virtue.

Phillips addressed his readers as a ‘practical man’, whose advocacy of vegetarianism was primarily based upon his belief in the incompatibility of the violence and brutality of meat-eating with the ongoing development of an enlightened and moral civilisation.⁷² He considered, in particular, that the killing and consumption of other animals fatally undermined the individual’s cultivation of *personal* ‘health’, both moral and physical. A fleshless diet, therefore, was an important element in the progressive transformation of society, but also, simultaneously, a way in which a single person could free themselves from the grasp of its current baneful effects. This focus on reforming the individual, ultimately for the sake of society, but immediately, and more attainably, for their own satisfaction and wellbeing, was certainly a defining feature of Phillips’ writings, and reflected a common tendency within broader vegetarian thought. That is not to say, however, that the suffering experienced by non-human animals was not at the forefront of his mind, for a concern with such cruelty and injustice was expressed with vehemence throughout his arguments.

⁷¹ Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, pp.68-69.

⁷² Phillips, *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.ix.

Phillips' commentary on politics, ethics, society, and diet, together formed part of a general exhortation to his readers to cultivate *independent sympathising minds* – to listen to the promptings of 'the HEART as well as the HEAD' – to recognise both human and inter-species communality, and to promote liberally-minded reform that sought the enlightened improvement, greater freedom and happiness of both society and those who composed it.⁷³ It is true that he presented a more politically restrained vision than Oswald, Ritson, or Shelley, accepting limits to radical arguments that enabled him even to welcome a knighthood.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, he drew upon similar ideas of 'health', 'harmony', and peaceful coexistence in placing vegetarianism at the centre of an ambitious progressivism; recognising its necessity in the creation of a compassionate, rational, and bloodless civilisation.

2.2. 'Let Nature be your teacher': Romanticism and Animal Advocacy

With its veneration of a nature defined by its holism, its ideal of an organic harmonious past, and its emphasis upon emotion and the individual, the Romantic movement of the early nineteenth century appeared to provide a potential basis for a more thoughtful and sympathetic consideration of the animal world. As Donald Worster, Jonathan Bate and James McKusick argue, Romantic authors pioneered an explicitly *ecological* standpoint, characterised by Worster as 'a search for holistic or integrated perception' that placed a great emphasis on 'interdependence and relatedness in nature' and sought 'to restore man to a place of intimate intercourse' with the surrounding world.⁷⁵ These essential ideas of 'relation, interdependence, and holism', which continued to form the basis of both environmental arguments and assertions of inter-species fellowship, were found throughout the writings of leading Romantic figures from William Wordsworth to William Blake.⁷⁶

⁷³ Phillips, *A Morning's Walk from London to Kew*, p.295.

⁷⁴ Issitt, "Introducing Sir Richard Phillips".

⁷⁵ Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, second ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.82; Bate, *Romantic Ecology*; James C. McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000). See also Peter Marshall's *Nature's Web: Rethinking Our Place on Earth* (1992; New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), p.268.

⁷⁶ Worster, *Nature's Economy*, p.58.

The writings of Wordsworth – widely celebrated for offering perhaps the greatest poetic expression of the beauty, spirit, diversity and oneness of nature – epitomised the Romantic desire for humanity to re-establish its close relationship with the natural world, and to rebuff the alienating forces of an ever-expanding industrialisation and urbanisation. Responding to what were perceived as the damaging effects of the Scientific Revolution, with its rejection of the organic and spiritual in favour of the mechanistic and detachedly rational, Wordsworth's *The Tables Turned* (1798) suggested that to truly understand both yourself and your surroundings, it was necessary to perceive the world not only through reason, but through 'intuition, sensibility, feeling and, above all, imagination':⁷⁷

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.⁷⁸

Within the context of an increasingly rationalist and materialist society, this poem urged its readers to ensure that they did not lose their ability to commune with the natural world: 'Let Nature be your teacher'.⁷⁹ It also challenged the loss of an essential humanity that so often accompanied a detached, unemotional intellectualism, particularly in the realm of science. As exemplified by the vivisectors criticised by Oswald, to place faith solely in cool logic and to measure progress purely in terms of man's advancing knowledge of the physical world, threatened not only an incomplete understanding of life on earth, but the triumph of a refined brutality that considered a butterfly pinned to a board more edifying than one fluttering through a meadow:

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous form of things:-
We murder to dissect.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Marshall, *Nature's Web*, p.271.

⁷⁸ William Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned; an evening scene, on the same subject", *Lyrical Ballads, with a few other poems* (Bristol: Printed by Biggs and Cottle for T.N. Longman, London, 1798), p.187, stanza 6.

⁷⁹ Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned", stanza 4, line 15.

⁸⁰ Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned", p.188, stanza 7.

As Marshall argues, Wordsworth's 'joyous', almost pantheistic, 'apprehension of the whole' provided 'a deep sense of unity, harmony, tranquillity and love'.⁸¹

Philosophers and scientists, in the course of their quest to comprehend its constituent parts, had ended up causing the disfiguration of all; they had even lost themselves, for their separation of reason from the rest of the human psyche with such clinical violence had served to fracture the human soul itself. Such a criticism of a quantitative science which objectified nature, was one of the clearest manifestations of the broader Romantic belief that 'naked reason alone was inadequate when not completed by the flash of intuition, the flame of feeling or the urging of instinct'.⁸² *The Tables Turned* had presented the sun, nature's progenitor, as offering a redemptive 'freshening lustre', shining through the 'green fields', encouraging man to 'come forth' into the 'light' of a natural, intuitive, holistic understanding of the world.⁸³

A second romantic, William Blake, who placed a far greater emphasis on the power of *human* imagination, rather than Wordsworth's deified nature, highlighted, however, that at present, a severely circumscribed human perception made most individuals incapable of recognising such an invitation; he instead observed a society characterised by alienation and greed, as typified by the miser, in whose eyes 'a Guinea is more beautiful than the Sun'.⁸⁴ In such a mercantile world, where the spiritual was shackled and human feeling constrained, man had grown insular, with nature transformed into commercially or scientifically profitable objects, or else insignificant clutter: 'The tree which moves some to tears of joy' becomes 'in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way'.⁸⁵

Blake's critique of Britain's emergent industrial capitalist society was, arguably, the most powerful of the Romantic period. His ideas regarding 'freedom' and

⁸¹ Marshall, *Nature's Web*, p.276.

⁸² Marshall, *Nature's Web*, p.271.

⁸³ Wordsworth, "The Tables Turned", p.187, stanzas 2 & 4, lines 6-7, 15.

⁸⁴ William Blake, "Letter to the Revd. Dr. Trusler, 23rd August, 1799", *Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: The Nonesuch Press, 1956), p.835.

⁸⁵ Blake, "Letter to the Revd. Dr. Trusler, 23rd August, 1799", p.835.

'emancipation' had developed in response to the iniquity, alienation, cruelty, and ugliness that it had engendered, and had led him to attack not only organised religion, an unjust economic system, and a repressive state, but also slavery and imperialism, as well as to voice strong support for sexual liberation and the emancipation of women.⁸⁶ It should come as little surprise that he also expressed deep concern regarding the abusive treatment of non-human animals, denouncing some of the most common abuses:

A Robin Red breast in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a Rage...
A dog starv'd at his Master's Gate
Predicts the ruin of the State...
Each outcry of the hunted Hare
A fibre from the Brain does tear...
The Game Cock clip'd & arm'd for fight
Does the Rising Sun affright.⁸⁷

Blake's outcry on behalf of persecuted nature, as communicated in these lines from *Auguries of Innocence* (1803), can be seen as a reflection of his broader radical emancipatory politics, as well as his larger preoccupation with personal and societal salvation and the restoration of a lost innocence:

Kill not the Moth nor Butterfly
For the Last Judgement draweth nigh.⁸⁸

Indeed, if an individual were to spare the moth, to reject tyranny, violence, and the abuse of the innocent, they would embrace a far brighter destiny not only for themselves, but for society at large, for 'The lamb misused breeds Public Strife', whereas 'The wild deer, wandring here & there / Keeps the Human Soul from Care'.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ For discussions, see: Peter Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist* (1988; London: Freedom Press, 2008); Kevin Hutchings, *Imagining Nature: Blake's Environmental Poetics* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002); David V. Erdman, *Blake, Prophet Against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of His Own Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954).

⁸⁷ William Blake, "Auguries of Innocence" (1803), *Poetry and Prose Of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, pp.118-119, lines 5-6, 9-10, 13-14, 17-18.

⁸⁸ Blake, "Auguries of Innocence", p.119, lines 39-40.

⁸⁹ Blake, "Auguries of Innocence", p.118, lines 21-23.

Clearly, Blake did not simply use animals allegorically in his work, for here he put forward the notion that violence towards animals was one of the building blocks of a brutalised character and a despotic civilisation.⁹⁰ More broadly, his critique reflected an increasing public anxiety concerning animal abuse, as well as its potential effects on human society, as was expressed through both early attempts to pass anti-cruelty legislation, and the preponderance of ‘kindness to animals’ discourses within didactic children’s literature of the period.⁹¹ This enhanced sensibility regarding animals was typified by works such as Thomas Day’s bestselling *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1783-89).

Day’s work extols Rousseauist educational ideals, contrasting the cruelty of civilised man with the simple goodness of natural man, in the process championing benevolence towards animals, and portraying them as fellows in nature.⁹² A further text which demonstrated the growth of such attitudes was William Hayley’s *Ballads* (1805); illustrated by Blake, the author’s friend, and published by Richard Phillips, this included several poems that emphasised a sympathetic and intimate human-animal relationship.⁹³ As these examples indicate, such concern for the well-being of non-human animals was common within liberal and progressive circles, as well as amongst the educated classes more widely.⁹⁴

As Kevin Hutchings observes, ‘the histories of human and animal rights are closely intertwined’, with past reformers frequently having recognised the connection between different manifestations of injustice.⁹⁵ This was illustrated by the fact that most of those who criticised the cruel treatment of animals were also vociferous

⁹⁰ For a discussion of this, see David Perkins, “Animal Rights and ‘Auguries of Innocence’”, *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 33, no.1 (Summer 1999), pp.4-11.

⁹¹ Anna Barbauld and Sarah Trimmer were two of the most prolific authors of such works. For a discussion of this literature, see Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, pp.51-78.

⁹² Thomas Day, *The History of Sandford and Merton: A Work Intended for the Use of Children* (London: J. Stockdale, 1783-89).

⁹³ William Hayley, *Ballads, founded on Anecdotes Relating to Animals* (Chichester: Richard Phillips, 1805).

⁹⁴ Even Thomas Paine had presented ‘cruelty to animals’ as ‘a violation of moral duty’: Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason; Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (Paris: Printed by Barrois, 1794), p.55.

⁹⁵ Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies*, p.92.

opponents of human slavery. Wilberforce, for example, who formed the public face of the abolition movement, situated animal advocacy as an essential part of his broader reformist agenda, accepting a solid correlation between different forms of cruelty and gratuitous exploitation.⁹⁶ Similarly, Blake, Day and Phillips all spoke out in favour of abolition as part of their own larger radical societal critiques.⁹⁷ Such simultaneous concern for both the human and animal oppressed certainly serves to illuminate the truth of Timothy Morton's assertion that 'to re-conceive relationships between humans and the natural (animal) world is...to decode the relation between despot and slave'.⁹⁸ For, to dismiss the validity of one exploitative relationship was to lend credence to the questioning and refutation of others.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *To A Young Ass* (1794) provided the most striking example of this notion. In this poem, Coleridge addressed a 'Poor little Foal of an oppressed race', an animal he had personally known, fed, and comforted, on the green at Jesus College, Cambridge.⁹⁹ He lamented the future of cruelty and hard labour that awaited this youthful creature, dwelling on the situation of his mother:

Or is thy sad heart thrill'd with filial pain
To see thy wretched mother's shorten'd chain?

The ultimate cause of both the foal and his mother's plight was, of course, their being subject to a tyrannical 'master'. Coleridge, however, recognised that the (lower class) master's brutalisation was the result of broader social inequity, and thus sympathised with both victim and perpetrator:

Poor Ass! thy master should have learnt to show
Pity – best taught by fellowship of Woe!
For much I fear me that He live like thee,
Half famish'd in a land of Luxury!

⁹⁶ Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies*, pp.110-111.

⁹⁷ See in particular Day's *The Dying Negro: A Poetical Epistle, Supposed to be Written by a Black, Who Lately Shot Himself on Board a Vessel in the River Thames, to his Intended Wife* (London: Printed for W. Flexney, 1773).

⁹⁸ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.31.

⁹⁹ Richard Holmes, *Coleridge: Early Visions, 1772-1804* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989), pp.81-83.

He goes on to make a bold statement of solidarity with the foal, invoking the French Revolutionary ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity:

I hail thee *Brother* – spite of the fool’s scorn!
And fain would take thee with me, in the Dell
Of Peace and mild Equality to dwell.¹⁰⁰

As Hutchings and Perkins have argued, this poem can be seen as an allegory of human oppression, namely slavery, of which Coleridge was highly critical.¹⁰¹ Indeed, his commentary on the treatment of the foal can certainly be seen as alluding to the ‘anguish’ that was ‘wantonly heaped’ upon African slaves – ‘our Brethren’ – by white Europeans.¹⁰² Such a conflation could be interpreted as deeply problematic; to view human slavery in the context of animal abuse seemingly indicating an implicit racism, an engagement in a discourse of dehumanisation that was part and parcel of the very justification of slavery itself.¹⁰³ That said, it is worth bearing in mind Coleridge’s own intentions when looking at this poem. For here he was attempting earnestly to engage in *both* a literal critique of animal abuse *and* an allegorical critique of slavery – not *equating* them, but recognising the common brutality that was their cause. As Hutchings perceives, ‘by linking in a single poem issues of human and animal abuse, [Coleridge] directs our attention...not [to] the inherent animality that slave-trade apologists attributed to African peoples, but [to] the inhumanity’ of avaricious, mercantile Europeans who sought to profit by the misery of others.¹⁰⁴ Coleridge’s simultaneous advocacy of abolitionism and animal advocacy was, therefore, not simply crass analogy, but the result of a recognition of the ‘commonalities’ that informed and united ‘all modes of oppression’.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, “To A Young Ass, its mother being tethered near it” (1794), *The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp.74-75, stanzas 1, 2 & 3, lines 1, 13-14, 19-23, 25-28.

¹⁰¹ Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies*, p.93; David Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.109.

¹⁰² Quoted in Perkins, *Romanticism and Animal Rights*, p.109.

¹⁰³ Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies*, pp.93 & 109.

¹⁰⁴ Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies*, p.109.

¹⁰⁵ Hutchings, *Romantic Ecologies*, p.109.

The young Coleridge's wider ideology – typified by his plans for a 'Pantisocracy', a communistic utopian community characterised by common ownership, direct democracy, and a peaceful life spent close to nature – certainly supported such a holistic view of the world.¹⁰⁶ In *The Eolian Harp* (1796) he explored his notion of the 'One Life' – the divine unity of humanity and nature: the feeling of 'one Life within us and abroad' that makes it 'impossible / Not to love all things'.¹⁰⁷ This 'religion for democrats' decreed 'Mankind to be one mighty family' and extended ideas of fellowship to include all life on earth: 'I call even my Cat Sister in the Fraternity of Universal Nature'.¹⁰⁸ Such a radical, emancipatory politics was inevitably greeted with enmity by some, as typified by the remark of a critic in the *English Review*: 'Mr. Coleridge...[is] the most violent leveller we have met with'.¹⁰⁹ However, his attempts to stand against oppression met with a notable degree of success, or, at least, so believed some of his contemporaries.

In 1829, a debate at the Cambridge Union asked whether Coleridge's poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), or Martin's Act (passed in 1822), would do more to prevent animal cruelty – the result was 47 to 45 in Coleridge's favour.¹¹⁰ This outcome appeared to affirm the power of the final moral of this work, which took the form of a reminder to the reader that:

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast...
For the dear God who loveth us,

¹⁰⁶ For further discussion of Coleridge's societal ideal see: John Morrow, *Coleridge's Political Thought: Property, Morality and the Limits of Traditional Discourse* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990); Nigel Leask, *The Politics of Imagination in Coleridge's Critical Thought* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988); Carl R. Woodring, *Politics in the Poetry of Coleridge* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961); Peter Kitson, "Political Thinker", in *The Cambridge Companion to Coleridge*, ed. Lucy Newlyn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp.156-169.

¹⁰⁷ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Eolian Harp", *The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.101, stanza 2, lines 26, 30-31. For a discussion of Coleridge's ideas regarding the importance of feeling, emotion, and the unity of heart and mind see: Kaz Oishi, "Contemplation and Philanthropy: Coleridge, Owen, and the 'Well-Being of Nations'", in *Coleridge and Contemplation*, ed. Peter Cheyne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp.135-137.

¹⁰⁸ Letter to Francis Wrangham, 24th October 1794, in *The Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Volume 1*, ed. Earl Leslie Griggs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), letter 67, p.121.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.75-76.

¹¹⁰ Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, p.72.

He made and loveth all.¹¹¹

This acted not only as an affirmation of Coleridge's notions of the unity and fellowship of the 'One Life', but also as a simple lesson regarding the importance of kindness to animals, one which clearly reverberated through the public consciousness. Indeed, this excerpt even eventually came to be emblazoned upon the masthead of the RSPCA's long-running periodical, *The Animal World* (1869-1905).

Lord Byron, despite having mocked Coleridge as the 'Laureat of the long-ear'd kind', also provided a public critique of animal abuse. This is evident in his commentary upon the brutalising practice of bull-fighting within *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812-18), and in his disdain for hunting, shooting and fishing in *Don Juan* (1819-24).¹¹² Byron's fondness for animals was well known. He surrounded himself with a menagerie of pets, the most famous being his dog, Boatswain, upon whose death he composed a eulogising poetic epitaph and commissioned a grand marble tomb, within which he, too, one day hoped to be interred.¹¹³ In a celebrated incident, he even endeavoured to keep a tame bear as a companion while at Cambridge, suggesting to the university authorities that 'he should sit for a fellowship'.¹¹⁴

Such activities were intended, at least in part, to create an outrageous, perhaps even misanthropic, public image, just as his occasional vegetarianism was, most likely, largely an element in his construction of a radical identity, appropriate to his milieu.¹¹⁵ Yet, it is also hard not to acknowledge that there was, undeniably, a degree

¹¹¹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798), *The Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.209, Part VII, lines 612-617.

¹¹² Lord Byron, "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers" (1809), *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works, Vol.1*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p.237, line 264; Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, pp.35 & 104-107.

¹¹³ Lord Byron, "Inscription on the Monument of a Newfoundland Dog" (1808), *Lord Byron: The Complete Poetical Works, Vol.1*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp.224-225; Peter Cochran, *Byron and Italy* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp.176-177; Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, pp.33-34.

¹¹⁴ Letter to Elizabeth Pigot, 26th October 1807, *Byron's Letters and Journals, Volume 1: 'In My Hot Youth', 1798-1810*, ed. Leslie A. Marchand (London: John Murray, 1976), pp.135-136.

¹¹⁵ For details of Byron's vegetarianism, see Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, pp.260-261 and Stuart, p.374. His diet was also potentially the result of somewhat obsessive health concerns, see Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.78.

of sincerity in Byron's sentiments and actions, particularly with regard to Boatswain, for whom he clearly cared and genuinely mourned.¹¹⁶ Indeed, when considering their intimate friendship, it is tempting to call to mind the 'poor Indian' of Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1734), who hopes that in death, 'admitted to that equal sky, / His faithful dog shall bear him company'.¹¹⁷

Byron's attitudes, especially his choice to defy Christian traditions regarding humanity's exclusive claims to burial, memorial, and an immortal soul, were not, however, reflective of a mawkish sentimentalism, but of an intellectual context in which the treatment of non-human animals, man's relation to them, and even the very order of nature's hierarchy, was being increasingly questioned.¹¹⁸ The Romantic period witnessed the growth of concepts regarding the similitude, or even kinship, of humans and other animals, which would later feed into Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, while moral and political concern regarding their wellbeing continued to expand.¹¹⁹ Within Romanticism itself there emerged a consciousness of mankind's affinity with nature, its place within an organic, interdependent whole, bound by ties of instinctual sympathy, that came to be expressed as an early form of ecological critique, highlighting the potentially deleterious effects of civilisation on the natural environment, as well as on all those beings (human or non-human) who lived within it.¹²⁰

As demonstrated by Wordsworth, Blake, and Coleridge, in particular, the kind of ideas and beliefs that may have been adhered to by Pope's 'poor Indian', were now ascendant within Romantic circles.¹²¹ Indeed, they considered the ability to clearly perceive and appreciate, what Coleridge termed, the 'One Life' running through all of existence, to be vital to humanity's future good; a fundamental element of an

¹¹⁶ For a thorough discussion of *Epitaph to a Dog*, as well as Byron's relationship with Boatswain, see Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, pp.11-50.

¹¹⁷ Pope, "Essay on Man", p.275, Epistle I, stanza 3, lines 99, 111-112.

¹¹⁸ Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, p.28.

¹¹⁹ Buffon's, Lamarck's, and Erasmus Darwin's biological theories were central in this regard. See Marshall, *Nature's Web*, pp.284-285 and Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, pp.167-169, 206.

¹²⁰ Both John Keats and John Clare were also critical of the abuse of animals. See Kean, *Animal Rights*, pp.25-26 and Kenyon-Jones, *Kindred Brutes*, pp.45-46.

¹²¹ Pope, "Essay on Man", p.275, Epistle I, stanza 3, lines 97-99.

active, transformative imaginative faculty, which, reuniting heart and mind, human and human, mankind and nature, for them held the key to a more harmonious world.¹²² The Indian may have lacked a more cultivated, creative imaginative capability, but as a quintessential ‘noble savage’ he nevertheless existed outside of the calamities of civilisation – he had not sought either an intellectual or material gain that would have driven him to dissect, to murder, and so his intuitive understanding of the world remained intact. Such a life, spent at one with his surroundings, offered a primitive utopian image that would have appealed to these poets – a ‘humbler heaven’ upon the earth, where ‘in depth of woods embraced...slaves once more their native land behold’, where ‘no fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold’.¹²³

This image, in particular, of ‘slaves’ re-entering the forests of ‘their native land[s]’, escaping from a corrupted world and *returning* to a lost paradise, would have notably chimed with the marked tendency of Romantic authors to dream of, and seek, Eden. Their concern regarding emergent industrial capitalism’s simultaneous degradation of both the natural world and human spirituality, had led them to formulate visions of an earthly ideal that was characterised by a liberated nature and an emancipated humanity. For Blake and Coleridge especially, this was envisaged as a green utopia, a boundless garden of universal fellowship and peace, in which cruelty and tyranny were absent, and both man and beast were able to live their lives in a state of freedom.¹²⁴ Their belief that such a paradise was potentially achievable in the here and now was clearly expressed in their immediate political hopes – for example the young Coleridge’s Pantisocratic plans, or Blake’s initial faith in the transformative power of the French Revolution.¹²⁵ Certainly, as *Jerusalem* attests, such a transition was, in fact, forever possible, for the imaginative, compassionate, communistic capabilities of humanity were always present – ‘the Universal Brotherhood of Eden’

¹²² This was most certainly true for Blake, Coleridge, Keats, and, as will be discussed, Shelley. See Marshall, *Nature’s Web*, p.271.

¹²³ Pope, “Essay on Man”, p.275, Epistle I, stanza 3, lines 104-106.

¹²⁴ Max F. Schulz, *Paradise Preserved: Recreations of Eden in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.41-59.

¹²⁵ As articulated, in particular, in Blake’s *The French Revolution* (1791) and in “A Song of Liberty”, at the end of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-1793).

existed within all individuals – and so it was simply necessary to ‘Awake!...expand!’ this shared internal Edenic fountainhead: ‘I am in you and you in me, mutual love divine’.¹²⁶

Despite this search for an ideal society, however, such conceptions of paradise as emanating from the inner-world of individuals also revealed a desire, existent more broadly within Romanticism, to take refuge from a fallen external world within one’s own, *personal*, garden of redemption. Just as Wordsworth came, at times, to seek escape to a lost corner of Eden in his beloved Grasmere – a ‘paradise before me’ – it is possible to view the Romantic cultivation of individual spirituality, mental freedom, communion with nature, and compassionate interaction with (human and non-human) others, not just as a critique and a means to reform, but as a way to mitigate their own negative experience of a society which they found severely wanting.¹²⁷ Undoubtedly, to inhabit the realities of a conspicuously imperfect present was, in practice, unavoidable, and so manifestations of Eden had to occupy either the realm of the abstract or that of nature. For many Romantics, Eden was in the mythical past and Jerusalem, potentially, in the future; in the present it was only possible to glimpse them through the observation and celebration of unspoiled nature, or by cultivating your own internal Edenic spirit. It was through the love of nature, the love of mankind, and the love of other living beings, that the peaceable garden was actualised in the Romantic mind.

2.3. ‘Innocent and Healthful Lives’: William Lambe and John Frank Newton

¹²⁶ William Blake, “The Four Zoas” (1795-1804), in *Poetry and Prose Of William Blake*, ed. Keynes, p.252; Blake, “Jerusalem” (1804-1820), in *Poetry and Prose Of William Blake*, ed. Keynes, p.434, canto 4, line 7. See also Marshall, *William Blake: Visionary Anarchist*, p.64 and Schulz, *Paradise Preserved*, pp.47-48.

¹²⁷ William Wordsworth, “Home at Grasmere” (1808-1814), *William Wordsworth*, ed. Stephen Gill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.174, line 12. See also Schulz, *Paradise Preserved*, pp.83-96.

2.3.1. Newton's Beliefs

Despite their Edenic inclinations and espousal of a philosophy of both human and animal liberation, there is no evidence that either Blake or Coleridge adhered to a vegetarian diet. There were, however, other individuals in this period for whom a quest for the reclamation of paradise compelled them to adopt a fleshless regimen. John Frank Newton (1770-1825), whose home in Bracknell provided a common meeting point for the Shelley/Godwin circle, was, perhaps, the most notable example. Newton, along with his family, was converted to vegetarianism in 1806 through his interactions with the eminent physician William Lambe, whose recommendation of a 'natural diet' had led to the curing of the former's chronic asthma.¹²⁸ Lambe's research, published three years later, formed the most comprehensive exposition of the medical benefits of vegetarianism to date, his conclusions leading to his own adoption of a meat-free diet around the same time as Newton:

I am at length convinced, that man is in his proper nature strictly to be ranked among the herbivorous animals; and that the use of flesh of animals is a deviation from the laws of his nature, and is universally a cause of disease and premature death.¹²⁹

For Newton, too, a focus on the health benefits of vegetarianism came to form the essential basis of his own work *The Return to Nature, Or, A Defence of the Vegetable Regimen*, published in 1811. Despite this, however, the vegetarian arguments which he promulgated, and continued to develop in his more esoteric 1821 work, *Three Enigmas Attempted to be Explained*, were not purely the result of a simple desire to improve physical health.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ John Frank Newton, *The Return to Nature, Or, A Defence of the Vegetable Regimen; with some account of an experiment made during the last three or four years in the author's family* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1811), pp.iii-iv.

¹²⁹ William Lambe, *Reports on the Effects of a Peculiar Regimen on Scirrhus Tumours and Cancerous Ulcers* (London: printed for J. Mawman, 1809), p.8. See Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.375 and Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, pp.160-161. See also William Lambe, *Additional Reports on the Effects of a Peculiar Regimen in Cases of Cancer, Scrofula, Consumption, Asthma, and other Chronic Diseases* (London: printed for J. Mawman, 1815).

¹³⁰ John Frank Newton, *Three Enigmas Attempted to be Explained* (London: Thomas Hookham, 1821).

Newton subscribed to a far wider conception of human well-being, one which considered body, mind, and soul to be intimately interconnected.¹³¹ Like previous vegetarians, he considered that the dawn of meat-eating had been fundamental to the introduction of a corrupting malady within this holistic network of mental and material fibres:

Man, in quitting the nutriment on which...nature had destined him to enjoy a state of perfect health, has debased his physical, and consequently his moral and intellectual faculties, to a degree almost inconceivable.¹³²

In Newton's eyes, this debasement of mankind could be viewed as a *fall* from a previous healthy, harmonious, peaceable state. He thus began *The Return to Nature* by re-interpreting the story of Adam and Eve as an allegory in which the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge – 'that is, of the knowledge of *evil*' – served to represent man's decision to consume the flesh of other animals. It was this act – 'irreconcilable with a state of perfect innocence' – that had brought an end to humanity's original paradisaal existence.¹³³

Newton considered the two trees of Eden (the tree of life and the tree of knowledge) to have 'represented mysteriously the two kinds of food which Adam and Eve had before them'; the Bible had asserted that the fruit of the latter promised death, and, in Newton's view, it certainly did, for not only did it 'rob [non-human animals of]...their lives' and mark the dawn of violence and discord in the world, but condemned transgressive humans, who had sought to become like gods themselves, holding life and death in their hands, to forever suffer '*premature diseased death*'.¹³⁴ This legacy of 'disease' – a term he frequently employed to describe the afflicted state of human bodies, morals, and society – had become a permanent marker of mankind's debased condition. It was only through a *return* to a bloodless diet that people could hope to remedy this unending malaise.¹³⁵

¹³¹ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, p.151.

¹³² Newton, *The Return to Nature*, pp.65-66.

¹³³ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, pp.3-6. He also offered a similar interpretation regarding the myth of Prometheus (pp.7-15).

¹³⁴ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, p.5.

¹³⁵ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, pp.156-157.

As demonstrated by Emily Paterson-Morgan, Newton's prelapsarian vegetarian beliefs were significantly informed by a dualist Zoroastrian philosophy.¹³⁶ This outlook, with its conception of a 'Good Principle', 'the original ruler and creator' of life on earth, struggling for dominance with an 'Evil Principle', which had corrupted the world at a later date, encouraged him to view the world through a somewhat Manichean lens.¹³⁷ Such a perspective led Newton to frame his ideas regarding the corrupting influence of meat-eating as a fundamental manifestation of the Evil Principle's malignant presence in the world.¹³⁸ When the Good Principle's final victory came, therefore, it would be figured through 'the renunciation of a mixed diet, and...man's return to his original and healthier sustenance of fruit and vegetables, in which he delighted' prior to his 'lapse'.¹³⁹ This triumph of the Good Principle (embodied as a peaceful meatless diet) over its evil counterpart (manifested as a discordant carnivorous one) would result in '*the physical as well as the moral improvement of mankind*'.¹⁴⁰

While awaiting the possibility of this new age, however, the *personal* practise of vegetarianism acted as a means by which an individual could expunge the Evil Principle from their own life. Like others within the Romantic period, therefore, Newton was attracted to visions of lost innocence and future paradise, and actively sought a means by which to realise them in the present. Within this attempt there was a clear desire to reform society, to rid it of 'disease'. However, as demonstrated by his closing remarks in *The Return to Nature*, which hesitantly pondered mankind's chances of salvation, the more immediate, and manageable, aim was to cure the individual.¹⁴¹ He had, it seems, ultimately decided that it was more effective (or, perhaps, less controversial) to frame his arguments in terms of the safeguarding of personal 'health', as opposed to challenging, radical calls for the collective good.

¹³⁶ Paterson-Morgan, "The Bloodless Church".

¹³⁷ Paterson-Morgan, "The Bloodless Church", p.97.

¹³⁸ Newton, *Three Enigmas*, p.6.

¹³⁹ Newton, *Three Enigmas*, pp.76-77.

¹⁴⁰ Newton, *Three Enigmas*, pp.76-77.

¹⁴¹ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, pp.153-154.

When considering Newton, it is tempting to call to mind the ascetic veganism of the medieval Christian dualist Cathars, and their attempt to remove themselves from the polluted world of flesh. They believed that by abstaining from the ‘mortal sin’ of eating ‘meat, eggs [and] cheese’ they could succeed in avoiding the taint of the ‘evil influence’ which these ‘corrupting creations’ of the ‘Destructive Principle’ contained and imparted.¹⁴² To them it was apparent that ‘no man nourished by these foods [could] obtain salvation’.¹⁴³ A similar belief, it seems, was also reflected by the vegan dinners held at Newton’s home in Bracknell, as described by Thomas Jefferson Hogg:

Flesh, fish, fowl, game, never appeared; nor eggs bodily in their individual capacity, nor butter in the gross: the two latter articles were admitted into cookery, it is true, but as sparingly as possible, and their presence was provisional, interlocutory, under protest, as culinary aids not approved of, and soon to be dispensed with...Cheese was under the ban,—anathematized, excommunicate.¹⁴⁴

Paterson-Morgan sees this veganism as further evidence of a specifically dualist influence, the abstinence from eggs and dairy apparently distinguishing Newton from vegetarians of the period.¹⁴⁵ It is, however, worth noting, that the unease of other individuals, such as Ritson, regarding these broader animal products, indicated a more complicated picture. The boundaries between vegetarianism and veganism were difficult to firmly draw, and any division was often more the result of practicability than ideology, with a vegan (or even frugivorous) diet often acknowledged as the ideal by those who were vegetarian in practice.

Despite his dualistic proclivities and his focus upon individual ‘health’, however, Newton’s belief system, including his vegetarianism/veganism, was also shaped by his broader Romantic environment. The influence of contemporary debates regarding the moral implications of the treatment of animals, for instance, was highly visible in his writings, as revealed in the conclusion of *The Return to Nature*:

¹⁴² Paterson-Morgan, “The Bloodless Church”, pp.102-103.

¹⁴³ Paterson-Morgan, “The Bloodless Church”, p.97.

¹⁴⁴ Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, vol. 2, pp.419-420.

¹⁴⁵ Paterson-Morgan, “The Bloodless Church”, pp.102-103.

So long as men are compassionate to such a degree that they cannot hear a fly struggling in a spider's web without emotion, it never can be reasonably maintained that it is their natural impulse to wound and kill the dumb animals, or to butcher one another in what is called *the field of honour*.¹⁴⁶

Here, Newton echoed earlier vegetarian writers in claiming a connection between meat-eating and warfare. Strikingly, he also asserted the role of compassion as the foundation of a system of ethics and alluded to the concept of an emotionally-based 'cry of nature', which urged individuals to reject a world of violence and bloodshed.

2.3.2. Veganism and the 'Return to Nature' in the works of Lambe and Newton

Lambe, although even more outwardly focussed on issues of health, had expressed similar ideas to Newton regarding vegetarianism's grounding in an essential compassionate impulse:

By long habit and familiarity with scenes of blood, we have come to view [animals] without emotion. But look at a young child, who is told that the chicken, which it has fed and played with, is to be killed. Are not the tears it sheds, and the agonies it endures, the voice of nature itself crying within us, and pleading the cause of humanity?¹⁴⁷

Lambe's and Newton's arguments had been formulated within the context of the same social and intellectual circles. These, with which Ritson and Phillips were also associated, had clearly encouraged the development of a particular body of vegetarian language and ideas. At the gatherings at Newton's home in Bracknell especially, this vegetarian culture had been shaped by a radical atmosphere within which current theories and debates, infused by Enlightenment and Romantic thought, were discussed and developed.

Lambe's and Newton's incorporation of contemporary agronomic arguments within their vegetarian writings serves as a notable demonstration of this influence.

Concerns regarding population growth, and the most efficient ways of using land to sustain a larger, healthier, and happier populace, were prominent around the turn of

¹⁴⁶ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, p.154.

¹⁴⁷ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, p.245.

the nineteenth century. Writers including William Paley, Adam Smith and Erasmus Darwin, all came to acknowledge that the rearing of animals for meat was, in comparison to plant-based agriculture, a far less sustainable means by which to support a growing human population.¹⁴⁸ The enclosure and conversion of arable land that had formerly maintained the independent lives of the lower classes, into pasture for animals or the crops that fed them, simply in order to satisfy the upper classes' growing appetite for meat, was already a prime target for radicals, especially those, such as Oswald, who sought to defend the rights of both humans and non-human animals. The conclusions of far more moderate thinkers, however, lent even wider cachet to such ideas, with individuals such as Darwin asserting that the good of the nation depended upon preventing it 'from becoming too carnivorous', lest the 'inferior orders' suffer from 'scarcity of food' and the 'higher ones' from 'disease[s] of both mind and body' that were the result of 'luxurious intemperance'.¹⁴⁹

Comparable arguments sat very comfortably within Lambe's and Newton's dietary writings and, importantly, also served as a further motivation for their explicitly *vegan* diet.¹⁵⁰ For, as Lambe indicated, both meat and dairy production created the same inefficiency of land use, and were, inherently, bound up together: 'Milk eating and flesh eating are but branches of a common system; and they must stand or fall together'.¹⁵¹ This early, concise, and memorable expression of a vegan agenda was, however, also motivated by a belief that it was not only 'flesh meat' that was unnatural, and thus injurious to human health, but also 'eggs, milk, cheese, and fish'.¹⁵² Grounded in anatomical evidence that a purely plant-based diet was the only one naturally 'suited to the organs of man', Newton contended that animal products may have been 'comparatively' less harmful than actual meat, but still contributed to mankind's diseased state, and were thus far from ideal.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ For Paley's arguments, see William Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy* (London: R. Faulder, 1785), pp.599-601. For Smith's, see Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell, 1776), vol.1, pp.184-202.

¹⁴⁹ Erasmus Darwin quoted in Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, pp.404-405.

¹⁵⁰ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, p.67; Lambe, *Additional Reports*, pp.171-172, 220, 238-243. For Phillips' arguments see *Golden Rules of Social Philosophy*, p.352.

¹⁵¹ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, p.171.

¹⁵² Lambe, *Additional Reports*, p.160. See also, Lambe, *Reports on the Effects of a Peculiar Regimen*, p.21.

¹⁵³ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, p.31.

As previous vegetarian authors had often indicated, the most natural, original, and *innocent* diet was a *frugivorous* one.¹⁵⁴ Based upon gathering the spontaneous productions – the *offerings* – of the earth for sustenance, it was that which had been practiced in Eden. More broadly, it was the diet which did the *least harm* to the world – offering a vision of a time when humanity trod lightly upon the Earth and lived at one with its natural surroundings. It was, too, the diet that had maintained the independence and freedom of individuals, before the cultivation of the land had led to the formation of fixed societies which served to bind them.¹⁵⁵ Ultimately, however, the frugivorous diet provided vegetarians in this period with a somewhat aestheticised foundation myth, a vision of an ideal state of existence which functioned more as a romantic symbol than a practiced reality.

As Lambe and Newton tended more towards a vegan diet, however, their engagement with such frugivorous ideas was, evidently, more meaningful. Indeed, Lambe explicitly singled out ‘fruit, and the produce of trees in general’ as ‘the most congenial to the human constitution’, whilst Newton highlighted young children’s love of fruit (as well as their greater tendency to refuse meat) as evidence for humanity’s natural tastes.¹⁵⁶ Further indicating their avid desire to re-embrace the natural, both also stressed the additional value of *raw* fruit and vegetables, arguing that the process of ‘artificial preparation’ often acted to sully them, and reduced their beneficial properties.¹⁵⁷ Newton, quoting John Ray via John Evelyn, expressed admiration for a ‘golden age’ where ‘gentle hands...gather[ed] fruit and vegetables’ to provide a banquet of ‘Paradisian fare’.¹⁵⁸ For them, this conception of a primordial frugivorous ideal indicated the fundamental role of such a foraging diet in the maintenance of the ‘innocent and healthful lives’ which had been enjoyed within this

¹⁵⁴ The most notable example was the Golden Age frugivorous diet depicted by the Roman poet Ovid in his *Metamorphosis*, as widely referenced by vegetarian authors such as Oswald and Ritson. See Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, trans. A.D. Melville, ed. E.J. Kenney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.4.

¹⁵⁵ For Ovid’s depiction of this early, liberated form of human life, see *Metamorphosis*, pp.3-4. For a recent discussion of the nature of pre-agricultural societies see James C. Scott, *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

¹⁵⁶ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, pp.176 & 276; Newton, *The Return to Nature*, pp.62-63.

¹⁵⁷ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, pp.173-177; Newton, *The Return to Nature*, p.127.

¹⁵⁸ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, p.98. For a celebration of New World fruits see p.79.

symbolic ‘delightful garden’ of humanity’s past; lives which they now sought, as far as possible, to regain.¹⁵⁹

Newton’s desire to recapture this lost innocence was not only expressed through the medium of diet, but also through the renunciation of excessive clothing. The very practice ‘of covering our persons with clothes’, he argued, appeared, just as ‘the custom of flesh eating’, ‘to have arisen from the migration of man into the northern climates’.¹⁶⁰ They were a chance occurrence, a reaction to circumstance. Neither were natural, and neither were healthy. In such beliefs, Newton found a firm ally in Nicholson, who had already published a short treatise explaining the artificiality of clothes, and extolling the health benefits of simpler dress.¹⁶¹ Newton, however, went a step further, embracing, and sometimes practising, ‘philosophical nakedness’, at least if Thomas Jefferson Hogg is to be believed.¹⁶² A penchant for healthful Edenic nudity would certainly have been in keeping with the Newton family’s earnest attempts to ‘return to nature...to the natural and pristine state of innocence’.¹⁶³

It would have also fitted into the broader contemporary trend within educated and progressive circles – influenced by the writings of Rousseau – to adopt simpler clothing, both for the sake of health, as well as for the purpose of rejecting luxury and ostentation. This wider Rousseauist ‘back-to-nature’ culture echoed throughout the beliefs and practices of Newton and his circle. Indeed, the story of Lambe’s daughter and Boinville’s son, who fell in love and ‘retreated to the country to live a bucolic dream’, perhaps provided the perfect symbol for their project.¹⁶⁴ For this contented pair, who spent their days ‘tilling the earth, the innocent occupation of our first parents’, could be seen as a real-life Paul and Virginia – the idealised young couple of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre’s popular 1788 Rousseauist novel, who dwelt in peace, health, and happiness, in the bosom of untouched nature.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, p.98.

¹⁶⁰ Newton, *The Return to Nature*, pp.81-82.

¹⁶¹ George Nicholson, *On Clothing* (Manchester: G. Nicholson, 1797).

¹⁶² Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, vol.2, pp.288-291.

¹⁶³ Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, vol.2, p.289.

¹⁶⁴ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.373.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Jefferson Hogg quoted in Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.77. Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *Paul et Virginie* (Lausanne: J. Mourer, 1788).

2.3.3. Receptions

Newton's home in Bracknell acted as a beacon for those who were attracted to such back-to-nature ideals, as well as Romantic, progressive, and vegetarian ideas more broadly. Nicholson, in the 1819 edition of his *On The Primeval Diet of Man*, praised and extensively quoted both Lambe and Newton, viewing them, alongside Ritson, as 'contemporary advocates in the same cause', stating his pleasure in reading their 'able and important reasonings'.¹⁶⁶ Most remarkably, the broader potential impact of Lambe's and Newton's writings are revealed within a section towards the end of Lambe's *Additional Reports* of 1815, where around thirty or so 'cases', including correspondence, of members of the public who had adopted the diet are laid out. These not only serve to question the image of vegetarianism as an insignificant practice in the early nineteenth century, but also highlight the mixture of concerns which compelled individuals to adopt the diet. Further, they demonstrate the explicit role that Lambe's and Newton's arguments frequently had in prompting individuals to become vegetarian.

A letter from a 'G.G. Fordham' – who informs Lambe that they had 'resolved to adopt' 'the vegetable diet' after 'having read Mr. Newton's work, and your publications' – provides a typical example.¹⁶⁷ As with all of the cases included, the narrative of the letter revolves around the curing of previous physical ill-health through the adoption of vegetarianism. This is supported by familiar claims such as the way in which 'comparative anatomy has clearly proved' man to be 'an herbivorous animal'.¹⁶⁸ Notably, however, it also gives voice to other contemporary vegetarian arguments, extending beyond the medical into the ethical, with its author declaring 'the slaughter of animals' to be 'a ferocious and disgusting act, which greatly opposes the growth of benevolent dispositions'.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ George Nicholson, *On the Primeval Diet of Man; Arguments in Favour of Vegetable Food; On Man's Conduct to Animals, &c &c*, fourth edition (Stourport: George Nicholson, 1819), p.4. For instances where Nicholson discusses or quotes Lambe or Newton, see pp.4-5, 8, 48, 63, 107, 155-163, 176-179, 182-186, 189, 201, 217-218, 234-238 & 253-254.

¹⁶⁷ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, pp.453-454.

¹⁶⁸ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, p.455.

¹⁶⁹ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, p.455.

Another letter, from a young doctor, similarly reveals a more complex picture of contemporary vegetarians' concerns. Although an admirer of Lambe's 'ingenious enquiry', he had adopted the diet as a young boy, partly due to an instinctual 'disgust', but also as a result of his contemporary intellectual environment.¹⁷⁰ As he explains, he had 'read some books' and heard 'talk of the health and longevity of many persons who had fed entirely on vegetable substances', as well as 'the simplicity of manners of the oriental herbivori', and 'the cruelty practiced towards animals' in order to supply mankind with meat.¹⁷¹ The young doctor paints a picture of a social milieu in which vegetarianism was fashionable both as a topic and in practice, noting that whilst at Cambridge 'many persons' had 'abstained from animal food' explicitly on 'consideration of the cruelty', while during his time working at St. Bartholomew's hospital, it had 'been the fashion among many of the students to eat a vegetable diet'.¹⁷² He ends his letter with a further condemnation of the slaughter of animals and its baneful effect upon human society:

The constant habit of destroying animated beings, both for food and for amusement, is...one of the most fertile sources of the ferocity and brutality of the human character.¹⁷³

Despite, therefore, the prominent concern to make mankind 'more free from disease', individual morality, societal well-being, and a desire to reduce non-human animals' suffering all played a role in informing his vegetarianism.

Thomas Love Peacock's depiction of Newton via the character of Mr. Escot in his novel *Headlong Hall*, provided another, though satirical and more cynical, overview of vegetarian ideas and concerns in this period. Early on, provoked by the arrival of 'a magnificent round of beef', Escot, a 'strenuous advocate of the vegetable system', declares 'animal food...to be one of the principal causes of the present degeneracy of

¹⁷⁰ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, p.434.

¹⁷¹ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, pp.434-435.

¹⁷² Lambe, *Additional Reports*, pp.435-436.

¹⁷³ Lambe, *Additional Reports*, p.441.

mankind'.¹⁷⁴ He then goes on to outline a typical vegetarian conception of the life of 'natural...original man' as one spent living 'in the open air', '[un]encumbered with clothes', where 'the roots and fruits of the earth supplied his simple nutriment'.¹⁷⁵ He presents this as a 'calm' and 'peaceful state', where man 'had few desires, and no diseases'.¹⁷⁶ As these 'first inhabitants of the world knew not the use either of wine or animal food', he argued, it was unsurprising 'that they lived...free from war, and commerce, and arbitrary government, and every other species of desolating wickedness'.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, the dawn of meat-eating had corrupted this natural state through its introduction of violence and discord:

When [man] began to sacrifice victims on the altar of superstition, to pursue the goat and the deer, and, by the pernicious invention of fire, to pervert their flesh into food, luxury, disease, and premature death, were let loose upon the world.¹⁷⁸

Thus humanity had fallen from being 'a free, strong, healthy, peaceful animal', to become 'a weak, distempered, cruel, carnivorous slave'.¹⁷⁹

Escot even offered a critique of dehumanisation and alienation, particularly of the lower classes, in the context of the rise of industrialisation and commerce (i.e. capitalism), which reflected both romantic and early leftist ideas. In this he attacked the tyranny of 'diabolical mechanism' and condemned the rich as the exploitative *consumers* of other humans and non-human animals, arguing that 'the many are sacrificed to the few', with the latter 'wallow[ing] in all the redundancies of luxury that can be wrung from' the 'labour and privations' of the former.¹⁸⁰ Escot believed that if man 'could be made to see the truth' then 'independence', 'individuality', 'active benevolence' and 'universal philanthropy' could be rediscovered.¹⁸¹

Peacock's archetypal vegetarian thus offered a fairly detailed discussion of both the

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Love Peacock, "Headlong Hall" (1816), in Thomas Love Peacock, *Headlong Hall, Nightmare Abbey, Maid Marian, and Crochet Castle* (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), pp.6-8. Subsequent citations are to the 1837 edition.

¹⁷⁵ Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, pp.7, 19 & 66.

¹⁷⁶ Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, pp.7 & 66.

¹⁷⁷ Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, p.19.

¹⁷⁸ Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, p.7.

¹⁷⁹ Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, p.20.

¹⁸⁰ Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, pp.42-45.

¹⁸¹ Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, pp.18 & 43-44.

ideas and the image associated with those who practiced the diet, in the process implying at least some degree of pre-existing understanding of such vegetarian debates and identities amongst his readership.

The content and inclusion of the above letters in Lambe's published work, and the extensive, satirical, yet very representative discussion of vegetarian arguments through a character inspired by Newton in Peacock's novel, highlight the way in which both Lambe and Newton simultaneously reflected and propagated the wider growth of vegetarian ideas in this period. Beyond even this dietary focus, however, the Bracknell group captured and contributed to a broader mood created by the confluence of a nature-worshipping Romanticism and a millenarian radicalism, both of which had a tendency to conjure visions of Eden, and which seemed conducive to vegetarian notions. Indeed, Newton's desire to 'return' his family to a state of lost innocence can certainly be seen as a manifestation of such larger cultural and intellectual trends.

2.4. Vegetarian Visions of Eden: Conclusions

Rousseau had provided an early critique of the limits of Enlightenment rationality, and the back-to-nature discourses which he inspired continued to exert a great influence as the nineteenth century dawned. Many Romantic authors offered further critiques of a suffocating, corrupting civilisation which had arrogantly severed mankind's connection with nature, and, for the sake of far narrower forms of scientific and philosophical knowledge, sacrificed the emotional, empathetic, and compassionate faculties. A central theme of Romanticism was thus the quest to rediscover mankind's place within, and ability to commune with, nature, as well as to encourage the rejoining of heart and mind in the creation of a fully formed humanity. Such an image was also present in radical millenarian discourses, particularly perfectibilist, paradisaical visions – be they of societal harmony, or, like Newton's, of personal salvation.

Ideas regarding the perfectibility of both society and the individual were most influentially propagated by Newton's friend Godwin, though broader allusions to the

possibility of a future golden age were abundant within wider contemporary radical language and symbolism. As Ian McCalman has demonstrated with reference to the agrarian radical Thomas Spence (1750-1814), exponents of unorthodox beliefs in this period were immersed in a culture of popular radical millenarianism that served to shape both their rhetoric and political visions.¹⁸² Examining the shared ideas and culture of Spence and Blake, Jon Mee has described how most radicals were ‘bricoleurs who sought to forge new systems of representation out of a variety of received protocols’.¹⁸³ Many incorporated both ‘millenarian religious ideas and popular forms of scepticism or materialism’, resulting in immanentist notions which equated God with universal natural laws based upon reason and morality, or with the inspired divinity found within humanity itself.¹⁸⁴

Given its fundamental intellectual and cultural ubiquity, it is not surprising that radicals often reinterpreted Biblical language and allegory in the structuring of their own belief systems. Indeed, this common practice was widely demonstrated by radical renditions of ‘fall’ and ‘salvation’ narratives, which authors’ used as vehicles to elucidate their particular view of the cause of, and solution to, humanity’s ills. Most prominent were the visions of Eden and of a paradise yet to come. The image of Eden as a representation of humanity’s natural state of equality and freedom was a longstanding one, and an expression of a much older radical tendency. Its egalitarian, cooperative symbolism had been commonly used by the Diggers, and had even found expression during the Peasant’s Revolt of 1381, through the radical priest John Ball’s subversive question: ‘When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?’.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸² Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries, and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (1988; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002). See also: Malcolm Chase, “‘The People’s Farm’”: *English Radical Agrarianism, 1775-1840* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Tim Fulford, ed., *Romanticism and Millenarianism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p.114; Philip Lockley, *Visionary Religion and Radicalism in Early Industrial England: From Southcott to Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), particularly pp.94-102.

¹⁸³ Jon Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.74. See also David Worrall, *Radical Culture: Discourse, Resistance and Surveillance, 1790-1820* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992).

¹⁸⁴ McCalman, *Radical Underworld*, pp.65-66.

¹⁸⁵ Stephen Greenblatt, *The Rise and Fall of Adam and Eve* (London: The Bodley Head, 2017), pp.189-203.

Imagined by Oswald as a ‘Universal Commonwealth’, by Blake as a new ‘Jerusalem’ and by Newton as a ‘return to nature’, the reclamation of humanity’s original freedom, happiness, and health provided a powerful guiding vision, as well as a compelling rhetorical device. For vegetarian radicals, its force appeared even more explicit. For a conception of Eden that sat somewhere between the allegorical and the actual, provided them with an emblem of how peace, freedom and equality in the human sphere was dependent upon a truly universal – bloodless – kinship with all other species. Just as the dawn of property had introduced conflict and injustice into the world, violence towards non-human animals had done likewise. The practice of flesh-eating thus represented humanity’s self-imposed exclusion from the garden of peace and plenty, and was conceptualised as a corrupting ‘disease’; a sickness which had entangled itself within the fibres of body and mind, causing the degeneration of both. To return to the garden, or to create a *new* garden, it was necessary to eradicate the unnatural malady – to eliminate, through a compassionate enlightenment, everything that stood between mankind and its original ‘health’, be it inequality, despotism, or the exploitation and consumption of other animals.

As this chapter has demonstrated, radical, Romantic, Millenarian, and vegetarian outlooks inhabited a shared intellectual and cultural space, with ideas, approaches, language, and symbols flowing between them. A focus upon freedom and the individual (their personal liberation, their awoken consciousness, and the capacity of their perceptions/visions to guide others), upon interconnection or re-connection (of reason and emotion, of human and human, and of humanity and the natural world), and an unabashed utopian streak based upon a view of humans as vastly, perhaps infinitely, improvable, were their most prominently shared characteristics. As will be explored in the following chapter, it was in this context that Percy Shelley drew upon these currents to elucidate his optimistic, all-encompassing vision of a bloodless world.

Chapter Three

‘A Larger and Saner Morality’: Shelley’s ‘Gospel of Humanity’

‘The only perfect and genuine republic is that which comprehends every living being’ – Percy Shelley, 1817.

Percy Shelley’s claim that vegetarianism ‘strikes at the root of all evil’ was, undeniably, a bold one.¹ Certainly, such a statement could appear as a declaration of a strange quixotic faith in the ability of a simple dietary change to cure society of all its ills. This, however, would be a serious misunderstanding of what the diet represented to him, as well as to many of its other adherents. As the previous chapter illustrated, the intellectual, cultural, and social circles within which Shelley operated were prime sites for the discussion and promotion of vegetarian ideas; ideas which were inherently bound up with wider reformist political concepts, particularly those regarding ‘emancipation’ (be it of the self, oppressed others, society at large, or all three). Through figures such as Newton, the diet could, superficially, be viewed as a self-contained creed, a unique path to salvation, the obsession of a pioneer ‘New Ager’, but when examined fully within such a wider ideological context, it becomes apparent that it was, instead, a fundamental expression of a larger set of beliefs in action.

For Shelley, vegetarianism struck ‘at the root of all evil’ because it embodied a fundamental rejection of all that did harm in the world – violence, exploitation, greed, detachment – and instead represented the embrace of its counter – peace, cooperation, love, interconnection. Like other radicals and progressives, Shelley came to attach an increasing significance to the practice and promotion of the diet as an integral part of his philosophy. The earliest signs of his vegetarian inclinations

¹ Percy Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.829.

date from his time at Oxford, around 1810-11, as recounted by Hogg, while a letter from his first wife Harriet Westbrook to their friend Elizabeth Hitchener formally asserted the couple's enthusiastic adoption of the diet in 1812:

we have forsworn meat, and adopted the Pythagorean system. About a fortnight has elapsed since the change... We are delighted with it, and think it the best thing in the world.²

By 1812-13, they were residing at Bracknell, alongside Newton and Lambe, in what was essentially a vegetarian community; from here Shelley's commitment to the diet was only to grow. Influenced in particular by Newton and the work of Ritson, he composed two essays extolling the virtues and necessity of the diet: *A Vindication of Natural Diet*, which was originally appended to his visionary utopian poem *Queen Mab*, published in 1813, and then published as a separate essay later that year, and *On the Vegetable System of Diet*, written in 1815.³ Through these texts, in conjunction with his broader political writings, as well as his poetry, Shelley formulated a proto-leftist belief system that placed vegetarianism at its core and which, as the nineteenth century progressed, led him to become a central figure within the histories of both political and dietary reform.

This chapter offers an analysis of Shelley's critique of existing society, his vision for future change, and his conception of how this could be achieved, with a central focus on the intellectual and practical role of diet within all three. Throughout, the influence of the ideas of both previous and contemporary vegetarian and radical writers are discussed, as well as the continuities and discontinuities between their

² Thomas Jefferson Hogg, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, 4 vols. (London: Edward Moxon, 1858), vol. 1, pp.128-131; Letter to Elizabeth Hitchener, 14th March 1812, in *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Vol. 1: Shelley in England*, ed. Frederick L. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), letter 175, pp.274-275. For a discussion of the chronological development of Shelley's vegetarianism see Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, pp.60-80.

³ Percy Shelley, *A Vindication of Natural Diet: Being one in a series of notes to Queen Mab, a philosophical poem* (London: Printed for J. Callow by Smith and Davy, 1813); Percy Bysshe Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet* (1815; Ashington: Published for The London Vegetarian Society by the C.W. Daniel Company Ltd, 1947). For the influence of Ritson see David Lee Clark, "The Date and Source of Shelley's *Vindication of Natural Diet*", *Studies in Philology* 36, no.1 (Jan. 1939), pp.70-76 and the mentions of Ritson in Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*. Elsewhere, Morton cites Ritson's *Essay on Abstinence from Animal Food as a Moral Duty* as Shelley's 'favourite book on the subject' (of vegetarianism). Timothy Morton, "Nature and culture", in *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, ed. Timothy Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.196.

arguments and Shelley's. Particular attention is also paid to the vegetarianism of Mary Shelley, as expressed through her novel *Frankenstein* (1818).⁴

3.1. Understanding Shelley's Thought: Historiography, Politics, Diet

Shelley's importance as an early and inspirational thinker within the canon of the British Left is well established. From Chartist esteem for the 'God-like Shelley' to Marx's admiration for a noted member 'of the advanced guard of socialism', Shelley's place in the progressive pantheon is beyond doubt.⁵ Even today, the leader of the Labour Party, in public addresses, chooses to echo Shelley's emancipatory exhortation for the people to 'rise, like lions after slumber' and shake their 'chains to earth like dew'.⁶ For later vegetarian leftists such as Henry Salt, Edward Carpenter, Charlotte Despard and George Bernard Shaw, Shelley's writings were instrumental in shaping their own ideas and arguments.⁷ For them, he appeared, in the words of Salt, as an 'inspired prophet of a larger and saner morality' – a morality to which they too subscribed.⁸

The reason for this was, in part, a result of both Shelley's fame and literary brilliance. However, it was also a reflection of the way in which his writings had offered an extensively elaborated belief system, influentially expressed as both galvanising poetry and penetrating political, philosophical and theological commentary. What Shelley's works particularly represented in terms of the history

⁴ For an overview of the role of vegetarianism in the novel see Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, pp.148-161.

⁵ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.28; Bouthaina Shaaban, "Shelley and the Chartists", in *Shelley: Poet and Legislator of the World*, eds. Betty T. Bennett and Stuart Curran (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp.115-125; Henry Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer* (1896; London: George Allen & Unwin, 1924), p.115; Edward Aveling and Eleanor Marx, *Shelley's Socialism* (1888; London: Journeyman Press, 1975), p.16.

⁶ Notable examples were in Corbyn's closing speech on the night of the 8th June 2017 general election, and in his speech at the Glastonbury Festival on 24th June 2017. For a contemporary commentary see Anoosh Chakelian, "'Rise like lions after slumber': why do Jeremy Corbyn and co keep reciting a 19th century poem? – How a passage from Percy Shelley's *The Masque of Anarchy* became Labour's battle cry", *New Statesman*, 27th June 2017, accessed, 10th May 2018, <https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2017/06/rise-lions-after-slumber-why-do-jeremy-corbyn-and-co-keep-reciting-19th-century>.

⁷ As will be discussed in Chapters Four, Five and Six.

⁸ Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer*, p.131.

of vegetarian-leftist thought, was the formulation of a more explicitly *modern* ideological tradition which sought to position the diet as a vital component of emergent ‘socialist’ and ‘anarchist’ agendas. It was through Shelley that this ideology of ‘universal emancipation’ began its enduring connection with both utopian and libertarian socialism.

In terms of the latter, the importance of ‘philosophical anarchism’ – a related school of thought – in providing an overarching framework for his belief system has already been demonstrated by Michael Scrivener and P.M.S. Dawson.⁹ ‘Philosophical anarchism’, as first articulated by Shelley’s father-in-law, William Godwin, sought to bring about the reformation of society through the diffusion of knowledge, positing that as the wisdom and morality of the people increased, evils such as government, law and private property would correspondingly crumble.¹⁰ Scrivener defines philosophical anarchism as a precursor to the nineteenth-century anarchism of Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin and highlights that Shelley’s version included a ‘preference for direct democracy’, a ‘repudiation of “Jacobin” centralism’ and a rejection of ‘militarism and other forms of authoritarian coercion’.¹¹ He also acknowledges, however, that ‘Shelley’s attempt to strike a workable balance between the possible and the ideal is more characteristic of democratic socialism than of anarchism’.¹² This demonstrates the difficulty of firmly categorising Shelley’s ideology and indicates the usefulness of the term ‘libertarian socialist’, for this represents leftist/socialist traditions which incorporate many key anarchist ideas and share a considerably similar outlook, yet vitally deviate from anarchism by considering the state as a secondary issue, something that will eventually become redundant, as opposed to the primary cause of oppression and thus an entity which much be abolished without delay.

Scrivener, Dawson and Cameron have demonstrated that a thorough understanding of Shelley’s over-arching philosophy and politics is vital to the comprehension of his

⁹ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*; P.M.S. Dawson, *The Unacknowledged Legislator: Shelley and Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

¹⁰ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, p.218.

¹¹ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, p.xii.

¹² Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, pp.xii & 36.

writings and thought.¹³ In addition, more explicitly political texts, such as Paul Foot's *Red Shelley* and Jacqueline Mulhallen's *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Revolutionary*, have argued specifically for the recognition of his 'proto-socialism', and proclaimed the importance of his legacy for the modern Left.¹⁴ Historically, however, the concerns of such studies have not always been widely shared. As Foot outlines, his formative encounters with the writings of/about Shelley were greatly frustrated by the systematic de-politicising of his works, exemplified by the 'horrible' 'castration' of collected editions of his poetry and prose, which deliberately excluded 'every trace of political or social thought'.¹⁵ This annoyance had been previously shared by Henry Salt, who criticised early treatments of Shelley for the 'injunction of silence' they placed upon his radical exhortations – particularly in the form of his depiction as an 'ineffectual angel'.¹⁶

More recent scholarship has paid serious attention to Shelley's politics, yet has still tended to marginalise his vegetarianism. In some ways, what is most remarkable about this, is that it has been carried out even by those whose own purpose was to recover Shelley's radical arguments from decades of condescension. Works such as Scrivener's and Dawson's make no real mention of Shelley's diet, while its exclusion by Foot is possibly attributable to his Marxist perspective, which has traditionally been hostile to such causes. Indeed, Foot's attitude is perhaps best revealed by his description of Henry Salt as 'a delightful bananas-and-sandals socialist'.¹⁷ Other scholars have also downplayed Shelley's vegetarianism, giving it only passing attention. William St Clair treats it as 'at best risible [and] at worst a

¹³ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, pp.xi & 318; Kenneth Neil Cameron, *The Young Shelley: Genesis of a Radical* (New York: Macmillan, 1950); David Duff, *Romance and Revolution: Shelley and the Politics of a Genre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ Paul Foot, *Red Shelley* (1980; London: Bookmarks, 1988); Jacqueline Mulhallen, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Revolutionary* (London: Pluto Press, 2015).

¹⁵ Foot, *Red Shelley*, p.10.

¹⁶ Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer*, p.11. This influential depiction originated in the critic Matthew Arnold's essay on Shelley. For an overview of early writing on Shelley as well as the continued echoing of Arnold's representation, particularly with regard to the commentary of F.R. Leavis, see: Timothy Morton, "Receptions", in *The Cambridge Companion to Shelley*, ed. Timothy Morton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). See also Alan Weinberg, "'Ineffectual Angel': Arnold's Misrepresentation of Shelley", *The Keats-Shelley Review* 23, no.1 (2009), pp.82-96. For Salt's overview of nineteenth-century views of Shelley, see Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer*, pp.1-11.

¹⁷ Foot, *Red Shelley*, p.244.

symptom of apparently reprehensible effeminacy’, while Richard Holmes’ leading biography, *Shelley: The Pursuit*, describes Shelley’s vegetarian writings as ‘crotchety’ and ‘peculiar’ and suggests, in a footnote, that they were ‘as much prompted by misplaced medical considerations as by ideological ones’.¹⁸ When mentioned at all, this anti-ideological interpretation of Shelley’s diet is common, as notably reflected in the work of Crook and Guiton.¹⁹ Two scholars who have countered this tendency – Onno Oerlemans and Timothy Morton – provide useful further discussions of such previous coverage.²⁰

Morton’s own ground-breaking study, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, explicitly sought to ‘rescue the theme of natural diet from its marginality in critical discourse’ and explain ‘how it may be understood in ways which make it hard to dismiss as “cranky”’.²¹ He certainly achieved this, providing an influential exploration of the essential place of vegetarianism within Shelley’s thought, analysing the role of diet and the body as an ideologically-coded interface between the individual, society and the natural world, as well as the figurative language surrounding this. This chapter builds on Morton’s work by expanding his exposition of Shelley’s vegetarian language and symbolism; looking at Shelley’s vegetarian-radicalism itself as a distinct belief system and situating his formulation of this in relation to a larger tradition of such thought, as well as within the wider history of the Left.

¹⁸ Jonathan Bate, “Review: Shelley and the Revolution in Taste: The Body and the Natural World by Timothy Morton”, *Keats-Shelley Journal* 45 (1996), p.195; William St Clair, *The Godwins and the Shelleys: The Biography of a Family* (London: Faber and Faber, 1989); Richard Holmes, *Shelley: The Pursuit* (New York: New York Review of Books, 1994), p.220.

¹⁹ Nora Crook and Derek Guiton, *Shelley’s Venomed Melody* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

²⁰ Onno Oerlemans, “Shelley’s Ideal Body: Vegetarianism and Nature”, *Studies in Romanticism* 34, no.4 (Winter, 1995), pp.531-532; Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, pp.57-60. Oerlemans’ article gives an overview of Shelley’s vegetarian writings with a particular focus on his ideas regarding nature and his early ‘ecological’ arguments, such concerns are followed up in his book: Oerlemans, *Romanticism and the Materiality of Nature*.

²¹ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.11.

3.2. 'I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite': Percy and Mary Shelley's Vegetarian-Radical Critique of Society

3.2.1. Mary Shelley and Vegetarian 'Fall' Narratives

Like her husband Percy, Mary Shelley was an integral member of the romantic and radical circles within which vegetarian ideas developed during this period. As Carol Adams has highlighted, despite its historical absence from the scholarship surrounding her, vegetarianism played a meaningful role in both her life and her most famous work – *Frankenstein*.²² It was through the narrative of the Creature in this novel, and his own vegetarian diet, that she powerfully distilled the themes and arguments of romantic-period vegetarianism at large. The subtitle of her work – *The Modern Prometheus* – offered the first clue as to its vegetarian message, as well as an allusion to its overarching theme. In this myth, Prometheus, under Zeus's instruction, created mankind from clay, but then defied the Gods by stealing fire to give to humanity, thus enabling its advance, yet resulting in his own punishment. This served to symbolise Victor Frankenstein's role as a creator of man, an individual who strove to forward human knowledge, but whose overreaching led to tragic unintended consequences.

An allegorical conception of Prometheus and his theft of fire as being representative of mankind's loss of its natural, happy condition was common within vegetarian writings.²³ This was due to a reading of the story which focussed upon the introduction of fire as illustrative of the beginning of meat-eating, and thence corruption at large. As Percy explained:

Prometheus (who represents the human race) effected some great change in the condition of his nature, and applied fire to culinary purposes; thus inventing an expedient for screening from his disgust the horrors of the

²² Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, pp.148-149.

²³ See, for example, Newton, *The Return to Nature*, pp.7-15. This was also mentioned in Peacock, *Headlong Hall*, p.7.

shambles. From this moment his vitals were devoured by the vulture of disease.²⁴

The myth of Prometheus thus acted as a vegetarian fall narrative: Prometheus was humanity; fire marked the dawn of a civilisation which enabled the inception of ‘unnatural habits’ (i.e. meat-eating) that deformed mankind’s nature; its punishment, similar to Prometheus’s original curse to have his liver consumed afresh by an eagle each day for eternity, was that it would be plagued from then on by both ‘physical and moral’ ‘disease’.²⁵ In this vegetarian version, however, unlike the original, it was not an affliction that necessarily had to last, for humans could always opt to change their ways.

This potential for redemption was clearly echoed in *Frankenstein* through the Creature’s retention of a vegetarian innocence despite his existence within a fallen world; his discovery of some ‘offals that...had been roasted’ over a fire by some passing travellers, not providing him with a lesson in the cooking of meat, but with the opportunity to develop his own vegetarian cuisine:

I tried, therefore, to dress my food in the same manner, placing it on the live embers. I found that the berries were spoiled by this operation, and the nuts and roots much improved.²⁶

In other words, ‘the Creature rejects [the] Promethean gift’ that had been so readily accepted by mankind.²⁷ Instead he seeks to take a different path, as ultimately outlined in his Edenic vision of a possible future life exiled in South America:

My food is not that of man; I do not destroy the lamb and the kid, to glut my appetite; acorns and berries afford me sufficient nourishment. My companion shall be of the same nature as myself, and will be content with the same fare. We shall make our bed of dried leaves; the sun will shine on us...and...ripen our food.²⁸

²⁴ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), pp.826-827. Here, Shelley takes his que directly from Newton, whom he then quotes at length.

²⁵ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), pp.826-827.

²⁶ Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.82.

²⁷ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p.155.

²⁸ Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p.120.

Mary Shelley's descriptions of the Creature's vegetarianism uncannily replicated two of the most favoured accounts of the diet within the vegetarian canon: Rousseau's 'natural diet' and the bloodless Golden Age feasts depicted in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*.²⁹ Indeed, the Creature's yearning to recapture the innocent life of Adam and Eve mirrored a similar desire, further bringing to the fore concepts of both fall *and* redemption to which the role of diet was central.

In essence, the vegetarianism of the Creature was a further element of Mary Shelley's depiction of him as a more sympathetic, perhaps more *human*, being than those who persecuted him. His lamentation to Frankenstein that he 'ought to be thy Adam' but was 'rather the fallen angel', was a sad irony, for in reality it was humanity which had fallen, while the Creature was the one with a desire to begin a new, peaceful, harmonious existence.³⁰ Perhaps it was not surprising that the Creature would end up seeking this path, for as an outcast from an insular human race, he not only found himself on the sharp end, and so with a greater perception, of their shortcomings, but discovered an acceptance and solidarity with the rest of nature, which was similarly excluded from humanity's moral concern. It was he, therefore, who came to develop a morality that embraced all living beings, something which Frankenstein himself, and humanity more broadly, had failed to do.³¹ As Adams surmises, the Creature had entered 'into a fallen world in which it [was] rejected' and so sought 'to establish a new Golden Age in which harmony through vegetarianism reigns'.³² Mary Shelley's seminal work thus came to convey an allegorical vegetarian critique, which contrasted the redemptive potential of natural, inclusive fellowship with the detrimental effects of a society characterised by exclusivity, division, conflict and fear.

3.2.2. Percy Shelley's View of Meat-Eating as the Harbinger of Corruption

This representation of humanity's corruption as resulting from the abandonment of

²⁹ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, pp.155-156.

³⁰ Shelley, *Frankenstein*, p.77.

³¹ See Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, pp.149-151.

³² Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p.156.

its peaceable nature, via the adoption of unnatural, violent habits, was the central purpose of vegetarian fall narratives in this period. They served to draw attention to the specific ‘mistake’ that had set human society on the path to its current condition.³³ As Percy Shelley claimed:

the mythology of nearly all religions seems to prove that at some distant period man forsook the path of nature, and sacrificed the purity and happiness of his being to unnatural appetites.³⁴

Shelley’s subsequent explanation, making reference to the stories of Adam and Eve and Prometheus, defined this ‘mistake’ as the growth of an ‘appetite’ for eating meat. Echoing Newton’s holistic use of the term, he proclaimed that from this moment ‘disease...consumed’ man’s ‘being in every shape of its loathsome and infinite variety’.³⁵ It was the original cause of ‘the depravity of [both] the physical and moral nature of man’, and, despite its distant unknowable origins, could be pinpointed as humanity’s foundational error.³⁶ For Shelley it was clear that this ‘supereminence of man’ above ‘his fellow-animals’ had undoubtedly given ‘the majority of his [own] species, doomed to penury, disease, and crime’ much ‘reason to curse’ this ‘untoward event’.³⁷

Shelley thus presented meat-eating as the harbinger of ‘disease’ and ‘one of the most important sources of the wretchedness of man’.³⁸ The word *one*, however, is perhaps telling, for despite Shelley’s grand claims as to the power of diet upon the individual and society, the essential importance of meat-eating in altering the course of history was that it was the first manifestation of larger, more general conception of humanity’s fall. In his subsequent discussion of the baleful effects of killing on the human character and societal wellbeing in *On the Vegetable System of Diet*, he offered a notably vague lament: ‘How interminable is the series of calamity which that man who first slew his brother, unthinkingly produced?’³⁹ Was this murdered

³³ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.14.

³⁴ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.826.

³⁵ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.827

³⁶ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), pp.826-827.

³⁷ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.827.

³⁸ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.14.

³⁹ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.15.

‘brother’ human or animal? It appears purposefully ambiguous. Perhaps the species of the victim was unimportant, for Shelley’s central point was that the ‘destruction of *any* sentient being’ was a ‘crime’, destroying mankind’s benevolent nature and fracturing the peace of society.⁴⁰

This comes back to the question posed by the ideology of universal emancipation: how can a harmonious society be based upon acts of violence? As Shelley argued, echoing the Hogarthian notion of ‘stages of cruelty’, how could an individual or society ‘be expected to preserve a vivid sensibility to the benevolent sympathies of our nature’ when so ‘familiar with carnage, agony and groans?’⁴¹ Moreover, ‘who that is accustomed to the sight’ of such ‘wounds and anguish’ would themselves hesitate ‘to inflict them’ if they deemed it ‘expedient’ in achieving their own ends?⁴² Violence, in other words, begat violence, and thus its presence was an impossibility in a peaceful, cooperative community. More damaging even than this, however, it also served to breed *further forms* of violence, fundamentally shaping the nature of a society, informing its morality, its structures, and the relationships between its members. Crude physical violence evolved into structural violence, elaborate systems of exploitation which (notably through capital/corporal punishment, war, conquest and butchery) nevertheless retained an explicitly bloody component.

For Shelley, as for the 1790s vegetarian radicals, such a narrative of the development of an interconnected systemic violence appeared obvious. So too did the central role of vegetarianism in shifting society onto a completely new footing. For if civilisation were based upon a peaceful, bloodless diet, it would engender equivalent social structures and relations, grounded in mutuality as opposed to self-interest. In a vegetarian society ‘the desire for tyranny could scarcely be excited in the individual’, for why would someone ‘of gentle feelings, rising from his meal of roots...take delight’ in acts of cruelty or exploitation – acts completely at odds with the *modus operandi* of the society of which he was a part, as well as with his own nature.⁴³

⁴⁰ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.15.

⁴¹ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, pp.15-16.

⁴² Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.15.

⁴³ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.830.

3.2.3. Meat-Eating and War

At present, however, in the context of the brutality and high death tolls of the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815), nothing symbolised the current predominance of a system of violence and exploitation more for Shelley than the ‘wasting wickedness’ of conflicts, ‘in which men [were] hired to mangle and murder their fellow beings, that tyrants and countries may profit by thousands’.⁴⁴ Through both poetry and prose, he attacked war as the most obscene manifestation of the way in which elites sought personal profit through the usage and misery of others. In *War* (1810) and a *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things* (1811), Shelley condemned those who fostered conflict – those whose ‘thirst of wealth, or frantic rage for fame’ had ignited ‘self-interest’s little flame’.⁴⁵ For it was they who breathed over ‘all the world the infectious blast of death’, they who ensured that ‘Fear’ and ‘Terror’ stalked ‘the palsied earth’, giving rise to ‘the orphan’s sigh, the widow’s moan’, establishing ‘the great man’s comfort’ on the back of ‘the poor man’s woe’.⁴⁶ In his eyes, it was ultimately for the indulgence of the ‘oppressors of mankind’ that ‘millions...compell’d, to fight or die / In mangled heaps on War’s red altar lie’.⁴⁷

This figurative image of the literal sacrifice of the many for the benefit of the few correlated with broader radical discourses, which depicted a social system based upon a bloody elite’s consumption of the life of the people. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, such a conception took on an even greater meaning for vegetarian radicals, who perceived the sacrificial violence as going one step further, with non-human animals suffering and dying in huge numbers for the benefit of the elite, but with the addition of then being *physically* consumed by them, albeit for the same cause of satisfying their gratuitous luxury. Writers such as Oswald and Ritson had

⁴⁴ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.15. For an account, see David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Modern Warfare* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007).

⁴⁵ Percy Shelley, “War”, *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.861, line 1; Percy Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things* (London: B. Crosby, 1811), p.10.

⁴⁶ Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*, pp.10-11; Shelley, “War”, pp.862-863, lines 68-69, 81.

⁴⁷ Shelley, “War”, p.861, line 23; Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*, p.9. See also Percy Bysshe Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform* (written 1819-20; London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1920), pp.89-90.

asserted the important role of animal and human sacrifice (the former leading to the latter) in the early days of organised religion and the first oppressive states, a notion with which Shelley, especially through his reading of Ritson, would have been familiar.⁴⁸ Shelley's 'red altar' thus not only provided an explicit symbol of the brutally exploitative reality of war, but also potentially alluded to his broader vegetarian-radical ideology.

In *On the Vegetable System of Diet*, again in a Hogarthian 'stages of cruelty' vein, Shelley made this connection between the slaughter of animals and that of humans clear, asserting that such cruelties, *whoever* they were against, inevitably led to their normalisation and further growth. Thus he argued that 'those who are necessitated by their profession to trifle with the sacredness of life, and think lightly of the agonies of living beings' – an obvious example being butchers or vivisectors – were imbued with 'habits' which served as an 'admirable apprenticeship' to the destructive, desensitising cruelties of war.⁴⁹ Here, he alluded to the broader notion that whether a butcher, a soldier, a politician ('cold advisors of yet colder kings'), a merchant, a financier, a judge, or a luxurious consumer, to actively partake in a system of violent exploitation made one increasingly deaf to the suffering it caused.⁵⁰ Such individuals (and, indeed, the majority of the population, who had internalised this brutalising system) thus inevitably greeted the 'sight of animals in the field...destined for the axe' with cold indifference.⁵¹ For now that society had reached a point where sympathy between *humans* had become so dramatically eroded, what chance was there for other animals to find inclusion within the circle of fellow-feeling?

Violence within the human sphere and violence against other animals formed, in Shelley's eyes, a mutually cultivating relationship, with both sowing the same seed of corruption. War and meat-eating were thus practices 'pregnant with inexhaustible calamity', reflecting and perpetuating mankind's fall and serving as a 'blood-stained...guilt-stained' bearer of humanity's original sin of violence.⁵² He therefore

⁴⁸ See, for example, Shelley, "Queen Mab", pp.788-789, canto 6, lines 84-104.

⁴⁹ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.15.

⁵⁰ Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*, p.11.

⁵¹ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.16.

⁵² Shelley, "War", pp.862-863, lines 80-82; Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*, p.9; Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.14.

looked to a fleshless diet and the rejection of bloody human conflict as an equally interrelated counter; outlining two opposing systems, one epitomised by vegetarianism, representative of a society of peace, and the other by meat-eating, indicative of a civilisation built upon war.

3.2.4. Meat-Eating, Imperialism and Commodification

In opposing a world of violence and exploitation, Shelley also adopted an anti-imperialist outlook. This was reflected in his support for Catholic Emancipation in Ireland and the repeal of the Act of Union, as expressed through *An Address to the Irish People* (1812), which sought to rouse Irishmen to take action, to reassert their freedoms and overcome the imposition of British rule.⁵³ He also critiqued the spread of Britain's empire and its inherent connection with violence and death, speaking, for example, of 'India's wasted plains', 'hot with gore'.⁵⁴ Further to this, he added his voice to the abolitionist movement, calling slavery 'the deepest stain upon civilised man', and describing in *Queen Mab* how Africans were:

...dragged to distant isles, where to the sound
Of the flesh-mangling scourge he does the work
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth.⁵⁵

The image of 'mangling' flesh, echoing Southey's use of the term in reference to the slave-driver's whip in his *Poems on the Slave Trade* (1797), was, Morton highlights, not only common within anti-slavery rhetoric but also within writings concerning animal rights, such as the work of the abolitionist and animal advocate Samuel Jackson Pratt.⁵⁶ Indeed, in a subsequent passage of *Queen Mab* regarding the butchery of animals, the phrase reappeared; the linguistic tie serving to indicate the

⁵³ Percy Shelley, "An Address, to the Irish People" (1812), *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), vol.1, pp.7-38.

⁵⁴ Shelley, *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*, pp.14 & 16-17.

⁵⁵ Percy Shelley, "Queen Mab: A Philosophical Poem, With Notes", *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.795, canto 8, lines 178-180.

⁵⁶ Robert Southey, "Poems on the Slave Trade", *Poems* (Bristol: N. Biggs for Joseph Cottle, 1797), p.35, Sonnet III, line 9; Timothy Morton, *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic* (2000; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.197; Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, pp.94-96.

essential way in which Shelley framed his critique of imperialism, viewing it as part of larger system of violent commodification and the consumption of life.⁵⁷

As Morton points out with regard to Southey, in symbolising the slave trade in such a way – describing, for example, slaves hung up to become the ‘living food’ of ‘gorging Vulture[s]’ – he was ‘describing capitalism as a devourer of bodies’.⁵⁸ This was made clear through his reference to European sugar consumption, as he lambasted those who ‘Sip the blood-sweeten’d beverage’.⁵⁹ Such a symbol, which immediately followed his image of the ‘mangling’ of slaves’ flesh, was Southey’s attempt to call attention to the bloody reality of European luxury. As he described, ‘cold-hearted Commerce...breathe[d]...gold-gender’d pestilence afar’, pouring forth ‘all the horrors of [its] train’ upon Africa’s shore, feasting like a ‘hyena o’er the slain’.⁶⁰ Shelley was an admirer of the young Southey – still inclined, like Coleridge, towards radical causes, prior to a later embracement of Toryism and reaction – and his own critique of slavery followed similar lines.

As Morton highlights, Shelley adhered to a discourse of ‘blood-and-gold’ as a means of representing the human alienation created by the predominance of an entwined violence and avaricious luxury.⁶¹ Nothing embodied this more than slavery, which explicitly revealed the two substances as the intermixed, circulating, sustaining life-force of an economy of exploitation and death, which removed humanity further and further from both its original nature as well as its potential future happiness. Within the slave trade, blood – i.e. human life – had become commodified, intrinsically tied to the flow of gold; the recognition of this decoded the latter, with the result that ‘luxury [could be] reversibly read as barbarism’.⁶² This ‘sale of human life’, whereby

⁵⁷ Shelley, “Queen Mab”, p.795, canto 8, lines 211-212.

⁵⁸ Southey, “Poems on the Slave Trade”, p.38, Sonnet VI, lines 1-2, 5; Morton, *The Poetics of Spice*, p.197.

⁵⁹ Southey, “Poems on the Slave Trade”, p.35, Sonnet III, line 10. For a discussion of the broader use of this imagery in abolitionist literature, see Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, pp.88-95.

⁶⁰ Southey, “Poems on the Slave Trade”, p.33, Sonnet I, lines 12-13; Robert Southey, “To the Genius of Africa”, *Poems* (Bristol: N. Biggs for Joseph Cottle, 1797), p.40, stanza 3, lines 21-24.

⁶¹ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.94; Percy Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (“Falsehood and Vice: A Dialogue), *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.802.

⁶² Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.94; Percy Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.832.

a black African was ‘changed with Christians for their gold’ so that elites may ‘heap luxuries to their sensualism’, led European consumers to become cannibals, deriving their pleasures, if not incomes, from the flesh and blood of their fellow man.⁶³

Shelley’s critique of luxury, and its role in perpetuating the commodification and consumption of human life, was not only confined to the slave trade, its most repugnant manifestation, but formed part of a larger attack upon the existing social system. This was most clearly demonstrated in *Queen Mab*, where, drawing upon “Book VIII, On Property” of Godwin’s *Political Justice*, he elucidated a critique of the way in which the workers of Britain eked out a miserable existence of excessive, dehumanising labour so that a class of ‘gilded flies...the drones of the community’ may ‘feed’ on their efforts.⁶⁴ This was a critique not only of monarchy and aristocracy, but also, fundamentally, of the role of ‘Commerce’ as the basis of society and human relations. The ‘all-enslaving power’ of ‘gold’ – ‘a living god’ – crushed the human soul, with the rich falling victim to the curse of ‘full-fed disease’, and the poor to that of ‘pining famine’.⁶⁵ This was a picture of alienation within which ‘The harmony and happiness of man / Yields to the wealth of nations’, wherein human nature and human potential are fatally corrupted, and ‘The iron rod of penury’ ensures that any would-be ‘rustic Milton’ would be condemned to a life of ‘unremitting drudgery and care’, living only to ‘mould a pin or fabricate a nail’.⁶⁶

The majority were thus ‘Mere wheels of work’, or even ‘articles of trade’, within the ‘machine’ of commerce.⁶⁷ They ‘drag[ged] out in labour’ ‘a sunless life’ purely to ‘glut [the] grandeur...[of the] few’, that they ‘may know the cares and woe of sloth’.⁶⁸ *A Vindication Of Natural Diet* continued this critique of luxury, commodification and alienation, condemning, like Nicholson, the grasping nature of

⁶³ Shelley, “Queen Mab”, pp.780 & 795, canto 5, lines 64-65 & canto 8, line 177.

⁶⁴ Shelley, “Queen Mab”, p.771, canto 3, lines 106-110.

⁶⁵ Shelley, “Queen Mab”, p.779-780, canto 5, lines 49, 54-55, 62.

⁶⁶ Shelley, “Queen Mab”, p.780-781, canto 5, lines 79-80, 127, 137, 139, 142. For a discussion of Shelley’s critique of commerce, see Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, pp.71-76. The reference to the ‘wealth of nations’ could be an allusion to either Adam Smith’s famous work, or else to Volney’s *Ruins*: Ross Wilson, *Shelley and the Apprehension of Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.73.

⁶⁷ Shelley, “Queen Mab”, p.780, canto 5, lines 76-77.

⁶⁸ Shelley, “Queen Mab”, p.772, canto 3, lines 114-117.

imperialism; the lust of the ‘odious and disgusting aristocracy of wealth’ for ‘those multitudinous articles of luxury, for which every corner of the globe is rifled’.⁶⁹ It also connected the ‘natural system of diet’ to this critique, extending the common argument that luxury was directly linked to privation through the agronomic idea that: ‘The quantity of nutritious vegetable matter, consumed in fattening the carcass of an ox, would afford ten times the sustenance...if gathered immediately from the bosom of the earth’.⁷⁰ At present, ‘the most fertile districts of the globe’ were ‘cultivated by men for animals, at a delay and waste of aliment absolutely incapable of calculation’.⁷¹ Through this, therefore, the ‘monopolizing eater of animal flesh...devouring an acre at a meal’ became directly responsible for ‘the long-protracted famine of the hard-working peasant’s hungry babes’.⁷² In this way his arguments echoed other vegetarian-radical critiques of the period, such as Oswald’s of the enclosures.

Shelley’s critique of luxury and commerce, as well as that of meat-eating, was part of his larger attack on a social system based upon the consumption of life, within which the ‘liberty, security, and comfort of the many’ was frequently sacrificed to ‘the avarice...of the few’, and wherein both humans and (domesticated) non-human animals had become commodified and alienated, mere shadows of their former, natural selves.⁷³ Indeed, Shelley asserted that ‘Man and the animals whom he has infected with his society, or depraved by his dominion, are alone diseased’.⁷⁴ It is worth quoting at length his consideration of sheep:

The argali or wild sheep is an animal of remarkable sagacity and strength, and attains the age of fourteen years: the domestic sheep is weak, timorous, and would be devoured by innumerable diseases long before the natural term of its existence, if the butcher’s knife does not anticipate its miserable end.⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.832.

⁷⁰ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.831.

⁷¹ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.831.

⁷² Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.831.

⁷³ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.832.

⁷⁴ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.827.

⁷⁵ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.12.

This description served to illustrate the deterioration of the essential nature – the intelligence, vitality and happiness – of domestic animals under man’s ‘contaminating dominion’, as well as the untimely death that awaited them.⁷⁶ Simultaneously, it exemplified the current state of a fallen humanity: slavish, miserable and blighted by disease and premature death. In this sense, the bulk of humanity had a great deal in common with domestic sheep, living a diminished, and ultimately shortened, life for the sake of the appetites of controlling masters.

3.3. ‘Love is...the sole law which should govern the moral world’: Shelley’s Holistic View of Emancipation

3.3.1. Custom vs. Human Nature

Shelley used the discussion of domesticated animals to highlight the role of meat-eating in engendering corruption, exemplifying its detrimental effects through a comparison of the wild boar (‘healthy’, ‘active’, ‘formidable’ and naturally ‘*frugivorous*’) with his domestic counterpart (‘miserable’, ‘languid’ and prone to an ‘immense variety of disease’ ‘in consequence’ of being made ‘*omnivorous*’).⁷⁷ Here, Shelley additionally illustrated the function of habit and custom in normalising such unnatural and damaging practices, borrowing from Ritson to provide an account of how animals such as ‘horses, sheep, oxen... wood pigeons’ and even ‘a lamb’ had ‘been taught to live on flesh’.⁷⁸ This, he asserted, demonstrated how ‘custom has been found to reconcile the animal system to habits the most unnatural and pernicious’, with the flesh-fed lamb, in particular, providing a potent symbol of how innocence could be lost through the introduction of a deleterious new behavioural norm.⁷⁹

If meat-eating was bad for pigs, this was also the case for man, a ‘naturally frugivorous animal’ (as ‘comparative anatomy teaches us’), ‘ill-adapted for rapine

⁷⁶ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.11.

⁷⁷ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.12. Emphasis added.

⁷⁸ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.14; Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.827.

⁷⁹ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.13.

and destruction’ and only able to consume flesh due to ‘the artifices...of many centuries’.⁸⁰ For Shelley it was obvious that ‘man has neither the fangs of a lion nor the claws of a tiger’, that ‘his instincts are inimical to bloodshed’ and that meat could only be consumed with ‘intolerable loathing’ unless it had been ‘altered by the action of fire and disguised by the addition of condiments’.⁸¹ Such a narrative of damaging, self-deceiving artifice and institutionalised habit offered a notable rebuke to arguments on behalf of meat-eating which were frequently grounded in little more than ‘the mere fact of [the diet] being generally’ practiced, for, as Shelley pointed out, it was the present *observable* effects alone that mattered, not prevalence or tradition.⁸²

Blind adherence to authority, habit and custom had, in his eyes, been responsible for entrenching humanity’s manifold mistakes, its ‘unnatural’ deviations.⁸³ He believed that the debasement of mankind – from the ‘unenlightened brutality of the multitude’ to ‘the profligate selfishness of courts’ – originated in ‘human error[s]’ which had subsequently ‘been rendered venerable by antiquity and consecrated by custom’.⁸⁴ The growth of meat-eating was one of the most calamitous of these; a ‘daily habit, the consequences of which’ could not ‘fail to be eminently pernicious’.⁸⁵ It was through the development of practices such as this that violence, exploitation and premature death had become the defining characteristics of a fallen, diseased humanity.

His critique, however, also contained the inherent implication that things did not have to be this way. If something was ‘unnatural’ or an ‘error’, then there was an ever-present potential for rectification. Shelley thus presented ‘disease’ and the evils it engendered as aberrations – artificially induced, *curable* maladies. As Mary Shelley explained, Shelley believed:

⁸⁰ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.13.

⁸¹ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.13. See also Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.828.

⁸² Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.14.

⁸³ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.9.

⁸⁴ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.9.

⁸⁵ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.14.

that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled...That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation.⁸⁶

Henry Salt clarifies this notion, explaining that Shelley's presentation of the unnatural and the evil as equating one another, did not indicate his denial of the inherent potential for negative propensities in human nature, but instead revealed his view that 'the good was more essential and organic, and in that sense more "natural" than the evil, and that, in spite of temporary defeat, it was destined to be in the end victorious'.⁸⁷ Hence the somewhat Manichean framework characteristic of much of his writing, which depicted a battle between 'the liberty of nature' and 'the tyranny of custom'.⁸⁸ Ultimately, Shelley reasoned, if mankind was to expel the artificial evils which plagued it, then it must re-embrace its essential self, and reject all forms of vicious authority, blinding dogma and injurious custom.

Shelley's belief in such an essential human self, characterised by a fundamental goodness, the erosion of this by corrupt institutions and practices, and yet its always-present, unlimited potential for future improvement, was reflective of general Enlightenment notions regarding the progressive nature of man, as promoted by both French philosophes such as Rousseau and Condorcet, as well as British radical thinkers like Paine and, particularly, Godwin. Most notably, though, in common with other vegetarian writers of the period, he portrayed one of the most consequential signifiers of this still existent innate human benevolence, as a rooted repugnance to the killing and eating of other animals; arguing that if 'the sight of [the] bloody juices and raw horror' of 'dead flesh' were not disguised through distancing oneself from the act of violence, including through 'culinary preparation', then instinctual 'disgust' would make the act impossible.⁸⁹ He thus challenged 'the advocate of animal food' to:

force himself to a decisive experiment on its fitness, and, as Plutarch recommends, tear a living lamb with his teeth, and plunging his head into its

⁸⁶ Mary Shelley, "Note on Prometheus Unbound", *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.271.

⁸⁷ Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer*, p.127.

⁸⁸ Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer*, p.127.

⁸⁹ Shelley, "Notes on Queen Mab" (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.828.

vitals slake his thirst with the streaming blood; when fresh from the deed of horror, let him revert to the irresistible instincts of nature that would rise in judgement against it, and [still then] say ‘Nature formed me for such work as this’. [For] then, and then only, would he be consistent.⁹⁰

For Shelley it was clear that mankind was ‘no carnivorous animal’; designed neither anatomically nor spiritually for such practices, humanity had more naturally in common with the peaceful frugivorous ‘orang-outang’ than with the ‘beast of blood’ – driven by ‘narrow and malignant passions’, living a tainted life, a slave to its own appetites – which it now resembled.⁹¹

In his eyes, the growth of meat-eating laid bare the disastrous consequences of mankind’s ‘renunciation of instinct’, its habituation and institutionalisation demonstrating how the violence and self-interest it embodied had become society’s defining feature.⁹² Perhaps more significantly, however, the anxious and conflict-ridden nature of the human relationship with meat-eating also provided a residual glimpse of humanity’s natural, benevolent disposition.⁹³ This was particularly apparent in young children, who ‘as originary humans, naturally humane, pre-social yet embodying the potential best elements of civilisation’, had a natural antipathy towards meat.⁹⁴ Indeed, the survival of a vegetarian instinct vitally highlighted the falsity of a present society based upon violence, exploitation, conflict and division, for it implied that mankind was fundamentally designed to adhere to a different, entirely *opposing* set of essential values. These were the values which formed the basis of Shelley’s counter-vision: the pursuit of an all-embracing liberation propelled by the revival of humanity’s natural inclination to seek peace, liberty, fellowship and unity.

⁹⁰ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.828.

⁹¹ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.828; Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.9.

⁹² Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.830.

⁹³ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), pp.828-829.

⁹⁴ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.134; Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), pp.828-829.

Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror; man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals.⁹⁷

Here, like earlier vegetarian writers, Shelley adopted an Edenic symbolism, recasting Christian images of salvation in order to express his own yearnings for a perfect future of universal fellowship. Within this world humanity had renounced its bloody ways and extended the hand of friendship beyond even its own species to those other animals with whom it shared the earth – the latter now cast as ‘equals’, in an assertion imbued with radically levelling implications. Such a vision of a boundless solidarity as a part of an all-embracing emancipation, was also illuminated by Shelley in *Laon and Cythna* (1817), which later became *The Revolt of Islam* (1818). As discussed by Morton, this poem described the creation of a peaceful inter-species community as a defining feature of the ultimate victory of revolutionary forces over those of tyranny. Within it all creatures were ‘free to dream – to be subjects allowed to enjoy their own capacity for imagination’, rather than ‘objects’ of the appetites of others.⁹⁸ Most vitally, harmony had replaced predation as the essential relationship between human and non-human:

My brethren, we are free! The fruits are glowing
Beneath the stars, and the night-winds are flowing
O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming--
Never again may blood of bird or beast
Stain with its venomous stream a human feast.⁹⁹

Again humanity’s ‘terrible prerogative’ had been abandoned, its new role appeared, somewhat anthropocentrically, to resemble that of steward:

⁹⁷ Shelley, “Queen Mab”, pp.795-796, canto 8, lines 198-202, 211-215, 218-227.

⁹⁸ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, pp.114-116.

⁹⁹ Percy Shelley, “The Revolt of Islam”, *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.92, canto 5, stanza 51.5, lines 2242-2246.

The dwellers of the earth and air
Shall throng around our steps in gladness,
Seeking their food or refuge there.¹⁰⁰

Typically, this revolutionary victory was christened through a vegetarian feast – an all-inclusive ‘banquet of the free’ in which every animal (all ‘that fly, or walk, or creep’) came together to ‘share in [a meal of] peace and innocence’, now devoid of ‘gore’ and ‘poison’, and instead composed of ‘an overflowing store / Of pomegranates and citrons, fairest fruit, / Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root / Sweet and sustaining’.¹⁰¹ In the equivalent scene in *Queen Mab* even ‘The lion now forgets to thirst for blood’ and could be seen ‘sporting in the sun / Beside the dreadless kid’.¹⁰² As was common within vegetarian writings, Shelley enlisted the symbolism of Isaiah 11, as well as Latin and Greek portrayals of the ‘Golden Age’, in the expression of his ultimate hopes for a future of unbounded peace and plenty.¹⁰³ His vision, however, of such a world ‘void of terror’, was also likely shaped by a wealth of contemporary travel narratives which described lands uninhabited by humans, where other animals had no fear of man, thus indicating, as Erasmus Darwin observed, that such fear was ‘an acquired article of knowledge’.¹⁰⁴

As indicated by such ideas, Shelley’s conception of nature was an idealised one. By equating it with ‘goodness’, his poems came to represent both harsh landscapes as well as all forms of predation, including that of carnivorous animals, as ‘unnatural’, for these were realities at odds with the quest for an earthly paradise, and so had to be represented as ultimately temporary phenomena.¹⁰⁵ It is important, however, to look beyond such paradisaal dreams of a luscious, harmonious Eden reborn, to move from the abstract poetic vision and to instead recognise the purpose it served within Shelley’s arguments for the here and now, which was to symbolise the presence of

¹⁰⁰ Shelley, “The Revolt of Islam”, p.92, canto 5, stanza 51.5, lines 2250-2253.

¹⁰¹ Shelley, “The Revolt of Islam”, p.93, canto 5, stanzas 54-56, lines 2293, 2307-2313.

¹⁰² Shelley, “Queen Mab”, p.794, canto 8, lines 124-126.

¹⁰³ Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, pp.62-62 & 227.

¹⁰⁴ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, pp.387-391.

¹⁰⁵ This was the case, for example, in *Queen Mab*, *The Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound*. See Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, pp.68-70 and Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, pp.385-386.

an intrinsic potential for good contained within all life. This was, in Shelley's eyes, the sole force which could overturn the 'unnatural', the curse of 'blood and gold', which had led the world down its ruinous path.¹⁰⁶ It was this conception of nature – as an always-present embodiment of the essential *rightness* of peace, fellowship and harmony and the *wrongness* of their antitheses – that made it central to Shelley's work. It was not a belief in a lost mythical age of perfection, or an anachronistic yearning for its recreation, but a poetic representation of an elemental guiding spirit which would help to usher in a better future. 'His cry was not', therefore, as Morton highlights, 'so much 'back to nature'...as 'forwards to nature'.¹⁰⁷

Shelley thus framed humanity's potential for goodness – its fundamental nature – as something that had always been present but had not yet been realised. He believed that the gradual progress of this ever-unfolding potential was not something that could be rushed, for it was based upon the shifting of consciousness – the slow changing of human thought, morals and behaviour. The purpose of Shelley's poetic works was, as he acknowledged in the preface to *The Revolt of Islam*, to help aid in the awakening of this, to kindle:

within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind.¹⁰⁸

His poetry, therefore, sought to reveal 'the transient nature of ignorance and error' in contrast to 'the eternity of genius and virtue', as it attempted to rouse such an eternal, instinctual 'faith' in humanity's potential to develop an expansive 'love of mankind', that would, naturally, seek to expunge 'all the oppressions...under the sun'.¹⁰⁹

This belief in the latent power of an inherent, unconquerable human desire for 'good', motivated by the awakening of innate compassionate impulses, certainly highlighted Shelley's stress upon the 'natural' origins of mankind's quest for a better future. This motivation was not, however, the sole force which drove progress. For

¹⁰⁶ Morton, "Nature and culture", p.198.

¹⁰⁷ Morton, "Nature and culture", p.204.

¹⁰⁸ Shelley, "The Revolt of Islam", preface, p.32.

¹⁰⁹ Shelley, "The Revolt of Islam", preface, p.32.

Shelley additionally recognised that the intellectual development of humanity was just as vital in stimulating positive change. This was, in common with his radical milieu, epitomised by the cultivation of individual freethought, as well as a belief in *perfectibility*, which seemingly advocated an advance which moved further and further *away* from a natural primal state.¹¹⁰ This apparent contradiction was explicitly posed by Shelley himself:

How can the advantages of intellect and civilisation be reconciled with the liberty and pure pleasure of natural life? How can we take the benefits and reject the evils of the system, which is now interwoven with all the fibres of our being?¹¹¹

For Shelley, it was clear that to reconcile nature and culture and thus solve the conundrum, it was necessary for culture to follow natural laws. Specifically, his answer was that humanity's innate compassion must become the *basis* – the guiding force – that underpinned and shaped the future development of human institutions and culture. For, by ensuring that the benevolent impulses of human nature fundamentally informed the way in which civilisation progressed, human culture – the arts, science and education in particular – would become the essential vehicle through which progressive, universally beneficial change could be both propagated and cemented. The word 'culture', therefore, would take on its original meaning, as human endeavour would now be definable as the attempt to *nurture* the natural good contained within mankind.

Shelley thus recommended that 'a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind' – one which rejected 'violent and malignant passions' and instead embraced humanity's capacity for compassion, sympathy and love – was vital. He declared this through the intent of his poetry, within which 'Love' was to be 'celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world'.¹¹² Vegetarianism, as a fundamental expression of such a

¹¹⁰ This was reflected in his claim that violence/oppression predominated in more primitive societies. See: Percy Shelley, "On Christianity" (1817), *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. E.B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), vol. 1, p.268; Shelley, "Queen Mab", pp.793-793, canto 8, lines 70-81, 145-197.

¹¹¹ Shelley, "Notes on Queen Mab" (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.827.

¹¹² Shelley, "The Revolt of Islam", preface, p.37.

new spirit of peace, all-embracing fellowship and universal love, provided an active manifestation of how following benevolent predispositions could indeed aid societal reformation. For, not only was it a practice which served to inherently undermine the essential ‘evils’ which characterised society’s present state, but also one which *cultivated* the natural basis of compassion and mutuality upon which the foundations of an improved civilisation could be built. It was in this way, therefore, that Shelley believed the diet could ‘in great measure capacitate us for the solution’ to the ‘important question’ as to how humanity could seek an intellectual and societal advance that was in tune with its natural impulses.¹¹³

3.4. ‘Calm yet irresistible progress’: Individual and Societal Change

3.4.1. Shelley’s Gradualism

In arguing for human relationships to become reoriented around an all-embracing ethic of love, Shelley envisaged a monumental transformation of both individuals and societies. Such a widespread, comprehensive change would, undoubtedly, be very difficult to achieve. So how then did Shelley expect such hopes to come to fruition? In order to answer this, it is necessary to first examine the two foremost influences that shaped his thinking regarding how positive societal change could, and should, progress: the ideas of his father-in-law, William Godwin, and his own critical analysis of the French Revolution.

Godwin’s philosophical anarchism was based upon a gradualist view of social change; he considered the diffusion of knowledge as key to society’s radical reformation, arguing that it was ultimately dependent upon the changing of public consciousness.¹¹⁴ He thus ‘looked to a revolution in opinions, not on the barricades’, rejecting the notion ‘that social ideals can be instituted immediately and by force’, and viewing revolutions as involving an intolerable degree of coercion.¹¹⁵ Beyond even this, the dream of revolution was, in Godwin’s eyes, an illusion, for if the

¹¹³ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.827.

¹¹⁴ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, p.18.

¹¹⁵ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, p.218; Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, pp.17-18; Godwin, *The Anarchist Writings of William Godwin*, p.123.

enlightenment of the people was its perquisite, then its absence indicated that it had already failed and would simply degenerate into a different form of tyranny, whereas its presence would, conversely, imply that the revolution was already essentially achieved.¹¹⁶

Naturally, such gradualist, incremental improvement would be a slow process, one which would stretch across generations. Its spread would be overseen by, what Marshall terms, ‘thoughtful and benevolent guides’, who would ‘speak the truth and practice sincerity and thereby act as catalysts of change’.¹¹⁷ As Scrivener elaborates, Godwin’s model of social change was based upon the notion ‘that social consciousness [could] be educated progressively by philosophical radicals’ and that this consciousness could then be ‘translated into political institutions’ thereby ‘influencing consciousness in new ways, permitting further advances’.¹¹⁸ Godwin’s (somewhat elitist) emphasis was thus on the role of the individual in spreading radical enlightenment through personal reflection and small-group discussion. He promulgated a cultural, literary radicalism (as opposed to a political or economic one), which positioned education as the primary means of reform, stressing its role in developing the innate qualities, talents and dispositions of individuals, as well as in promoting freethought.¹¹⁹

In many ways, Shelley echoed Godwin’s view of reform, as was demonstrated through his own critique of the French Revolution. In *A Philosophical View of Reform* (1819-20), he claimed that the overthrowing of the existing order through revolt, and the immediate establishment of universal suffrage would be a premature and untenable path forward, for:

¹¹⁶ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, pp.18-19.

¹¹⁷ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, p.218.

¹¹⁸ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, p.36.

¹¹⁹ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, pp.5-7; Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, pp.212-213; Janet Bottoms, “‘Awakening the Mind’: the educational philosophy of William Godwin”, *History of Education* 33, no. 3 (May 2004), p.267.

A Republic, however just in its principle and glorious in its object, would through the violence and sudden change which must attend it, incur a great risk of being as rapid in its decline as in its growth.¹²⁰

Firstly, this was because Shelley believed that the enlightenment of the people, necessary for the success and entrenchment of such bold reforms, could not simply be achieved overnight, and thus that the latter would most likely be doomed to failure.¹²¹ Universal suffrage, inclusive of women, the abolition of monarchy and aristocracy and a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and property were all goals towards which Shelley believed society should strive, but to seek them prior to the sufficient development of the larger public consciousness required for their lasting success would constitute an ‘immature attempt’.¹²² In his eyes it was far better that the people:

should be instructed in the whole truth; that they should see the clear grounds of their rights, the objects to which they ought to tend; and be impressed with the just persuasion that patience and reason and endurance *are the means of a calm yet irresistible progress*.¹²³

This emphasis on a ‘calm yet irresistible progress’ was indicative of the second key reason Shelley believed that revolution was usually a premature and mistaken endeavour: its characteristic violence. A revolution implied a sudden break from the past that was impossible, for the changing of consciousness, habits and behaviours, upon which the shaping of genuinely new institutions rested took considerable time. In the context of revolt, therefore, the negative elements of human nature, incubated during the period of oppression, would still be present, and would be likely to come to the fore.¹²⁴ During violent revolution and civil war people become ‘soldiers’ and thus, Shelley asserts, ‘slaves’, as they are ‘taught obedience’, abandoning their own will and becoming inured to ‘human suffering’, ‘like the bloody knife which has stabbed and feels not’.¹²⁵ The nature of revolution, therefore, posed an existential danger to the development of a compassionate consciousness.

¹²⁰ Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, p.67.

¹²¹ Revolt of Islam, preface, p.33

¹²² Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, pp.67 & 72.

¹²³ Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, p.67. See also pp.49-50.

¹²⁴ Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, pp.67-68.

¹²⁵ Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, p.68.

Indeed, violence was completely antithetical to the type of society Shelley desired. It characterised a system of division and exploitation, which blinded people to all of the better impulses and potentialities of human nature. War, of course, represented its apex, and revolution provided, in the form of civil war, a further manifestation. Violent conflict such as this would tend ultimately to play into the hands of those who sought to oppress others, for there was a particular relationship between ‘Destruction and Power...Monarchy and War’.¹²⁶ As he explained, all forms of war not only acted to extinguish ‘the sentiment of reason and justice in the mind’, perverting human emotion and imagination, but also offered ‘tyrants’ the chance to expand their authority, to ‘take advantage’ of the situation, ‘to establish and defend their encroachments’, particularly through the organisation of obedient, ‘mechanical’ armies habituated into using ‘brute force’ in pursuit of a cause which was in practice essentially ‘forgotten’.¹²⁷ Shelley believed that ‘if there had never been war, there could never have been tyranny in the world’, and thus he observed that through its violence, an embodiment of its immaturity, the ‘mighty advantages of the French Revolution’ had been almost entirely overturned ‘by a succession of tyrants...from Robespierre to Louis XVIII’.¹²⁸

Shelley reasoned that to defeat a system fundamentally based upon violence, it was necessary to cultivate, promote and embody its counter. For him, vegetarianism was, of course, a fundamental expression of this, as a vegetarian society would, by its nature, preclude violence and tyranny. ‘Had the populace of Paris satisfied their hunger at the ever-furnished table of vegetable nature’, would they ‘have lent their brutal suffrage to the proscription-list of Robespierre?’¹²⁹ The answer, assuredly, was no. Likewise, it was ‘impossible’ to imagine that had ‘Buonaparte...descended from a race of vegetable feeders...he could have had either the inclination or the power to ascend the throne of the Bourbons’.¹³⁰ Such a notion notably conflicted with the figure of Oswald, whose vegetarianism accompanied an acceptance of revolutionary

¹²⁶ Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, p.89.

¹²⁷ Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, p.90.

¹²⁸ Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, p.90. See also p.18.

¹²⁹ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.830.

¹³⁰ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.830.

violence. For Shelley, however, meat, violence, militarism and power again stood in contrast to vegetables, compassion, peace and fellowship – two contrasting ways of being, diametrically opposed.

Shelley thus also came to advocate a philosophy of non-violent resistance, as famously expressed in *The Masque of Anarchy* (1819), written in response to the Peterloo Massacre of the same year, in which the violent dispersal of a demonstration for parliamentary reform had resulted in the deaths of eighteen people and the injuring of hundreds more.¹³¹ In this he encouraged people to gather in ‘vast assembly’ in order to boldly declare their freedom in the face of their oppressors, disarming the latter’s violence with their combined resolve and the justice of their cause:

Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute...

And if the tyrants dare
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew,–
What they like, let them do...

Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.¹³²

The actions of the assembled thus embodied a rejection of systemic violence and injustice; they stood above it, demonstrating a higher humanity, and asserted the possibility of a better future. In the process, the brutality and disgrace of the current system was made explicit, inducing the self-contemplation and shame of those who perpetuated its oppressions.

¹³¹ For a recent discussion see Jacqueline Riding, *Peterloo: The Story of the Manchester Massacre* (London: Head of Zeus, 2018).

¹³² Percy Shelley, “The Masque of Anarchy”, *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.344, stanzas 79, 84 & 86, lines 319-320, 340-343, 348-351. See also his discussion of this in *A Philosophical View of Reform*, pp.80-82.

Both vegetarianism and non-violent resistance formed part of Shelley's creation of a politically powerful pacifism, which bound means to ends in its agitation for a new type of society based upon compassion, egalitarianism and mutuality, and which influentially echoed down the proceeding centuries, inspiring leftists and liberators around the globe. Shelley certainly recognised the vital role of such actions in awakening public consciousness, ending *The Masque of Anarchy* with an assertion of the inspirational power that could be drawn from the example of those who gathered at St. Peter's Field:

And that slaughter to the Nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular;
A volcano heard afar.

And these words shall then become
Like Oppression's thundered doom
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again – again – again –

Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number –
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you –
Ye are many – they are few.¹³³

Those who partook in such action had, implicitly, already started to awaken from their 'sleep'; they, with lion's hearts, were already rising. What the focus should be, Shelley thus stressed, was the harnessing of this force in order to push change further, to make the arguments for reform 'again – again – again', until the battle was won. This was a process that Shelley believed had, inevitably, to be gradual. It was an attempt to spread a new consciousness, to increasingly free individuals from ignorance, prejudice and habit, and enable them to perceive – and enact – new ways

¹³³ Shelley, "The Masque of Anarchy", p.344, stanzas 89-91, lines 360-372.

of being; this meant that it was, in essence, a kind of educative process that could only advance on a step-by-step basis.

3.4.2. The Role of the Vegetarian Individual

Within this, Shelley argued that the role of individuals was vital, asserting that ‘institutions change as the popular consciousness changes’.¹³⁴ This encouraged him to put great emphasis on action, on the living of beliefs, arguing that those already awakened to the rightness of a point – such as vegetarianism – were ‘bound by the most sacred obligations of morality to adopt in practice what he admits in theory’.¹³⁵ This clearly echoed the exhortations of other vegetarian radicals, whose interest in the diet was, like Shelley’s, based upon its representative function as the embodiment of a particular societal critique, and of a potential future way of being based upon peace and fellowship. Indeed, vegetarianism could be seen as a way of manifesting the future in the present, of demonstrating to others what could be, whilst in the meantime bringing such a vision that little bit closer. It could also be seen as the essence of Shelley’s creed – love – in action. Most notably, all of this demonstrates once more the role of the diet as a form of radical praxis (the attempt to develop, and begin to realise, a set of theoretical beliefs through their enactment in everyday life). As elucidated by both Morton and Timothy Clark, the figuring of beliefs through the body thus became absolutely central to Shelley’s presentation of his ideas regarding reform.¹³⁶

For Shelley vegetarianism was, in part, an attempt free to the individual body from the pollution and oppression – the ‘disease’ – of contemporary ‘civilisation’. This was reflected in other areas of his personal life, for example his desire to live a simple, untainted existence, as demonstrated by his dislike of alcohol, the pollution of cities, and ‘the muffling of our bodies in superfluous apparel’.¹³⁷ This Rousseauist desire for natural simplicity, shared by other vegetarian radicals, was, particularly

¹³⁴ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, p.62; Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, p.79.

¹³⁵ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.14.

¹³⁶ Morton, “Nature and culture”, p.195; Timothy Clark, *Embodying Revolution: The Figure of the Poet in Shelley* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Morton in *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*.

¹³⁷ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.828.

when thinking of Newton, a potential sign of the self-focus of the diet. As the above discussion demonstrates, however, such a narrow view is incorrect. Vegetarianism certainly sought to free and enlighten the individual, but this formed part of a much larger, highly politicised, programme of societal regeneration. A common mistake in Shelley scholarship has been a stress on the supposed primacy of the individual health aspect of his diet.¹³⁸ Beyond authors' own personal views, the reason for this appears partly due to a failure to properly understand Shelley's holistic definition of 'health', as well as the central role of vegetarianism within his radical ideology.

It is undeniably true that standard health arguments regarding the individual health benefits of the diet (a repetitive element of most vegetarian works) feature throughout Shelley's two vegetarian texts. Ignoring their interrelation with his broader ideology has, however, meant that a fundamental, somewhat obvious, reason for their frequent inclusion has received insufficient attention: their power to persuade. As Shelley himself acknowledged, if the vegetarian diet was to be more widely adopted it was necessary to convince people of its merits and so to present a great body of facts regarding its personally beneficial effects may thus serve to 'reconcile it to the selfishness of some by the promise of immediate advantages'.¹³⁹

Vision was certainly a powerful thing, and central to Shelley's view of progress, but he was also, however, eminently practical when it came to his reformist endeavours, including his promotion of vegetarianism. This was true of vegetarian authors more broadly, who, like Shelley, commonly amassed a huge bank of scientific and medical evidence to defend their ideas. Shelley thus provided an overview of various cases of health and longevity occasioned by a fleshless diet, from ancient Greece to modern England. For how else was he supposed to convince those not already 'among the enlightened and benevolent' to embark upon a new, perhaps seemingly radical, dietary venture?¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ This has been well discussed by Morton in *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, notably pp.57-60.

¹³⁹ Shelley, *On The Vegetable System of Diet*, p.14.

¹⁴⁰ Shelley, "Notes on Queen Mab" (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.831.

Arguments regarding the improvement of individual health were, evidently, a useful string in the vegetarian bow. However, this is not to intimate that Shelley did not himself sincerely believe in them, nor value highly the health-giving properties of the diet. His prominent debt to Lambe and Newton clearly alludes to this, referencing their medically- and individually-centred works extensively, and typically pointing his readers in their direction: ‘Those who may have been excited to question the rectitude of established habits of diet...should consult Mr. Newton’s luminous and eloquent essay’.¹⁴¹ Even Newton’s children – ‘the most beautiful and healthy creatures it is possible to conceive’ – provided him with compelling evidence, for both himself, as well as to convey to his audience, of the physically regenerative powers of natural living.¹⁴²

This bodily beauty and health was, though, still part of a larger, holistic vision of beauty and health, and beyond the former’s visually symbolic power, and its ability to exemplify, persuade and convert, there was perhaps another reason for its prominence in Shelley’s arguments: political expediency. As commonly noted by authors discussing Shelley’s vegetarian writings, the influence of Ritson’s *Essay on Abstinence* is highly pronounced, yet scantily acknowledged by Shelley.¹⁴³ This is despite the fact, as highlighted by David Clark, that Shelley’s work has far more in common with (and borrows very significantly from) Ritson’s text than with Newton’s.¹⁴⁴ Indeed, as this chapter has demonstrated, Shelley adhered to a vegetarian radical belief system which was in many ways similar to that of Ritson.

Most importantly, both explicitly tied their vegetarianism to a radical politics which sought a complete societal transformation, fundamentally basing their visions on a moral footing, stressing the power of compassion and freethought, embodied as an ethic of all-encompassing love and fellowship. Why then did Shelley choose to mask

¹⁴¹ Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.831.

¹⁴² Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab” (*A Vindication of Natural Diet*), p.834.

¹⁴³ Clark, “The Date and Source of Shelley’s *Vindication of Natural Diet*”, pp.70-76; Cameron, pp.227-230 & 377; Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.380.

¹⁴⁴ Clark, “The Date and Source of Shelley’s *Vindication of Natural Diet*”, pp.70-76. Clark provides an overview of how Shelley extensively borrowed arguments, anecdotes, references and more from Ritson, usually with no mention, at various points Ritson’s and Shelley’s texts essentially mirror one another.

his immense debt to Ritson, and to the text which, perhaps more than any other, had informed the structure of his own? Stuart alludes to the likely answer: that it was, in fact, due to Shelley's perception of the contemporary unpopularity of the arguments as expressed by Ritson.¹⁴⁵ In other words, Shelley's vegetarian writings took on a more 'anthropocentric', health-focussed, form because Ritson's presentation had been received badly for being too radical, too atheistical, for trying too hard to undermine humanity's separation from, and supremacy over, the 'lower animals'.

Such an attitude was certainly reflective of the context of political repression in Britain, started in the 1790s under Pitt.¹⁴⁶ Shelley's more pragmatic politics were a clear demonstration of this. In terms of his vegetarian arguments, therefore, he can be seen as having used the theme of 'health' so prominently in order to present them in a more palatable, and effective, form. A notable reflection of this difference in presentation can be found in Hogg's biography, which suggested that Shelley adopted and promoted the diet as 'a calm, deliberate choice' made on the basis of 'a sincere conviction of the propriety and superior salubrity of such food', whereas Ritson – who 'called sheep, oxen, and pigs "our fellow creatures"' – had, in contrast, 'put forward his theories with such vehemence and wild extravagance, as to be stigmatised, perhaps unjustly, as a wretched maniac'.¹⁴⁷

Shelley did, however, also express notions of fellow creaturehood, and certainly conveyed emotive, far-reaching radical visions through his writings. This though, unlike Ritson (and Oswald), he did predominantly through poetry, which often, as with *Queen Mab*, was intended to have a very limited initial circulation. Poetic vision, especially when presented to a limited audience, was, perhaps, a less threatening medium than incendiary political prose.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, ultimately, Shelley's own prose works generally presented a practical, gradualist reformism, whilst his poetry was deployed to conjure the revolutionary images of a golden, harmonious future. This was, more broadly, reflective of the way in which he believed societal

¹⁴⁵ Stuart, *The Bloodless Revolution*, p.380.

¹⁴⁶ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, p.34.

¹⁴⁷ Hogg, *The Life of Percy Byshe Shelley*, vol. 2, pp.414 & 425.

¹⁴⁸ Although, controversial works such as *Queen Mab* certainly push this notion to its limits. The possibility that *Queen Mab* could result in his prosecution had certainly given Shelley considerable worry. Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, pp.91-92.

change would occur; that pragmatic gradualism and revolutionary vision were not at all incompatible, but actually, necessarily, complementary. As Dawson explains: Shelley's 'reformist means [were] always directed to revolutionary ends, but he...accepted that the necessary transformation of society [could] only come about through the step-by-step purification and improvement of the old order, rather than by a single apocalyptic stroke. It was this decision that involved him in movements for limited reform, though...[with] his thinking...always informed by his ultimate aims'.¹⁴⁹ His poetry provided an unbounded, emancipatory libertarian vision; his prose signalled the various, often modest, means by which the journey towards it could begin – the adoption of a thoughtful, benevolent, practical vegetarian ethic being one of them.

3.5. 'To live as if to love and live were one': Conclusions

Throughout his work Shelley presented 'love' as the animating essence of both his political aims (the creation of peaceful, cooperative society) and the means of their achievement (the liberation and re-joining of the human heart and mind in the form of compassionate consciousness). He defined love as a spirit of sympathetic fellowship and mutual understanding, inherent in the human, which bound people together and encouraged a collective aspiration to discover and develop the best in ourselves, in others and in our surrounding world. It was, he argued, the key to equitable human relations, enabling the shift to an increasingly egalitarian and democratic way of being, for, in a society of 'true and real friends' 'all [would be] common'.¹⁵⁰ He outlined a theory of love as the basis for an ideal communistic society, arguing that it would overturn 'those distinctions which have been artificially set up, of nations, societies, families, and religions', encouraging individuals 'not to love the individuals of your domestic circle less, but to love those who exist beyond it *more*'.¹⁵¹ This was an expansive conception of love as the embodiment of an all-embracing friendship/kinship, and it was this alone, Shelley believed, that could provide the means to a universal emancipation.

¹⁴⁹ Dawson, *The Unacknowledged Legislator*, pp.6-7.

¹⁵⁰ Shelley, "On Christianity", p.264.

¹⁵¹ Shelley, "On Christianity", pp.264-265. Emphasis added.

‘To live as if to love and live were one’ – an idea conveyed by Shelley in *The Revolt of Islam*, was that which Salt believed provided ‘a true summary of Shelley’s ethics’.¹⁵² Indeed, it certainly could be seen as such, for it encapsulated Shelley’s belief in the need to adopt a new mode of being – to reorient oneself (and ultimately society) towards a life of mutuality, peace and unity, as opposed to one of selfishness, greed and isolation. This creation of a new ethos, a new animating spirit and end goal, clearly infused Shelley’s poetic and political efforts. As a naturally present potential force within us, it alone had the power to transform the world and displace the ‘evil’ malady which currently gripped it.

As Salt surmised, Shelley’s was an anarcho-communist ‘ideal of a society where free, spontaneous beneficence shall take the place of authority and government, where the reign of law shall be succeeded by the reign of love, where the simple kindly instincts of the human heart shall be holier than any code of religion or ethics’.¹⁵³ Shelley himself certainly presented it as an attempt to rediscover the essence of a true religious ethic, as had been originally alluded to by reformers such as Jesus Christ, before institutional religion had corrupted its expression.¹⁵⁴

Although Shelley conceived of love as something natural and inherent, he also perceived that it needed to be actively cultivated by humans in order to achieve its full transformative, *elevating* potential. Its ability to usher in a new world was dependent upon an active and enlightened humanity serving as its guide, combatting on all fronts every manifestation of violence and exploitation, so that it might overwhelm the artificial barriers, characteristic of a world of division and conflict,

¹⁵² Shelley, “The Revolt of Islam”, p.118, canto 8, stanza 12, line 3304; Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer*, p.119.

¹⁵³ Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer*, p.118.

¹⁵⁴ See: Shelley, *A Philosophical View of Reform*, p.2; Shelley, “Essay on Christianity”; Shelley, “Notes on Queen Mab”, pp.819-826; Percy Shelley, “Notes on Hellas”, *Shelley: Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp.478-480; Percy Shelley, “On the Doctrines of Christ”, *The Prose Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. E.B. Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). This theme was also picked up by Shelley’s friend Leigh Hunt, culminating in his *The Religion of the Heart* (London: John Chapman, 1853). For a discussion, see Timothy Webb, “Religion of the Heart: Leigh Hunt’s Unpublished Tribute to Shelley”, *The Keats-Shelley Review* 7, no.1 (1992), pp.1-61 (especially pp.16-17, 26, & 30-31).

which blocked its path, and instead unite all that live and breathe in one common community of feeling. Shelley's ideal of love thus encouraged humanity's development of an unbounded circle of fellowship into which, necessarily, even other species would be welcomed. As he proclaimed: 'the only perfect and genuine republic is that which comprehends every living being'.¹⁵⁵

Ultimately, Shelley's vegetarianism thus functioned as a vital manifestation of such a belief system. It embodied in the present the future which it sought to achieve – a society that was devoid of conflict and violence, and that was instead animated by an all-embracing ethic of fellowship and love. It also served as a form of radical praxis, providing a means by which individuals could simultaneously begin to realise radical change, and ensure its gradual spread through tying their diet to a larger agitative and educative effort. It was the interconnected analysis of oppression and emancipation which Shelley offered that would go on to influence leftists from the nineteenth century onwards. In particular, his emphasis on freedom from all forms of oppressive dogma and external constraint, his belief in the importance of the individual, and his stress upon the liberating power of personal reformation as the basis of institutional/societal change, made him a figure of great interest to those of a libertarian socialist persuasion, such as Salt and Carpenter.¹⁵⁶ Indeed, for such individuals his belief system – with his vegetarianism at its very forefront – became an inspiration, gaining an influence, and a seriousness, far greater than it had ever been granted during his own lifetime.

¹⁵⁵ Shelley, "Essay on Christianity", p.264.

¹⁵⁶ See Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, p.62.

Chapter Four

‘A vision of health, joy and beauty’: Feeding Utopian Dreams

‘Salvation for man means salvation for the animals’ – John Coleman Kenworthy, 1895.

As the nineteenth century unfolded, Shelley’s radical ideals proved to hold a lasting appeal. From the utopian socialists at the beginning of century, through the Chartists and the myriad groups of Victorian reformers, to the leftist rebirth and blossoming of thought and activity at the century’s close, the message of freedom, equality, and fellowship which he had conveyed continued to find ever-increasing expression. This was, after all, the period to which the British Left traditionally traces its roots – where the birth of an exploited (yet increasingly organised) industrial working class led to a demand for a more egalitarian and democratic society. This found early expression in Robert Owen’s cooperative socialistic ideas, and later in growing demands for electoral reform, as embodied in the People’s Charter of 1838.¹

It was during this period that the great, interrelated mass of radical and progressive beliefs, arguments, and causes, manifested in the writings and actions of numerous individuals and groups, came to coalesce around, and create, the ideologies of socialism, communism, and anarchism. These ‘modern’ belief systems, more ‘scientifically’ expressed and clearly defined, yet still containing an immense diversity of ideas, opinions, and approaches, formulated programmes of societal transformation, looking forwards to the creation of brave new worlds. They still, however, retained many of the core concerns of earlier radicalisms, gladly

¹ For an account of Robert Owen and his followers, see J.F.C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: The Quest for the New Moral World* (1969; London: Routledge, 2009). For a recent study of the Chartist movement, see Malcolm Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). For a broader discussion of both in the context of the emergence of socialism in the early nineteenth century, see Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints: Politics and Anti-Politics in early British Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

acknowledging those pioneers who had come before them. Amongst these, Shelley stood as one of the most compelling, and, for this reason, his name, and influence, remained a consistent presence throughout the development of the modern British left.

It was not only Shelley's captivating poetic expression of radical ideals which earned him subsequent praise. The vegetarianism he promoted also continued to figure as a central radical practice for a significant number of rebels and reformers in this period, with many claiming him as a direct inspiration not only in their adoption of socialism, but also of a dietary practice which, like him, they considered to be an intrinsic part of such a belief system, and a vital element of their practical politics. What this suggests is that the popularity of Shelley in leftist circles across the nineteenth century indicated not only esteem for a pioneer of the cause, but an apparent admiration for his particular transformative vision. Indeed, what his appeal perhaps reflected, especially with regard to his most fervent admirers, was the continued growth of certain forms of leftist thought, in particular, those of an ethical or libertarian bent, which stressed the moral impulse behind socialism, holistic conceptions of liberation, and the importance of individuals in the process of societal regeneration. Certainly, the number of authors and activists who adhered to such ideas, and who placed vegetarianism centrally as part of an attempt to forward an all-embracing emancipation, noticeably grew in this period, as did the practice of the diet at large, expanding in terms of adherents, organisation, and public recognition.

This chapter explores the growth and development of such vegetarian-leftist ideas, from the period of Shelley's death to the dawn of the twentieth century. It starts by considering the diet's place within utopian socialism, looking, in particular, at its presence amongst the followers of Robert Owen, as well as the thought of James Pierrepont Greaves and the community that was established upon his principles. It then provides an overview of the 'socialist revival' at the end of the century, wherein vegetarian-leftist ideas flourished, focussing in particular on the arguments of 'ethical' and 'religious' vegetarian-socialists in the period. Finally, it examines the impact of the vegetarian-anarchist ideas of Leo Tolstoy upon British socialists, the

role of vegetarianism in leftist visions of a new life, and the diet's function in attempts at 'living socialism'.

In terms of the history of the development of vegetarianism in Britain in the nineteenth century, the standard work remains James Gregory's *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*. This provides an extensive treatment of the growth of the diet within the context of Victorian reform, focussing on the social history of the organised vegetarian 'movement', largely concerned with health and temperance, albeit still infused with many broader reformist, spiritual, and animal welfarist concerns. This chapter builds upon Gregory's work, revealing the development of vegetarianism in relation to progressive ideology. It also adds to the rich body of scholarship surrounding the history of the Left in the nineteenth century, which largely excludes mention of the politics of diet.

Of particular relevance to this study is the work of those who have sought to rescue the great diversity of leftist thought, which exploded in the 1880s and 1890s, from the condescension occasioned by the twentieth-century dominance of centralising, bureaucratic, statist forms of socialism. Indeed, with Marxism on the one hand and a staid third-way social democracy on the other, there appeared little room within the academy or the broader political discourse for 'alternative' leftist ideas. This very notion, however, that such ideas were 'alternative', implying a deviation from an established, accepted definition of socialism, revealed a fundamental misunderstanding of the left's multifaceted nature, as well as an ignorance of the many forms of belief and motivation that have historically underpinned leftist thought and activity.

Stephen Yeo's exploration of ethical and religious socialism in late nineteenth-century Britain provided an early rejection of such a blinkered view, disrupting existing historiographic hegemonies, and paving the way for new lines of enquiry.² Other studies have followed, such as Kevin Manton's analysis of the ideology and political programme of the Fellowship of the New Life, an important pioneering

² Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain".

socialist organisation which flourished during the 1880s and 1890s.³ In this he claims that groups such as the Fellowship have been side-lined and misrepresented ‘as ‘ethical’ sectarian purists as opposed to ‘real’ socialists engaged in the business of seeking power’, by a scholarship dominated by ‘either Fabian-style social democracy or Marxist-inclined labour history’, each stressing ‘the primacy of political power and material reform’ and sharing ‘a distrust of’, or a tendency to ‘discount’, ‘issues of individual morality and ethics’.⁴

Perhaps the most notable work to be carried out, however, is that of Mark Bevir, recently culminating in his *The Making of British Socialism*. Here, Bevir considers socialism as a ‘diverse and fluid phenomena that included a vast range of beliefs, feelings, and activities’, emerging in a period ‘before ideological lines became hardened by political parties and cold-war warriors’.⁵ Within this he demonstrates how socialism was defined by individuals in a variety of ways, drawing upon multiple traditions and reacting to various dilemmas, and how it was often figured through lived experience. Such a history reveals how socialism had just as much, if not more, to do with moral and spiritual concepts, ‘radical democracy, and a new life’, as it did with ‘state ownership, bureaucratic planning, and the industrial working class’.⁶ This chapter seeks to build upon this notion, for it is here that the links between the Left and the vegetarian diet are to be discovered.

4.1. ‘The Most Loveful Diet’: Socialism and Vegetarianism in the Early Nineteenth Century

4.1.1. The Influence of Shelley and the Shared Origins of Socialism and Vegetarianism

In 1892, in a letter to Henry Salt, Eleanor Marx described the ‘enormous influence’ exercised by Shelley’s writings upon leading Chartists: ‘I have heard my father and

³ Manton, “The Fellowship of the New Life”, pp.282-304.

⁴ Manton, “The Fellowship of the New Life”, p.304.

⁵ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.3 & 14.

⁶ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.3. This idea is also expressed in Linehan’s *Modernism and British Socialism*.

Engels again and again speak of this; and I have heard the same from the many Chartists it has been my good fortune to know – Ernest Jones, Richard Moore, the Watsons, G.J. Harvey, and others’.⁷ Shelley was, certainly, a notable presence within both the Owenite and the Chartist press. Twenty-one items on him, for example, were published in the Owenite *New Moral World* between 1835 and 1845, and over fifty in the Chartist *Northern Star* between 1838 and 1852.⁸ *Queen Mab*, along with *The Mask of Anarchy* and *Prometheus Unbound*, were the firm favourites in such journals – galvanising poems which reflected the concerns and encouraged the hopes of those who sought societal transformation.⁹ It was thus in this period that *The Mask of Anarchy*’s famous exhortation for the people to ‘rise like lions’ and shake their ‘chains to earth like dew’ began to become embedded within the lexicon, as well as the cultural memory, of the British left. And, similarly, that in which the ideas of these poems – notably *Queen Mab*, apparently known as both the Owenite’s ‘gospel’ and ‘The Chartists’ Bible’ – came to inform both its arguments and self-image.¹⁰

Despite originally being printed privately due to a politically repressive atmosphere, and thus having had a very modest initial circulation, Shelley’s *Queen Mab*, in particular, went on to become an influential text for the nascent British left. The publication of a pirated edition in 1821 by William Clark (who was subsequently prosecuted) and then a new edition by Richard Carlisle, were the first of many to appear throughout the 1820s and 1830s, their number growing as the appeal of this radical poem, with its rousing, emancipatory utopian vision, continued to spread

⁷ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.90.

⁸ Shaaban, “Shelley and the Chartists”. See also Bouthaina Shaaban, “Shelley in the Chartist Press”, *Keats-Shelley Memorial Bulletin* 34 (1983), pp.41-60. For a thorough, recent discussion of the place of Shelley within Owenism and Chartism, see Jen Morgan, “The Transmission and Reception of P.B. Shelley in Owenite and Chartist Newspapers and Periodicals” (PhD thesis, University of Salford, 2014).

⁹ Shaaban, “Shelley and the Chartists”, pp.114-116.

¹⁰ The origin of the first quote is Thomas Medwin’s *Life of Shelley*, where he references a meeting with Owen: Thomas Medwin, *The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1847; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913), pp.98-100. The second is George Bernard Shaw’s account of a conversation with ‘an old Chartist’: George Bernard Shaw, “Shaming the Devil about Shelley”, in George Bernard Shaw, *Pen Portraits and Reviews* (1932; London: Constable and Company, 1949), p.244. (First published as an article in 1892).

amongst numerous reformers and working class radicals.¹¹ It was, according to William St Clair, ‘by far the most quoted literary work in the reformist radical press’.¹² Read at rallies, quoted on banners, and turned into songs, surviving copies – well-thumbed, annotated and passed from person to person – pay testament to the fact that it was ‘not only read but read intensively’.¹³ As Scrivener asserts, it was in this context that the poem ‘became a weapon in the battle of ideas during the heroic age of English socialism, when Owenites, secularists, Chartists, and radicals of different persuasions read it in cheap editions’ and cemented it as ‘a part of socialist culture’.¹⁴

The ‘utopian socialism’ of the early nineteenth drew upon earlier radical philosophy, particularly that of Godwin and Shelley. The influence of Godwin on Robert Owen, one of the founders of utopian socialism, was especially clear, and could be perceived in the latter’s perfectibilist view of an inevitable progress, to be achieved through moral regeneration, education, and enlightenment.¹⁵ In addition, key to the utopians’ plans were the establishment of ideal decentralised, cooperative communities, based upon principles of mutualism, such as Owen’s New Lanark and New Harmony, which, although not always in tune with Godwin’s or Shelley’s gradualist and libertarian approaches, contained the essence of their ideals.¹⁶

Visionary schemes, and their enactment, were the defining feature of this emergent socialism, and so it was unsurprising that a work such as *Queen Mab* would resonate. Not only did it sing the song of human freedom, but it also alluded to the importance of individual reformation in making this a reality – as notably expressed through its attached vegetarian essay. Such an emphasis on personal reform was fundamental to much utopian socialist thought and activity, and remained central to many progressive and leftist movements throughout the century. From this period

¹¹ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, p.67. For a discussion of the influential spread of pirated editions of *Queen Mab*, and its proletarian and radical readership, see William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.320-338.

¹² St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p.336.

¹³ St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p.321.

¹⁴ Scrivener, *Radical Shelley*, p.67.

¹⁵ Marshall, *Nature’s Web*, p.304.

¹⁶ For a discussion see Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America*.

onwards, vegetarianism itself specifically retained a conspicuous presence in radical circles. As Gregory highlights, the quest for utopia in this period, be it ‘actual experimentation, or fictional and prospective, invariably involve[d] dietetic radicalism’.¹⁷ It is, in fact, here that the origin of the term ‘vegetarian’ is to be found – coined by the community at Alcott House (1838-49), established by the self-styled ‘sacred socialist’ James Pierrepont Greaves, the fellow communitarian and friendly rival of Owen.¹⁸

That vegetarianism gained its current label at the hands of the same milieu of early cooperative, communalist experimenters who provided the roots of modern British socialism, and who themselves had already given rise to the widespread use of the very term ‘socialism’, is certainly striking. Indeed, the *OED* indicates that the first recorded use of the term ‘socialist’ in print came in 1827 in the pages of the *Co-operative Magazine*, journal of the first London Co-operative Society, whose key contributor was William Thompson (1775-1833) – a pioneer of co-operative socialism, an early feminist, a believer in the universality of human rights, and, for the last thirteen years of his life, a committed vegetarian.¹⁹ These shared contextual origins of the words socialism and vegetarianism well reflect the contemporary mixing of vegetarian and socialistic ideas by figures such as Thompson, who was illustrative of a larger trend.

¹⁷ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.6.

¹⁸ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.6; J.E.M. Latham, *Search for a New Eden, James Pierrepont Greaves (1777-1842): The Sacred Socialist and His Followers* (London: Associated University Press, 1999), p.18. The term first appears in print in 1842 in the first year of the Alcott House journal *The Healthian*, but implies a pre-existing familiarity with its meaning. See John Davis, “Extracts from some journals 1842-48 - the earliest known uses of the word ‘vegetarian’”, *International Vegetarian Union*, accessed 14th December 2018, <https://ivu.org/history/vegetarian.html>.

¹⁹ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, ed. James Murray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), s.v. “socialist”; Morton, *Shelley and the Revolution in Taste*, p.30; William Thompson, *Appeal of One Half of the Human Race, Women, Against the Pretensions of the Other Half, Men, to Retain them in Political, and thence in Civil and Domestic Slavery* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, & Green, 1825); William Thompson, *Practical Directions for the Speedy and Economical Establishment of Communities on the Principles of Mutual Co-operation, United Possessions and Equality of Exertions and the Means of Enjoyments* (London: Strange & E. Wilson, 1830). See also: Richard Pankhurst, *William Thompson (1775-1833): Pioneer Socialist* (1954; London: Pluto Press, 1991); Dolores Dooley, *Equality in Community: Sexual Equality in the Writings of William Thompson and Anna Doyle Wheeler* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996).

4.1.2. Vegetarianism and Owenism

As Gregory has demonstrated, the diet was frequently practiced, or at least debated, within Owenite communities.²⁰ One notable adherent was Abram Combe (1785-1827), a follower of Owen who established a community at Orbiston, near Glasgow.²¹ Another was James Rigby (1802-1859), a close ally of Owen, who later became his secretary and companion in old age.²² Rigby was an enthusiastic promoter of Owenite doctrines, and was characterised, in the words of Edward Royle, by ‘a boundless optimism and confidence that under Owen the new moral world was at last being realised’.²³ From a working-class background in Salford, he had been employed in the reformist and Cowherdite vegetarian Joseph Brotherton’s factory as a child, and educated in his radical Sunday School.²⁴ Steeped in non-conformity and ideas of working-class self-improvement, he went on to become another pioneer of co-operative socialism, as well as a lifelong vegetarian.²⁵ His advocacy of the diet, despite it perhaps being more the result of upbringing than of personal decision, was certainly reflective of something broader. Indeed, the important Owenite community at Harmony Hall in Hampshire (1839-45), of which Rigby was a governor, counted around half of its members as vegetarian, with Rigby’s successor, John Finch, apparently amongst them.²⁶

The prevalence of the diet did owe something to ethical motivations, as exemplified by the community member Alfred Slatter, who ‘continued to advocate it as a means to social reform into the 1870s’, as well as by Finch’s provocative assertion that in a truly rational society ‘those who will eat beef, mutton, veal, and pork, must in turn

²⁰ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.26-28. Preece claims that Owen himself was a vegetarian, although provides no evidence. Preece, *Sins of the Flesh*, pp.235-236.

²¹ “Memoir of Mr. Abram Combe”, *The Register for the First Society of Adherents to Divine Revelation, at Orbiston* (19th September, 1827), p.68. For an account of Combe, see Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America*, pp.87-89.

²² Edward Royle, *Robert Owen and the Commencement of the Millennium: A Study of the Harmony Community* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p.135.

²³ Royle, *Robert Owen and the Commencement of the Millennium*, p.135.

²⁴ Royle, *Robert Owen and the Commencement of the Millennium*, p.134.

²⁵ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.27 & 204.

²⁶ Royle, *Robert Owen and the Commencement of the Millennium*, pp.142 & 168; Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.27.

kill the animals for themselves'.²⁷ However, as Gregory observes, a more significant reason for the innate appeal of the diet for Owenites was their emphasis on 'high-thinking and plain living' – on temperance, health, and simplicity as enabling a more rational mode of life, in which suffocating, exploitative luxury is replaced by a cooperative system which guarantees plenty for all.²⁸ In this sense the diet could be seen as a liberating, empowering practice, bound to the creation of a new form of community and way of life.²⁹

As J.F.C. Harrison highlights, Owenism itself, like vegetarianism, frequently appealed to the 'natural' as the basis of its arguments, drawing upon Enlightenment ideas, as well as concepts of natural right and natural religion, to offer 'a critique of early industrial capitalism as an artificially imposed system, in contrast to the 'natural' society of the New Moral World'.³⁰ Owenite ideals and practices were infused with a pastoral utopianism that contained strong Edenic overtones, which, Harrison suggests, provided a potential 'bond of affinity between Owenites and vegetarian reformers'.³¹ Certainly, the ideal world that many Owenites imagined – a 'community in a garden' where 'harmony existed between man and man and between man and nature' – presented a utopianism, a dream of a new Eden, of a healthier, happier, more harmonious world, that shared much with the imagery and aims of radical, reformist, and romantic vegetarians of the period.³²

4.1.3. James Pierrepont Greaves

The context of a radical, millenarian politics which stressed the active *living* of cooperative fellowship and natural simplicity, and which championed self-improvement and temperance, provided fertile ground for the growth of vegetarian

²⁷ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.26-27.

²⁸ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.26.

²⁹ In this sense it also mirrored the attraction of alternative medical practices for Owenites. See Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.112, and, for a fuller discussion, J.F.C. Harrison, "Early Victorian Radicals and the Medical Fringe", in *Medical Fringe & Medical Orthodoxy 1750-1850*, ed. W.F. Bynum and Roy Porter (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp.198-215.

³⁰ Harrison, "Early Victorian Radicals and the Medical Fringe", p.203.

³¹ Harrison, "Early Victorian Radicals and the Medical Fringe", pp.203-204.

³² Harrison, "Early Victorian Radicals and the Medical Fringe", p.204.

ideas. Perhaps the most notable example of this comes from the community of Alcott House and the ideas of James Pierrepont Greaves. Born to a London linen draper, and raised as an evangelical Christian, Greaves continued in the family business as a merchant, but went bankrupt during the difficult economic climate of the Napoleonic Wars.³³ This loss appeared to be the trigger for a personal spiritual awakening in 1817, when he experienced ‘some strong interior visitations’ that convinced him of man’s inner divinity.³⁴ It was this instance that led him to become a theosopher – a ‘guru’, as J.E.M. Latham calls him – who sought to encourage the spread of ‘the spiritual renewal and reformation of the individual’.³⁵ Indeed, Greaves’ entire philosophy was built around the notion that mankind’s necessary reform could only be achieved through ‘a recognition of the Divine Spirit, love, that dwells within each person’.³⁶

Shortly after his own spiritual revelation, Greaves came into contact with the work of the Swiss educational reformer Johann Pestalozzi and travelled to visit him in Yverdon. Pestalozzi’s teachings on education were infused with the ideals of Romanticism and significantly influenced by Rousseau. The core message of his works was that the purpose of education was ‘not to impart knowledge but to realise the emotional, spiritual, and intellectual powers innate in the child’.³⁷ In a text that was structured as a series of letters to Greaves himself, Pestalozzi wrote that children contained ‘an active power of faith and love’.³⁸ This chimed with Greaves’ own conceptions concerning the development of inner divinity, and reflected the shared ideals upon which they established a mutually admiring friendship.³⁹

Greaves went on to combine this essential belief with a form of communitarianism, as reflected in his self-description as a ‘socialist’. As Latham has explained, however, his prefacing of this term with the word ‘sacred’ functioned to differentiate

³³ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, pp.17 & 25-42.

³⁴ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, pp.17 & 42-44.

³⁵ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, pp.17-18.

³⁶ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.18.

³⁷ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, pp.45-46; Johann Pestalozzi, *Letters on Early Education. Addressed to J.P. Greaves Esq* (London: Sherwood, Gilbert, and Piper, 1827), p.18.

³⁸ Pestalozzi, *Letters on Early Education*, p.22.

³⁹ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, pp.45-47.

him from those, such as Owen, who focussed on the political, economic, and material means by which mankind may be reformed, and to instead highlight his belief in the primacy of individual moral change and the development of the ‘love spirit’.⁴⁰ Ultimately, his doctrines advanced the idea that ‘a small community of love-directed individuals could reform the wider community, nation, and even the world’, yet he never really tied this notion to any broader form of political or economic theory.⁴¹

Greaves was influenced by traditions of mysticism, Romanticism, and philosophical idealism, and less so by those of Enlightenment rationalism, as Owen had been. Of particular appeal to Greaves, therefore, was Transcendentalism, which blossomed in the United States during the 1820s and 1830s and exerted a notable influence over contemporary radicals in Britain, particularly those who viewed America as the bountiful land in which new Edens could be established. The New England Transcendentalists stressed intuition over empiricism, and sought to rediscover the health, happiness, and independence of individuals through the throwing off of the corrupting practices and institutions with which contemporary society had smothered the human soul. This was an objective that Greaves shared – to cultivate every ‘inward heavenly tendency’, and rediscover mankind’s spiritual nature.⁴² He thus sought to connect with his American fellows, naming the school and community which he established at Ham Common in Surrey in 1838 after the transcendentalist and reformer Amos Bronson Alcott, himself an early advocate of veganism.⁴³

Alcott House, also known as the ‘Concordium’, was Greaves’ attempt to realise his beliefs. The Concordium described itself as a community of ‘united individuals...desirous, under industrial and progressive education, with simplicity in diet, dress, lodging, &c. to retain the means for the harmonic development of their

⁴⁰ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.18; Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.22.

⁴¹ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.18.

⁴² James Pierrepont Greaves, *The New Nature in the Soul. From the Journal of James Pierrepont Greaves* (London: John Chapman, 1847), p.5.

⁴³ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.20.

physical, intellectual, and moral natures'.⁴⁴ It also served as a centre for radical activity and debate, attracting a steady stream of radically-inclined (or simply curious) visitors, and publishing two journals, *The Healthian* and *The New Age*, to spread its ideals.⁴⁵ As Gregory highlights, 'these devoted much space to vegetarianism', reflecting the fundamental role of the diet within the community itself – due, as indicated by its self-description, to its emphasis on simplicity, purity, and self-reform.⁴⁶ This ultimately stemmed from Greaves' own view of the moral, the spiritual, and the physical as interconnected, and his concomitant conception of humanity's corruption and redemption as holistic processes. Through such ideas, he came to believe that to discover the divine within, it was necessary to relinquish all the corrupting practices of contemporary society, and, thus, that man's 'cookery [was] as erroneous', and, indeed, as important, 'as his philosophy and his religion'.⁴⁷

The vegetarianism of Greaves and his followers replicated several earlier motivations for the diet. Despite the emphasis on personal purity, it contained a firm humanitarian component, partly based upon the belief that 'animal murder [was] the wicket-gate to theft, and hate, and human murder'.⁴⁸ Predominantly, though, such arguments were part of the Concordium's desire to foster a new Edenic world, necessarily free from all forms of violence. Their desire to usher in an age of peace, achieved 'through the spiritual renewal of the individual through love', led them to consider the damage done to the human soul, and thus human society, by the killing of other species for food.⁴⁹ This was exemplified by an address to the London Peace Society penned in 1843 by Greaves' close friend and disciple William Oldham. Opening with a quote from Shelley's *Vindication of Natural Diet* positing that a vegetarian Paris would never have witnessed the Terror, Oldham provocatively argued that governments would do well to recruit their soldiers from the ranks of

⁴⁴ *A Prospectus for the Establishment of a Concordium; or an Industry Harmony College* (London: Strange, 1841), p.3.

⁴⁵ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.20; Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.22.

⁴⁶ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.22. See also *The New Age, and Concordium Gazette, and Temperance Advocate* (1st October 1844), pp.291-292.

⁴⁷ Greaves quoted in Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), p.230.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.170.

⁴⁹ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.178.

‘graziers, drovers, and butchers’, for their ‘constant association...with reeking entrails, mangled limbs, flowing blood, and dying groans’ had rendered ‘callous their unhumanized hearts’ and prepared ‘them most efficiently for human slaughter’.⁵⁰ Here, Oldham made the point that ‘the slightest offence towards the smallest of animals’ could contribute to the nurturing of both an individual and societal spirit of violence, typified by war.⁵¹ In order to shift society onto a different footing, it was necessary not only to again live by the commandment “‘Thou shalt not kill’”, but to extend this to all living beings.⁵²

Killing was inherently brutalising, and thus, for Oldham and the Concordium, ‘to limit the term “kill” to the murder of man only, is a liberty for which...we can see no reason’.⁵³ Cruelty and bloodshed, of any sort, was inimical to ‘the Divine laws’ of humanity’s ‘nature’; ‘Benevolence’ and ‘Love’ were ‘wounded at the sight’ of such ‘destruction’.⁵⁴ Humanity’s ‘moral nature’, therefore, could never fully develop ‘whilst man [remained] the tyrant or the murderer of other portions of the creation’.⁵⁵ Children, in particular, ‘whose tender nature is continually blunted by sights of slaughtered...animals’ could easily become ‘familiarised to deeds of cruel ferocity’, and permanently lose their innate potential for goodness.⁵⁶ For the sake of both the individual and humanity, it was thus vital to educate ‘the peace nature’ of children.⁵⁷ This, Oldham explained, involved parents leading by example, becoming ‘peace-natured beings’ themselves, as well as through the establishment of schools which would nurture ‘peace principles’, and avoid all ‘that kindles the evil fire of wrathful contention’, in particular, ‘all books, tales, and toys relating to battles, murders, wars’.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.60.

⁵¹ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.60.

⁵² *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.60.

⁵³ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.60.

⁵⁴ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.61; *The New Age* (1st January 1844), p.148.

⁵⁵ *The New Age* (1st January 1844), p.148.

⁵⁶ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.60.

⁵⁷ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.62.

⁵⁸ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.62.

In addition to their arguments regarding moral and physical health, another cause of the Concordists' rejection of meat-eating was a fear of animalisation: 'that in mingling the human and animal elements, natures' would become 'confused, and the lower propensities brought into active opposition to the moral sympathies'.⁵⁹

Ultimately, this would cause humanity's divine nature to become lost, 'entombed in the dark sepulchre of...animality'.⁶⁰ This belief in humanity's *difference* from other species, its unique spirituality and the quest for its 'elevation', was key to the Concordists' adoption of a vegan diet, described as being 'strictly of the pure and bloodless kind': 'No animal substances, neither flesh, butter, cheese, eggs, or milk, pollute our tables or corrupt our bodies'.⁶¹ Such ideas are illustrated by Oldham's assertion that 'animal milk, which is so early given to children' served 'to animalise their being, and render them more ferocious'.⁶²

The Concordists' veganism was combined with the rejection of culinary stimulants, non-indigenous ingredients, and, ideally, the heating of food, resulting in a somewhat austere regimen.⁶³ Such measures again reflected the fear of animality, baseness, and the dangers of 'passion, anger, and wrathful irritation' – ideas which were further exhibited in Greaves' negative view of sex, embodied in his teachings of abstinence, as well as his own celibacy.⁶⁴ In this, as in their broader conception of love, Greaves and the Concordists differed from both Shelley and their fellow utopian socialists Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, for, unlike these others, they were less concerned with social or sexual forms of love, and almost wholly dedicated to 'love' as a form of divine spirituality.⁶⁵

Their desire to overcome the 'animal nature' of man was part of a mission to elevate humanity to a position of spiritual purity. Through this cultivation of the divine within, they wished to become the children of God in a new Garden of Eden, seeking

⁵⁹ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.63.

⁶⁰ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.63.

⁶¹ *The New Age* (1st November, 1843), p.119.

⁶² *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.60.

⁶³ For a description of their diet see Latham, pp.169-171 and *The New Age* (1st November, 1843), p.119.

⁶⁴ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.62.

⁶⁵ Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, pp.230-231; Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.170.

to create their own community of peace and plenty. Such an endeavour was reflected in their dietetic practices, which became central to their practical faith – an ideal vegan diet furnished from ‘the field, the orchard, the garden’.⁶⁶ ‘Daily’, they were ‘more and more convinced that those who wish to become pure and regenerate beings, must not neglect the conditioning of the body for the highest development of the spiritual, psychical, and physical natures’ of man, ‘the leading feature’ of which ‘must be a strict attention to the purest, the most simple, and the most loveful diet’.⁶⁷ This highest dietary ideal was, as it had been for Newton, fruitarianism: ‘ripe fruits, cooked solely by the sun and air, in nature’s order’.⁶⁸ This was the ‘best food’ for the body and soul of man; the diet of Eden, wherein humanity had lived harmoniously with other species.

Ultimately, the Concordists’ spiritualism in combination with a co-operative socialistic pacifistic ethic encouraged them to seek an individual and societal liberation, and thence *elevation*, through simplification and restraint. In this they incorporated many pre-existing radical, millenarian, and vegetarian ideas and arguments, but also foregrounded an explicit anthropocentric notion of mankind’s fundamental difference and superiority, and an abhorrence at the animal ‘other’. Despite this, however, notably radical ideas remain, such as their vegan diet based entirely upon local produce, and their apparent endorsement of the rights of non-human species. Whilst Oldham, for example, was describing the harmful animalising potential of human’s drinking other animals’ milk, he also made the point that this was ‘sustenance’ designed for ‘the animal’s own young’.⁶⁹ ‘Much has been said of the inviolability of *human* life’, he proclaimed, so ‘why should we not extend this inviolable right to animals as well as ourselves?’⁷⁰

⁶⁶ *The New Age* (1st November, 1843), p.119.

⁶⁷ *The New Age* (1st October 1844), p.292. William Alcott, brother of Bronson, whose *Vegetable Diet Defended* (1844) was reprinted in chunks in the pages of *The New Age*, reflected a similar emphasis on ‘elevation’: *The New Age* (1st January 1844), p.151. See also W.A. Alcott, *Vegetable Diet Defended* (London: John Chapman, 1844).

⁶⁸ *The New Age* (1st August 1844), pp.267-268. See also Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.170.

⁶⁹ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.60.

⁷⁰ *The New Age* (1st July 1843), p.60.

Greaves and the Concordists thus embodied a complexity of interrelated, and sometimes potentially contradictory, reasonings and motivations for their diet. In addition to their emphasis on the moral and spiritual, they also presented more traditional physiological arguments, as well as those regarding the benefits of plant-based agriculture in comparison to the inefficient land use/food yield ratio of rearing of animals for slaughter.⁷¹ Such diversity was unsurprising, for they were well versed in vegetarian literature, and recognised themselves as part of a growing dietary tradition. For instance, in *The New Age*, in an introduction to the recent vegetarian text of W.A. Alcott, there was a notable consideration of vegetarian proponents who had come before, with Lambe, Newton, Phillips and Shelley all featuring.⁷² Elsewhere, Nicholson's work was given special mention, considered by the Concordists to 'deserve an extensive circulation' as a key guide to vegetarian theory and practice.⁷³

4.1.4. Vegetarianism and Reform in the Nineteenth Century

Another example of the development of such vegetarian arguments can be found across the Atlantic, in the famous community of 'Fruitlands', established in 1843 just outside Harvard by Bronson Alcott and Charles Lane, a prominent member of the Concordium. Under the influence of transcendental philosophy, as well as the ideas of Greaves, this community set itself up along cooperative, communistic lines, and similarly sought spiritual regeneration through simplification.⁷⁴ Self-sustaining and opposed to all forms of exploitation, the community sought to remove itself from the existing economy, rejecting, in particular, products of slavery, such as cotton.⁷⁵ For them, 'self-spun linen' was the clothing of choice, for wool, too, was a product derived from exploitation: that of non-human animals.⁷⁶ No animal labour was used to work the land at Fruitlands, and, as at the Concordium, veganism was

⁷¹ See, for example, *The New Age* (1st June 1844), pp.228-230.

⁷² *The New Age* (1st January 1844), p.149.

⁷³ *The New Age* (1st December 1844), p.332.

⁷⁴ For an account of Fruitlands see Richard Francis, *Fruitlands: The Alcott Family and Their Search for Utopia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) and Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, pp.205-221.

⁷⁵ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.211.

⁷⁶ Latham, *Search for a New Eden*, p.211.

the practised diet. This, Frederick Willis later recalled, was due to Alcott's belief that all 'animals had equal rights as to life, liberty, and happiness, with mankind'.⁷⁷ Additionally, however, and in a more Greavesian vein, it also resulted from his contention that 'animal food...polluted the body, and through it penetrated and defiled the soul'.⁷⁸ Again, therefore, questions of self-sufficiency, humanitarianism, and the elevation of human divinity were combined.

Beyond Fruitlands and the Concordium there were numerous other communitarian and socialistic experimenters who incorporated vegetarianism into their attempts to bring a new world, a new humanity, into being. Many, such as John Etzler, James Elmslie Duncan, and Catherine and John Goodwyn Barmby, had been connected to the Concordium, and adopted the diet for the usual mix of 'economic, social, and moral reasons'.⁷⁹ Typically, the Barmbys, notable pioneers of both communism and feminism, felt a particular affinity for Shelley, similarly shared by Duncan.⁸⁰ This can be ascribed, in part, to the presence, and popularity, of certain vegetarian-radical ideas, as pioneered by Shelley, within the intellectual and cultural atmosphere of radicalism in this period. A telling comment appeared in the Chartist *Northern Star*, which described the Concordists as an 'interesting body of Social reformers, who seem to realise practically (so far as possible) what god-like Shelley only dreamed of in his Queen Mab'.⁸¹ Such reformers, moving within and between Owenite/communitarian and Chartist circles, were those who ultimately fed into the growth of both organised socialism and organised vegetarianism in Britain.

⁷⁷ Frederick Willis, *Alcott Memoirs, Posthumously Compiled from the Papers of Dr. Frederick L.H. Willis by E.W.L. & H.B.* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1915), p.83.

⁷⁸ Willis, *Alcott Memoirs*, p.82.

⁷⁹ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.28-29. For an account of Etzler, see Gregory Claeys, "John Adolphus Etzler, technological utopianism, and British socialism: the Tropical Emigration Society's Venezuelan mission and its social context, 1833-1848", *The English Historical Review* 101, no.399 (April 1986), pp.351-375.

⁸⁰ Notably, John Goodwyn Barmby was one of the first individuals to use the term 'communist'. Bouthaina Shaaban, "Shelley and the Barmbys", *Keats-Shelley Journal* 41 (1992), pp.122-138. For an account of the Barmbys, including their own utopian experiment, the 'Moreville Communitorium', see Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago, 1983), pp.172-182 and W.H.G. Armytage, *Heavens Below: Utopian Experiments in England 1560-1960* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961), pp.196-208. For an account of Duncan, see James Gregory, *The Poetry and the Politics: Radical Reform in Victorian England* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014). This work also includes a further account of the Barmbys (pp.81-88).

⁸¹ Quoted in Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.28.

The birth and development of vegetarianism as an organised movement has been well explored by James Gregory, and so this study will not dwell long on the topic. It is, however, important to note that the Vegetarian Society (founded in 1847) was largely brought into being by the ‘remnants of the Concordium’, alongside the members of the vegetarian Bible Christian Church.⁸² The latter, an offshoot of Swedenborgianism established by William Cowherd in Salford in 1809, stressed the temperance element of the diet, although this was, again, based upon more fundamental notions regarding the necessity of moral and spiritual renewal and the cultivation of humanity’s inner divinity.⁸³ Adhering to a more rationalistic approach to scripture, they also put significant emphasis on independent thought, and formed part, according to Twigg, of what can be termed ‘the proletarian enlightenment’ – that belief in self-improvement as a means to achieving personal as well as progressive societal aims – as ‘reflected in their strong interest in medicine, science, and education’.⁸⁴

Such ideas, and the strong link to religious non-conformity and progressive politics were defining features of the emerging movement. Figures such as Cowherd’s successor, Joseph Brotherton (later to become Salford’s first member of parliament), and James Simpson, the first president of the Vegetarian Society, were active in the promotion of a multitude of progressive causes, such as pacifism, abolitionism, opposition to corporal and capital punishment, and democratic reform; Brotherton even established a fund for the victims of Peterloo.⁸⁵ Such connections and concerns were indicative of the movement’s roots: specifically Manchester and Salford, and, more broadly, Lancashire and Yorkshire.⁸⁶ These were the regions, as Gregory observes, that had ‘nurtured the various medical’, dietary, and religious

⁸² Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.30-31.

⁸³ For an account of the Bible Christians see Twigg, “The Vegetarian Movement in England 1847-1981”, II.5.C.

⁸⁴ Twigg, “The Vegetarian Movement in England 1847-1981”, II.5.C.

⁸⁵ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.31-44. William Horsell and the Clubb family (Henry, Sarah, and Robert) are other notable examples. For Brotherton, see Peter Shapely, “Brotherton, Joseph (1783-1857)”, in *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2004), accessed 19th April 2019, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-3575>.

⁸⁶ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.35 & 38.

‘unorthodoxies’, as well as ‘Chartism, Owenism, secularism, spiritualism and other later ‘currents of plebeian independence’’, such as the Social Democratic Federation, the Labour Churches, and the Independent Labour Party.⁸⁷

These urban, industrialised areas of the north were the key centres of radicalism and non-conformity and fostered a culture of working-class self-education and improvement.⁸⁸ In this environment, vegetarianism thrived, and through the early to mid-nineteenth century the diet remained connected to ideas of reform – individual and societal, mental and moral. The liberation of mind, body, and spirit became a theme that suffused, and wove together, much radical, non-conformist, and vegetarian discourse. Dietary reform thus developed as part of a broader emergent progressivism in Britain.

It is certainly true that many involved in this development, such as Brotherton, were more allied to liberalism, rather than nascent leftist ideologies. However, it is important to note that in this early milieu of reform, the ideas and motivations of different groupings often significantly overlapped. Socialist communitarians, radically inclined liberals, and religious non-conformists often shared a desire to free the individual from repressive orthodoxy, as well as to reform society in line with humanitarian, pacifistic, democratic, and egalitarian ideals.

The essential components of leftist thought – concepts of peace, fellowship, universalism, love, cooperation, and equality, combined with millenarian yearnings, holistic understandings of reform, and the attempt to realise a new world through the living of a new life – which began to solidify in the form of organisation and ideology in this period, were those which simultaneously structured the expression of vegetarian ideas. As the nineteenth century continued, this particular connection was only to strengthen, with the leading voices promoting the diet increasingly coming from socialist, communist, and anarchist quarters.

⁸⁷ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.35 & 112.

⁸⁸ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.36 & 112-113. As Twigg indicates, working-class men formed the largest contingent within the membership of the Vegetarian Society in the middle of the century. Twigg, “The Vegetarian Movement in England 1847-1981”, II.5.D.ii. For further membership statistics, see Charles W. Forward, *Fifty Years of Food Reform: A History of the Vegetarian Movement in England* (London: The Ideal Publishing Union, 1898), pp.57-58.

4.2. 'An Intensity of Aspiration': The Socialist Revival

4.2.1. The Development of Socialism in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain

The 1880s and 1890s was a time of rapid growth for the Left in Britain, witnessing 'the proliferation of a veritable kaleidoscope of new socialist groups'.⁸⁹ These ranged from Marxist organisations, most notably, Henry Hyndman's Democratic Federation (1881), later the Social Democratic Federation (1884-1909), to the 'ethical socialist' Fellowship of the New Life (1883-1898) and the more heterogeneous Socialist League (1884-1901), as well as Christian socialist groups such as the Labour Church Movement (1891-1902). Also founded in this period were the Fabian Society (1884), the Scottish Labour Party (1888-1895), the Independent Labour Party (1893-1975) and the Labour Representation Committee (1900), which, in 1906, changed its name to the Labour Party. Some of these groups were relatively modest in terms of membership, others were not. Indeed, particularly when viewed collectively, socialist organisations had significant popular appeal. As Linehan illustrates, the Independent Labour Party 'had over 400 clubs and branches by 1894 and maybe as many as 50,000 members by 1895', while Robert Blatchford's well-known socialist weekly *The Clarion* (1891-1934) was 'selling 80,000 copies per issue by the close of the decade'.⁹⁰

The reasons for this dramatic awakening of socialist thought and activity in the late nineteenth century were numerous. As Bevir has shown, the specific reassertion of *socialist* ideas, as opposed to more general forms of radicalism and progressivism, was, in part, due to the fracturing and failures of liberalism, and its loss of political and ideological dominance.⁹¹ Both within parliament and in the country, the alliance of various liberal, nonconformist, and radical tendencies, which the Liberal Party represented had begun to break down.⁹² So too, in the light of a long period of economic depression and high unemployment, lasting from c.1873 to c.1896, had the

⁸⁹ Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, pp.1-2.

⁹⁰ Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, p.2.

⁹¹ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.34.

⁹² Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.38-40.

authority of one of liberalism's central planks: classical economics.⁹³ It was in this context of 'economic and party-political plasticity' that a significant section of the progressively-inclined middle and working class began to look elsewhere for answers.⁹⁴

This period also saw the broader erosion of other established certainties, particularly in the sphere of religion, with the dawn of what has been termed the Victorian 'crisis of faith'.⁹⁵ Scientific advance, particularly evolutionary theory, had contributed to the undermining of an evangelicalism, which, with its individualistic emphasis on self-reliance, had often served to support the dominance of classical economic ideas.⁹⁶ The undercutting of existing religious dogmas and institutions was reflected in the growth of religious criticism, marked by both a rise in secularism and an increasing change in the nature of religious faith for many individuals, particularly those of a nonconformist or progressive persuasion. Immanentist, spiritualist and idealistic forms of belief abounded. God was now often identified as working through evolutionary processes, through humanity's own inner moral voice and through awakened individuals, most notably a more human, more radical figure of Jesus.⁹⁷

Further to these economic, political, and spiritual 'dilemmas', as outlined by Bevir, Linehan also stresses the role of modernity itself in encouraging this socialist resurgence. 'The temporal, psychological and cultural strains' induced in this period by the shifting sands of ideology and belief, the erosion of old certainties, and rapid technological and societal change (as manifested in the so-called Second Industrial Revolution of the late-nineteenth century), had resulted in a 'liminoid moment' – a

⁹³ Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, p.27; Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.34 & 36-38.

⁹⁴ Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain", p.32.

⁹⁵ For explorations of this, see: Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 2 vols. (London: A & C Black, 1971); John Moore, *The Post-Darwinian Controversies: A Study of the Protestant Struggle to Come to Terms with Darwin in Great Britain and America, 1870-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Frank M. Turner, *Between Science and Religion: The Reaction to Scientific Naturalism in Late Victorian Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

⁹⁶ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.32-36.

⁹⁷ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.32-33.

somewhat dizzying stage between old and new ways of being.⁹⁸ This was a time of apprehension, a period in which people reacted to a sense of loss, particularly to the notion that an ‘onrushing progress was de-spiritualising life’.⁹⁹ It was, in addition, a time which witnessed increasing alarm and dismay at the growing injustices, alienation, and ugliness that a modern industrial capitalist society was serving to perpetuate.¹⁰⁰

Such a sense of uncertainty and change, however, also encouraged a desire for ‘revitalisation’ – ‘an awakened spiritual sensibility and optimism about constructive change’.¹⁰¹ Indeed, this period contained a strong sense of ‘epochal consciousness’ – a feeling ‘that one was living through an exceptionally new time’.¹⁰² The *fin de siècle* was thus conducive to heady, imaginative, optimistic experimentation, particularly in the realms of the political, the spiritual, and the artistic. The potential for a new world to be born out of the ashes of the old provided an animating spark that encouraged the activities of numerous groups and individuals – not least within the flourishing socialist movement.

The nature and scale of the socialist revival perhaps makes the presence of vegetarian ideas unsurprising. Central leftist themes of this period – of holistic liberation, unbounded fellowship, immanent divinity, and individual moral transformation – were also highly conducive to vegetarianism, with many contemporary socialists incorporating the diet as part of their ideology. More broadly, the period at large, with its dynamic of contestation and renewal, also encouraged a vegetarian resurgence, which, like socialism’s, came after a period of mid-century stagnation and decline. As Gregory asserts, ‘by the 1890s’ vegetarianism had become imbued with ‘a new vitality’ and enjoyed greater public visibility.¹⁰³ Flourishing alongside, and within, a resurgent left, it became ‘recognised as a feature of modern metropolitan reformist, radical, or progressive

⁹⁸ Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, pp.27-28 & 43-44.

⁹⁹ Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, p.43.

¹⁰⁰ Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, p.27.

¹⁰¹ Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, pp.28 & 43-44.

¹⁰² Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, pp.27-28 & 43-44.

¹⁰³ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.62 & 66.

life'.¹⁰⁴ It was in these hopeful *fin de siècle* days that the diet thus became a quintessential 'sign of the times'.¹⁰⁵

Of the three broad categories commonly used to define British socialism in this period – Marxist, Fabian, and ethical socialist – almost all leftist vegetarians were to be found in the last.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps surprisingly considering its later derision, this category was also the most popular. As Bevir describes, the Marxists and Fabians were always relatively small, metropolitan groups. It was 'only when a noticeably more ethical socialism spread through the provinces' that 'socialism became a widespread movement'.¹⁰⁷ The reason for this is well illustrated by the Nottingham socialist Percy Redfern's (1875-1958) recollections of observing socialist agitation during a miners' strike in 1893. For here, although he witnessed the 'eloquent' exposition of 'Marxian doctrine' and the instructive use of 'Fabian diagrams', it was not these that caught his, or the crowd's, attention; it was instead the utopian socialist vision of the future presented by Margaret McMillan: 'a vision of health, joy and beauty in working lives to be demanded and created by the people themselves'.¹⁰⁸ Redfern recounted: 'We listened with respect, touched by something vaguely, unattainably fine, and then we went back to the strike'.¹⁰⁹

It was this ethical socialist tradition that stimulated most socialist activity in this period. Ethical socialism was more relatable than its Marxist and Fabian counterparts, yet also – through its appeal to the personal, the spiritual, and the moral – presented a more complex, holistic, and innate conception of socialism, which, as will be seen, ultimately offered contemporaries the most compelling route into the socialist camp. Here, however, it is important to note that the term 'ethical socialist' is itself a contentious one. For, as Manton highlights, it has long been employed as a

¹⁰⁴ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.62.

¹⁰⁵ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.67.

¹⁰⁶ It must be noted, though, that the boundaries between these groupings were always blurred, as they shared a great deal of ideology, argument and membership. For a discussion of the practice of multi-group membership see Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain", pp.35-36 and Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, pp.2-3.

¹⁰⁷ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.41.

¹⁰⁸ Percy Redfern, *Journey to Understanding* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1946), p.19.

¹⁰⁹ Redfern, *Journey to Understanding*, p.19.

pejorative term for those who advocated forms of socialism that stood apart from the later dominant Marxist or Fabian traditions, its usage commonly serving to reinforce a false doer-dreamer dichotomy between the pragmatic materialism and organisational efficiency ascribed to the Fabians and the supposed other-worldly mooning of the ‘ethical’.¹¹⁰

4.2.2. Ethical and Religious Socialism and Vegetarianism

The Fellowship of the New Life (FNL), an early, and influential, organisation of the socialist revival, provided the most significant embodiment of ‘ethical socialist’ ideas in this period.¹¹¹ Established in London in 1883 under the influence of the itinerant scholar Thomas Davidson, its initial purpose was to encourage its members ‘to perfect their individual characters in accord with ethical precepts of simplicity, kindness, and love...to form a community embodying these principles’, and to then ‘use the example of this community to regenerate humanity as a whole’.¹¹² Although more of an intellectual and social discussion group, as opposed to an actual model community, such an ethical, spiritual emphasis continued to define the Fellowship’s thought and activity.¹¹³

As one of its founding members, William Jupp (1846-1936), indicated, the central purpose of the Fellowship was to demonstrate that, in changing both the individual and society, ‘an inward and spiritual reform was not less important than drastic changes in outward and material conditions’.¹¹⁴ Such an emphasis stemmed from an immanentist conception of God as ‘the one spirit that includes and pervades all the

¹¹⁰ Manton, “The Fellowship of the New Life”, p.284.

¹¹¹ The Fellowship published a journal, *Seed-time*, from 1889 to 1898. In addition to Manton’s work on the Fellowship, see also Armytage, *Heavens Below*, pp.327-341.

¹¹² Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.243. For Davidson’s original expression of this concept, see Thomas Davidson, *The Moral Aspects of the Economic Question* (London: William Reeves, 1888), p.48.

¹¹³ They did, however, have a shared house, a commune of sorts, in Doughty Street in Bloomsbury, London. Manton, “The Fellowship of the New Life”, p.286. For a good account of these ideas, see Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.217-234.

¹¹⁴ William Jupp, *Wayfarings: A Record of Adventure and Liberation in the Life of the Spirit* (London: Headley Brothers, 1918), p.83.

parts'.¹¹⁵ This view of God as a shared divine internal animating force served to unify: 'as we learn that God is not alien to any of us...it begins to appear highly absurd that we should be alien or indifferent to one another'.¹¹⁶ Through this realisation society could thus be re-imagined 'as an organic whole...a fellowship of inter-related, mutually dependent human beings, wherein the claims of the personality of each should be recognised and, under a justly established social order, made one with the needs of the common life'.¹¹⁷

For Jupp and his associates, the 'self-reform' of individuals was primary, for it was the development of such a consciousness of humanity's innate goodness, and of the unity and kinship of all, that would encourage people to 'remake their lives in a way that would create the good society', a society which they could now perceive as within their grasp.¹¹⁸ This 'remaking' was the attempt to *live* the ethic of fellowship in the present, and thus contribute to its irresistible onward progress.¹¹⁹ Such a belief was central to Fellowship thinking, and widespread within the socialist movement more broadly. Indeed, as another Fellowship member, Maurice Adams, asserted, an individual 'having found deliverance himself' was duty-bound 'to aid in the formation of a healthy public opinion and a higher ideal of life, and then to work with his fellows to embody this ideal, and give it a permanent place in actual life by means of better laws and social arrangements'.¹²⁰

As this indicates, the 'ethical' label which has been used to pigeonhole Fellowship members as 'dreamers', unconcerned with practical economic or social reform, is a misleading one. They may have promoted the importance of the moral and the personal, but this was as part of a more comprehensive conception of socialism – one which recognised the mutual dependence of the moral and the material, the individual and the societal. As another member, J.F. Oakeshott, explained:

¹¹⁵ William Jupp, *The Religion of Nature and of Human Experience* (London: Philip Green, 1906), pp.3 & 174.

¹¹⁶ Jupp, *The Religion of Nature*, p.177.

¹¹⁷ Jupp, *Wayfarings*, p.69.

¹¹⁸ Jupp, *Wayfarings*, p.83; Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.232.

¹¹⁹ Jupp, *The Religion of Nature*, pp.179-180.

¹²⁰ Maurice Adams in *Seed-time* (January 1896), quoted in Manton, "The Fellowship of the New Life", p.298.

were all the desired changes in our political and economic systems made tomorrow they would be futile, unless the outcome of a prior moral movement, and unless followed by a corresponding change in the ideal of life and of the moral relationship of men...And conversely...a moral regeneration of mankind...would be good only so far as it immediately translated itself into a movement for further political and economic evolution.¹²¹

The Fellowship thus endorsed a more ‘connected and coherent’ view of socialism than the Fabians (who emerged as a separate society following a schism within the Fellowship in January 1884). It was, in fact, the Fabians’ own focus on ‘the primacy of political power and material reform’, and their ‘distrust’ or discounting of ‘issues of individual mortality and ethics’, that led to (largely unfair) accusations of the partial and ineffectual nature of a supposedly ethereal Fellowship socialism divorced from practical reality.¹²²

For members of the Fellowship, the fundamental emphasis was on the changing of relationships, and this, inescapably, incorporated both the moral and the material. It was this attempt to embody, propagate, and realise a new way of being and relating, based upon an all-embracing ethic of fellowship, that led a number of socialists associated with the Fellowship, such as Jupp, to expand this concept and embrace the vegetarian diet. Another member, John Coleman Kenworthy (1861-1948), in an 1895 article in *Humanity*, provided a typical example of the vegetarian socialist ideas to be found within the Fellowship’s milieu.

Basing his argument upon a conception of the interdependence of life, he contended that humans were ‘conditioned’ by the nature of their connections with each other, with society, and with ‘all [other] species’.¹²³ Under ‘the present iniquitous social conditions’ these had become fundamentally negative, as ‘the doctrine of ‘the

¹²¹ J.F. Oakeshott quoted in Manton, “The Fellowship of the New Life”, pp.294-295.

¹²² Manton, “The Fellowship of the New Life”, p.304.

¹²³ J.C. Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, *Humanity: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (October, 1895), p.66. This article was derived from an address, organised by the Humanitarian League, given by Kenworthy in the same month. Some of Kenworthy’s arguments appear to draw upon Salt’s *Animal Rights*, published three years before.

dependence of life on life’’, something natural and inescapable, had ‘come to apply in terms of hate instead of terms of love: we “bite and devour one another” and are “consumed one of another”’.¹²⁴ Kenworthy, using typical vegetarian leftist language that blurs the metaphorical into the literal, thus highlighted the need to shift society from a state of negative dependence – *predation* – to one of positive dependence – *cooperation*. In order to do this, humanity needed to rediscover the ‘right, desirable, relations with the rest of life’, which were, quite simply, ‘the relations of *love*’.¹²⁵

Kenworthy conceived of love as ‘a quality of soul which necessitate[d] the exclusion...of hate and indifference’ in its entirety.¹²⁶ If it was to become society’s animating force, it needed to expand ‘further than the limits of the human race’, for, as he explained, a person could not truly ‘love his neighbour-man, and hate, or be indifferent to, his neighbour-animal’, as the presence of violent or exploitative relationships, of any kind, would inevitably serve to corrupt individual and societal morality.¹²⁷ Non-human animals were ‘equally involved with ourselves in our social conditions’, and our treatment of them, as well as our treatment of each other, represented, and reinforced, the overarching societal ethic – be it of predation or cooperation.¹²⁸ Thus he declared: ‘salvation for man means salvation for the animals’.¹²⁹

In order to change society through the awakening of such a ‘spirit of universal Love’, Kenworthy believed that individuals first needed to recognise humanity’s inner-divinity.¹³⁰ This led him to prioritise the initial development of inter-human fellowship as the necessary precursor to a broader recognition of the ‘divine life’ which similarly ‘dwells in...[other] creatures’.¹³¹ He continued, however, to stress that a more comprehensive ‘change in society’ would only come through people’s

¹²⁴ Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, p.67.

¹²⁵ Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, p.67. Original emphasis.

¹²⁶ Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, p.67.

¹²⁷ Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, p.67.

¹²⁸ Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, p.67.

¹²⁹ Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, p.67.

¹³⁰ Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, pp.67-68.

¹³¹ Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, p.68.

recognition of their place within this larger unity of life – this ‘divine family’ – and their attendant realisation that the ‘first duty in life’ was thus to ‘love...*all* things’.¹³²

Kenworthy’s socialist and vegetarian beliefs were clearly informed by an immanentist faith, common within the socialist movement in this period, and characteristic of the apparently ‘religious’ nature of much of its thought, activity, and self-presentation – often characterised as a ‘religion of socialism’. The ‘religion of socialism’ essentially alludes to a view of socialism, held by many in the movement, as the forging of a new way of life, as a moral and spiritual rebirth that would lead to ‘an intensity of aspiration’ for the creation of a soon-to-be-realised world of unity, love, freedom, and joy.¹³³ It was a conception of socialism that was personal and popular, adapting Christian iconography and mythology to create an emotionally compelling aestheticised image of ideal fellowship and individual and societal salvation.¹³⁴ Despite its association with ‘ethical’ and Christian socialism, it had a ubiquitous presence, infusing the language, symbolism, and vision of socialist writing, speech, and culture across *all* factions and groupings.¹³⁵

It was, however, perhaps most clearly embodied by the Labour Church Movement, established by John Trevor in Manchester in 1891.¹³⁶ Trevor’s essential belief was that the Labour movement was the means by which humanity’s inner-divinity found expression.¹³⁷ In this sense, it was the successor to Christianity, and offered a truer form of ‘religion’. The Labour Church was thus founded ‘for the distinct purpose of declaring that God is at work, here and now, in the heart of the Labour Movement’.¹³⁸ Its message appeared to be a popular one, establishing numerous

¹³² Kenworthy, “The Rights of Men and The Rights of Animals”, pp.67-68. Emphasis added.

¹³³ Yeo, “A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain”, p.9. This is thoroughly discussed in Yeo.

¹³⁴ Yeo, “A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain”. See also Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, pp.24-64.

¹³⁵ Yeo, “A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain”, p.6.

¹³⁶ Reflective of a resurgence in interest, there have been two recent studies of the Labour Church Movement: Neil Johnson, *The Labour Church: The Movement and its Message* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018) and Jacqueline Turner, *The Labour Church: Religion and Politics in Britain 1890-1914* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2018).

¹³⁷ Trevor’s key exposition of his belief system is found in his autobiography: John Trevor, *My Quest for God* (London: Labour Prophet, 1897).

¹³⁸ Quoted in Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.281.

churches across the country, though with a strength in northern England, reaching a peak of around fifty in 1895.¹³⁹ Alongside the conference held in Bradford in 1893 to establish the Independent Labour Party, a Labour Church service was held that attracted around five thousand people.¹⁴⁰

The core mission of the Church was, Trevor believed, the attempt to *make* socialists, to grow and spread the ethic of fellowship by simultaneously living it oneself whilst also communicating its vision to those around you: ‘to make life from within, to keep on making it, and to be men of action’.¹⁴¹ As Katharine Bruce Glasier (1867-1950) informed one church, socialism was ‘the form of society which must inevitably come into being when men believe, that is to say live by, the truth of the unity of life’.¹⁴² Although Trevor himself was no vegetarian, it was through such an emphasis on creating socialism through the active living of an ethic of *universal* fellowship, that many individuals, such as Glasier, came to consider vegetarianism an integral element of their socialism.¹⁴³

Both Kenworthy and Jupp adhered to such beliefs, and were themselves involved in a similar endeavour, joining forces with John Bruce Wallace, another vegetarian socialist, in the latter’s development of the Brotherhood Church. Taking its name from Wallace’s weekly periodical *Brotherhood*, its first branch was established in Southgate Road, London in 1892, with others in Forest Gate, Walthamstow, and Croydon swiftly following.¹⁴⁴ The essential mission of the churches (and later the Brotherhood Trust) was to encourage the application of ‘the principles of the Sermon on the Mount literally and fully to individual conduct’.¹⁴⁵ Such an outlook encouraged strong links with pacifist and anti-war movements, as well as with Quakerism. It also fostered a belief in the necessity of practicing a *universal* benevolence, as expressed, for example, by the vegetarian diet, and as embodied in

¹³⁹ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.290.

¹⁴⁰ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.278.

¹⁴¹ Trevor quoted in Yeo, “A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain”, p.15.

¹⁴² Quoted in Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.294.

¹⁴³ Twigg, “The Vegetarian Movement in England 1847-1981”, II.6.C.

¹⁴⁴ Armytage, *Heavens Below*, p.342; Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.260. See also Alfred G. Higgins, *A History of the Brotherhood Church* (Stapleton: The Brotherhood Church, 1982).

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.260.

their ultimate aim of reformulating society along ‘Socialist Co-operative lines’ – a change that would be progressively achieved through the establishment and expansion of exemplary communes.¹⁴⁶

4.2.3. The Influence of American Romanticism

Like many ‘religious’, ‘ethical’, or Fellowship socialists of the period, the pioneers of the Brotherhood Church were influenced by American romanticism – specifically the thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Walt Whitman.¹⁴⁷ Particularly influential was Emerson’s conception of the ‘Over-soul’. This considered an inner-divinity to pervade and connect all of life on earth: ‘within man is the soul of the whole...to which every part and particle is equally related... We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are shining parts, is the soul’.¹⁴⁸ Whitman, too, offered writings which held tremendous appeal for many British socialists, illuminating the organic unity of the human soul and body with the natural world, as well as ideals of comradely love.¹⁴⁹ Thoreau, meanwhile, most famously through *Walden* (1854) and his essay *On Civil Disobedience* (1849), popularised anarchistic and ecological forms of thought, advocating the fulfilment of the individual through the living of a simple life, led in close harmony with nature and with others, as well as the adoption of non-violent resistance to oppose injustice.

Thoreau also often presented powerful images of inter-species kinship, perceiving an inherent humanity in both humans and other animals. Although not a strict vegetarian, Thoreau tended towards the diet, avoiding ‘animal food...not because of

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.261. See also J. Bruce Wallace, *Towards Fraternal Organisation: An Explanation of the Brotherhood Trust* (London: Brotherhood Trust, 1894).

¹⁴⁷ A discussion of the influence of American Romanticism on British socialism is provided in Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.235-255.

¹⁴⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The Over-Soul”, in *Essays* (Boston: James Munroe, 1841), p.223.

¹⁴⁹ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn, NY: 1855). This self-published collection of poems was greatly expanded in numerous subsequent editions. For an account of Whitman’s influence on British socialists, see Kirsten Harris, *Walt Whitman and British Socialism: ‘The Love of Comrades’* (London: Routledge, 2016).

any ill [health] effects’, but because it was ‘not agreeable to my imagination’.¹⁵⁰ Indeed, ‘repugnance to animal food’, he argued, ‘is an instinct’; although man ‘can and does live, in a great measure, by preying on other animals’, it was ‘a miserable way of life’, offending humanity’s natural aversion to the ugliness of unnecessary violence and destruction.¹⁵¹ Vegetarianism, Thoreau believed, would aid in the development of mankind’s ‘higher or poetic faculties’, thus ultimately perceiving it to be ‘part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals’ altogether.¹⁵²

As Bevir describes, many ethical socialists made frequent reference to their specific debt to the major figures of American romanticism when framing their beliefs.¹⁵³ In 1892, for example, the Fellowship’s journal, *Seed-time*, asserted that the organisation and its membership had predominantly been inspired and ‘influenced by Thoreau and Emerson rather than’ thinkers such as ‘Marx’.¹⁵⁴ Whilst the founder of the Labour Church, John Trevor, made the bold, yet representative, claim that Emerson’s and Whitman’s influence upon him had been so profound that they had become ‘part of me’.¹⁵⁵ Vegetarian socialists such as Jupp and Kenworthy, and, as will be discussed, Henry Salt and Edward Carpenter, expressed similar sentiments, and often found that it was shared admiration that contributed to the binding of their own friendships. Jupp, for instance, a most dedicated ‘Thoureauvian’, who devoted a chapter of his autobiography to the man, described the works of Thoreau, Emerson, and Whitman as ‘Scriptures ‘given inspiration by God’’, and formed a firm intellectual and personal relationship with Salt on this basis.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854), p.231.

¹⁵¹ Thoreau, *Walden*, pp.231-232.

¹⁵² Thoreau, *Walden*, pp.231-232.

¹⁵³ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.254.

¹⁵⁴ *Seed-time* (April 1892), quoted in Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.244.

¹⁵⁵ Trevor quoted in Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.254.

¹⁵⁶ Jupp, *Wayfarings*, p.68; Harris, *Walt Whitman and British Socialism*, pp.142-143; Henry S. Salt, *Company I Have Kept* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1930), p.68; Hendrick, *Henry Salt: Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters*, p.26.

4.3. ‘Something warmer, more vital’: Vegetarianism, Utopian Vision and Living Socialism

4.3.1. Tolstoy, Vegetarianism and British Socialism

The philosophers and poets of New England thus offered a new ethical outlook that energised many of those who would come to form part of Britain’s nascent socialist movement. There was, however, another source of anarchistic theories of immanent divinity, unbounded unity, non-violence, and universal fellowship that exercised a fundamental influence on British socialists in this period: Leo Tolstoy. In *The Kingdom of God is Within You* (1894), Tolstoy outlined a Christian anarchist philosophy – a ‘practical’ ‘religion of Christ’ – which placed the teachings of Jesus, particularly the Sermon on the Mount, at its heart, rejecting the impositions and corruptions of the Church, and instead stressing the personal, immanent nature of spiritual and moral reform.¹⁵⁷ In it, he condemned state, church, law, and private property, stressing their fundamental grounding in exploitation and violence, and thus their intrinsic opposition to the ideal way of life which Jesus had described. He believed that Jesus had sought to remove violence from the world through the spread of its replacement – a doctrine of universal love – the ideal which had underpinned all world faiths. This was the basis of Tolstoy’s pacifism, and it was from here that he developed and expounded his own principle of non-violence resistance.¹⁵⁸ This concept – of violence and oppression overcome by peaceful resistance and an active ethic of love – formed the essence of his philosophy, and influenced many leftist and liberationist thinkers and activists, most notably informing the thought of a young Mohandas Gandhi.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Leo Tolstoy, *The Kingdom of God is Within You: or, Christianity not as a Mystical Doctrine, but as a New Life-Conception*, trans. A. Delano (London: Walter Scott, 1894); Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, pp.364, 369 & 371.

¹⁵⁸ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, pp.369-370.

¹⁵⁹ See Leo Tolstoy, “A Letter to a Hindu”, in *Recollections and Essays* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp.413-432. Tolstoy and Gandhi maintained a correspondence from 1909 until Tolstoy’s death in November 1910. Gandhi also named his cooperative community, established in 1910 near Johannesburg, South Africa, ‘Tolstoy colony’. Tolstoy and Gandhi were both admirers of Thoreau, see, respectively, Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, pp.372 & 378 and Anthony J. Parel, *Pax Gandhiana: The Political Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.180-204.

In *The First Step* (1892), Tolstoy provided a typical account of the means by which he believed humanity could begin to reject the evils which had engulfed the world, and to instead seek a ‘good life’.¹⁶⁰ The essential first step towards this new moral life was, he argued, the development of ‘self-control’ – a capacity which modern man fatally lacked.¹⁶¹ Indeed, humanity ‘had developed’, and was ‘enslaved by’, ‘an immense number of desires’ – a ‘hundred unnecessary habits’, the satisfaction of which depended upon ‘the labour, often the painful labour, of others’.¹⁶² Before an individual ‘can do good to men’, Tolstoy asserted, ‘he must cease to do evil’.¹⁶³ Mankind’s current existence, therefore, based upon the suffering of others, and a wilful blindness to it, meant that it was impossible for people, particularly members of the middle and upper classes, to truly enact the higher ethics of ‘justice...generosity or love’ in their daily lives.¹⁶⁴ ‘Self-renunciation’, for Tolstoy, provided the basis for the development of a more virtuous life.¹⁶⁵

The progress towards this new life would be achieved not through the dictates of institutions of church and state, or through violent struggle, but via the development of an individual religious ethic and the spread of a new morality of simplicity and brotherly love. The potential for this new life was already inherent in humanity, for ‘implanted in every individual’ was the ‘divine law of love’.¹⁶⁶ Understanding of this could be expanded through an awakening of both morality and rationality that would enable people to recognise the ‘truth’ and ‘righteousness’ of a life of equality, peace, and fellowship, and thus encourage them to adopt the golden principle of do ‘unto others that which you wish others to do unto you’.¹⁶⁷ As Tolstoy explained, a time would come ‘when all institutions based on violence will disappear because it has become obvious to everyone that they are useless, and even wrong’.¹⁶⁸ This form of

¹⁶⁰ Leo Tolstoy, “The First Step” (1892), *International Vegetarian Union*, accessed 5th April 2019, https://ivu.org/history/tolstoy/the_%20first_step.html, section 2.

¹⁶¹ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 8.

¹⁶² Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 4.

¹⁶³ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 7.

¹⁶⁴ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 4.

¹⁶⁵ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, sections 5 & 7.

¹⁶⁶ Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, pp.371-372.

¹⁶⁷ Tolstoy quoted in Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, pp.369, 371-372 & 377-378.

¹⁶⁸ Tolstoy quoted in Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, p.372.

change was dependent upon ‘personal effort’, the self-driven reconfiguration of one’s own philosophy and behaviour – something Tolstoy himself sought to embody.¹⁶⁹

The First Step was originally penned as an introduction to the Russian edition of Howard Williams’ book *The Ethics of Diet*, first published in 1883. Williams’ text provided the first comprehensive overview of vegetarian thought, gathering together excerpts from centuries of writings of those who promoted, or were at least sympathetic, to the diet. From Pythagoras to William Cowherd, this included the words of Rousseau, Oswald, Ritson, Nicholson, Newton, Shelley, Lambe, and Phillips, amongst many others.¹⁷⁰ Tolstoy, who became a vegetarian around the age of fifty-seven, described it as ‘that excellent book’ which explained, through the voices of mankind’s ‘best representatives’ from all periods, ‘why abstinence from animal food’ was ‘the first act of...a moral life’.¹⁷¹ It was the purpose of *The First Step* to outline Tolstoy’s adherence to this notion, and to clearly explain how vegetarianism was a fundamental ‘first step’ that individuals should make if they sought to develop the higher moral life which he envisaged.

Vegetarianism for Tolstoy was thus part of an attempt to ‘reform [life] from the very roots’; to shift society from an ethic of predation to one of cooperation.¹⁷² The killing of animals, he argued, was deeply damaging, for it forced people to suppress ‘the highest spiritual capacity – that of sympathy’.¹⁷³ To erode humanity’s ‘deeply seated’ ‘aversion to all killing’ through meat-eating – enabled by a combination of ‘example’, ‘greediness’, God’s supposed endorsement, and, ‘above all...habit’ – served to cultivate a callous society.¹⁷⁴ This, Tolstoy demonstrated through a lengthy account of his visit to a slaughterhouse, where he witnessed the complete indifference with which stomach-turning violence was met by its desensitised

¹⁶⁹ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 2.

¹⁷⁰ Howard Williams, *The Ethics of Diet: A Catena of Authorities Deprecatory of the Practice of Flesh-Eating* (London: Pitman, 1883).

¹⁷¹ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, sections 9 & 10.

¹⁷² Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 5.

¹⁷³ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 9.

¹⁷⁴ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 9.

perpetrators.¹⁷⁵ He reserved, however, his most scathing criticism for the luxurious consumer – those who hide like ‘ostriches’ from the horrific realities of the procurement of what they devour – for it was they who developed an even more pernicious form of indifference.¹⁷⁶ This was also reflected in the sphere of human relations, with Tolstoy describing the upper classes as those who satisfied ‘their caprices’ via ‘the crushed lives of working people’, ‘consuming in luxury the labour of thousands’.¹⁷⁷

To move away from this society of predation, it was necessary, first of all, to simplify one’s life and to remove the desire for such things that destroy the lives of others.¹⁷⁸ This was the essential importance of vegetarianism for Tolstoy, for to make one’s literal consumption (of food) a totally benign exercise represented the first stage of a self-control and self-renunciation that would lead to such a life of non-violent, non-exploitative simplicity, and thus to a higher plane of virtue. Vegetarianism was, therefore, ‘the first step’ towards ‘moral perfection’, to the bringing about of ‘the kingdom of God on earth’.¹⁷⁹

Despite his tendency towards a somewhat ascetic presentation of the diet, the core of Tolstoy’s vegetarianism was still the essential notion that violence towards animals was ‘simply immoral’, and that meat-eating was incompatible with a society characterised by sympathy and fellowship.¹⁸⁰ This was reflected in the focus of the buoyant Russian vegetarian movement, which Tolstoy’s teachings had fostered; with the Moscow Vegetarian Society (established 1909), for example, asserting as a key aim ‘the establishment of love and peace among all living creatures’.¹⁸¹ The Russian movement emphasised the role of the diet as a fundamental element of a ‘wider

¹⁷⁵ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 9.

¹⁷⁶ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 10.

¹⁷⁷ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, sections 4 & 7.

¹⁷⁸ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 7.

¹⁷⁹ Tolstoy, “The First Step”, section 10.

¹⁸⁰ For an account of Tolstoy’s vegetarianism, penned by his former private secretary, see Valentin Bulgakov, “Leo Tolstoy and Vegetarianism, with some reference to the Doukhobors”, taken from an address at the 8th World Vegetarian Congress, Berlin/Hamburg, Germany, 1932, printed in *The Vegetarian News* (September 1932), *International Vegetarian Union*, accessed 9th April 2019, <https://ivu.org/congress/wvc32/bulgakov.html>.

¹⁸¹ Charlotte Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples: The History of a Radical International Movement* (London: I.B. Taurus, 2014), pp.31-32.

religious and humanitarian imperative'; an embodiment of the pursuit of a 'moral ideal' which sought to realise a world 'of harmony and justice'.¹⁸²

In Britain, Tolstoy's philosophy, including his vegetarianism, had a significant impact on many in the socialist movement. As one contributor to *Seed-time* wrote, his name became 'a household word in England...especially among those...interested in the Social Revolution'.¹⁸³ For some, such as the ethical socialist and vegetarian Percy Redfern, Tolstoy's writings served as a transformative intellectual and spiritual awakening: 'Tolstoy was my university and my church'.¹⁸⁴ For others, such as Kenworthy, Tolstoy's teachings were a return 'to the principles of conduct taught by Jesus Christ', those of 'self-surrender, truth, and perfect love to all'.¹⁸⁵ Such a philosophy provided the basis for his increasingly anarchistic outlook, including his pacifism and vegetarianism.¹⁸⁶ It also encouraged his belief in the creation of communes devoted to developing the ideal spiritual communal life, as came to fruition at Purleigh in Essex, where, under his guiding hand, a community based upon the teachings of Tolstoy, as well as broader anarcho-communistic ideas, was established in 1896.¹⁸⁷

There were a number of such communities founded in the 1890s, tied to the growth of 'ethical' and libertarian socialist, as well as (specifically Tolstoyan and Kropotkinite) anarchist, ideas.¹⁸⁸ These groupings had significant overlap, all placing

¹⁸² Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples*, p.32. The second quotation is from a resolution passed at the first All-Russian Vegetarian Congress in 1913.

¹⁸³ Quoted in Armytage, *Heavens Below*, p.334.

¹⁸⁴ Percy Redfern, *Tolstoy: A Study* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1907), p.5. See also, Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples*, pp.70-71 and Peter Gurney, "Percy Redfern (1875-1958)", *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (2006), accessed 12th April 2019, <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-89413>.

¹⁸⁵ John Coleman Kenworthy, *Tolstoy: His Life and Works* (London: Walter Scott, 1902), pp.29 & 34. For Kenworthy's relationship with Tolstoy, see: John Coleman Kenworthy, *Tolstoy: His Teaching and Influence in England* (London: Clarion Office, 1901); Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples*, pp.71-72; Armytage, *Heavens Below*, p.346.

¹⁸⁶ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.263; Armytage, *Heavens Below*, p.346.

¹⁸⁷ Armytage, *Heavens Below*, p.347; Dennis Hardy, *Utopian England: Community Experiments 1900-1945* (London: E & FN Spon, 2000), p.175; Alston, *Tolstoy and His Disciples*, pp.128-134; Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.274-275.

¹⁸⁸ In addition to Purleigh, there was Mayland (1895), Clousden Hill (1895), Norton (1896), Ashingdon (1897), Wickford (1898), and Whiteway (1898), as well as numerous other groups and

a similar emphasis on the role of moral transformation and peaceful personal example in the bringing about of societal change.¹⁸⁹ Their major difference, however, as illustrated by the case of Kenworthy, was that the more inwardly-focussed Tolstoyan anarchists would not contemplate the broader political agitation and organisation (including involvement in governmental and legislative processes) that the socialists deemed vital.¹⁹⁰ Kenworthy's specific approach ultimately led him to essentially withdraw from society, eliciting the disapproval of many of his fellow socialists, and, as Manton highlights, playing into the hands of the Fabian critique of 'ethical socialism'.¹⁹¹

For many others, experimental communities were viewed as a means of bringing attention to new ideas – as a form of political *action*, as opposed to spiritual retreat. The FNL explicitly viewed the establishment of socialist 'colonies' as a way of 'illustrating its ideal', despite the fact that this could only ever be 'partial...at best'.¹⁹² Such communities thus reflected the importance attached to the living of beliefs, to the embodying of new ethics and new ways of being as a form of creative agitation, of radical praxis. 'Alternative' lifestyle practices, as manifestations of ideology, were intrinsic to these communities. Vegetarianism, in particular, was common.¹⁹³ In addition to the largely vegetarian Purleigh, there was the completely vegetarian Norton Colony, established under the influence of Edward Carpenter just outside of Sheffield in 1896, whose members even attempted to manufacture vegan footwear (which, naturally – in both senses of the word – took the form of sandals).¹⁹⁴ Whiteway Colony, established in the Cotswolds in 1898, was another, where, in addition to experimenting with everything from dress to gender relations,

associations in the Midlands and the North. Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, pp.68-69; Armytage, *Heavens Below*, pp.349-350.

¹⁸⁹ Bevir provides a good discussion of the 'new' 'ethical anarchism' that emerged in this period: Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.256-277.

¹⁹⁰ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.264.

¹⁹¹ Manton, "The Fellowship of the New Life", pp.297-299.

¹⁹² Quoted in Manton, "The Fellowship of the New Life", pp.298-299.

¹⁹³ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.275-277.

¹⁹⁴ Alston, p.276; Armytage, *Heavens Below*, pp.310-312; Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.55.

dietary change was a prominent feature; as one of its pioneers, Nellie Shaw, asserted: ‘most of us are vegetarians’.¹⁹⁵

Shaw, following a period in the Fabian Society and the ILP, had been drawn to the writings of Tolstoy, and then to Whiteway, in an attempt to find ‘something warmer, more vital, more appealing to the idealistic side of our natures than mere economics’.¹⁹⁶ This illustrates the way in which these communes came to fruition as expressions of the more personal, holistic forms of socialism discussed above. In particular, it highlights their role as embodiments of utopian vision – bringing glimpses of an ideal future into the present. This emphasis on vision was a fundamental feature of the socialist revival, and, in addition to community experiments, was articulated through various forms of activism, art and literature.

4.3.2. Vegetarianism and Popular Socialist Literature

Socialist literature in this period embodied these holistic forms of socialism, with the works of Shelley providing a continued influence. As Elizabeth Carolyn Miller describes, Shelley’s ideas and writings were reproduced throughout leftist periodicals in this period, ‘from anarchist papers such as *Freedom* and the *Torch* to moderate parliamentary socialist journals such as *Our Corner* and *Labour Leader*’.¹⁹⁷ Numerous socialists declared Shelley to have been instrumental in the development of their beliefs, to the extent that to claim him as the ‘entry point for youthful radicalization was practically ritualized speech among British socialists’.¹⁹⁸ As the dedicated ‘Shelleyan’ George Bernard Shaw proclaimed at the inaugural meeting of the Shelley Society in 1886, it had been Shelley’s work that had spurred him to become, like the poet himself, ‘a socialist, an atheist, and a vegetarian’.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ Nellie Shaw, *Whiteway: A Colony on the Cotswolds* (London: C.W. Daniel, 1935), p.58.

¹⁹⁶ Shaw, *Whiteway: A Colony on the Cotswolds*, p.20.

¹⁹⁷ Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Slow Print: Literary Radicalism and Late Victorian Print Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p.150.

¹⁹⁸ Miller, *Slow Print*, p.150.

¹⁹⁹ Roland A. Duerksen, “Shelley and Shaw”, *PMLA* 78, no.1 (March, 1963), p.115. This article provides a thorough discussion of Shelley’s influence on Shaw. See also George Bernard Shaw, *Sixteen Self Sketches* (London: Constable and Company, 1949), p.53.

Referencing his impact on the chartist movement, Shaw declared that Shelley had become an inspirational ‘power’ for the left: ‘He made and is still making men and women join political societies, Secular societies, Vegetarian societies, societies for the loosening of the marriage contract, and Humanitarian societies of all sorts’.²⁰⁰ It was the eloquence and strength of Shelley’s vision that made him such a force, as Shaw witnessed when attending a Shelley centenary celebration in London, where he observed the audience to consist ‘for the most part of working men who took Shelley quite seriously’, compelled by ‘his opinions and spirit’.²⁰¹ Shelley, Shaw indicated, found widespread popularity amongst radicals and progressives from both the working and middle classes because he was not merely a poet but a ‘prophet’, giving voice to compelling, beautiful visions of a juster social order.²⁰² It was ‘the aesthetic’, Shaw asserted, that was ‘the most convincing and permanent’, and it was thus that Shelley’s writings came to stimulate and embody the ‘warmer’, ‘vital’, ‘idealistic’ urge that so appealed to the bulk of ordinary socialists.²⁰³

Shaw indicated that another of these ‘prophets’ was William Morris, whose socialist utopian novel *News from Nowhere* (1890) was the most famous and influential literary socialist ‘vision’ of the period.²⁰⁴ This work, in which the narrator falls asleep in late nineteenth-century London only to awake in an ideal communist society of the future, offered a compelling imagining of a world of equality, freedom and fellowship, where systems of authority, property, class and division were replaced by common ownership and direct democracy. In Morris’ future Britain, individuals could find pleasure in a diversity of work and leisure, infusing the physical and the intellectual with the artistic and the creative, leading lives of beauty and fulfilment close to nature.

Such a vision was not prescriptive. It was, instead, a way to communicate ‘the values on which a socialist society would be based’, as well as the rationale of socialists’

²⁰⁰ Shaw, “Shaming the Devil about Shelley”, pp.244-245.

²⁰¹ Shaw, “Shaming the Devil about Shelley”, p.243.

²⁰² George Bernard Shaw, “Keats”, in George Bernard Shaw, *Pen Portraits and Reviews* (1932; London: Constable and Company, 1949), pp.182-183.

²⁰³ Stephen Winsten, *Days with George Bernard Shaw* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1949), p.195.

²⁰⁴ Shaw, “Keats”, p.182.

activity and faith.²⁰⁵ Most importantly, though, it was an explicit attempt to inspire others to themselves imagine a better world. This function of utopian socialist visions has been termed ‘the education of desire’, as these expressions of new societies, ethics, and relations enabled people to develop new understandings ‘of what is necessary for human fulfilment’, offering ‘a broadening, deepening and raising of aspirations in terms quite different from those of their everyday life’.²⁰⁶

Famously, Morris has been claimed by most leftist groupings – for Marxism, anarchism, and ethical socialism. Such claims are all, to an extent, valid.²⁰⁷ However, as demonstrated by Goodway, he can most accurately be described as a libertarian socialist.²⁰⁸ Despite his own anti-statist outlook, he disagreed with the anarchist pre-occupation with the state’s immediate abolition, and, although identifying as a Marxist, was deeply influenced by romanticism and utopianism, drawing more upon artistic ideals than economic theory. Ultimately, in *News from Nowhere* he presented an anarcho-communistic vision that reflected his own stress upon the transformation of life and the spiritual, moral and artistic renewal of mankind – a new world wherein:

men and women...are free, happy, and energetic...most commonly beautiful of body also, and surrounded by beautiful things of their own fashioning, and a nature bettered and not worsened by contact with mankind.²⁰⁹

Morris’s vision, like those of the experimental communities, gave voice to a form of socialism that focussed on re-conceiving the relationships of daily life – on simplification, fellowship, and communion with nature.²¹⁰ Other utopian socialist

²⁰⁵ Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (London: Philip Allan, 1990), p.120.

²⁰⁶ Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, p.122.

²⁰⁷ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.86-87, 95, 105 & 127.

²⁰⁸ Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow*, pp.20-24. See also Ruth Kinna, “Morris, Anti-Statism and Anarchy”, in *William Morris: Centenary Essays*, ed. Peter Faulkner and Peter Preston (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1999). The fullest accounts of Morris’ life and thought remain Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994) and E.P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (London: Merlin, 1977).

²⁰⁹ Morris, *News from Nowhere*, p.159.

²¹⁰ The Arts and Crafts Movement, in part inspired by Morris, itself formed an expression of this, and, under the direction of C.R. Ashbee, even established its own socialistic community of craftsmen. For an account, see Fiona MacCarthy, *The Simple Life: C.R. Ashbee in the Cotswolds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) and Alan Crawford, *C.R. Ashbee: Architect, Designer and Romantic Socialist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

novels of the period offered a similar emphasis, with Robert Blatchford's *The Sorcery Shop* (1907), for example, describing a future Manchester as an egalitarian green city 'of health and beauty, of happy homes...of trees and flowers' – a 'Paradise regained'.²¹¹ Blatchford's vision in many ways resembled the contemporary efforts of the garden city movement; itself a more structured and effective, though less radical, descendant of previous attempts to establish progressive communities. Inspired by Ebenezer Howard's 1898 work *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, the garden city movement sought to merge the best of town and country life, combining good housing and more cooperative economic and social arrangements with abundant green space and close, mutually beneficial relations with the natural world.²¹²

Inevitably, the first garden city to be established – Letchworth – in 1909, attracted reformers of all types, including many socialists, particularly those associated with The Fellowship of the New Life.²¹³ Vegetarian socialists were prominent amongst them, with both Wallace and Jupp opting to make Letchworth their home.²¹⁴ Vegetarianism itself was another prominent cause amongst Letchworth's founding inhabitants, and the town soon witnessed the establishment of both a 'food reform' restaurant and a 'Simple Life Hotel'.²¹⁵ A contemporary caricature of a 'typical Garden citizen' reveals this characteristic mixing of radical politics, spiritualism and lifestyle reform, describing an individual: 'clad in knickerbockers and, of course, sandals, a vegetarian and member of the Theosophical Society, who kept two tortoises which he polishes periodically with the best Lucca oil', and whose library shelves contain 'the works of William Morris, H.G. Wells and Tolstoy'.²¹⁶

²¹¹ Robert Blatchford, *The Sorcery Shop: An Impossible Romance* (London: The Clarion Press, 1907), p.17.

²¹² Ebenezer Howard, *To-Morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1898). See also: Armytage, *Heavens Below*, pp.370-374; Duncan Bowie, *The Radical and Socialist Tradition in British Planning: From Puritan Colonies to Garden Cities* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp.141-169; Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design Since 1880*, fourth ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), pp.90-148.

²¹³ Armytage, *Heavens Below*, pp.373-374.

²¹⁴ Armytage, *Heavens Below*, p.341.

²¹⁵ Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, p.76.

²¹⁶ Armytage, *Heavens Below*, p.374.

Letchworth's architect, Raymond Unwin (1863-1940), who designed the town in the Arts and Crafts style, was himself a vegetarian, as well as a utopian socialist who claimed Morris' *News from Nowhere* to be 'the key to every one of his architectural, social and political opinions'.²¹⁷ Indeed, such visions of unbounded fellowship, cooperation and a simple, rewarding life led in intimate harmony with nature, were highly conducive to vegetarian sympathies. Blatchford's utopia certainly reflected this, as one of the travellers to his future England discovered when enquiring of his hosts as to the absence of meat in his meal: "“Meat?” said Mrs. Lascelles, with a look of surprise. “What is meat?””²¹⁸ ‘Naturally’, their meal had been ‘a vegetable curry’, for such a ‘bad habit’ as meat-eating was entirely ‘unknown’ in this new world of health and happiness.²¹⁹

Blatchford had already explicitly endorsed the diet in his best-selling *Merrie England* (1893), a work that outlined a more holistic conception of socialism, looking beyond a focus on material improvements – ‘food, and shelter, and clothes’ – to argue for a fuller appreciation of humanity's needs and potential.²²⁰ ‘Men have imaginations and passions as well as appetites’, he asserted, and so we should not simply consider ‘bacon and blankets’ to be the ‘facts of life’, but also ‘love’, ‘hope’, ‘laughter’, ‘music’, ‘knowledge’, ‘art’, ‘recreation’, and ‘friendship’.²²¹ He also encouraged adherence to a simple ““natural” life”, and recommended as key works to his readers texts by Carpenter and Morris.²²²

Selling over a million copies, the *Manchester Guardian* claimed that ‘for every convert made by “Das Kapital”, there were a hundred made by “Merrie England”’.²²³

²¹⁷ Colin Ward, “An Old House Amongst New Folk: Making Nowhere Somewhere”, in *William Morris & News from Nowhere: A Vision for Our Time*, ed. Stephen Coleman and Paddy O’Sullivan (1990; Dartington: Green Books, 2004), p.127. Unwin was also a good friend of Edward Carpenter.

²¹⁸ Blatchford, *The Sorcery Shop*, p.24.

²¹⁹ Blatchford, *The Sorcery Shop*, pp.24-25.

²²⁰ Robert Blatchford, *Merrie England* (London: Clarion Office, 1894), p.39. Blatchford was also a member of Salt's Humanitarian League's ‘Humane Diet’ department. Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.158.

²²¹ Blatchford, *Merrie England*, pp.15-16 & 19.

²²² Blatchford, *Merrie England*, pp.18-19.

²²³ Robert Blatchford, *These Eighty Years* (London: Cassell & Co., 1931), p.xiii. Gregory Claeys suggests that ‘the actual ratio was probably nearer one to a thousand’. Gregory Claeys, *Imperial Sceptics: British Critics of Empire, 1850-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010),

Holistic conceptions of socialism, such as Blatchford's, were those which truly served to inspire, to *make* socialists in this period. Morris was even more successful in this regard, becoming, as Bevir puts it, for both contemporaries as well as subsequent generations, 'everyone's favourite British socialist'.²²⁴ As Yeo highlights, 'works like [Carpenter's] *Towards Democracy*, *Merrie England*, or *News from Nowhere* were gulped thirstily into the consciousness of groups of workers, and were used as integral parts of socialist life'.²²⁵ Texts such as these embodied a socialism that provided 'something warmer, more vital', as sought by Nellie Shaw, and that illuminated the 'vision of health, joy and beauty' described by Percy Redfern. Outlining inspirational visions, educating imaginations and aspirations, they formed the basis of a truly popular socialism in this period.

4.4. Natural Bedfellows: Conclusions

Ultimately, these texts emphasised the essential moral and spiritual values – the humanity – upon which socialism was based, and illustrated the nature, and importance, of *living* socialism in daily life. They demonstrated the centrality of changing the way in which people related to each other and the world around them (including other species as well as nature itself), foregrounding the necessity of shifting the underlying ethic of society from one of predation and alienation to one of cooperation and unity. Vegetarianism thus often appeared as a natural bedfellow of socialism – with two of the three most influential socialist texts of the period written by vegetarians and advocating the diet, and the third (Morris') intersecting in numerous ways with past and contemporary vegetarian-socialist outlooks.

p.173. For an account of Blatchford, see Laurence Thompson, *Robert Blatchford: Portrait of an Englishman* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1951).

²²⁴ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.85.

²²⁵ Yeo, "A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain", p.29. As Gregory highlights, the 1908 edition of *Merrie England* advertised its effect on the advancement of vegetarianism, stating that since Blatchford 'gave up meat, vegetarianism has made more rapid strides than before, especially among Social reformers'. Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.251.

This is well demonstrated by the artist Walter Crane (1845-1915), whose iconic imagery defined the socialist movement in this period.²²⁶ His vegetarian proclivities were perhaps most clearly on display in his illustrations to the 1911 satire *Rumbo Rhymes; or the Great Combine*.²²⁷ This work imagined the calling of a grand assembly of all the oppressed animals of the world, in order 'To formulate a common plan / To circumvent the gourmand man'.²²⁸ Providing a critique of vivisection, the use of animals in the manufacture of goods (particularly fashion), and, most prominently, meat-eating, it lambasted humanity for its arrogance and self-focus:

The Kingdom of the Earth's for man –
At least, he acts upon that plan;
Ignoring all the hopes and wishes
Of birds and beasts, crabs, eels and
fishes²²⁹

Its essential message was that mankind should change its ways and no longer view other animals as food, 'tool [or] slave', and instead recognise their common kinship, reconceiving relationships with the world around them and learning to inform actions not purely:

...from his selfish point of view
Which is not honest, right or true,
But from the point of view of others²³⁰

Crane's most striking image from this work (Fig.5), imagined an inter-species resistance to mankind's predatory tyranny:

The victims of the pot and pan –
Went forth against the tyrant, man.²³¹

²²⁶ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, p.251. Gregory cites Crane's description as 'almost vegetarian' from a contemporary vegetarian periodical. For Shelley's influence on Crane, see Walter Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London: Methuen & Co, 1907), p.80. For a collection of Crane's most famous images, see Walter Crane, *Cartoons for the Cause, 1886-1896* (London: Twentieth Century Press, 1896).

²²⁷ Alfred C. Clamour (author), Walter Crane (illustrator), *Rumbo Rhymes; or the Great Combine: A Satire* (London: Harper & Brothers, 1911).

²²⁸ Clamour, *Rumbo Rhymes*, p.33.

²²⁹ Clamour, *Rumbo Rhymes*, p.16.

²³⁰ Clamour, *Rumbo Rhymes*, pp.24 & 64.

²³¹ Clamour & Crane, *Rumbo Rhymes*, pp.19 & 25.

Depicting a bull holding aloft the red flag, surmounted by an up-turned cooking pot, the symbol of carnivorous oppression, this can be seen as a worthy addition to his famous representations of the ideals of the fin-de-siècle left; for although far less famous than those images displayed on banners or the front covers of *The Clarion*, it provides a vital recognition of the neglected presence of the ideal of an all-embracing emancipation that he, and many of his contemporaries, envisaged as the essence of their cause.



Figure 5. Walter Crane, “The victims of the pot and pan – / Went forth against the tyrant man”. Illustration from *Rumbo Rhymes*, 1911 (author’s own collection).

Despite the triumph of Fabianism and the rise of a Labour Party focussed more on parliamentary politics, state intervention and modernist forms of expertise, the influence of the more holistic forms of socialism described in this chapter remained deeply influential.²³² Many figures in the Labour Party's early history continued to draw upon these other, often 'ethical' or 'religious', socialist perspectives. Members of the ILP, such as Keir Hardie, Katherine Glasier, Philip Snowden, Ellen Wilkinson, and Ramsay MacDonald all had such connections.²³³ Vegetarianism also retained its presence, with Glasier, Hardie and Wilkinson all adhering to the diet, in addition to Beatrice Webb, Frank Podmore, the biographer of Robert Owen, and the author Edith Nesbit, all founding Fabians.²³⁴ One of the most influential leftist intellectuals of the twentieth century, George Bernard Shaw, also became a committed advocate of the diet, and, as will be discussed, so too, did many socialist women involved in the campaign for female suffrage.

²³² Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.310.

²³³ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.304-305.

²³⁴ Gregory, *Of Victorians and Vegetarians*, pp.158 & 251; Preece, *Animal Sensibility and Inclusive Justice in the Age of Bernard Shaw*, pp.194-195 & 204-206. For Hardie's vegetarianism, see Caroline Benn, *Keir Hardie* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), p.432.

Chapter Five

‘The Creed of Kinship’: Henry Salt’s Vegetarian-Socialism

‘Animals are my friends, and I don’t eat my friends’ – George Bernard Shaw.

Fuelled by the continued growth of its empire, as well as its transformation into a consumer society, the end of the nineteenth century witnessed the further consolidation of Britain as a leading industrial capitalist nation. In this context both old and new injustices proliferated for the sake of the power and luxury of the upper classes, as well as the aspirations, and well-furnished parlours, of an increasingly sizable middle class. Peoples around the globe experienced the violence of imperialism, extreme poverty in Britain blighted the lives of millions, particularly in urban centres, and animals’ bodies were transformed into marketable commodities on a vast, never-before-seen scale.

The mechanisation of the meat industry, the rise of live cattle imports from the USA and Argentina from the 1860s, and the killing of hundreds of thousands of birds and mammals for their furs and feathers, fuelled ever-growing concern regarding the welfare and rights of non-human animals.¹ Likewise, the brutal inequality of society spurred on a flourishing socialist movement, culminating in the birth of the Labour Party, and the evils of empire prompted both domestic opposition and the growth of independence movements in colonised nations. It was thus a period of apparent strength for the established order, yet also one in which its ills were ever plainer to see, and in which opposition – from an increasingly educated and organised working class and progressive middle class – was rapidly growing. It was in the context of such broad societal critiques that leftist, feminist and pacifist ideologies incorporated

¹ On the mechanisation of the meat industry, see Jack Goody, “Industrial Food”, in *Food and Culture: A Reader*, ed. Carole Counihan, Penny Van Esterik and Alice P. Julier (London: Routledge, 1997), pp.338-356. On the commodification of birds, see Robin W. Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation: A Study in Nature Protection* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

animal advocacy and vegetarianism into their outlooks, seeking a fundamental change to the nature of both social structures and daily relationships.

Henry Stephens Salt (1851-1939) was an individual intimately familiar with the growth of such ideas. Through his writings and activism, he was, in fact, one of their key formulators, offering the most sophisticated exposition of the ideology of ‘universal emancipation’ – or, as he termed it, the ‘creed of kinship’ – which this thesis explores. He has, however, received little scholarly attention, generating only one short biography in 1977.² This chapter offers an in-depth analysis of Salt’s thought, examining his arguments regarding animal rights, vegetarianism, socialism, pacifism, and many other social and political causes of the day, both in relation to each other, as well as to the intellectual, cultural, political, and scientific context of the period. Through this his core ideas and the influences upon the development of his thought are revealed, and his own contribution to the intellectual and organisational history of animal advocacy, vegetarianism, and the Left is demonstrated.

5.1. ‘Cannibals in cap and gown’: Evolution, Kinship and the Genesis of Salt’s Thought

5.1.1. Salt’s Life and Ideas

Born in India in 1851, the son of a colonel in the Royal Bengal Artillery, Henry Salt returned to England at the age of one, spending his childhood in Shrewsbury. Later educated at Eton, followed by King’s College Cambridge, he seemed destined for a life of establishment conformity.³ Taking up a junior master post at Eton in 1875 appeared to confirm this. Any faith, however, that Salt actually had in ‘Respectability’ soon began to wane.⁴ After marrying Catherine (Kate) Leigh Joynes

² Hendrick, *Henry Salt: Humanitarian Reformer and Man of Letters*. There is also an article on Salt’s Humanitarian League: Dan Weinbren, “Against All Cruelty: The Humanitarian League, 1891-1919”, *History Workshop*, no. 38 (1994), pp.86-105.

³ For a thorough biographical background, see: Hendrick, *Henry Salt*.

⁴ Henry S. Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages* (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1921), p.56.

(1857-1919) in 1879, the pair, along with Kate's brother James Leigh Joynes (1853-1893), increasingly came under the influence of both vegetarian and socialist ideas.⁵

Through James, in particular, (who resigned his own post at Eton following a trip to Ireland with the famous social reformer Henry George), Salt became immersed in socialist and reformist circles, making the acquaintance of figures such as William Morris, H.H. Champion, Belfort Bax, H.M. Hyndman, and Ramsay MacDonald, and forming long-lasting friendships with others, among them George Bernard Shaw, Sydney Olivier and Edward Carpenter.⁶ He also became involved with both the Fellowship of the New Life and the Fabian Society (although he resigned from the latter due to its lack of opposition to Boer War).⁷ Prior even to this, as a result of walking amongst the mountains of the Lake District in the winter of 1878/9 in the company of the socialist and disciple of Ruskin, William Riley Harrison, Salt had had something of a socialist epiphany, with Harrison 'opening [his] eyes to...a message from another world'.⁸

Salt's vegetarian inclinations developed during the same period. In part, they were inspired by Shelley, who served to fundamentally shape Salt's broader social, political and (rationalist) religious views, and who Salt considered to be his pre-eminent 'guide and companion'.⁹ They were also likely encouraged by Howard Williams' *Ethics of Diet*, which prior to its publication in 1883, had been 'appearing by instalments in the magazine of the Vegetarian Society'.¹⁰ Salt, who later developed a firm friendship with Williams, praised it as a work of 'rare merit', asserting 'that during the last half century no individual...[had] done more...for the advocacy of humane diet'.¹¹ It was, however, from an innate moral sense that his

⁵ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.58-62; Henry S. Salt, "James Leigh Joynes: Some Reminiscences", *Social Democrat*, No.8 (August, 1897); Edward Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams: Being Autobiographical Notes* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916), p.236-237. Henry was married again, to Catherine Mandeville in 1927, following Kate's death in 1919.

⁶ Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, pp.64-68; Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.61.

⁷ Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, pp.67-68; Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.76-77.

⁸ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.61.

⁹ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.111.

¹⁰ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.63.

¹¹ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.63; Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, p.174.

vegetarianism was ultimately born. As Salt recounted, mealtimes had led to a growing realisation:

that the “meat” which formed the staple of our diet, and which I was accustomed to regard – like bread, or fruit, or vegetables – as a mere commodity of the table, was in truth dead flesh – the actual flesh and blood – of oxen, sheep, swine, and other animals that were slaughtered in vast numbers under conditions so horrible that even to mention the subject at our dinner-tables would have been an unpardonable offence.¹²

Salt alluded to a rooted repugnance to the killing and eating of non-human animals inspired by, what Adams terms, ‘restoring the absent referent’ – i.e. breaking down the cultural masking and separation of the acts of butchery and consumption, and recognising the object, the commodity of ‘meat’ for what it really is: the ‘dead flesh’ of once living creatures.¹³

This vegetarian realisation had a powerful effect on Salt, causing him to question the essential nature of the ethics and institutions of the ‘so-called “civilisation”’ surrounding him.¹⁴ He perceived that ‘benevolence and brotherhood’, although present, were inconsistent and highly exclusive, and that the veneer of supposed civilisation hid an underlying ‘barbarism’: a tendency towards violence and exploitation that underpinned not only humanity’s relationship with other species, but also its own political, economic and social relations – as epitomised by war, imperialism and the punishment of criminals, as well as the brutal poverty and social injustice generated by a competitive capitalist system.¹⁵

“Civilisation”, Salt argued, was simply a ‘phrase’ – a notion used by supporters of the established order to convince their ‘savage fellow-islanders’ that they were ‘a cultured and highly civilised race...wholly emerged from the barbarism of their forefathers’.¹⁶ ‘In reality’, however, the only difference between this past ‘barbarism’ and present ‘civilisation’ was ‘the absence or presence of certain

¹² Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.9.

¹³ Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, p.13.

¹⁴ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.8-15.

¹⁵ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.8-15.

¹⁶ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.108-109; Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.8.

intellectual refinements and mechanical sciences, which, while largely altering and complicating the outward conditions of life, [left] its essentially savage spirit almost entirely untouched'.¹⁷ A 'humane and decent mode of living' – the true measure of human advance – remained absent.¹⁸

Through such a consideration of society's current condition, Salt came to the realisation:

that we Eton masters, however irreproachable our surroundings, were but cannibals in cap and gown – almost literally cannibals, as devouring the flesh and blood of the non-human animals so closely akin to us, and indirectly cannibals, as living by the sweat and toil of the classes who do the hard work of the world.¹⁹

In other words, he recognised that the mask of cultural refinement and scientific advance hid an underlying ethic of barbarous predation that formed the essential animating spirit of contemporary society. From this analysis emerged his holistic humanitarian socialism, grounded in a belief that the positive future progress of humanity was dependent upon the simultaneous erosion of this 'doctrine of self-seeking' and the development of mankind's higher humane, cooperative instincts.²⁰

Thus inspired, Salt quit his position at Eton and moved to a cottage in Tilford, among the Surrey hills.²¹ His academic cap and gown – 'symbols of the old servitude' – found new life in its garden; the former now providing shade for 'a young vegetable-marrow', and the latter 'cut into strips for fastening creepers to walls' – 'like swords beaten into ploughshares'.²² From here his writing began in earnest, publishing on a range social, political and literary topics – from his seminal text on *Animals' Rights* (1892), to works on Shelley and Thoreau. During this time, inspired by Williams' proposition for the establishment of a 'humane society with a

¹⁷ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.8. See also: Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.viii, 6 & 103.

¹⁸ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.109; Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.111.

¹⁹ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.64.

²⁰ Henry S. Salt, *The Heart of Socialism* (London: Independent Labour Party Publication Department, 1928), p.25.

²¹ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.74.

²² Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.74.

wider scope than any existing body’, he co-founded the Humanitarian League (1891).²³ This was, in part, set up as a result of the limitations Salt found within the highly rationalist Fabian Society, where ‘humaneness found little place’; as illustrated by his visit to the house of ‘a refined...highly intellectual’ Fabian family who had just finished staining the floors of their new residence with bullock’s blood, fresh from the shambles.²⁴ The League, in contrast, served to embody Salt’s belief in the need to adopt a ‘consistent principle of humaneness’ in opposition to the interconnected oppressions of contemporary society, and included campaigning departments dealing with cruel sports, vivisection, criminal law and prison reform, and humane diet and dress, amongst others.²⁵

The League’s support-base was broad, but contained many prominent socialists, including Keir Hardie, Ramsay MacDonald, George Lansbury, Annie Besant, Sydney Olivier, Herbert Burrows, and Walter Crane, as well as Edward Carpenter and George Bernard Shaw.²⁶ It also attracted the assistance of other reformist figures such as the spiritualist Edward Maitland, the secularist G.W. Foote, and animal welfarists like Alice Drakoules and the publisher Ernest Bell.²⁷ The authors Thomas Hardy and George Meredith, the artist George Frederick Watts and the naturalist Alfred Russell Wallace, along with Tolstoy and Élisée Reclus, also lent their support.²⁸ As indicated by the breadth of these endorsements, although an unassuming man, Salt counted amongst his friends many leading thinkers of the day, including figures of international significance, such as Gandhi and Kropotkin.

Gandhi was among a number of Indians who visited League gatherings held at vegetarian restaurants in London.²⁹ His views on liberation and non-violence, and his belief that ‘the tendency of...Indian civilisation [was] to elevate the moral being’

²³ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.122. For an account of the League’s background, ideas and activities, see Weinbren, “Against All Cruelty”.

²⁴ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.82.

²⁵ Henry S. Salt, *Humanitarianism: Its General Principles and Progress* (London: William Reeves, 1891), p.28.

²⁶ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.204, 210 & 216.

²⁷ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.124 & 208.

²⁸ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.202-204.

²⁹ Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, p.137.

whilst that of ‘Western civilisation [was] to propagate immorality – the latter based upon ‘brute-force’, and the former conducive to the development of a ‘love-force’ or ‘soul-force’ that provided resistance to evil through the peaceful revelation of truth (Satyagraha) – had much in common with the outlook of Salt and the League.³⁰ Gandhi and Salt felt a common affinity with the anarchistic simple-life philosophy of Thoreau and his ideas regarding civil disobedience; as described in a letter to Salt, Gandhi actually drew upon the latter’s biography of Thoreau when introducing himself to these ideas.³¹

Most notable, however, is the fact that it was Salt’s writings which convinced Gandhi of the necessity to move beyond the religious injunction against meat eating, adhered to since birth, and to adopt an explicitly *ethical* vegetarianism. As he recounts, after picking up a copy of Salt’s *Plea for Vegetarianism* (1886) at a vegetarian restaurant in London, he set about reading it ‘from cover to cover’, and, ‘very much impressed by it’, became, from that moment, ‘a vegetarian by choice’, with the spread of the diet ‘henceforward’ becoming his ‘mission’.³² He did, indeed, from this time offer his support to the British vegetarian movement, sharing a platform with Salt at a meeting of the London Vegetarian Society in 1931 where he delivered a speech, ‘The Moral Basis of Vegetarianism’, explaining his dietary ethic.³³

By his death in 1939, Salt had gained a reputation as one of the most prominent and tireless humanitarian campaigners of the period. Through his writings he had developed and expounded a thoroughgoing critique of existing society, and

³⁰ M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj, or Indian Home Rule* (1909; Madras: G.A. Natesan & Co., 1921), pp.57, 72 & 100; M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (Madras: S. Ganesan, 1928).

³¹ Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, pp.100-101.

³² Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, p.138. M.K. Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Press, 1927), pp.118-120; Henry S. Salt, *A Plea for Vegetarianism, and Other Essays* (Manchester: The Vegetarian Society, 1886). For a thorough discussion of the relationship and mutual-influence of Salt and Gandhi, see: L. Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, pp.67-114.

³³ E.J.T., “Henry Salt and Gandhi: A Notable Occasion”, *The Vegetarian News*, Vol.11, No.132 (Dec 1931). Gandhi’s speech was reproduced in *The Vegetarian Messenger*, Vol.28, No.12 (Dec 1931).

formulated his own vision: a new ‘religion of humanity’.³⁴ This he came to term the ‘Creed of Kinship’, as surmised in his self-composed funeral address:

I wholly disbelieve in the present established religion; but I have a very firm religious faith of my own—a Creed of Kinship, I call it—a belief that in years yet to come there will be a recognition of the brotherhood between man and man, nation and nation, human and sub-human, which will transform a state of semi-savagery, as we have it, into one of civilization, when there will be no such barbarity as warfare, or the robbery of the poor by the rich, or the ill-usage of the lower animals by mankind.³⁵

Rejecting the exploitative predatory violence of the society surrounding him, Salt championed the creation of a comprehensive ‘ethical creed’ ‘founded...on the instinct of compassion’ and the unifying ‘sense of kinship’ connecting all life on earth, but that could only be developed into ‘a rational and consistent principle’ through the ‘attempt to educate and organize’ these ‘innate’ impulses.³⁶ This belief in the need to ‘cultivate’ this higher humanity led to his commitment to a life of political and social agitation, declaring in his final address: ‘I shall die, as I have lived, a rationalist, socialist, pacifist, and humanitarian’.³⁷

5.1.2. Evolution and Animal Rights

Salt’s inclusion of non-human animals in his programme for societal transformation was a reflection of his belief that humans and other animals were intrinsically bound together, relatives who were both part of the same natural world. Contemporary developments in evolutionary science, most famously elucidated by Charles Darwin, had demonstrated humanity’s evolution ‘from among the animals’, and cemented the notion that man was in fact ‘an animal himself’.³⁸ This, Salt believed, had served to thoroughly ‘disprove’ the ‘old pretence that man is the centre of the universe’, providing the ‘physical basis’ for a ‘humane philosophy’ inclusive of all sentient life.³⁹ Indeed, not only had evolutionary theory proved the shared physical origins of

³⁴ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.26.

³⁵ Henry Salt, “Funeral Address” (self-composed), quoted in Hendrick, *Henry Salt*, pp.1-2.

³⁶ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, pp.5, 15 & 27; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.v.

³⁷ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.23; Salt, “Funeral Address”, p.1.

³⁸ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.66.

³⁹ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.65; Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.133.

humanity and other species, but it had also furthered claims for the latter's mental and emotional capacities; as Darwin himself declared: 'the senses and intuitions, the various emotions and faculties, such as love, memory, attention, curiosity, imitation, reason, etc., of which man boasts' could be found throughout the rest of the animal world.⁴⁰

In light of such evidence, it was, Salt argued, no longer possible to claim the existence of an 'impassable gulf between human and non-human' – a division 'hollow[ed] out' over centuries by an 'anthropocentric' Judeo-Christian religion, as well as a dominant Cartesian scientific doctrine, which presented other animals as devoid of consciousness and feeling.⁴¹ This gulf was an artificial creation, denying a kinship which many still intuitively felt. Modern evolutionary science had 'exploded the idea that there [was] any difference in kind...between the human and non-human animal', but this was simply a restoration of the 'old Pythagorean notion of the unity of man with Nature', as had been continuously embodied in both Eastern religions and the 'common sense' and 'popular sentiment' of many in the West.⁴² The development of scientific knowledge thus acted to strengthen a pre-existing intuitive understanding of this relationship; the sense of universal fellowship and brotherhood' that had 'long been felt by the poet [was] now being scientifically corroborated by the anthropologist and philosopher'.⁴³

The implications of this new relationship were significant; with old physical and spiritual boundaries between human and non-human removed, issues 'of an ethical and social nature' now needed to be addressed.⁴⁴ Specifically, humans now had certain 'duties' towards other animals, and their current 'ill-use' was destined to become increasingly 'impossible'.⁴⁵ In his ground-breaking *Animals' Rights*, Salt argued that due to the high degree of commonality between humans and non-human animals, the extension of rights to the latter, as well as the *active recognition* of these

⁴⁰ Darwin, *Descent of Man*, quoted in Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.15.

⁴¹ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.65-66; Salt, *Animals' Rights*, pp.12-15.

⁴² Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.68; Salt, *Humanitarianism*, pp.14-15; Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.13.

⁴³ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.14; Salt, *Animals' Rights*, pp.112-113.

⁴⁴ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.2.

⁴⁵ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.13; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.55.

rights, was not only necessary but inescapable. Undeniable biological and psychological kinship indicated that humanity was now obliged to include other animals in the moral community, and to recognise their common right ‘to live a natural life’ characterised by liberty and the free expression of personal desire.⁴⁶

This necessity to recognise the just claims of other species in relation to human morality and social systems was Salt’s essential purpose. Unconcerned with any lengthy academic wrangling over definitions, or even whether ‘natural rights’ actually existed, Salt opened his work with a simple proposition: ‘Have the lower animals “rights?” Undoubtedly – if men have’.⁴⁷ Drawing upon Herbert Spencer’s contemporary work, he outlined a straightforward definition of rights, applicable to both human and non-human, which, he claimed, could just as easily be depicted as an essential, instinctive ‘sense of justice’, at the heart of which was ‘a demand for freedom to live [one’s] own life, subject to the necessity of respecting the equal freedom of other people’.⁴⁸ Like humans, other species were possessed of ‘individuality, character [and] reason’; ‘to have those qualities’, Salt argued, was ‘to have the right to exercise them’.⁴⁹ ‘To take advantage of the sufferings of animals...for the gratification of sport, or gluttony, or fashion’, was totally ‘incompatible with any possible assertion of...[such]...rights’, and constituted an indefensible form of ‘tyranny and injustice’.⁵⁰

For Salt, other species were ‘*persons*, not *things* – sentient...rational fellow-beings, with feelings and affections closely akin to our own’, and deserved to be recognised as such.⁵¹ Critical not only of the explicit violence against non-human animals, Salt was also ill at ease with the practice of ‘pet keeping’, not to mention their exploitation in performance shows and circuses or their confinement in zoos – these were false, degrading, objectifying relationships that denied animals both freedom

⁴⁶ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.28.

⁴⁷ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.1.

⁴⁸ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.2.

⁴⁹ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.15-16.

⁵⁰ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.16 & 47.

⁵¹ Henry S. Salt, *The Story of My Cousins: Brief Animal Biographies* (London: Watts & Co, 1923), p.64.

and respect.⁵² Salt did, however, enjoy a ‘sympathetic acquaintance’ with many animals during his life, and believed that these more genuine forms of interaction could actually lead to a greater understanding of their personhood.⁵³ Meaningful, respecting relationships could easily be forged with both wild animals and domestic familiars as long as they were based upon mutual choice and an understanding of shared kinship and rights. This form of relationship could best be termed ‘cousinhood’, for it encompassed an elasticity of meaning that implied such associations could either ‘grow to intimacy, or remain in remoteness, as the parties choose’.⁵⁴

Concerns regarding nomenclature, and the use of language when discussing non-human animals was central to Salt’s attempt to alter the framing of human-animal relations. ‘Words and names’, he argued, ‘are not without their effect upon conduct; and to apply to intelligent beings such terms as “brute,” “beast,” “live-stock,” and the ‘pronoun “it”’, was at best ‘proof of misunderstanding’, and at worst ‘a practical incitement to ill-usage’: “give a dog a bad name,” says the proverb...“and hang him”’.⁵⁵ Such a ‘denial of “personality”’, of ‘intelligent individuality’, was certainly used as a prime justificatory tool in the cruel exploitation of other animals.⁵⁶ By placing them ‘outside the pale of humanity and justice’ non-human animals were purposefully *dehumanised*, like persecuted humans, as illustrated by Salt’s account of a vivisector who used such means to expand the reach of his scalpel from the dog to the criminal.⁵⁷

To recognise the rights and personhood of all living beings required a change of language, and Salt’s struggle with this played out throughout his work. Despite some inconsistency and the inclusion of phrases such as ‘lower’ and ‘inferior animals’, he

⁵² Salt, *The Story of My Cousins*, p.4; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.60-61; Henry S. Salt, “Literæ Humaniores: An Appeal to Teachers”, *Humanitarian Essays, being Volume III of “Cruelties of Civilisation”*, ed. Henry S. Salt (London: William Reeves, 1897), pp.9-12 & 15-17.

⁵³ Salt, *The Story of My Cousins*, p.64.

⁵⁴ Salt, *The Story of My Cousins*, p.1.

⁵⁵ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.61-62; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.17-18; Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.129.

⁵⁶ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.64; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.17.

⁵⁷ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.64-65; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.76.

generally came to settle upon a variety of terms including ‘other animals’, ‘non-human animals’, ‘fellow-beings’, and ‘cousins’. Diverging from many in the animal welfare movement of the period, he took particular issue with the popular phrase “‘dumb animals’”. Such a deprecatory term, he argued, may have served to stimulate ‘pity’, but it did little to encourage ‘respect’.⁵⁸ It was certainly a ‘grim irony’, therefore, that here humanity assumed that it was other animals ‘who [were] afflicted by some organic incapacity’, that it was ‘*they*’ who were the “‘dumb animals’”, for it was clearly mankind who were lacking – ‘deaf’ to their shared affinity and to the bonds of biological and sympathetic kinship which demanded greater comprehension.⁵⁹

5.2. ‘I do not eat animals because I am an animal’: Salt’s Vegetarian Arguments

5.2.1. Kinship vs. Commodification

In light of this re-conceived human-animal relationship, Salt came to present meat-eating as ‘almost’ akin to cannibalism.⁶⁰ The practice was incompatible with any possible assertion of rights or kinship, for it was a ‘difficult thing’ to recognise the possession of such things by a being ‘on whom you purpose to make a meal’.⁶¹ Eating other animals was a ‘fundamental negation of their rights’, undermining their further moral consideration.⁶² It also provided a primary justification for their further ill-treatment, offering implicit ‘sanction’ for many other ‘cruelties’ and ‘acts of injustice’: ‘Butchery for food’, Salt argued, ‘may not be...so callous as blood-sports, or so cruel as vivisection, but it underlies them both’.⁶³ Denying other animals ‘their right to live’ for the sake of human appetites served to make them mere commodities – ‘*things*, possessed of no purpose, and no claim on the justice and forbearance of the community’.⁶⁴ This commodification stultified and debased ‘the very raison

⁵⁸ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.129.

⁵⁹ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.18.

⁶⁰ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.64.

⁶¹ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.55.

⁶² Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.71. See also Henry S. Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism* (1899; second edition, London: George Bell and Sons, 1906), p.106.

⁶³ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.55; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.69-70.

⁶⁴ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.63 & 100.

d'être of countless myriads of beings': 'from the first pre-destined to untimely slaughter...their whole mode of living [was] warped from its natural standard', leading 'aimless and stunted' lives, they became 'scarcely more than animated beef...mutton or pork'.⁶⁵

The language of 'cannibalism' used by Salt, was, partly, designed to rebuff this, to highlight the fact that other species were not simply animated meat, but living beings similar to ourselves. It also served to draw attention to humanity's own past and present practice of cannibalism, the abandonment of which resulted from a combination of shifting morality and a recognition of shared kinship.⁶⁶ If cannibalism was discontinued in this way, it seemed logical that an expanding sense of sympathetic fellowship should see meat-eating suffer a similar fate.⁶⁷ For, if it was the case that 'I do not eat men...because I am a man', then it should be equally so that 'I do not eat animals because I am an animal'.⁶⁸

Salt's vegetarianism was, primarily, predicated on this belief that humans and non-human animals were kin, and that they both shared a similar right to the free enjoyment of a natural, fulfilling life. His diet was thus ethically based, although, like most vegetarians, he forwarded a range of moral, social and health arguments, asserting that meat-eating not only caused 'a vast amount of unnecessary suffering to the animals, but also react[ed] most injuriously on the health and morals of mankind'.⁶⁹ Such arguments were developed throughout his writings, but their most thorough exposition came in *The Logic of Vegetarianism* (1899). In this work, Salt systematically countered common anti-vegetarian arguments – from supposed natural or religious sanctions, to complaints of vegetarians' lack of complete consistency, and assertions that animals' owed their 'existence' to human appetites – and demonstrated that 'the great foe of vegetarianism, as of every other reform', was, ultimately, 'habit – that inert, blind, dogged force', and that it was 'this which lurk[ed] behind the flimsy sophisms and excuses' relied upon by 'the flesh-eater'.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.63; Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.107.

⁶⁶ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.99.

⁶⁷ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.72-73.

⁶⁸ Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, p.150.

⁶⁹ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.9.

⁷⁰ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.109.

Fundamentally, Salt framed his arguments in terms of opposition to ‘unnecessary’ suffering. This, he believed, certainly included meat-eating. Modern humans were clearly able to live on a meat-free diet, and, moreover, one which was both enjoyable and beneficial in terms of its effects on ethics, health and society. He was unconcerned with the role of meat-eating in the distant past and instead sought to focus attention on the unnecessary damage that it was doing, and would do, in the present and future. Addressing the ills of contemporary Western society, he did not seek to criticise those indigenous societies who consumed meat through necessity, but did mock those who used the meat-eating of such peoples (or indeed, even other species) to justify their own gratuitous consumption.⁷¹ When asked ‘What would become of the Esquimaux?’, he thus replied:

If you cannot dissociate your habits from those of the Esquimaux, why don’t you eat blubber? At least they have a better reason for eating blubber than some people have for eating beef – they can get nothing else.⁷²

Describing ‘the horrors’ of the mass transportation and mechanised slaughter of animals for food, Salt argued that the evils of meat-eating were exacerbated by modernity.⁷³ With the development of a ‘complex civilisation’ based upon increasing urbanisation, pastoralism had become untenable and given rise to a brutal traffic in live animals and a slaughtering system ‘inseparable’ from cruelty.⁷⁴ The sheer scale of the attempt to satisfy growing demand for meat thus resulted in a level of suffering never before seen. Its worst manifestations attracted broad public criticism, with campaigns conducted by the Humanitarian League, amongst others, against the Atlantic cattle trade as well as the notoriously grim private slaughter houses. This contemporary combination of immense suffering with the fact that meat-eating was viewed as increasingly, if not entirely, unnecessary, provided Salt with a primary motivation for his vegetarianism.

⁷¹ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.69.

⁷² Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.68.

⁷³ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.60-61 & 129.

⁷⁴ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, pp.33 & 40.

5.2.2. Salt's Holistic Societal Critique

Despite the influence of this new context, however, Salt's vegetarian arguments still stood within a long-standing tradition of vegetarian thought of which he was very aware. In *Animals' Rights*, Salt made clear that he sought to contribute to a tradition of humanitarian and vegetarian thought that stretched backed to the ancient world, and which, he claimed, had begun to find fuller expression from the 1790s onwards – asserting elsewhere that ‘the writings of Ritson, Nicholson, Lambe, [and] Shelley’ had formed founding texts, newly presenting the diet as a ‘reasoned...ethical principle’.⁷⁵ In an appendix to *Animals' Rights* he described pioneering eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts dealing with animal rights. Containing both Oswald's ‘eloquent and forcible’ work, as well as Nicholson's, this reproduced passages which captured the essence of their authors' arguments and ideals, and served to highlight the remarkable similarity between their outlooks and Salt's own.⁷⁶

The notion of a tradition of humane thought is found throughout Salt's writings, and he frequently used it to frame his arguments. He published many works that dealt with the ideas of both past and contemporary pioneers of more compassionate modes of life, and filled his corpus with constant reference to the various poets and philosophers who had served as ‘voices crying in the wilderness’, providing ‘glimpses of [a] civilisation’ yet to come.⁷⁷ His interest in nature-writers partly sprang from this, as did his publication of edited collections of socialist and humanitarian poetry.⁷⁸ In particular, he often drew upon more radical humanitarian writers such as Godwin and Rousseau, championing the latter's famous maxim as the basis for contemporary humanitarianism: “‘Hommes, soyez humains! C'est votre

⁷⁵ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, pp.3-7; Henry S. Salt, “The Humanities of Diet”, *Humanitarian Essays, being Volume III of “Cruelties of Civilisation”*, ed. Henry S. Salt (London: William Reeves, 1897), p.7.

⁷⁶ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, pp.142-143 & 146-148.

⁷⁷ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.73 & 101.

⁷⁸ These nature-writers, on whom Salt published a number of works, included Thoreau, Richard Jefferies and James Thomson (‘B.V.’). The two edited collections are: Henry S. Salt (ed.), *Songs of Freedom* (London: Walter Scott, 1893) and Henry S. Salt (ed.), *Kith and Kin: Poems of Animal Life* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1901). He also edited volumes of poetry by John Barlas and Francis Adams.

premier devoir. Quelle sagesse y a-t-il pour vous, hors de l'humanité?"⁷⁹ This message was also emblazoned on the mast-head of the Humanitarian League's journal *Humanity*, and the League itself ran a series of features on past 'Humanitarian Pioneers' including the likes of Rousseau and Shelley, as well as a circulating library, the vegetarian section of which contained early works such as Newton's *The Return to Nature*.⁸⁰

Salt's emphasis on a holistic humanitarian tradition indicates the role of his vegetarianism as one facet of a broader societal critique. Viewing all forms of violence and exploitation as interconnected, his vegetarianism was an attempt to assail the predatory ethic which permeated society, and of which meat-eating formed one of the most explicit manifestations. His use of the symbolism of 'cannibalism' was thus also designed to embody this wider destructive ethic – representing the modus operandi of a society in which the lives of both humans and non-humans were commodified and consumed. Such language was, therefore, a critique of the competitive system of capitalism itself – 'a system of cannibalism', which 'instead of instilling the feeling of brotherhood...compels us to eat each other'.⁸¹

Under capitalism, 'the well-being of men and women is ruthlessly sacrificed' for the sake of 'commercial profit', with 'millions' of lives given over to 'anxiety and toil' for the sake of the 'comfort and ease' of the few.⁸² Within such a system, Salt argued, it was inevitable that other animals would be treated in much the same way. Indeed, in this predatory hierarchy 'the victims of the hunting-field and slaughter-

⁷⁹ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, pp.121-122. See also Salt, "Literæ Humaniores", p.3. Salt notably edited an edition of Godwin's *Political Justice*. William Godwin, *Political Justice: A Reprint of the Essay on Property*, ed. Henry S. Salt (London: Swan, Sonnenschein & Co, 1890).

⁸⁰ *Humanity: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (November, 1898), p.86. Rousseau was frequently praised in the League's journal as an originator of the humanitarian movement, see, for example: *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (April, 1908), p.26 & (November, 1908), p.88.

⁸¹ Here, Salt was quoting his friend, the American John Howard Moore. Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.64. Moore adhered to a similar belief system to Salt, as expressed in: John Howard Moore, *The Universal Kinship* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1906). For their relationship, see Salt, *Company I Have Kept*, pp.110-112 & Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.132-133.

⁸² Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.117; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.16.

house' were just 'as grievously exploited as any human workers' – whether 'the aggressor...cheats them, or eats them, is but a detail'.⁸³

The curse of the explicit, physical violence of previous ages may have waned, but it had been replaced by a system of structural, institutionalised violence that was equally malign. 'Human life' was now 'carefully safeguarded against pillage and slaughter', yet it was increasingly blighted by the 'insidious ravages of poverty' and the manifold iniquities of 'a state of gross and glaring inequality'.⁸⁴ Despite the supposedly refined sentiments of the modern age – 'aghast at the notion of open bloodshed' – 'patriotic' warfare, widespread destitution, and the systematised wholesale killing of non-human animals, demonstrated to Salt that the average Englishman:

through the callous indifferentism of the society of which they are a product and a part, are in great measure, fed, clothed, sheltered, and amused by a long-continued series of human and animal suffering.⁸⁵

A competitive society based upon 'a mad scramble for wealth' had led to an indifference to the lives of others, as well as the passive acceptance of their misery and sacrifice as an unfortunate inevitability.⁸⁶ This encouraged a commodifying view which stripped oppressed humans and non-human animals of their individuality, with the recognition of moral obligation towards them suppressed by forms of 'othering' – be this on the basis of class, racial or species 'difference' – making their lives easy to ignore and consume.

For Salt, such consumption was epitomised by the 'fur and feather traffic – the slaughter of mammals and birds for human clothing...[and] ornamentation', which saw millions killed annually.⁸⁷ This he termed 'murderous millinery', and the mass destruction it wrought for the sake of the 'artificial wants' of fashion, provided a prime example of how an imagined division, and the denial of rights, could enable a life to be transformed into a mere thing – how a beautiful hummingbird or an

⁸³ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.4.

⁸⁴ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.16; Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.11.

⁸⁵ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, pp.16-17.

⁸⁶ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.11.

⁸⁷ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.79.

intelligent seal could become nothing more than a ‘bonnet’ or a ‘mantle’: ‘hideous...funereal ornaments’.⁸⁸ It also demonstrated how the responsibility for this rested ‘on the class which demands an unnecessary commodity, rather than on that which is compelled by economic pressure to supply it’.⁸⁹ It was, Salt argued, ‘not the man who kills the bird, but the lady who wears the feathers in her hat’ who was ‘the true offender’.⁹⁰ This was equally true elsewhere; addressing the meat-eater, he proclaimed that the responsibility for the cruelties involved were ‘on *you*, not on the brutal drover or slaughterman’.⁹¹

Such a critique of ‘murderous millinery’ was common in the period, and not purely the preserve of more radical figures like Salt. The Humanitarian League campaigned vigorously on the issue, but so too did the mainstream RSPCA. Most notably, in 1889 the Plumage League (Manchester) and the Fur, Fin and Feather Folk (London) were established, merging to form the Society for the Protection of Birds in 1891, which, gaining a royal charter in 1904, became the RSPB.⁹² Both of these groups were initially formed by women, who, unlike those considered later in the thesis, were fairly conservative in their political outlook. Nevertheless, they sought, like their radical counterparts, to confront the (largely female) consumer directly with the cruel, damaging effects of their desire for animal body parts for use in fashionable attire.

Salt greeted the emergence of such organisations as ‘a welcome sign’ that ‘humane feeling’ was increasingly ‘asserting itself’, although inevitably viewed many in the animal welfare movement as ‘part-humanitarians’, only perceiving one manifestation of society’s cruel, predatory ethic, unable to ‘grasp its significance or meaning as a whole’.⁹³ Salt frequently critiqued the ‘spasmodic sentimentality’ of inconsistent animal welfarists – those who would defend one abuse and then indulge another.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.79 & 87-88.

⁸⁹ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.80.

⁹⁰ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.80.

⁹¹ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.32. See also Salt, “The Humanities of Diet”, p.14.

⁹² For a discussion see Doughty, *Feather Fashions and Bird Preservation*, pp.92-152.

⁹³ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.42; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.vii.

⁹⁴ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.21.

Here, diet was usually the test, as he illustrated with a typical anecdote regarding the ‘animal-loving’ owner of a deceased cat, who, having welcomed the idea that the pair may meet again in the afterlife, was swiftly reminded ‘that the goose you had for lunch [would also] have something to say to you’.⁹⁵ Salt defended his own belief system from charges of ‘sentimentality’ on this basis, demonstrating that it was not he, with his ‘consistent position towards the rights of men and...animals alike’, who was sentimental, but those who pick and chose according to ‘passing whims and inclinations’ where sympathy or justice should be dispensed.⁹⁶

This fed into a broader critique of ‘so-called “charity” and “philanthropy”’ which, Salt argued, at best served as a palliative for suffering, and at worst as a means by which the current inequitable system could be preserved.⁹⁷ Charity was, he asserted, ‘a resource of those who would uphold the present system, not of those who would amend it’, diverting attention and energy from genuine attempts at change, and instead creating a ‘narrow and vicious circle’ in which those who had profited from an unfair economic system simply went about ““relieving” those whom they have exploited and exploiting those whom they “relieve””.⁹⁸ For Salt, this may have been classed as ‘philanthropy’ but it was certainly ‘not...humanity’.⁹⁹ ‘No amount of charities [could] ever make up for the absence of just conditions’, wherein ‘one class’ would no longer ‘exploit’ and ‘live by the labour’ of another.¹⁰⁰

Salt’s desire to overturn society’s predatory basis thus led to his combining of anti-capitalism with animal rights and vegetarianism. It also encouraged his anti-imperialist outlook, for Britain’s empire represented one of the clearest demonstrations as to how both fellow-humans and fellow-animals could be denied their personhood, and sacrificed to the greed of (western) elites. ““Empire””, he

⁹⁵ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.96.

⁹⁶ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.27; Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.21.

⁹⁷ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.18. Salt was potentially responding to the rapid expansion of charitable organisations in this period. For a discussion, see Sarah Roddy, Julie-Marie Strange and Bertrand Taithe, *The Charity Market and Humanitarianism in Britain, 1870-1912* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

⁹⁸ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, pp.35 & 60; Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.132.

⁹⁹ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.132.

¹⁰⁰ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.9.

asserted, simply meant the ‘ransacking [of] whole provinces and continents’ for the sake of the appetites of the ‘idle gentlemen and ladies’ of Europe.¹⁰¹ ‘Our “possessions,” as we absurdly call them’, were nothing more than ‘lands stolen...for purposes of revenue and profit’.¹⁰²

For Salt, empire, through its exploitation and reduction of living beings to the status of goods, revealed the fundamental similarity of human and animal oppression. Presenting, for example, the Atlantic cattle-trade as a natural ‘continuation of the slave-trade’, reproducing its ‘worst atrocities’, he claimed that the historical expansion of sympathy and justice that had aided the abolition of human slavery was still incomplete, for myriad beings remained excluded and trapped within violent systems of exploitation, denied their rights, freedoms, even their very existence.¹⁰³ Here, Salt was not equating these forms of oppression; he clearly asserted their extreme difference in degree and that the former should be viewed with the greatest abhorrence, but stressed their similarity in kind, as well as of the mentalities which supported them both.¹⁰⁴ ‘Slavery’, he declared, ‘is at all times hateful and iniquitous, whether it be imposed on mankind’ or non-human animals.¹⁰⁵

Salt argued that the line between violence towards animals and violence towards humans frequently blurred within colonies, where ‘restrictions of morality’ were often lessened by distance from the metropole.¹⁰⁶ In one particularly vivid illustrative anecdote, he relays the story of a visit to a ‘big game’ hunter’s house, wherein, ‘passing up a staircase between walls literally plastered with portions of the carcasses of elephant, rhinoceros, antelope, etc., he came to a landing where, under a glass case, stood the head of a pleasant-looking young negro’; the presence of this human head was ‘simply a part...of the surrounding dead-house’, and served to demonstrate how ‘mankind itself’ could become nothing more than ““big game” to our soldier-sportsmen’ of the empire.¹⁰⁷ This figure of the ‘soldier-sportsmen’ was

¹⁰¹ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.35 & p.100; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.83.

¹⁰² Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.35 & p.100; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.83.

¹⁰³ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.71; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.20 & 128.

¹⁰⁴ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.4.

¹⁰⁵ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.43. See also pp.21-22.

¹⁰⁶ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.52.

¹⁰⁷ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.51-52.

used by Salt to highlight the interconnected nature of different forms of violence and oppression within an imperial context, as well as the fundamental similarity between blood-sports and warfare. Relating an account by an English officer in the Boer War, reproduced in an infamous letter to *The Times* in 1899, which described the killing of fleeing and injured Boer soldiers as ‘excellent pig-sticking’, he highlighted the way in which imperial warfare encouraged the dehumanisation of other peoples, and facilitated a shift from the recreational killing of non-humans to that of humans.¹⁰⁸

For Salt, ‘blood-sports and war’ were clearly ‘pastimes with a good deal in common’: ‘Sport [was], in truth, a form of war, and war [was] a form of sport.’¹⁰⁹ Both bred the same spirit of violent dominion, with sport serving, in part, to foster ‘the temper which makes war...possible’ by ‘doing to death thousands upon thousands of helpless animals for purposes of mere recreation’ during ‘so-called times of peace’.¹¹⁰ Sport thus provided ‘a “training” for war’, as was commonly acknowledged, albeit, of course, with a slightly different framing, by the proponents of blood-sports themselves.¹¹¹ ‘Those’, Salt argued, who ‘defended such institutions as the Eton Beagles, on the ground that the schoolboys who indulge in them were thereby trained to be the future stalwarts of Imperialism’, were ‘fully justified in their contention’.¹¹² In his eyes, these public schools formed ‘a nursery of barbarism – a microcosm of that predatory class whose members...ever seek their ideal in the twofold cult of sport and soldiership’:

If we wish as a nation to lord it over our human fellow-beings without regard to considerations of justice and humaneness, it must be a most appropriate training to practise and perfect ourselves in a similar treatment of the non-human races...As a school for callousness there is nothing superior to blood-sports.¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.47.

¹⁰⁹ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.48 & 53.

¹¹⁰ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.53.

¹¹¹ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.49; Ritvo, *The Animal Estate*, pp.243-288.

¹¹² Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.53. Beagling is the hunting, generally of hares, with a pack of dogs.

¹¹³ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.16; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.50.

If, however, a country sought to be ‘just, humane, and generous...jealous of the rights of others as of its own...a peaceful, sympathetic, and considerate member of the family of nations’, then blood-sports would be an ill-suited domestic pursuit.¹¹⁴ Non-violence towards all could provide the only basis for a new, anti-imperial, world order, with the needless, wilful killing of humans and non-humans banished to the realms of a savage past. In the context of both imperialism and the First World War, Salt argued vociferously against the militarism engrained in British society and dedicated much energy to the cause of pacifism. He criticised the ‘eulogising’ surrounding war which emphasised its ‘heroism’ and ‘glory’, claiming that it masked its horrors and entrenched its persistence.¹¹⁵ War would only cease, he claimed, when such manufactured feeling and artificial enmity ended, when the universality of human kinship was recognised, and *all* areas of life were ‘humanised’, thus stimulating ‘a genuine desire for peace’.¹¹⁶

Salt characterised forms of unnecessary killing such as war and blood-sport as ‘amateur butchery’ – different facets of the same system of needless, unconcerned violence.¹¹⁷ Vivisection was another, although this, he decided, with its more ‘determined and deliberately chosen attitude’, could be better termed ‘experimental torture’.¹¹⁸ He criticised vivisection for promoting an instrumental rationality that achieved a very limited form of knowledge, understanding little of the ‘individuality’, ‘character’ and ‘spirit’ of its subjects, and instead offering only the ‘accumulat[ion] of facts’ and the ‘industrious dissect[ion] of carcasses’.¹¹⁹ Like other kindred deathly practices, he argued that vivisection had damaging ‘moral and spiritual’ consequences, eroding an essential part of our own humanity and entrenching division – in this case, between humans and non-human animals.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.50.

¹¹⁵ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.30-46. He criticised the poet Tennyson on this basis: Henry S. Salt, *Tennyson as a Thinker* (1893; repr., London: A.C. Fifield, 1909).

¹¹⁶ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.46.

¹¹⁷ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.67.

¹¹⁸ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.90.

¹¹⁹ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.90-91. See also Salt, “Literæ Humaniores”, pp.12-14. This certainly echoed the Romantic notion of ‘murdering to dissect’.

¹²⁰ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.120-121 & 123.

Fundamentally, all such practices were the ‘hydra-heads...of one parent stem’ – from the killing of non-human animals for food, fashion, experimentation or recreation, to the destruction of human life through the ravages of war, imperialism or poverty, all were manifestations of a society based upon an ethic of predation, in which life was commodified and consumed.¹²¹ War, Salt asserted, often combined many of the worst ‘atrocities, crimes, and sufferings’ of which mankind was capable.¹²² It did not, however, just come in the form of isolated conflicts; for in such a society, it also characterised the essence of both human and human-animal relations at large.¹²³ This spirit of war that permeated society thus needed, Salt argued, to be countered in all areas of life, for its manifestations were ‘so interwoven as to be in the end inseparable’ and, therefore, required addressing ‘equally and together’.¹²⁴

Referencing Shelley, Salt declared that there existed ‘two contending Powers’ in the world, ‘one barbarous [and] one humane’.¹²⁵ In many ways echoing Gandhi’s ideas regarding ‘brute-force’ and ‘love/soul-force’, he envisaged a contest between two opposing ethics, each of which humanity was equally capable of embodying. Such a concept served to frame Salt’s holistic belief system, as he argued that the war-like ethic of predation should be replaced by one of peace and cooperation. The latter ultimately depended ‘on the way in which men regard and treat their fellow-beings generally’, and so it was necessary to cultivate a new, positive and comprehensive form of relationship that would infuse society – a ‘broad democratic sentiment of universal sympathy’, ‘of kinship and brotherhood’, that would gradually spread to encompass all life on earth.¹²⁶ The development of this renovating spirit of humanitarianism would enable ‘the emancipation of men from cruelty and injustice’, and, ‘in due course, the emancipation of animals also’.¹²⁷

¹²¹ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.88-89.

¹²² Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.32-33.

¹²³ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.11.

¹²⁴ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.59.

¹²⁵ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.vi.

¹²⁶ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.4 & 33; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.118.

¹²⁷ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.3, Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.4.

5.3. Mutual Aid: Libertarian Socialism and Vegetarianism

5.3.1. Alfred Russel Wallace and Peter Kropotkin

This struggle between a predatory and a cooperative ethic was, Salt believed, grounded in nature. Drawing on the work of his friend, the anarcho-communist philosopher Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921), as well as that of the eminent naturalist, associate of Darwin and key figure in the development of evolutionary theory, Alfred Russel Wallace (1823-1913), he argued that there was ‘a great deal more in Nature than [the] rapine and slaughter’ supposedly suggested by ‘the Darwinian doctrine of the “struggle for life”’, and pointed to the existence of ‘two principles at work’: ‘the law of competition and the law of mutual aid’.¹²⁸ Both were essential elements of life on earth; humanity, however, found itself in the unique position of being able to choose whether it belonged to the class of ‘carnivorous’ or non-carnivorous’, ‘predatory’ or ‘sociable’ beings.¹²⁹

Wallace countered the notion that nature was characterised by competitive struggle and, as emphasised by social Darwinists such as Herbert Spencer, the ‘survival of the fittest’.¹³⁰ Instead, he highlighted the problems of a competitive society, and stressed the role of cooperation, fellowship and greater equality as the natural drivers of the positive progression of the human species, thus linking socialism with evolution and rendering it a ‘naturalistic’ means of gradual social change.¹³¹ Himself a socialist, initially influenced by Owenism, and later by the writings of Bellamy, Morris and Blatchford, Wallace, like Salt, criticised the social and environmental damage wrought by capitalism and imperialism, opposed war and militarism, advocated

¹²⁸ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.25.

¹²⁹ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.25.

¹³⁰ For an overview of Wallace’s life and ideas see: Martin Fichman, *An Elusive Victorian: The Evolution of Alfred Russel Wallace* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004); Ross A. Slotten, *The Heretic in Darwin’s Court: The Life of Alfred Russel Wallace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); John R. Durant, “Scientific Naturalism and Social Reform in the Thought of Alfred Russel Wallace”, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 12, no. 1 (March, 1979), pp.31-58.

¹³¹ For the impact of such ideas on socialism in this period see David Stack, *The First Darwinian Left: Socialism and Darwinism 1859-1914* (Cheltenham: New Clarion Press, 2003), p.29. Many members of the Humanitarian League shared Wallace’s evolutionary outlook: Weinbren, “Against All Cruelty”, pp.89-90.

women's suffrage, and even endorsed the vegetarian diet as 'essential to a higher social and moral state of society'.¹³² He believed that society's ills were the result of 'living under a system of universal *competition*...the remedy for which [was an] equally universal *cooperation*'.¹³³

Kropotkin, most notably in *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* (1902), also forwarded a view of evolutionary and social progress that stressed the role and benefits of cooperation over competition, arguing that 'only those animals who are mutually helpful are really fitted to survive; it is not the strong, but the co-operative species that endure'.¹³⁴ Salt shared much of Kropotkin's broader anarcho-communistic outlook, but it was this belief that the natural impulse of cooperation could, and should, shape humanity's future that provided the fundamental underpinning of, and link between, both of their belief systems.

Notions of 'survival of the fittest' had, Salt argued, been used as a 'weapon' by 'the defenders of the social *status quo*' to excuse manifold injustices and to deny the rights of many groups – from the working classes to non-human animals.¹³⁵ The idea that it was, in fact, mutual aid that best equipped mankind for its survival and development, served to overturn this, and provided hope that humanity's essential capacity for cooperation could continue to be cultivated, guiding it towards a peaceful communistic future.¹³⁶

Kropotkin and Salt both presented this natural cooperative ethic not simply as a form of 'altruism', but as 'a living impulse from within' through which individuals perceived the social, material and emotional interconnection and dependency of all

¹³² For an overview of his criticisms of society's ills see Alfred Russel Wallace, *The Wonderful Century: Its Successes and Its Failures* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1898). On his endorsement of vegetarianism, see James Marchant (ed.), *Alfred Russel Wallace: Letters and Reminiscences*, vol.2 (London: Cassell and Company, 1916), p.158.

¹³³ Alfred Russel Wallace, *Social Environment and Moral Progress* (London: Cassell and Company, 1913), pp.154-158.

¹³⁴ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.26; Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902; New York: Dover Publications, 2006).

¹³⁵ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, pp.25-26.

¹³⁶ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.26.

of the members of the community of which they were a part.¹³⁷ Salt explained that with such an awareness, ‘we avoid a selfish act because...it becomes intolerable *to ourselves*’.¹³⁸ The cooperative ethic was not, therefore, one of ‘self-sacrifice, but self-fulfilment’ – it was the development of a higher humanity, based on an awakened natural sense of affinity, that recognised the kinship and mutual-dependence of all life.¹³⁹

For Salt, clear evidence for the existence of such an ethic was provided by humanity’s instinctive aversion to the suffering and pains of others – be they human or non-human animal.¹⁴⁰ ‘Our innate horror of bloodshed’ – a horror which, he believed, was ‘on the increase’ – was a particularly obvious manifestation of this, and suggested ‘proof that we are not naturally adapted’ for the life of a carnivorous ‘beast of prey’.¹⁴¹ Indeed:

If Nature pointed us to such a diet, we should feel the same instinctive appetite for raw flesh as we now feel for ripe fruit, and a slaughter-house would be more delightful to us than an orchard.¹⁴²

‘Nature’ thus indicated that mankind, through both its ‘physical structure and...compassionate instincts’ belonged ‘unmistakeably to the sociable, and not the predatory tribes’.¹⁴³

As Salt declared throughout his writings, it was the cultivation of these ‘compassionate instincts’, based upon a realisation of the kinship of all life, on which the development of the cooperative, humanitarian ethic depended. ‘Oppression and cruelty’, he explained, ‘are invariably founded on a lack of imaginative sympathy’.¹⁴⁴ Once a ‘sense of affinity is awakened’, therefore, the death ‘knell of tyranny is sounded’.¹⁴⁵ ‘An intuitive appeal’ to ‘the profound emotional sympathies’,

¹³⁷ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.15; Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, p.241.

¹³⁸ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.15.

¹³⁹ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.15.

¹⁴⁰ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, pp.4-5.

¹⁴¹ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.27; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.61.

¹⁴² Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.27.

¹⁴³ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.27.

¹⁴⁴ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.21.

¹⁴⁵ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.21.

‘inherent...in every human heart’, was the key to prompting individuals to reconnect with one another, and to recognise the mutually-damaging nature of relationships based upon predation and exploitation.¹⁴⁶

To bring about such a realisation would require promoting and embodying the cooperative ethic in the present. By its very nature, this would involve a comprehensive renovation that would touch all areas of life. Salt, therefore, formulated and championed a humanitarian creed that encompassed all movements that he considered to be ‘inspired’ by, and conducive to, the growth of ‘the sense of Kinship’.¹⁴⁷ ‘Pacifism’, ‘socialism’, ‘vegetarianism’ – all were vital in the creation of a new world which rejected selfish individualism and embraced fellowship and love as its guiding principles.

‘Boundless compassion for all living beings’ was the means by which Salt believed change could progress, as well as the form this change would ultimately take; for, ‘whoever is filled with it’, would ‘assuredly...do harm to no one’, nor ‘encroach on [their] rights’, they would, instead, ‘have regard for everyone, forgive everyone, help everyone as far as [they] can, and all [their] actions will bear the stamp of justice and loving-kindness’.¹⁴⁸ Not only did it thus offer a natural impetus for reform, as well as a clear and comprehensive approach, it also provided the basis for an anarcho-communistic society, through its embodiment of a mutualistic spirit of all-embracing, sympathetic cooperation.

Ultimately, it was as a facet of this broader vision that Salt’s practice and promotion of vegetarianism developed. ‘A conscious endeavour to benefit not merely the individual...but human society itself’, the diet was, ‘like other kindred *-isms*, a part

¹⁴⁶ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.123; Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.4 & p.17.

¹⁴⁷ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.v.

¹⁴⁸ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.245. Here, Salt was quoting the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860), in *On The Basis of Morality*, trans. Arthur Broderick Bullock (1840; London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1903), pp.213-214. Schopenhauer argued that the ‘everyday...phenomenon of compassion’ was the basis of morality (p.170), and also supported the concept of animals’ rights. See also Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.14.

of the great humanitarian impulse' fuelling the progress of 'social regeneration'.¹⁴⁹ In itself, it was no great 'panacea for the ills...of the world', but formed a vital element of the 'interlocked and interdependent' body of reforms that collectively struggled towards a world of fellowship and peace.¹⁵⁰ It was:

no more and no less than an essential part in the...engine which is to shape the fabric of a new social structure, an engine which will not work if a single screw be missing. The part without the whole is undeniably powerless; but so also...is the whole without the part.¹⁵¹

For Salt, a new compassionate, cooperative ethic was the engine, and a bloodless diet that rejected violence, exploitation and division, was one of its inescapably crucial components.

5.3.2. The Creed of Kinship

Salt's vegetarianism was thus central to his broader humanitarian, libertarian socialist belief system, or, what he came to term, 'The Creed of Kinship'. This 'creed' placed great emphasis on notions of 'freedom' – on the creation of a society devoid of authority, hierarchy and oppression, wherein 'all...life' was 'free to develop itself unrestricted and uninjured'.¹⁵² Such a 'socialism', he claimed, would enable the growth of a 'higher individuality'.¹⁵³ The 'individualism' of capitalism merely consisted of the "freedom" to pursue a shallow existence of 'personal moneymaking...self-seeking at the expense of the lives and happiness of one's fellows'; under socialism, however, it would mean the free development of 'original personality', intellect and artistry, as individuals were liberated from the constraints of the inequality, anxiety and poverty occasioned by a society grounded in material competition and strife.¹⁵⁴ Individual self-realisation could, therefore, only be attained within a cooperative, egalitarian society based upon an ethic of fellowship.

¹⁴⁹ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, pp.16 & 101. Here, Salt was partly quoting J.C. Kenworthy. See also Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.3.

¹⁵⁰ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.101.

¹⁵¹ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.108.

¹⁵² Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.26.

¹⁵³ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, p.46.

¹⁵⁴ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, pp.45-48.

Salt believed that it was an unbounded ethic of love that provided the necessary conditions for a society of truly free individuals – a state in which all were simultaneously independent yet still fundamentally *interdependent* – and it was the awakening and embodying of this pre-eminent human impulse that constituted humanity’s natural, positive evolution. This, he declared, could provide the basis for a new way of being – a new mutualistic societal ethos that recognised ‘that all sentient life is akin, and that he who injures a fellow-being is in fact doing injury to himself’.¹⁵⁵

Declaring that ‘socialism...springs from the heart’, Salt echoed many other socialists of the period, particularly those associated with the FNL, asserting that its ‘spirit...[was] something much more than an economic or political doctrine’.¹⁵⁶ It was, he explained, ‘wholly [different] from Conservatism and Liberalism in its inception and aspirations’, constituting ‘something bigger’, beyond party politics or personal self-interest.¹⁵⁷ It was, instead, ‘a great moral and humanitarian force’ that appealed to an essential ‘humanity’.¹⁵⁸ It was for this reason that socialism had witnessed such ‘amazing growth’ in the last ‘half-a-century’, as the ‘enthusiasm...zeal, and self-devotion’ it was capable of inspiring had overcome the ‘wealth [and] wire-pulling’ of the ‘united opposition...of the moneyed classes’ to establish a significant, vibrant and varied cultural and political presence in Britain.¹⁵⁹

As this had demonstrated, due to its essential basis, the way to advance the socialist cause was, Salt claimed, quoting the recent Labour Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald, ‘to get at the hearts of men’.¹⁶⁰ It was through ‘a change of heart’ that a shift from the predatory to the cooperative ethic increasingly had, and would, be achieved, and so the question now was how this change could be stimulated further.¹⁶¹ Salt believed that the ‘creed of kinship’ itself revealed the answer, offering

¹⁵⁵ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.244.

¹⁵⁶ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, pp.12 & 21-22.

¹⁵⁷ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, p.22.

¹⁵⁸ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, pp.12 & 22.

¹⁵⁹ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, p.22.

¹⁶⁰ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, p.61.

¹⁶¹ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, p.61.

‘a new gospel of emancipation’, ‘a new motive-power’ that would take the form of ‘a religion of humanity’ capable of inspiring the natural inclinations of the human heart.¹⁶²

Taking a broader view of the definition of ‘religion’, Salt asserted that socialism could, in a positive sense, be conceived of as ‘religious’ in nature.¹⁶³ It contained ‘the essence of all religions – the ardour of humanity’, and it gave a more genuine voice to ‘the growing sense of brotherhood’, the only means by which the ‘terrible tangle’ of our ‘social system’ of ‘self-seeking’ could be escaped, than corrupted organised religion ever had.¹⁶⁴ Through its basis in the benevolent impulses of the human heart, socialism revealed the promptings of an organic humanitarian ethic which had formed the initial underpinning of all faiths. Quoting Gandhi, he explained that “‘true religion is identical with morality’”:

What the churches have believed in the past, or what the scientists may discover in the future, is of infinitely less moment than what the human heart shall ultimately approve as beautiful and gracious.¹⁶⁵

At present such a ‘true’ religion of the heart may well seem insubstantial ‘in comparison with the complicated doctrines which theology has piled up’; as an intrinsic human impulse, however, it was destined to ‘outlast them all’, and thus formed ‘the one sure and abiding hope for mankind’.¹⁶⁶

Salt’s ‘creed of kinship’ went further than a standard socialism, recognising all humanitarian causes as one, inspired by the same moral impulse of fellowship and love. He perceived it, therefore, as the truest possible embodiment of an essential human religion: ‘The Creed of Kinship, I maintain, is...of all religions the greatest’.¹⁶⁷ Such a creed was not a body of rigid, complex doctrine, but a formal recognition of an intuitive feeling. Its progress would be ‘forwarded by the patient and gradual process of fostering love and comradeship in place of hatred and self-

¹⁶² Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, p.22; Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.26.

¹⁶³ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, pp.61-62.

¹⁶⁴ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, pp.61-62.

¹⁶⁵ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.87.

¹⁶⁶ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.87.

¹⁶⁷ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.v.

seeking – a much larger love, and a much wider comradeship’ than anything present religion or science had envisaged.¹⁶⁸

This process, as discussed, would be ‘founded...on the instinct of compassion’ – the ‘solid and incontrovertible basis’ for a new ‘ethical creed’.¹⁶⁹ ‘In so complex a society’, however, he acknowledged that ‘more’ was required than a ‘mere appeal’ to emotional impulses.¹⁷⁰ There needed to be an ‘attempt to educate and organize this innate instinct into a definite and rational principle’.¹⁷¹ Only this could combat the entrenched ‘power of habit’ and serve to gather and direct the disparate, and often ineffective, individual and societal expressions of compassion and fellowship within a single coherent and effective outlook.¹⁷² The basis of a successful humanitarian creed was thus the unity of compassion and reason – ‘wisdom...informed and vitalized by love’ and ‘love...tempered and directed by wisdom’.¹⁷³ It was, Salt argued, only the development of a compassionate consciousness that could ‘cultivate the higher and more imaginative moral instincts’: an ‘appeal...not to heart alone, nor to brain alone, but to brain and heart combined’.¹⁷⁴

‘Reason’ and ‘free thought’ were thus central in ‘cultivating’ pre-existing human impulses of compassion and kinship – reconciling nature and culture.¹⁷⁵ Both validated and supported the other, and neither could be fully realised except in conjunction. This was, perhaps, particularly true of ‘reason’, which, he argued, could ‘never be at its best...never be truly rational, except when...in perfect harmony with the deep-seated emotional instincts and sympathies’ of the human heart’.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, the latter, he asserted, had too often been neglected in modern society, sacrificed to a rationality that was divorced from morality and emotion.¹⁷⁷ Partly in order to counter charges of ‘sentimentality’, however, he was also often careful to present his beliefs

¹⁶⁸ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.87.

¹⁶⁹ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, pp.15 & 27.

¹⁷⁰ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.18.

¹⁷¹ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.15; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.68.

¹⁷² Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.18.

¹⁷³ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.121.

¹⁷⁴ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.23; Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.3.

¹⁷⁵ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.viii & 84.

¹⁷⁶ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.114.

¹⁷⁷ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.114. See also Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.86.

as avowedly ‘rationalist’, as epitomised by the original pre-publication subtitle of *The Creed of Kinship*, proclaiming it as: ‘a Rational Solution of the Humanitarian Problem’.¹⁷⁸ He presented his arguments for vegetarianism in similar terms, asserting, in the aptly titled *Logic of Vegetarianism*, that the diet was ‘suggested in the first place by instinctive feeling, but confirmed by reason and experience’.¹⁷⁹

Salt presented a compassionate consciousness as providing a coherent and compelling ‘guiding principle’ that would lead to the development of a ‘higher’ humanity.¹⁸⁰ ‘Man’, he asserted, ‘to be truly man, must cease to abnegate his common fellowship with all living nature’, for ‘it is ourselves, our own vital instincts, that we wrong, when we trample on the rights of our fellow-beings, human or animal’.¹⁸¹ Here, Salt integrated human ‘nature’, ‘culture’ and ‘aesthetics’ in a unified conception of the ‘humane’, viewing the development of an all-inclusive morality, ‘justice and compassion’, a ‘refined...culture’ and ‘an aesthetic appreciation of what is beautiful and pure’ as inherently interconnected.¹⁸² His vegetarianism was, therefore, presented as being based ‘not on asceticism, but aestheticism; not on the mortification, but the gratification of the higher pleasures’ – it was not a sacrifice, but a fulfilment of mankind’s positive evolution.¹⁸³

5.3.3. Salt’s Gradualism

Stemming from this evolutionary view of human development, Salt adhered to a gradualist conception of social change. Speaking of vegetarianism, he asserted that ‘a widespread change of diet, like any other radical change’, would take ‘a matter not of years but of centuries’.¹⁸⁴ This was due to the fact that fundamental changes of

¹⁷⁸ Henry S. Salt, “The Creed of Kinship: A Rational Solution of the Humanitarian Problem”, original book manuscript, author’s own collection. In this the subtitle is crossed out in pencil. It is unclear whether it was ultimately excluded for the sake of pithiness, or in order to avoid giving ‘rationality’ too great a dominance.

¹⁷⁹ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.9.

¹⁸⁰ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, pp.22-23; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.111.

¹⁸¹ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.111 & 131.

¹⁸² Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.51. See also Salt, “Literæ Humaniores”, p.32 and Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.25.

¹⁸³ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.11.

¹⁸⁴ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.111.

this nature were invariably based upon a ‘revolution in personal habits’, something that was ‘more difficult’ and required even ‘greater time for...fulfilment’ than a mere ‘revolution in political forms’.¹⁸⁵ With this in mind, humanitarian reformers should take heart, for any ‘cause which aims at so far-reaching a change’ was bound to appear slow in its progression, and, when looked at on this longer-term scale of human development, a cause such as vegetarianism had actually made a great deal of headway over the ‘past half-century’.¹⁸⁶

Salt did, however, still seek the ideal embodied in his ‘creed of kinship’; the ‘old habits’, he declared, may require ‘years’ or even ‘centuries to pass’, but, nevertheless, he ‘firmly believe[d] that in the fullness of time they *will* pass’.¹⁸⁷ Invoking Shelley’s vision from *Queeb Mab*, he still envisaged a future time when mankind would ‘see “the animals”...living around him in peace, instead of fleeing...the presence that they have now such reason to dread’.¹⁸⁸ His endorsement of veganism as the ultimate aim of dietary reform reflected this, asserting that in the long run society would relinquish the use ‘of animal products’ entirely.¹⁸⁹ In this light, those ‘who live upon a purely vegetable diet, without using milk or eggs’ were clearly ‘in advance of their fellows’.¹⁹⁰ Vegans were ‘pioneers’, ‘anticipating a future phase of our movement’.¹⁹¹

Salt sought to demonstrate that transformative, utopian vision and practical reform were not mutually exclusive, but in fact went hand-in-hand. ‘The traveller’, he explained, ‘who discerns from afar the mountain-top which is the object of his pilgrimage’ is fully aware of the reality of the ‘difficulties’ that ‘must be laboriously and patiently surmounted before his ambition can be satisfied...but he knows that

¹⁸⁵ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.111.

¹⁸⁶ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.111.

¹⁸⁷ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.73-74.

¹⁸⁸ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.62.

¹⁸⁹ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.9.

¹⁹⁰ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.11. See also Salt, “The Humanities of Diet”, p.11.

¹⁹¹ Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, p.11; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.78-79. He also described the inevitability, within an increasingly vegetarian/vegan society, of the replacement of substances such as leather and tallow with non-animal substitutes. See Salt, *The Logic of Vegetarianism*, pp.84-86; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.81.

the summit is real also', and it is this knowledge that motivates the entire journey.¹⁹² Whether the summit is even ever reached was perhaps irrelevant anyway, for the purpose of such vision was to act as a motor for a potentially infinite improvement; those who worked for humanitarian ends, he argued, 'should do so with the...purpose of capturing one stronghold of the enemy, not because they believe that the war will then be over, but because they will be able to use the position...gained as [a]...starting-point for still further progression'.¹⁹³

Also echoing the general approach of the FNL, Salt took a long view of human development, envisaging a 'limitless time before the world' in which the vision embodied in the 'creed of kinship' could progressively encourage an ever-expanding compassionate consciousness.¹⁹⁴ Believing that 'emancipation...[could] only proceed step by step', and that it was 'both natural and politic to strike first at what is most repulsive to the public conscience', he dedicated his activist energies to a broad body of modest, practical reform causes – although, of course, always stressing the 'general principle' of kinship that underlay 'each individual protest'.¹⁹⁵

Salt's guidance of the Humanitarian League epitomised this approach, campaigning for more achievable changes, likely to gain popular support, in order shift public consciousness in the right direction. Its campaigns, for instance, regarding the mistreatment of non-human animals, simply attempted to 'indicate in a general way the main principle of animals' rights', whilst highlighting their 'most flagrant...violations'.¹⁹⁶ Vegetarianism was advocated, but it was not pushed; instead the League focussed on brutalities which had already begun to catch the public's attention, such as the Atlantic cattle-ships, private slaughter houses (which they wished to see replaced by regulated, municipally-controlled abattoirs), 'murderous millinery', and cases which could serve as particular 'pegs' on which to

¹⁹² Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer*, p.124.

¹⁹³ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.103.

¹⁹⁴ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.v-vi & 6.

¹⁹⁵ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.103.

¹⁹⁶ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.23.

hang exposures of bigger issues, like the Royal Buckhounds (used to ‘expose the cruelty of stag-hunting’).¹⁹⁷

The abolition of the Royal Buckhounds (a state-backed hunt of tame deer) was one of the League’s many legislative successes, along with others relating to hunting and animal welfare, prison and criminal justice reform and corporal punishment – their campaigning notably prompting the end of flogging in the navy, as well as of young offenders.¹⁹⁸ Salt certainly viewed legislation as a useful tool in progressing his humanitarian and socialist aims, describing it as a vital ‘safeguard’ for the rights of ‘the weak and helpless’, and acknowledging the necessity of state intervention in eliminating contemporary evils such as poverty.¹⁹⁹ He perceived legislation, however, as ‘an auxiliary and supplementary instrument’, explaining that it was simply ‘the record, the register, of the moral sense of the community...follow[ing], not preced[ing], the development of that moral sense’.²⁰⁰

Education, Salt argued, ‘in the largest sense of the term’, was more fundamental.²⁰¹ It had ‘always been, and must always remain, the antecedent and indispensable condition of humanitarian progress’.²⁰² It was the key to the cultivation of compassionate consciousness, and thus to the realisation of that ‘spirit of sympathetic brotherhood’ which alone had the ability to reform society from the roots.²⁰³ The education of children, in particular, he asserted, needed to be ‘revolutionized’ and to look beyond a mere ‘surface “humanism”...of scholarship and refinement’ to the inculcation of a ‘sense of sympathetic “humanity”...spring[ing] from the profounder culture of the heart’.²⁰⁴ It was ‘useless

¹⁹⁷ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.128-129; *Humanity: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (July, 1896), pp.133-135; Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.152-154.

¹⁹⁸ Weinbren, “Against All Cruelty”, pp.88, 94 & 96. Salt personally campaigned vociferously against corporal and capital punishment, see Henry S. Salt, *The Flogging Craze: A Statement of the Case Against Corporal Punishment* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1916).

¹⁹⁹ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.125; Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, p.24.

²⁰⁰ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.119 & 124.

²⁰¹ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.119.

²⁰² Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.119.

²⁰³ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.120.

²⁰⁴ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.120; Salt, “Literæ Humaniores”, p.4.

to pass laws to repress...tyranny' if 'we permit', or even 'encourage', the rising generations to themselves to be 'cruel'.²⁰⁵

Beyond children, however, Salt believed that 'society as a whole' required 'an intellectual, literary, and social crusade against the central cause of oppression': 'the disregard of...natural kinship'.²⁰⁶ His aim, and that of the League, was, therefore, 'to educate public opinion', to bring attention to present iniquities and illuminate a clear path of reform.²⁰⁷ As part of such efforts the role of the individual would be paramount, for any quest for 'far-reaching' change 'promoted by a few believers in the face of public indifferentism', could 'only be carried through by the energy and resolution of its supporters'.²⁰⁸ For Salt, certain 'philosophers and poets', most notably Shelley, were prime exemplars, with current 'understanding' of humane ideas owing much to their efforts.²⁰⁹

The 'consuming enthusiasm of the prophet' was, however, not enough.²¹⁰ Socialist and humanitarian campaigners needed to adopt a three-pronged approach to transform society – focussing not only on education and organisation, but also on personal lifestyle and the living of belief. Echoing Shelley, Salt indicated that 'self-reform must precede, or at any rate accompany, all legislative enactments', asserting a personal doctrine of 'simplicity' – the liberating of oneself from the unnecessary wants and ill-effects of present society, as well as the emancipation of those whose lives were sacrificed in the creation of superfluous commodities – to be the essence of freedom and equality.²¹¹ All were part of society, and so, Salt argued, 'no

²⁰⁵ Salt, "Literæ Humaniores", p.31.

²⁰⁶ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, pp.120 & 122.

²⁰⁷ Humanitarian League, *The Humanitarian League: What It Is and What It Is Not* (Undated). See also Salt, *Animals' Rights*, pp.130-131.

²⁰⁸ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.122. Notably, in Salt's reproduction of part of Nicholson's work, he chooses Nicholson's exhortation to 'independent and sympathising mind[s]'. Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.148.

²⁰⁹ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.110.

²¹⁰ Salt, *Animals' Rights*, p.130.

²¹¹ Salt, *Percy Bysshe Shelley: Poet and Pioneer*, pp.117-118. Salt pointed to Rousseau, Godwin, Thoreau and Carpenter as pioneers of 'the connection between simple living and a juster social state'. Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.73.

individuals can exempt themselves from a share in the general responsibility – the brand of the sweater and the slaughterer is on the brow of every one of us’.²¹²

Individual change and societal change were thus fundamentally interconnected, with activist, educational, legislative and personal transformations mutually feeding into and stimulating one another. Salt believed ‘that the personal conscience of individuals and the public conscience of the nation, acting and reacting in turn on each other’, could ‘slowly and surely’ achieve profound change.²¹³ Ultimately, it was on an ‘awakening of the humane instincts’ and an expanding ‘sense of equality’ within each individual that this all rested, but social institutions nonetheless played a crucial role in serving to ‘strengthen...and secure’ such moral development ‘against the danger of retrocession’, laying the basis for future progress.²¹⁴

5.3.4. Predation to Cooperation: Reformulating Relationships

At its heart, Salt’s ‘Creed of Kinship’ was an attempt to reformulate relationships, and through this transform a society of domination and predation into one of fellowship and cooperation. Specifically, he argued that to view all living beings as fellows, as kin, would demolish the ‘barriers and divisions’ that enabled oppressive structural relations to exist.²¹⁵ Salt’s discussion of changing humanity’s relationship with other animals provided a clear embodiment of this approach. Condemning the ‘false...relationship’ of ‘dominion’ that currently existed, he asserted that we should reject a view of non-humans as ‘things’, ‘chattels’, ‘automata’, or ‘pets’, and instead aim ‘to make animals our friends’ – to ‘cultivate...an intimacy based on a genuine love for them as living beings and fellow-creatures’, as outlined in his concept of ‘cousinhood’.²¹⁶ To redefine our relationship in such a way would bring a recognition not only of fellowship but also rights, as George Bernard Shaw put it: ‘Animals are my friends, and I don’t eat my friends’.²¹⁷ ‘Friendship’, despite

²¹² Salt, “The Humanities of Diet”, p.13.

²¹³ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.107.

²¹⁴ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.124.

²¹⁵ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.51.

²¹⁶ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, pp.40 & 53; Salt, “Literæ Humaniores”, p.10.

²¹⁷ This famous quote is commonly attributed to Shaw, although its precise origins are unknown. Nevertheless, it certainly carries the spirit of his vegetarian belief.

appearing a simple concept, had revolutionary implications, representing a form of benevolent all-embracing relationality which had the power to fatally undermine existing hierarchical divisions and transform social structures.

For Salt, Thoreau was a notable example of how adopting a new way of relating to those around you could conjure a greater sense of understanding, solidarity and unity. In particular, he demonstrated how ‘friendly relations’ with non-human animals – ‘the reconciliation of man with nature’ – could be achieved through an engagement that was characterised by a ‘silent watchfulness’ wherein one observed, respected and even on occasion helped (Salt uses the example of Thoreau protecting foxes from hunters) other animals, whilst doing no harm.²¹⁸ This would enable the gradual development of an ‘intimacy with animals’, arising from their realisation that man was a benign presence.²¹⁹

The ‘new spirit of comradeship’ which Salt hoped would come to characterise both human and human-animal relationships, was well-surmised by Schopenhauer: “‘Injure no one, but as far as possible give help to all’”.²²⁰ This embodied the ‘Golden Rule’ of ‘do unto others’ that had underpinned most religious/ethical traditions; a fact also highlighted by Kropotkin, who argued that such a notion was actually an expression of the enduring human ‘instinct’ of ‘mutual aid’.²²¹ Indeed, this form of mutualistic cooperative relationship, promoted by Salt, which would be realised, via a developing compassionate consciousness, through a growing recognition of kinship also provided the basis for an anarcho-communist society.²²² Influenced by his friend Kropotkin, as well as the libertarian-socialist milieu of which he was a part, it was, in fact, this specific vision of a society of ‘mutual aid’ that Salt himself was endorsing.

Kropotkin had argued that mutual aid was an inherent feature of both the natural world and human society, it was bound-up with our evolutionary development, and

²¹⁸ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.82-83.

²¹⁹ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.82-83.

²²⁰ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.18.

²²¹ Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, pp.246-247.

²²² Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, p.62.

provided the motive-power of our future progress.²²³ It was the natural essence of a society of peace and fellowship that would enable the self-realisation of each member, arguing for the positive interdependence of every individual within a collective whole.²²⁴ This idea – that social solidarity was the means of individual freedom and fulfilment – was echoed by many, with the first issue of the anarchist journal *Freedom*, for example, typically defining liberty as being at ‘one with social feeling’.²²⁵ Many members of the FNL also adhered to this view, with Jupp, for instance, asserting that ‘freedom’ was found through ‘fellowship’ within a mutually-beneficial society of ‘profound and rational dependence’.²²⁶

Current society had, to some extent, corrupted such cooperative instincts, although, as Kropotkin highlighted, these had ‘taken refuge in the narrow circle of the family, or the slum neighbours, in the village, or the secret union of workers’, as well as in the multiplicity of voluntary associations that formed much of daily life.²²⁷ Salt, similarly, described the existence of, what one scholar has recently termed, ‘everyday communism’ within families and community/friendship groups, as well as in ‘such Communist institutions as public libraries, parks, and gardens’.²²⁸ The task, therefore, was to encourage the development of such mutualistic sentiment beyond ‘the charmed circle of relationship’ to which most people limited it, and to bridge the ‘gulf of division’ that prevented it from becoming universal.²²⁹

Within Salt’s work, the notion of ‘ever widening circles’ of compassion or kinship, common to much vegetarian-radical writing from Oswald onwards, was prominent. Arguing that ‘morality [was] progressive’, he asserted that the ‘free growth’ of ‘compassion’ would prompt us to ‘be moved by a wider regard for the well-being of others’, one which looked beyond the ties of immediate ‘relationship or...neighbourhood’, and embraced ‘those who are at present looked upon as

²²³ Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, pp.228, 241 & 246-247.

²²⁴ Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, p.247.

²²⁵ Quoted in Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.262.

²²⁶ Jupp quoted in Manton, “The Fellowship of the New Life”, p.289.

²²⁷ Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, pp.241 & 243.

²²⁸ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, p.50. For a discussion of the concept of ‘everyday communism’ see David Graeber, *Debt: The First 5,000 Years* (New York: Melville House, 2011).

²²⁹ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.10.

“outsiders”.²³⁰ Kropotkin had already described such a progressive evolution of mutualistic sentiment within human society – from the ‘clan...to the nation, and finally...in ideal...to the whole of mankind’ – but Salt took this one step further, describing an evolution of sympathy that came to include non-humans – the ultimate ‘outsiders’.²³¹

Gandhi, familiar with the vegetarian-socialist milieu of late nineteenth-century Britain, interpreted the views of individuals like Salt thus:

Ethically, they had arrived at the conclusion that man’s supremacy over the lower animals meant not only that the former should not prey upon the latter, but that the higher should protect the lower, and that there should be mutual aid between the two as between man and man.²³²

This overview highlights the continued tension in Salt’s arguments between an endorsement of human-animal similarity and a simultaneous discourse of the elevation of humans above other species – a position which, in part, appeared to place mankind in a role of benevolent responsibility. It also, however, illustrates the idea that a morally developed humanity would extend sympathy and cooperation to other living beings now recognised as kin, which, in expanding the anarcho-communistic ethic, would ultimately be to the benefit of all.

In essence, Salt believed that an increasing ‘awareness’ of others would accompany a outward growth from ‘the wretched isolation in which we now pursue what we regard as our interests’, and enable us to ‘see a wider horizon’.²³³ This ‘horizon’ was an ever-expanding sense of sympathetic kinship, based on an understanding of the unity of life. For Salt, this extended beyond even animals, quoting Montaigne, he indicated that there was ‘a general duty of humanity that ties us not only to beasts that have life and sense, but even to trees and plants’.²³⁴ Thus, he developed an ecological dimension to his ethic of ‘humanitarianism’, which, he declared, was ‘a protest against all tyranny and desecration, whether such wrong be done by the

²³⁰ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.24; Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.8.

²³¹ Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, p.247; Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.20.

²³² Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, pp.137-138.

²³³ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, pp.98-99.

²³⁴ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.25.

infliction of suffering on sentient beings, or by the vandalism which can ruthlessly destroy the grace of the earth'.²³⁵ 'The destruction of a growing tree, or the pollution of a clear river', were both contrary to an ethic which recognised the mutual benefits of humanity's protection of a free, unspoiled nature.²³⁶

The preservation of the natural environment meant a great deal to Salt, who argued passionately for the protection of both Britain's mountainous landscapes and its ever-declining wildflowers.²³⁷ Here, again, he indicated that the necessary relationship was one of 'sympathy between plant and man', and, more broadly, of humanity with the natural world.²³⁸ He explained that environmental degradation, similarly to the disregard shown to public, as opposed to private, space at large, stemmed from a capitalistic 'doctrine of self-seeking' which failed to understand that collective interests were of 'much greater importance and sanctity than private ones'.²³⁹ The safeguarding of nature, was, therefore, dependent upon humanity's dawning awareness of its interconnection with the rest of life on earth, an awareness that would overturn its present imagined separateness, and transform a mutually-damaging relationship into one of shared well-being.

5.4. The Politics of Friendship: Conclusions

As Leela Gandhi has shown, an expansive ethic of mutuality provided the basis for a new 'politics of friendship'. This disregarded barriers of class, race, gender and species, and instead sought to forge an all-inclusive community that together worked for a common emancipation.²⁴⁰ As Kropotkin had indicated, the 'vertically organized State [had] historically resisted the horizontal circuits of voluntary association, curtailing the affective intensities between people'.²⁴¹ If these bonds of affinity could

²³⁵ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.185.

²³⁶ Salt, *Humanitarianism*, p.25.

²³⁷ See, most notably, Henry S. Salt, *Our Vanishing Wildflowers* (London: Watts & Co, 1928); Henry S. Salt, *The Call of the Wildflower* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1922); Henry S. Salt, *On Cambrian and Cumbrian Hills: Pilgrimages to Snowden and Scawfell* (London: Arthur C. Fifield, 1908); Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.185-199.

²³⁸ Salt, *The Call of the Wildflower*, p.10.

²³⁹ Salt, *The Heart of Socialism*, pp.25-26.

²⁴⁰ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.26.

²⁴¹ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.112.

be cultivated, then the existing system as a whole could be challenged. To reformulate one's view of the world in a way which transformed 'others' into 'friends', was thus to develop what Gandhi terms a 'revolutionary sociability', creating a new form of relationality that was fundamentally opposed to the rigid binary hierarchies that characterised a patriarchal, capitalist, imperialist, speciesist society.²⁴²

This view was completely at odds with the 'anti-feeling' utilitarian governmentality which defined the age, presenting an 'anarchic' form of association that brought individuals from different groups together within a single affective community, characterised by an 'immediate and cooperative sociality', embodied as 'mutual aid'.²⁴³ Gandhi explains, with specific reference to fin-de-siècle vegetarian socialists such as Salt, that to re-establish one relationship on this basis – for example, between human and non-human animal – was to open the door to challenging them all. Quoting a contemporary vegetarian periodical, Gandhi thus highlighted that the 'culture of sympathy' was subject to 'the law of exercise', and that an affective identification with non-human animals would naturally indicate strengthened 'sympathies in all directions'.²⁴⁴ This was the reason (Mahatma) Gandhi perceived a strength of support for anti-imperialist movements amongst Britain's vegetarians, for they 'more readily sympathise[d] with the Indian aspirations' as a result of their mutualistic outlook.²⁴⁵ It also illuminates the reason for the close connection between vegetarianism and anarcho-communism in this period – with both Kropotkin's and Tolstoy's arguments for the transformation of relationships along compassionate, cooperative lines echoing throughout vegetarian-leftist literature.²⁴⁶

It was, perhaps, inevitable that the First World War would undermine such a vision of unbounded mutualism and friendship. As Salt pointed out, to pursue humanitarian aims in such a context 'was but to cultivate the slopes of a volcano'.²⁴⁷ One of the

²⁴² Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.11.

²⁴³ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, pp.99-100 & 112-113.

²⁴⁴ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.112.

²⁴⁵ Quoted in Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.73.

²⁴⁶ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.113.

²⁴⁷ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.218.

only ‘healthy and cheering incidents’ of the period had been the famous Christmas Day truce, where English and German soldiers had fraternised, playing football instead of fighting – ‘such a rational symptom was’, Salt lamented, of course ‘suppressed’.²⁴⁸ The Humanitarian League finally folded in 1919, partly due to a less sympathetic public, but also because of the rise of a more organised Labour Party which increasingly shunned the ‘wider socialism’ from which the League had, in part, grown.²⁴⁹

Salt’s ideas had, nevertheless, found a wide audience in his lifetime, and were representative a far larger phenomenon.²⁵⁰ Anecdotally, but indicative of the milieu to which such writings appealed, two of the particular copies of Salt’s works that have been used in the writing of this thesis were owned by two little-known, but revealing individuals. The copy of *The Creed of Kinship* belonged to Will Rowe, a pacifist and socialist who founded the Birmingham branch of the Woodcraft Folk, while that of *Seventy Years Among Savages* belonged to Gertrude Francis, a militant suffragette, once arrested for arson.²⁵¹ Vegetarian-socialist beliefs infused the British Left in this period; connecting socialism, anarchism, pacifism, feminism, environmentalism and animal-advocacy, the diet formed a nexus for those who wished to transform the way in which we relate to each other and to world around us. Salt’s writings were a key embodiment of this, and, particularly through his friendships with Gandhi, Carpenter and Shaw, made a significant contribution to the development of leftist ideas and arguments.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Salt, *The Creed of Kinship*, p.33.

²⁴⁹ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, p.211 & pp.217-218; Weinbren, “Against All Cruelty”, p.100.

²⁵⁰ As explored in Chapters Four and Six.

²⁵¹ John Boughton, “Working-Class Politics in Birmingham and Sheffield, 1918-1931” (PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1985), p.292. Notably, the Woodcraft Folk, established in 1925, was itself connected to socialist, pacifist and vegetarian ideas. C.J. Bearman, “An Examination of Suffragette Violence”, *English Historical Review* 120, no.486 (April 2005), pp.385-386 & 391.

²⁵² Other notable, but lesser known, figures who were friends with Salt and progressed similar views included Bertram Lloyd and Ernest Crosby.

Chapter Six

‘The Love Instinct’: Sex, Socialism and Suffragettes

‘It is a strange fact that the ranks of the militant suffragettes are mostly recruited from the mild vegetarians’ – Maud Joachim, 1908.

During the late nineteenth-century ideas of ‘liberation’ abounded, finding expression through various leftist and progressive movements, as well as a broader fin-de-siècle artistic and literary culture imbued with a sense of experimentation, modernity and an impending sense of ‘change’. Many sought to throw off the dual constraints of an oppressive bourgeois morality and a spiritually-bankrupt materialistic capitalism, and to embrace new ways of living and relating. Attempts at experimental lifestyles, dress and diet proliferated, different forms of spirituality became popular, and sexuality was increasingly discussed and explored. Most importantly, this was also a period in which the oppression of women, fundamental to the functioning of capitalist patriarchy, was challenged by the growth of feminist ideas, most notably in the form of the campaign for women’s suffrage. It was within these movements, for the transformation of lifestyle, and for women’s liberation, that vegetarian ideas further grew their connections with broader visions of emancipation.

The pioneer of gay rights, Edward Carpenter (1844-1929), whose ‘larger socialism’ sought not only social justice, but also sexual liberation, the emancipation of women and the recognition of animals’ rights, was a particular inspiration to both. Through his ‘simple life’ philosophy he envisaged a new world of freedom, beauty and love that proved so appealing he became in his lifetime one of the most revered figures on the British left. Similarly seeking sexual equality and the dismantling of gender roles, many progressive women of the period – feminists, socialists, suffragettes – also championed holistic outlooks, recognising all forms of oppression as interconnected manifestations of a patriarchy based upon violence and dominion,

and looking to re-construct society on the basis of a new mutualistic ethic that recognised the rights of all.

The first half of this chapter provides a consideration of Carpenter, analysing in particular the beliefs he held in common with Salt, his sexual politics and his ideas regarding the creation of a new society through the changing of relationships. This builds upon several existing studies of Carpenter's life, including those of Rowbotham, Tsuzuki and Brown, by focussing specifically on the interrelation of his vegetarianism with his larger belief system.¹ The chapter then turns to address what has thus far been a notable absence: the role of women in formulating such belief systems. Throughout writing, this absence has felt an inappropriate one. For, as scholars such as Carol Adams, Josephine Donovan and Greta Gaard have argued, holistic liberationist outlooks, which incorporated non-human animals and nature, were/are central to women's own emancipation, and, moreover, to the realisation of a comprehensive feminist ethic.² Drawing on earlier studies by Lansbury and Leneman, this chapter explores the gender politics of vegetarianism, women's involvement in animal welfare activism in this period, the role of vegetarianism within the women's suffrage movement, and the ideas of the vegetarian socialists Charlotte Despard (1844-1939), Isabella Ford (1855-1924) and Annie Besant (1847-1933).³

¹ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*; Shelia Rowbotham and Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life: The Personal and Sexual Politics of Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis* (London: Pluto Press, 1977); Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter 1844-1929*; Brown (Ed.), *Edward Carpenter and late Victorian Radicalism*.

² See, most notably: Josephine Donovan, "Animal Rights and Feminist Theory", *Signs* 15, no. 2 (Winter, 1990), pp.350-375; Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*; Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan, eds., *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan, eds., *Beyond Animal Rights: A Feminist Caring Ethic for the Treatment of Animals* (New York: Continuum, 1996); Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan, eds., *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics: A Reader* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Greta Gaard, ed., *Ecofeminism: Women, Animals, Nature* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993); Greta Gaard, "Vegetarian Ecofeminism: A Review Essay", *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 23, no.3 (2002), pp.117-146; Lori Gruen, *Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for our Relationships with Animals* (New York: Lantern Books, 2015); Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (London: Wildwood, 1982).

³ Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Leneman, "The Awakened Instinct". See also:

6.1. 'The Gay Godfather of the British Left': The Development of Edward Carpenter's Thought, Connections and Influence

Edward Carpenter, a close friend of the Salts, was another who sought societal change through the transformation of relationships. Recently described as the 'gay godfather of the British Left', Carpenter anticipated the notion that the 'personal is political', producing pioneering writings on homosexuality and campaigning for a multiplicity of causes including women's liberation, vegetarianism, the rights of animals, and an environmentalism that railed against pollution and the destruction of the natural world.⁴ Both his writings and lived example spoke powerfully to the hopes and concerns of those witnessing, and willing-on, the breakdown of the constraining certainties of a claustrophobic Victorian social order. Indeed, for many, he appeared, as one contemporary observed: 'like a man coming into a stuffy sitting room in a seaside boarding house, and opening the window to let in light and air'.⁵ Giving voice to the vision of a new society of cooperative association in which individuality, diversity and personal freedom would flourish, calling for liberation across an acknowledged, and celebrated, *spectrum* of sexuality, and recognising humanity as part of an interconnected nature, his ideas today still seem decidedly 'modern'.

Brought up in middle-class comfort in the fashionable holiday resort of Brighton, Carpenter felt ill at ease amongst what he saw as its 'heartless conventionalities' and 'silly proprieties', later looking back at the town as the epitome of the vacuous Victorianism he despised:

Moira Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen, 1780-1900: Patriots, Nation, and Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998). There is also a forthcoming work that looks to make a significant contribution to the field: Diana Donald, *Women Against Cruelty: Protection of Animals in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019). A study of the relationship between women and the natural world in the realms of science, art, literature and activism is provided in Barbara T. Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

⁴ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.303.

⁵ Quoted in Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.425.

commercialism in public life...cant in religion, pure materialism in science, futility in social conventions, the worship of stocks and shares, the starving of the human heart, the denial of the human body and its needs...the “impure hush” on matters of sex, class-division, contempt of manual labour, and the cruel barring of women from every natural and useful expression of their lives.⁶

One of ten children, including six sisters, Carpenter particularly lamented the repressive, shallow existence that was foisted upon many young bourgeois women – a personal identification which was to inform his sexual politics.⁷

Carpenter spent the years 1864-1874 at Cambridge, first as an undergraduate, then as a clerical fellow. He remained restless, perceiving the same ‘vacuity and falsity’ of Brighton presented in another form.⁸ Throughout his Cambridge years, however, his own sexuality was developing, and in 1868/9, at the age of twenty-five, he discovered the poetry of Walt Whitman. This was his first revelation, experiencing ‘a great leap of joy’ in finding one whose view of ‘sex...accorded with [his] own sentiments’, and whose work served to ‘celebrate comradeship’ in a way which combined democratic sentiments with homoerotic love and desire.⁹ ‘From that time forward’, he recalled, ‘a profound change set in within me’.¹⁰ Whitman was certainly one of the most significant influences on Carpenter’s personal and intellectual development, with the pair striking up an intimate correspondence, and Carpenter later crossing the Atlantic to visit him in April 1877.¹¹

With Whitmanesque ideals of an affective, manly, democratic comradeship fresh in his mind, came Carpenter’s second epiphany: a flash of desire to ‘go and make my

⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.13-14 & 321. For an overview of Carpenter’s early years, see Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.11-64 and Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.13-78.

⁷ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.20-21; Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.94-95.

⁸ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.72.

⁹ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.30, 64-65 & 86. Whitman framed his democratic ideal as ‘the dear love of comrades’, placing great emphasis upon ‘manly love’. Walt Whitman, *The Complete Poems*, ed. Francis Murphy (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975), pp.150 & 161.

¹⁰ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.64.

¹¹ For an account, see Edward Carpenter, *Days with Walt Whitman: With Some Notes on his Life and Work* (London: George Allen, 1906). See also Harris, *Walt Whitman and British Socialism* and Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.54-57.

life with the mass of the people and the manual workers'.¹² In 1874, he left Cambridge, and moved to Leeds to work for the University Extension Movement, bringing higher education to mass audiences. Finding his lectures largely attended by an aspiring middle class, however, he grew weary of the city and, in 1877, moved to Sheffield.¹³ It was here that Carpenter discovered the 'world to which [he] belonged', meeting working-class men with whom he could 'knit up alliances more satisfactory to me than any I had known before'.¹⁴ Here, he also developed his desire for a life close to nature, adopted vegetarianism, and embraced socialism, particularly after an encounter with Hyndman and the SDF, becoming, in 1886, one of the founding members of the Sheffield Socialist Society and a prime mover in the socialist revival.¹⁵ Crossing class and sexual boundaries in his relationships, he settled at Millthorpe, just south of the city, in 1883, living the simple life with his working-class life partner George Merrill.¹⁶

During his lifetime Carpenter became an influential figure, counting amongst his friends key players in politics, philosophy and literature. In the flourishing socialist movement, he knew Morris, Hardie, MacDonald, Shaw, Unwin, Crane, Alfred Russel Wallace, the Webbs and the Glasiers, as well as Ruskin, Gandhi and Kropotkin.¹⁷ He was also close to many leftist and feminist women, including Besant, Despard, Ford, Emma Goldman and Olive Schreiner. His sexual politics connected him with a broader range of individuals, particularly in literature and the arts, such as the author E.M. Forster, the poet Siegfried Sassoon, the artist Roger Fry and the pioneer sexologist Havelock Ellis.¹⁸

¹² Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.77.

¹³ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.47.

¹⁴ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.101-102.

¹⁵ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.61-86.

¹⁶ Carpenter met Merrill in 1891, they co-habited from 1898.

¹⁷ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.218 & 245-246.

¹⁸ For discussions of his relationships with these figures, see Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter* and Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*. Notably, Carpenter served as the inspiration for Forster's novel, *Maurice*, started in 1913-14, but which remained unpublished until 1971 due to its controversial nature. E.M. Forster, *Maurice: A Novel* (London: Edward Arnold, 1971). For Forster's recollections of Carpenter, see E.M. Forster, "Some Memories", in *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*, ed. Gilbert Beith (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), pp.74-81. For an account of Carpenter's apparent influence on D.H. Lawrence, see Emile Delavenay, *D.H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter: A Study in Edwardian Transition* (London: Heinemann, 1971).

By his late fifties, Carpenter had solidified a fashionable image as a ‘sage’, ‘seer’, or ‘guru’.¹⁹ His home at Millthorpe increasingly became a centre for radicals and reformers of every description, with ‘vegetarians, dress reformers, temperance orators, spiritualists, secularists, anti-vivisectionists, socialists, [and] anarchists’ composing its typical milieu.²⁰ Middle-class leftist intellectuals like Morris were frequent guests, the Glasiers spent part of their honeymoon there, whilst the Salts came to live nearby for a time.²¹ Working-class visitors were also a constant presence, be they radicals, homosexuals (often both), or neighbours.²² One visitor, the trade unionist C.T. Cramp, recounted how: ‘The Sheffield cutler, engineer, miner, or railwayman met poet, musician, or dramatist beneath his roof and were all made to feel one of a great family’.²³ Carpenter’s affability, charisma, and his genuine desire to live an ‘ordinary’ life amongst the working people he so respected, were key to his development of such an atmosphere and image.

Millthorpe was, in particular, a prime destination for many LGBT people, with Carpenter serving as ‘a focal point for isolated women and men troubled about their sexuality who treated him as a mentor and informal therapist’.²⁴ One of his greatest impacts was in changing the discourse around sexual freedom, encouraging a positive homosexual identity and, as far as he could in such repressive times, advocating gay liberation.²⁵ For Carpenter, sexuality was ‘absolutely inborn...not induced by any outside example or teaching’, his homosexuality was ‘a most

¹⁹ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.335. See, for example, Edith Ellis, *Three Modern Seers: James Hinton, Nietzsche, Edward Carpenter* (London: Stanley Paul & Co., 1910). See also contributors’ references to him in Gilbert Beith, ed., *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931).

²⁰ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.167. For a good-humoured account of Millthorpe’s more eccentric visitors see pp.167-189.

²¹ Brown, “Introduction”, p.13; Katharine Bruce Glasier, “Edward Carpenter’s Influence”, in *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*, ed. Gilbert Beith (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), p.88.

²² For an account of Millthorpe, see Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.229-243.

²³ C.T. Cramp, “My Earliest Teacher”, in *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*, ed. Gilbert Beith (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), p.21.

²⁴ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.329.

²⁵ Carpenter certainly lived ‘a remarkably open life’ during a period, following the Labouchere Amendment to the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, where all homosexual acts, public or private, were illegal in Britain. Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, fourth ed. (London: Routledge, 2018), p.188. The Oscar Wilde trial of 1895 was one of the most notable outcomes of this, and caused Carpenter some publishing issues. Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.195-6. For a discussion of his influence, see Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, pp.188-191.

intimate and organic part' of 'my nature' – something to be embraced and celebrated.²⁶ As an influence, and often personal guide, for many LGBT individuals, Carpenter played perhaps his most meaningful role, becoming 'the touchstone of a freer sexuality'.²⁷

His combination of radical political, sexual and spiritual views, his support for a range of niche or controversial causes, from the growth of allotments to the plight of the Walsall Anarchists, and his self-cultivated image as a Whitmanesque sage living the 'simple-life', gave Carpenter the appearance of a figure on the political fringes. Despite this he was heavily involved in socialist politics and campaigning, with many prominent figures on the left greatly valuing his ideas, activism and friendship, as was demonstrated by the congratulatory letter he received on his seventieth birthday in 1914, signed by over three hundred friends and admirers.²⁸ This declared the 'gratitude' that was felt by 'a very large number' for Carpenter, praising 'the spirit of comradeship' with which he had infused attempts to address 'so many social problems', as well as 'questions of sex', and endorsing his compelling vision of 'love, beauty, and humanity in...daily life'.²⁹

Carpenter's direct involvement in national politics was, however, seemingly minimal. The main focus of his activities were the predominantly northern working-class cities, where he tirelessly lectured and organised on behalf of the socialist cause.³⁰ Here he sought to aid in the growth of new socialistic communities, combining political agitation and education with social activities, outings, food and song.³¹ This focus on decentralised, small-scale organisation and the fostering of a

²⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.97.

²⁷ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.329-330 & 405.

²⁸ For the list of signatories, see Delavenay, *D.H. Lawrence and Edward Carpenter*, plate 3.

²⁹ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.318.

³⁰ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.8. Sheffield, Leeds, Chesterfield, Bradford, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Nottingham were typical locations. He also had a notable influence on the Bristol Socialist Society, see S. Bryher, *An Account of the Labour Movement in Bristol* (Bristol: Bristol Socialist Society, 1931).

³¹ A notable example of this is his Sheffield 'Commonwealth Café'. Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.112. His socialist songbook, containing work by himself, Morris, Whitman, and Shelley, amongst others, and with a cover designed by Crane, provided 'songs of hope and enthusiasm' to animate such gatherings. Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.136; Edward Carpenter, ed., *Chants of Labour: A Song Book of the People* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1888).

new shared culture was a reflection of his belief in the role of fellowship, direct democracy and personal transformation as the basis of social change. He envisaged ‘a new society...arising and forming within the structure of the old’, and saw the cultivation of a spirit of comradeship and the development of new lifestyles and desires as the means for its achievement.³² ‘Our “Sheffield Socialists”’, he declared, ‘though common working men and women, understood well enough the broad outlines of this ideal’.³³

Carpenter’s published works reflected his influence, frequently selling tens of thousands of copies, and running into multiple editions. The complete edition of *Towards Democracy*, his seminal poetic expression of self-realisation through comradeship, first published in 1916, had, for example, by 1926, run into its thirtieth reprint. *Love’s Coming of Age* (1896), his first collection of writings on sexuality, was reprinted sixteen times, and translated into numerous languages, notably selling 40,000 copies in Germany alone by 1912.³⁴ His ideas regarding politics, sex and society resonated not only domestically but throughout Europe, and he found significant audiences in both the USA and Japan.³⁵

Carpenter’s popularity lay in his presentation of a fluid, non-prescriptive vision that served to enthuse, to ‘educate desire’. His writings manifested the way in which socialism could be lived in the present, and how a freer, happier state of existence could begin to be developed from within. As Cramp recalled after hearing him speak in Sheffield on the subject of ‘The Simplification of Life’:

as one listened...one mentally sloughed off the conventional husks which seemed to encase one’s spirit and confine one’s outlook...In a curious way he seemed to take one both forward...to a freer and less care-worn world, yet backward to something which all of us had lost. One lost the sense of the

³² Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.216.

³³ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.130.

³⁴ Keith Nield, “Edward Carpenter: The Uses of Utopia”, in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, ed. Tony Brown (London: Frank Cass, 1990), p.20.

³⁵ For details, see: Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.343-356. For a list of translated works, including German, Italian, French, Dutch, Russian, Bulgarian, Spanish and Japanese editions, see Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.329-331.

grimy city with its jostling thousands living under the pall of smoke and earning their scanty livelihood by sweating at mill or forge...[and instead]...saw a reconquest of the green and beautiful England by a happy and healthy people.³⁶

Indeed, as Rowbotham puts it: ‘Razor-grinders, labourers, engineers, quarry-men, gardeners, clerks and schoolteachers tucked his books into their pockets and walked out into the countryside to dream of better days’.³⁷

Unsurprisingly, it had been within the FNL, the chief promoter of this conception of socialism, that Carpenter had felt most at home, as he recalled: ‘those early meetings...were full of hopeful enthusiasms – life simplified, a humane diet and rational dress, manual labour, democratic ideals, communal institutions’.³⁸

Carpenter’s appeal within the socialist movement, did, however, go beyond such groups. Attractive to both working-class labour communities and the middle-class intelligentsia, he was a popular figure whose addresses were enthusiastically received by local branches of the ILP, the Labour Churches, the Fabians, trades unions, and various ethical societies, cutting across divisions of class, religious belief and political faction.³⁹ He had given early support to the Marxist SDF as well as the Socialist League, and was equally at home speaking to the Theosophical Society as he was to 3,000 Sheffield railway workers.⁴⁰

The reason for this broad appeal was partly of Carpenter’s own making, for, believing that all leftist groups were ultimately striving for the same ends, he ignored factional hostilities and lent support to all those who contributed to the critique of current society, stimulating the growth of a ‘glowing and vital enthusiasm’ for ‘the realization’ of something ‘new’.⁴¹ ‘The Anarchists, Social Democrats, Labour parties, Fabians, and Trade Unions’, he argued, were ‘along the same line of march’,

³⁶ Cramp, “My Earliest Teacher”, pp.20-21.

³⁷ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.8.

³⁸ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.225.

³⁹ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.306 & 313-315.

⁴⁰ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.306.

⁴¹ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.126-127.

they simply fixed ‘their minds on different points on the line’.⁴² All perceived that ‘a Collectivist stage’ of state ownership/regulation was the inescapable next phase of social development, and all agreed that ‘beyond that lies a non-governmental (or Anarchist) stage in which authoritative regulation will fall off’, ‘superseded by the voluntary and instinctive consent and mutual helpfulness of the people’.⁴³ They may have disagreed about the speed and specific means of change, but the vision was essentially the same.

Here was Carpenter’s underlying anarcho-communism, although within a pragmatic, gradualist framing that defined him as a libertarian socialist.⁴⁴ This perspective was displayed in his distrust of ‘officialism and bureaucracy’, as well as his belief in the importance of diversity and individuality.⁴⁵ There was no one ‘ideal’, such a thing was always personally defined; the evolution of society in an increasingly ‘communistic direction’ would not be achieved via a quickening uniformity, but through an ‘immense diversity’ of adapting ‘institutions and habits’.⁴⁶ ‘The real value of the modern Socialist movement’ was thus in its ‘oceanic character’, the way in which it ‘permeated society’ through multiple channels, and worked itself out through ‘mistakes and differences of opinion’.⁴⁷ It was about a change of spirit and outlook, not the realisation of one particular group’s political programme.

⁴² Edward Carpenter, “Transitions to Freedom”, in *Forecasts of the Coming Century: By a Decade of Writers*, ed. Edward Carpenter (Manchester: The Labour Press, 1897), p.175. See also Tsuzuki, *Edward Carpenter*, p.116.

⁴³ Carpenter, “Transitions to Freedom”, pp.174-5; Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.127.

⁴⁴ His essay “Transitions to Freedom” formed the essential summary of his views regarding the means and direction of societal change. It was reissued three times, with alterations, under the title of ‘Non-Governmental Society’, firstly in Edward Carpenter, *Prisons, Police and Punishment: An Enquiry into the Causes and Treatment of Crime and Criminals* (London: Arthur C. Fifield, 1905). Then separately as Edward Carpenter, *Non-Governmental Society* (London: Arthur C. Fifield, 1911). And, finally, in Edward Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1917). For a discussion of its development, see Marie-Françoise Cachin, “Non-governmental Society: Edwards Carpenter’s Position in the British Socialist Movement”, in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, ed. Tony Brown (London: Frank Cass, 1990), pp.58-73. For a discussion of Carpenter’s libertarian socialism/anarcho-communism, see Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow*, pp.51-61.

⁴⁵ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.127.

⁴⁶ Carpenter, “Transitions to Freedom”, p.191.

⁴⁷ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.126-27.

His libertarian belief in diversity and the importance he attached to a general shifting of attitudes, values and desires meant that he worked with most major leftist groups in the period, even if there was sometimes mutual disagreement or suspicion. There were, certainly, tensions with others over his ‘ethical’ socialist approach (most notably with Fabians such as Shaw and the Webbs, and Marxists such as Hyndman), and as the Labour Party moved further from a focus on inner-transformation to the practicalities of parliamentary politics he became increasingly sidelined.⁴⁸ Despite this, however, his influence had diffused itself within the socialist movement, and he had had a hand in the ‘education’ of many of its leading voices.⁴⁹ Such an influence was recognised on his eightieth birthday, when he received an album signed by every member of the first Labour government, organised by Margaret Bondfield, Britain’s first female cabinet minister, and including Carpenter’s old friend from the FNL, Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald.⁵⁰

6.2. ‘The Larger Socialism’: Civilisation vs. the ‘Oneness’ of Life

Carpenter came to present his belief system as ‘The Larger Socialism’.⁵¹ This was a socialism that was not simply concerned with the ending of economic inequality, but which represented ‘a changed ideal’ and a new ‘conception of daily life’, grounded in a transformation of human relationships and the closer union of mankind with nature.⁵² Marking the dawn of a society animated by ‘loving companionship and mutual helpfulness’, in which life was ‘sacred and beautiful’, it would ‘clear our skies and purify our streams’, and enable ‘us to sing once more at our work, and to rejoice in it’.⁵³ As E.M. Forster described, ‘Edward’s heart beat no warmer’ at the prospect of a ‘Labour movement...advanced by committee meetings and statistics’,

⁴⁸ Brown, “Introduction”, p.13; Christopher E. Shaw, “Identified with the One: Edward Carpenter, Henry Salt and the Ethical Socialist Philosophy of Science”, in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, ed. Tony Brown (London: Frank Cass, 1990), p.52.

⁴⁹ For an account of Carpenter’s posthumous influence, see Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.439-456.

⁵⁰ Goodway, *Anarchist Seeds Beneath the Snow*, p.50; Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.425.

⁵¹ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.315.

⁵² Edward Carpenter, *England’s Ideal, and Other Papers on Social Subjects* (1887; London: George Allen & Company, 1913), p.72.

⁵³ Edward Carpenter, “A Thought for May-Day”, *Labour Leader*, May Day Supplement, 29th April 1910.

looking ‘towards a State-owned factory attached to State-supervised recreation-grounds’:

What he wanted was News from Nowhere...the rapture of unpolluted streams, sunrise over the moors, and in the midst of these the working people whom he loved, passionately in touch with one another and with the natural glories around them.⁵⁴

As Forster implies, Carpenter’s socialism was of a similar type to that of William Morris – an aesthetic vision of beauty in daily life, of a free people taking joy in their work, living outdoors and in harmony with nature.⁵⁵ At its core, it embodied an anarcho-communism, attempting to realise ‘to the fullest extent the two opposite poles of Communism and Individualism in one vital unity’.⁵⁶ This, Carpenter argued, was the instinctive yearning of humanity:

If any one will only think for a minute of his own inner nature he will see that the only society which would ever really satisfy him would be one in which he was perfectly free, and yet bound by ties of deepest trust to other members.⁵⁷

Mutualism, Carpenter contended, was the state of existence that came most naturally to humanity; it satisfied people’s emotional and social needs, and provided individuals with the freedom to discover their true selves. Its underlying presence in human life could be observed among ‘primitive’, non-Western peoples, where ‘communistic habits’ commonly prevailed, as well as within the family unit, which preserved in miniature ‘the sacred flame’ of an ‘ancient communal humanity’.⁵⁸ Myths of ‘the Golden Age’, or some sort of ‘prehistoric Eden-garden’, represented to Carpenter mankind’s intuitive knowledge of this, collectively forming a general

⁵⁴ Forster, “Some Memories”, p.78.

⁵⁵ Carpenter himself acknowledged their similarity: Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.216; Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, pp.86-87.

⁵⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.128.

⁵⁷ Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, p.92.

⁵⁸ Edward Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure, and Other Essays* (1889; repr., London: George Allen & Company, 1912), pp.8-9 & 47-48; Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, p.91; Carpenter, *England’s Ideal*, pp.154-155.

‘reminiscence of a more harmonious...state of being’ that was carried within ‘each human soul’.⁵⁹

Current ‘civilisation’ – structured around the artificial, divisive system of ‘Private Property’ – was a far cry from such natural inclinations. Based upon a ‘mad nightmarish competition’ for ‘subsistence’ for the majority, or personal advancement for the few, it was ‘animated first and foremost by Fear’.⁶⁰ Indeed, ‘hounded by compulsion’ and ‘kept in subjugation by sheer authority’, it was a society in which a ‘grinding anxiety for...material safety’ formed the ‘keynote’ of most people’s lives.⁶¹

For Carpenter, a ‘free non-governmental society’, grounded in a natural mutualistic ethic, embodied its counter.⁶² Here, the ‘decent provision...of the actual necessities of life’ would be guaranteed, and so cooperative relationships could increasingly replace those characterised by conflict, coercion and exploitation.⁶³ In such a society, ‘the main motives to activity’ would no longer be ‘Fear’ or ‘greed of Gain, but rather Community of life and Interest in life’; ‘you [would] undertake work because you *like* [it], because you feel that you can do it, and because you know that the product will be useful, either to yourself or someone else’.⁶⁴ It was a vision that saw the deadening monotony, conformity and anxiety of a society of commerce and competition replaced by spontaneity, creativity and self-fulfilment, enabled by a cooperative communism.

Represented as a lost former state as well as a future ideal, and embodied in the spirit of numerous individuals, institutions and practices, the mutualistic ethic was the essence of humanity’s always-present potential for improvement. Moreover, in Carpenter’s eyes, it was becoming increasingly prominent. Previously, ‘isolated communisms’ had ‘existed here and there and from time to time’, but now, in the

⁵⁹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.10-11.

⁶⁰ Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, pp.79-80 & 95.

⁶¹ Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, pp.81-82 & 84.

⁶² Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, p.79.

⁶³ Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, p.81.

⁶⁴ Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, pp.87-88.

midst of the socialist revival, there was an unprecedented movement of ‘both the masses and the thinkers of all the advanced nations’ to ‘consciously’ seek ‘the establishment of a socialistic and communal life on a vast scale’.⁶⁵

In part, this was due to Carpenter’s belief that a recognition of the interconnectedness of all human beings, as well as of humanity and the natural world, was steadily growing. This stemmed from his development of a belief system that conceived of the world as being characterised by an essential ‘oneness’, wherein all humans, animals, plants, and even the land itself, were ultimately unified in one ‘Great Self’, one ‘World Soul’.⁶⁶ All were bound by shared origins, and formed different, yet related, manifestations of a ‘common life’, thus combining similitude with boundless diversity: ‘ever diverse yet the same... inexhaustibly continuous with the rest’.⁶⁷ It was a concept that considered humanity to be one expression of a larger creative will which animated the entire natural world, but also viewed each individual as a microcosm of this.⁶⁸ Whether aware of such connection or not, ‘each self’ was ‘united with the self of all human beings’, and all life on earth was bound by ‘infinite threads of relation’.⁶⁹ It was the knowledge of this ‘infinite of relations’ that constituted a ‘universal consciousness’, contained within every being.⁷⁰

An awareness of this ‘wholeness’ had, Carpenter believed, been lost with the rise of ‘civilisation’. For other animals, and during humanity’s early years, there was an intuitive understanding, but, for ‘civilised’ man, it had disappeared with the advent of a society where relationships were determined by ‘wealth’ rather than ‘blood’, affinity or common-interest.⁷¹ ‘The influence of Property’, through its fostering of a selfish, materialistic outlook, had drawn man away from ‘Nature, from his true Self,

⁶⁵ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.48-49.

⁶⁶ Shaw, “Identified with the One”, pp.33-34.

⁶⁷ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p.491. For a discussion of these ideas, see, in particular Edward Carpenter, *The Art of Creation: Essays on the Self and Its Powers* (London: George Allen, 1904).

⁶⁸ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p.490; Carpenter, *The Art of Creation*, p.54.

⁶⁹ Carpenter quoted in Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.312; Carpenter, *The Art of Creation*, p.60.

⁷⁰ Carpenter, *The Art of Creation*, p.60.

⁷¹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.4.

[and] from his fellows'.⁷² It had 'destroyed the ancient system of society...and introduced a society of classes founded upon differences of material possession'.⁷³ Ending practices of 'mother-right and inheritance through the female line', turning 'the woman into the property of the man', privatising the land, creating a 'class of landless aliens' and introducing all manner of 'slavery, serfdom and wage-labour', it marked the dawn of a society of predatory consumption: 'an organisation by which the rich fatten upon the vitals of the poor, the strong upon the murder of the weak'.⁷⁴ 'The State...the policeman' and 'artificial barriers of Law' were created in order secure and formalise these 'various forms of...dominance', serving as symbols of the decay of humanity's communal life.⁷⁵

Carpenter viewed 'civilisation' as a distinct 'historical stage', commencing with 'the division of society into classes founded on property, and the adoption of class-government'.⁷⁶ This had broken a primitive unity or 'health', terms which, for him, embodied each other.⁷⁷ Indeed, he considered 'the health of a people', to consist in their 'real *unity*, the organic life by which each section contributes freely and generously to the welfare of the whole' and 'identifies itself with that welfare'.⁷⁸ Civilisation had served 'in every way to disintegrate and corrupt man', breaking up the 'great inner and cosmical self by which he is one with his fellows'.⁷⁹ He thus viewed it as 'a kind of disease', painful but temporary, something 'to pass through'; hence the title of his work: *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*.⁸⁰

Such a state of 'disease', he argued, was manifested in both 'our physical condition' and 'our social' one.⁸¹ Referencing Shelley, he reflected on the current physical ill-

⁷² Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.27-28.

⁷³ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.4. Here, Carpenter drew upon anthropologist Lewis H. Morgan's study of human development *Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilisation* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1877).

⁷⁴ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.4-5 & 29.

⁷⁵ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.5 & 30-31.

⁷⁶ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.5.

⁷⁷ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.25-26.

⁷⁸ Edward Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations and the Hidden Sources of Their Strife* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915), p.212.

⁷⁹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.25 & 30.

⁸⁰ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.1 & 11.

⁸¹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.2.

health of civilised man, as well as the degenerative effects of domestication on animals.⁸² Bodily ill-health, he explained, was caused by internal ‘discord between the various parts’, ‘abnormal development of individual organs’, or the destructive ‘consumption of the system by predatory germs and growths’.⁸³ The alienating effects of an unnatural life of luxury or poverty, ‘in mansion or in slum’, was the stimulant of such internal disunity.⁸⁴ Similarly, on a collective scale:

in our modern life we find the unity gone which constitutes true society, and in its place warfare of classes and individuals, abnormal development of some to the detriment of others, and consumption of the organism by masses of social parasites.⁸⁵

‘The disease of disunity...of parasitism and selfish domination’ in society, and the baleful effects of a body divided against itself by penury or excess, were thus alike in both cause and kind.⁸⁶

Civilisation was, to an extent, a ‘fallen’ state, although formed what Carpenter termed the ‘second stage’ of a three-step evolution towards a ‘consciousness’ even greater than that which humanity had possessed in its earlier days.⁸⁷ As he explained, during the civilisation stage ‘the consciousness of Self becomes more and more distinct’ and divisions between the self and others become entrenched, blinding individuals to their relation to the rest of life.⁸⁸ Following the growth of this ‘illusion of separation’, the ‘antagonism of subject and object, of “self” and “matter”, and all the antagonisms which follow in its wake – of intellect and emotion [and of] the individual and society’, there would, however, finally come a fresh realisation.⁸⁹

This was the dawn of a ‘Cosmic, or universal, Consciousness’, wherein:

the subject and the object are felt, are *known*, to be united and one – in which the Self is felt to *be* the object perceived...or at least in which the subject and

⁸² Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.2.

⁸³ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.2.

⁸⁴ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.2.

⁸⁵ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.2-3 & 16.

⁸⁶ Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations*, p.212.

⁸⁷ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.11; Carpenter, *The Art of Creation*, p.48.

⁸⁸ Carpenter, *The Art of Creation*, p.48.

⁸⁹ Carpenter, *The Art of Creation*, p.51.

the object are felt to be parts of the same being, of the same including Self of all.⁹⁰

Through this, ‘the long process of differentiation comes to an end, and reintegration takes place’.⁹¹ Moreover, this knowledge of the ‘oneness’ of all would present a ‘higher and more perfect form of knowledge’ than that of the primitive first stage.⁹² For here all had been one, but, never having been divided, the joy and creative potential of unity was not consciously perceived. Carpenter thus valued civilisation as a necessary stage in which ‘self-knowledge’ could be developed; it was a vital fall that would teach humanity the value of the ‘blessedness and freedom’ of the unified life it had lost, and ultimately lead to its attainment of ‘a more perfect and conscious union than could ever have been realised without it’: ‘Man himself, as soon as he understands can take part in the art of creation’.⁹³

This holistic outlook, with its stress on immanetism and ‘oneness’, and its conception of ‘the World, the whole creation’ as being animated by a divine process of ‘self-revelment’, culminating in a self-conscious realisation of the ‘vast unity underlying all’, was something Carpenter shared with the American romantics, as well as with earlier British Romanticism and Idealist philosophy.⁹⁴ It was, however, also something with notably non-Western roots. In the USA, he certainly developed an affinity with both Whitman and Emerson, as related through their conversations, and made a pilgrimage to Thoreau’s Walden Pond, but underlying their association was a shared fascination with the religions of India, particularly Hinduism, which they associated with their own belief in an immanent divinity existing throughout the world.⁹⁵

As was true for many during a period in which the erosion of Christian faith served to popularise the exploration of other religious, spiritual and occultist ideas, Carpenter was ‘intensely interested’ in Eastern philosophy and religion, believing it

⁹⁰ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.51-52.

⁹¹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.51.

⁹² Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.52.

⁹³ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.25; Carpenter, *England’s Ideal*, p.156.

⁹⁴ Carpenter, *The Art of Creation*, pp.34 & 44; Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.6 & 271.

⁹⁵ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, pp.247-248.

to contain the seeds of an ‘ancient wisdom’, and seeking to situate his outlook within its tradition.⁹⁶ The Bhagavad Gita, the Hindu scripture, in particular, made a tremendous impression on him, significantly influencing the development of *Towards Democracy*.⁹⁷ He also undertook his own trip to India and Ceylon in 1890, specifically to meet the Gñani Ramaswamy, a guru figure who taught the interconnection of the individual self with the higher, universal self.⁹⁸ Through him, Carpenter felt that he was coming into ‘contact with the root-thought of all existence’ – ‘the germinal idea’ ‘which in various ages of the world has become the nucleus and impulse of new movements’ and ‘the soul...of religion after religion’.⁹⁹ It was this which he believed could once again animate a new transformative social movement.

Indeed, with this overarching concern with ‘unity’ came Carpenter’s support for socialism, and his belief that the conscious recognition and development of an all-embracing fellowship, stimulated by a boundless love, would form the solution to humanity’s fallen state, carrying it upwards to a higher plane of being. This would occur through a progressively unfolding awareness of unity – a process he termed ‘exfoliation’. Taking the term from Whitman, and drawing on the evolutionary theories of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, Carpenter saw human society developing through purposive principles, not Darwinian competition. He considered ‘desire’, the conscious ‘urge of growth’ in a certain direction, to be the chief agent of change in both the natural and social world, serving to encourage evolution ‘into new and newer forms’, be it in terms of physical development or changing social structures.¹⁰⁰ Carpenter thus described the process of the latter as commencing with the

⁹⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.142-143. For an account of the various influences, including Taoism and Buddhism, see Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.271-272.

⁹⁷ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.106, 142 & 251.

⁹⁸ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.143. For Carpenter’s own account of the trip, see Edward Carpenter, *From Adam’s Peak to Elephanta: Sketches in Ceylon and India* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1892). Carpenter also found Indian religion and life more sympathetic to his sexuality, see Parminder Kaur Bakshi, “Homosexuality and Orientalism: Edward Carpenter’s Journey to the East”, in *Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism*, ed. Tony Brown (London: Frank Cass, 1990), pp.151-177 and Antony Copley, *A Spiritual Bloomsbury: Hinduism and Homosexuality in the Lives and Writings of Edward Carpenter, E.M. Forster, and Christopher Isherwood* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006).

⁹⁹ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.143.

¹⁰⁰ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.136 & 140. A discussion of this role of ‘desire’ is central to *The Art of Creation*.

appearance of ‘a dim feeling of discontent’, followed by ‘a new sense of justice’ and ‘fraternity’, which then took ‘intellectual form’ with ‘books...written’ and ‘plans formed’, ‘new organisations...expressing these ideas’ then took shape ‘in the body of the old society’, which, finally, would find itself ‘reorganised’ along their lines, becoming ‘commonplace accepted institutions’, ‘ready to succumb to fresh mental births...from within’.¹⁰¹ The new was thus born within the shell of the old, a process of repeated renewal driven by the creative pursuit of inner desires.¹⁰²

Carpenter believed that humanity’s most fundamental desire was love.¹⁰³ Which, for him, could ultimately be defined as the ‘desire and longing for the perfect human Form’ – ‘the revelation of a Splendor dwelling in others’ and in ourselves.¹⁰⁴ Other desires, for ‘self-preservation’, ‘hunger, thirst’, ‘power’, ‘knowledge’, were ‘nothing by themselves’, love alone ‘perpetuate[d] itself’, and its constant yearning for fellowship, beauty and the self-realisation of both the individual and humanity, would provide the motor for mankind’s development.¹⁰⁵

This more conscious, active, personal driver of change served to foreground the role of the individual in altering the structures of society. If only one person, ‘speaking from the very depth of his heart’, rejects the status quo and strives for ‘something better’, then, Carpenter proclaimed, it is ‘likely’ that ‘his word’ will ultimately prove ‘stronger than all institutions [and] traditions’.¹⁰⁶ Indeed:

When a new desire has declared itself within the human heart, when a fresh plexus is forming among the nerves – then the revolutions of nations are already decided, and histories unwritten are written.¹⁰⁷

‘Man’, both individually and collectively, ‘forms society, its laws and institutions, and man can reform them’, ‘whoever today feels that there is a better standard of

¹⁰¹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.139.

¹⁰² Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.34 & 144.

¹⁰³ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.141.

¹⁰⁴ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.141. In personal relations he defined it as ‘the inner devotion of one person to another’. Edward Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (London: Sawn Sonnenschein, 1908), p.14.

¹⁰⁵ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.141.

¹⁰⁶ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.66.

¹⁰⁷ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p.45.

life...contains ...*in himself* the germs of a new social order'.¹⁰⁸ As Carpenter thus declared in his popular socialist song *England, Arise!*: 'Hear, England, hear! Deliverance is within you'.¹⁰⁹

The gradual evolution of a conscious desire for unity, initially felt by a few but increasingly spreading outwards, was the path of humanity's social evolution. For those who contained this seed of reform it was, therefore, their 'clearest duty', as well as in their 'best interest', 'to act it out' in their 'own life', their 'strenuous action' pushing onwards a transforming society, which, in turn, would 'react on its members' to generate further change.¹¹⁰ Ultimately, Carpenter presented this as the growth 'a new sentiment of humanity', 'a new ideal of fraternity', which, 'however crude and inexperienced it may at times appear', was, he believed, 'surely destined to conquer and rule the world at last'.¹¹¹

This change of desire, feeling, ethic, he explained, would be carried along by a new spirit of compassionate consciousness, a union of natural intuition and sympathetic fellow-feeling with the self-awareness and rationality of the modern age.¹¹² His vision of a new 'rational and humane science' was a typical embodiment of this.¹¹³ 'Science and intellect' were, he argued, the servants of humanity's deeper faculties, and so any science based upon their division – i.e. the separation of the human mind from its heart, or of mankind from nature – would never come to a full understanding of the world.¹¹⁴ Of man, animal, vegetable and mineral, existing science 'dissects', or even vivisects, in order to understand relationships, indeed a unity, which its actions immediately shatter.¹¹⁵ A science led by a new sympathetic feeling and conscious desire for unity would discover at once a more fruitful, and moral, method

¹⁰⁸ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, pp.1, 66 & 71.

¹⁰⁹ Edward Carpenter, "England, Arise!", in Edward Carpenter, *Sketches from Life in Town and Country, and Some Verses* (London: George Allen & Sons, 1908), p.259.

¹¹⁰ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, p.72.

¹¹¹ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, p.71; Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.128.

¹¹² Carpenter, *The Art of Creation*, p.101; Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.142.

¹¹³ See, most notably, his essays: "Modern Science: A Criticism", "The Science of the Future: A Forecast" and "A Rational and Humane Science" in Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.51-81, 82-99 & 157-175.

¹¹⁴ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, pp.67-68; Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.174.

¹¹⁵ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.88 & 174.

of enquiry.¹¹⁶ Mankind thus needed to ‘harmonise’ its own internal emotional and rational faculties, to ‘bring them into perfect co-operation’ in order to understand the external unity of the world around it.¹¹⁷ Such a combination of intellect and intuition would bring about not only a more humane and worthwhile science, but give shape and expression to the new ethic of fellowship.

Fundamentally, the growth of this ethic was grounded in the transformation of relationships. The recognition of ‘oneness’ and the development of fraternal feeling were dependent on the destruction of barriers and divisions. As Carpenter’s close friend and influence, the noted Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore expressed, it was necessary to seek a state of existence ‘where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls’.¹¹⁸ This was the essence of Carpenter’s message – to reject our suffocating isolation in over-stuffed parlours, and to rejoin with our fellows in ‘the light of the sun’.¹¹⁹ To achieve this, he argued, we must not only reject a materialistic capitalism, but repudiate the aggressive, competitive ‘fighting instinct’ that underpinned it, and increasingly replace it with ‘the sociable or friendly instinct’.¹²⁰ Both were, he admitted, ‘equally engrained’ in human nature, although the latter was more fundamental.¹²¹ If humanity was to develop this essential impulse of friendship, then it could look forward to ‘an epoch of intelligent helpfulness and fraternity...of recognition and understanding’, wherein it would discover that it was one great community, with ‘friends in all the ends of the earth’.¹²²

Carpenter believed that socialism sprung ‘from and demand[ed] as its basis’ this awakened sense of interconnection and mutual care, viewing it as the embodiment of love and fellowship itself.¹²³ Recognising, however, the gradual nature of change, he viewed its first stage as a period of both state and voluntary collectivism, wherein

¹¹⁶ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.88-89; Shaw, “Identified with the One”, p.39.

¹¹⁷ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.175.

¹¹⁸ Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali (Song Offerings)* (1910; London: Macmillan & Co., 1913), p.27.

¹¹⁹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.26 & 44-45.

¹²⁰ Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations*, pp.194-195.

¹²¹ Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations*, pp.195 & 200.

¹²² Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations*, p.216.

¹²³ Carpenter, *England’s Ideal*, p.71.

‘new ideas and...habits’ could be fostered, where ‘the sentiment of the Common Life’ could be learnt by increasingly ‘acting together for common ends’ and ‘feeling together for common interests’.¹²⁴ His ideal, however, remained an anarcho-communist society which represented to him the state in which the recognition of the universal self would ‘revolutionize’ all, enabling:

the bringing of the Races of the world together...the Communalization of Land and Capital, the freeing of Woman to equality with Man, the extension of the monogamic Marriage into some kind of group-alliance, the restoration and full recognition of the heroic friendships of Greek and primitive times [homosexual relationships]...the Simplification...of daily life by the removal of those things which stand between us and Nature, between ourselves and our fellows – by plain living, friendship with the Animals, open-air habits, fruitarian food, and such degree of Nudity as we can reasonably attain to.¹²⁵

The culmination of a long process of evolution, stemming from a ‘seed’ which humanity had always contained, it was a vision of complete sympathetic unity, a world where all ‘barriers’ had been ‘thrown down’ and ‘mutual help and combination’ had ‘become spontaneous and instinctive: each man contributing to the service of his neighbour as inevitably and naturally as the right hand goes to help the left in the human body – and for precisely the same reason’ – that ‘they are part and parcel of the same life’.¹²⁶ Once realised man would be able to ‘*feel* his unity with his fellows...with the animals...the mountains and the streams, with the earth itself’.¹²⁷ This would mark the dawn of ‘true Democracy’, where ‘external government’ falls away, replaced by an ‘inward rule – the rule of the mass-Man in each unit man’.¹²⁸ This replacement of civilisation by a spontaneous egalitarian mutual aid would enable a state of freedom never before seen. Here could be developed a fully realised humanity, where ‘all characters and qualities [would] be recognised’ and individual self-realisation would blossom.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Carpenter, *Towards Industrial Freedom*, pp.93-94 & 96; Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.307.

¹²⁵ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.207-208.

¹²⁶ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, pp.164-165; Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.41 & 127.

¹²⁷ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.45.

¹²⁸ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.34.

¹²⁹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.128.

Carpenter looked towards the achievement of ‘a complex human Communism’, which contained within it the roots of ‘individual freedom’.¹³⁰ He believed that mankind had been ‘made for love – to embrace all, to be united ultimately with all’, but first had to traverse the misery of self-conscious ‘civilisation’ in order to develop a higher understanding and appreciation of the potential of a life of social communism and unity with nature.¹³¹ It was thus not a return to primitivism that Carpenter sought, not a wish to go back to a figurative lost paradise, but to foster a growing *desire* in the hearts of humanity to create something afresh, to push ‘forward to the new Eden’.¹³²

6.3. ‘Salvation by Sandals and Sunbaths’: Vegetarianism and the Simple Life

Perhaps the most essential manifestation of Carpenter’s desire for ‘unity’ was his advocacy of ‘the simplification of life’.¹³³ This was, in part, an attack on capitalism, urging people to remove themselves as far as possible from a divisive system of exploitative consumption. ‘If you do not want to be a vampire and a parasite upon others’, living on their labour, it was vital to change your lifestyle – to do away with unnecessary wants, and to endeavour to supply as many of your needs for yourself as possible.¹³⁴ This would enable the development of a society based upon self-production, cooperation and voluntary collectivism, where class-division and alienation from labour and its products would disappear.

Perhaps more importantly, however, simplification was also the means by which humanity could regain its unity with the natural world:

¹³⁰ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.49.

¹³¹ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p.491.

¹³² Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.35.

¹³³ The theme of ‘the simple life’ runs throughout Carpenter’s works, but for a well-known discussion see his essay “Simplification of Life” in Carpenter, *England’s Ideal*, pp.95-120.

¹³⁴ Carpenter, *England’s Ideal*, pp.95-96 & 120.

The life of the open air, familiarity with the winds and waves, clean and pure food, the companionship of the animals...all these things will tend to restore that relationship which man has so long disowned.¹³⁵

Carpenter viewed mankind's emergence 'from houses and all his other hiding places' as the first step toward this, asserting that 'Nature must once more become his home, as it is the animals and the angels'.¹³⁶ 'Curtains and stone walls' and, indeed, clothes, had served as 'a dense and impenetrable hedge' between 'man and his true life'.¹³⁷ For women, in particular, the escape from the oppressive domesticity of these 'boxes with breathing holes', as well as the restrictive fashions of the day, would be akin to the release from 'a prison'.¹³⁸

Like Rousseau, Nicholson and Newton before him, Carpenter sought escape from excessive clothing – 'the wrappings and...mummydom of centuries, by which [man] has shut himself from the light of the sun'.¹³⁹ Shoes were a particular bugbear, and, wishing to free the human feet from 'their leathern coffins', he became a noted pioneer of the sandal.¹⁴⁰ Clothes acted as 'a barrier', separating man from his fellows by demarking rank, preventing social interaction and debarring the wearer from manual work.¹⁴¹ They also served to entrench humanity's isolation from nature, and inhibited their interaction with other creatures: 'when the chimney-pot hat and frock-coat appears, the birds fly screaming from the trees'.¹⁴²

Nudity, or at least as much as was possible, was Carpenter's preference, providing the physical representation of man's ultimate evolution/exfoliation.¹⁴³ In civilisation, 'man clothes himself to descend', whilst in a new state of natural unity, he 'unclothes himself to ascend'.¹⁴⁴ Carpenter put his ideal of simplification into practice whilst

¹³⁵ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.36.

¹³⁶ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.35.

¹³⁷ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.35-36; Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p.390.

¹³⁸ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.26 & 40.

¹³⁹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.26 & 35.

¹⁴⁰ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, p.113; Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.99. Carpenter was introduced to the sandal by his friend Harold Cox, who sent him a pair from India.

¹⁴¹ Carpenter, *England's Ideal*, p.8.

¹⁴² Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.39.

¹⁴³ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.36.

¹⁴⁴ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.35.

living at Millthorpe. In his plain cottage, his vegetable growing and sandal-making, and his working outdoors, even conducting his writing in a hut by a stream at the bottom of his garden, he sought, what he jokingly termed, ‘salvation by sandals and sunbaths’.¹⁴⁵

The vegetarian diet, was, for Carpenter, another vital element of this natural life. He viewed it as ‘pleasant, clean, healthful in every way, and grateful to one’s sense of decency and humanity’.¹⁴⁶ His criticism of meat-eating came partly from a health standpoint, viewing dependency on meat as a ‘stimulant’ to be ‘harmful’.¹⁴⁷ However, at the forefront was the issue of ‘our moral or sentimental relation to the animals’.¹⁴⁸ Carpenter condemned ‘deadly Respectability sitting at its dinner table’, and looked forward to the day when humans would no longer be ‘maintained at the cost of the Fear, Torment, and Slaughter of the animals’.¹⁴⁹ He recommended as the ideal a natural ‘elementary [fruitarian] diet’ of ‘fruits, nuts, tubers, grains, [and] eggs’, for not only did these ‘contain by their nature the elements of life in their most condensed forms’ but they could also ‘be appropriated without injury to any living creature’, even avoiding the destruction of living plants.¹⁵⁰ Both of these considerations convinced him that such foods were those ‘most fitted to develop the kernel of man’s life’.¹⁵¹

Fundamentally, such a diet resulted from his belief that non-human animals should be recognised as the ‘friends’ of humanity, part of the same universal life, different manifestations of a shared, underlying ‘Great Self’.¹⁵² Tyranny against any member was a blow to all, and thus encouraged the socialist movement to include animals in the great ‘bond of amity’ which it sought to create.¹⁵³ The othering of non-human

¹⁴⁵ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.49; Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.146.

¹⁴⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.101.

¹⁴⁷ Carpenter, *England’s Ideal*, pp.101-102; Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.37-38.

¹⁴⁸ Carpenter, *England’s Ideal*, p.102.

¹⁴⁹ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, pp.24 & 390.

¹⁵⁰ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.38. His own diet remained, however, a pragmatic vegetarianism. See Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.100-101.

¹⁵¹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.38.

¹⁵² Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.208; Shaw, “Identified with the One”, p.34.

¹⁵³ Edward Carpenter, “Social Reform and the Protection of Animals”, *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (October, 1906), p.77.

animals, as well as nature itself, had led man to a cruel, alienated state, enabling ‘him to vivisect a dog, unconscious that he [was] blaspheming the pure and holy relation between man’ and his fellow creatures.¹⁵⁴ Carpenter sought to reject such distancing, asserting that we should seek ‘to enter into a living relation with the blue sky, and the incense-laden air, and the plants and the animals’.¹⁵⁵ Indeed, a fully-realised humanity, he declared, should have ‘a heart beating in sympathy with every creature’.¹⁵⁶

The vegetarian diet, as an acknowledgement of sameness and inter-species solidarity, would provide a basis for this new relationship of love and respect. It would enable the creation of a state ‘of equality’ based upon ‘the recognition of oneself in others’, wherein humanity would see through ‘the illusion of difference, that divides’ and understand ‘its kinship with the animals’, able to perceive ‘that it is the same human creature that flies in the air, and swims in the sea, or walks biped upon the land’.¹⁵⁷ As his friend, and first biographer, Edward Lewis observed, Carpenter could not ‘look into the eyes of the cattle in the field without seeing the human soul gazing out therefrom’.¹⁵⁸

Although Carpenter considered all life to be part of a physically and spiritually interconnected whole, he still recognised gradations within this. Mankind represented the ultimate embodiment of an inner humanity that had worked its way through numerous forms, from the lowest to the highest of the other animals.¹⁵⁹ Although contained within all life, it was only fully manifested in mankind itself, and so, as its most highly developed expression, it had explicit responsibilities towards other animals and to the surrounding natural world. Indeed, ‘the upward

¹⁵⁴ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.87. Carpenter was a fierce opponent of vivisection. See, most notably, Edward Carpenter, *Vivisection: Two Addresses Given Before the Humanitarian League* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1905).

¹⁵⁵ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.87.

¹⁵⁶ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.87.

¹⁵⁷ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.156.

¹⁵⁸ Edward Lewis, *Edward Carpenter: An Exposition and an Appreciation* (London: Methuen, 1915), p.69. As Carpenter had expressed: ‘I saw deep in the eyes of the animals the human soul look out upon me’. Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p.175. See also Edward Carpenter, *Towards Democracy* (first complete edition 1905; repr. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1915), p.174 and Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations*, p.226.

¹⁵⁹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.22-23, 136 & 142.

growth and unfoldment of all organic life' would ultimately lead to 'the emergence of the perfect Man', who, 'accepting and crowning nature', would make its 'universal law' of loving unity manifest throughout the world.¹⁶⁰ Carpenter thus envisaged humanity's destiny as the 'interpreter' of the shared animating spirit of the world, 'aiding the efforts of the sun and soil, giving voice to the desire of the mute earth'.¹⁶¹

Mankind's new relationship with other species was, therefore, part of a broader vision of all-embracing unity, in which humans formed the stewardly apex of a new Eden. He depicted an ideal society where humanity and nature were united as one, in which human dwellings were 'so simple and elemental in character' that they would fit seamlessly into the natural landscape, and where communal settlements would be surrounded by gardens 'sacred to the unharmed and welcome animals'.¹⁶² In practice, along with vegetarianism, such a vision encouraged his environmentalism, manifested in his campaigns against pollution, as well as his advocacy for the creation of 'natural reserves', providing a home for 'all kinds of free plants and creatures'.¹⁶³

As C.T. Cramp observed: 'everything in nature seemed to be his friend – his fellow human beings, the beasts of the field, and the rich life of the trees and growing things were all embraced in his great love for the world'.¹⁶⁴ His belief in the embodying of an all-inclusive ethic of friendship would 'constitute a revolution in human life deeper and more far-reaching than' ever before.¹⁶⁵ By breaking down the barriers which divide humans from each other, nature, and their true selves, and reaching-out to the larger universal life, any assertion of fellowship – be it through socialism,

¹⁶⁰ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.42 & 46.

¹⁶¹ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.41 & 142.

¹⁶² Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, pp.39-40.

¹⁶³ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.60-61; Edward Carpenter, "The Smoke Plague and Its Remedy", *Macmillan's Magazine* (July 1890), pp.204-213; Edward Carpenter, "Sport and Agriculture", *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (November 1913), p.181. For a history of debates regarding pollution in Britain, see Peter Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution: Coal, Smoke, and Culture in Britain since 1800* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁴ Cramp, "My Earliest Teacher", p.20.

¹⁶⁵ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.208.

vegetarianism, or sexual freedom – contained the potential to prove ‘fatal’ to ‘our existing institutions’.¹⁶⁶

6.4. ‘The Intermediate Sex’: Sexual Politics and the Ethic of Friendship

This philosophy of friendship, of an expansive freedom, love and fellowship, was perhaps best expressed through Carpenter’s sexual politics. His desire to restructure society on the basis of free, loving relationships, was intimately connected to his own homosexuality, and to his belief that free sexual relations should be acknowledged as a ‘sacred’ expression of love and ‘comradeship’, with no ‘sense of shame’ surrounding them.¹⁶⁷ During this period those of a libertarian socialist or anarchist persuasion, as well as bohemians more broadly, embraced sexual liberation as a fundamental element of a larger radical transformation of society into one of free association and personal freedom.¹⁶⁸ Oscar Wilde, who embodied both of these groups, explained that the ‘new Individualism’, born out of a libertarian socialism, would convert ‘the abolition of legal restraint into a form of freedom that will help the full development of personality, and make the love of man and woman more wonderful, more beautiful, and more ennobling’.¹⁶⁹ The simple expression of a free sexual desire could serve as a liberating act with wide implications; as Carpenter urged: ‘People should...express or liberate their *own* real and deep-rooted needs and feelings. Then in doing so they will probably liberate and aid the expression of the lives of thousands of others’.¹⁷⁰

Carpenter concurred with many socialist feminists, who saw sex reform as a key element in the struggle for human emancipation, condemning women’s sexual and emotional repression and the commercialisation of sex and love under capitalist

¹⁶⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.208.

¹⁶⁷ Carpenter, *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure*, p.26.

¹⁶⁸ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.270.

¹⁶⁹ Oscar Wilde, *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1891; London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1912), p.31.

¹⁷⁰ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.322.

patriarchy.¹⁷¹ Women, he declared, were ‘debarred from natural Sexuality’, and existing ‘marriage and social institutions’ acted to ‘lumber along over the[ir] bodies’.¹⁷² Carpenter envisaged a future woman as free to embrace her own sexual impulses and to form relationships in any way she saw fit.¹⁷³ He saw this too as the future for those who loved their own sex, with much of his writing on the sexual suppression of women providing cover for arguments in favour of homosexual freedom. As the ‘sufferings of women’ had given ‘cause and impetus to the Women’s Movement’, the ‘similar sufferings’ of homosexuals were, he hoped, ‘destined in their turn to lead another wide-reaching social organisation’.¹⁷⁴

His primary focus was thus on the role of homosexuality, not only in benefitting from, but in *embodying* and *progressing* the development of this new ethic of liberated, all-embracing relationality. For Carpenter, homosexuals embodied a new type of person – an ‘intermediate sex’ – in which the soul of one sex was contained within the body of the other.¹⁷⁵ It was, in particular, to those male bodies who enclosed a ‘feminine soul’, to which Carpenter turned his greatest attention, for these, he believed combined the best of masculine and feminine traits, with the latter’s ‘intuition’ and ‘emotion’ melding with the former’s ‘logic’ and ‘active’ disposition to create a higher, more unified form of human being.¹⁷⁶

Sometimes presenting more negative aspects of society as ‘masculine’, such as the ‘fighting instinct’, he frequently spoke of ‘feminine’ characteristics in a positive light.¹⁷⁷ Gay men, were, he explained ‘superior to normal men’ as a result of their more refined ‘love-feeling – which is gentler, more sympathetic, more considerate, more a matter of the heart and less one of mere physical satisfaction than of ordinary men’, and ‘all this flow[ed] naturally from the feminine element’.¹⁷⁸ Despite valuing

¹⁷¹ Bevir, *The Making of British Socialism*, p.270. For a discussion of Carpenter’s views on women’s oppression, see, in particular, Edward Carpenter, *Love’s Coming of Age: A Series of Papers on the Relation of the Sexes* (Manchester: Labour Press, 1896).

¹⁷² Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p.25; Carpenter, *Love’s Coming of Age*, p.31.

¹⁷³ Carpenter, *Love’s Coming of Age*, p.53.

¹⁷⁴ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.98.

¹⁷⁵ Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p.19.

¹⁷⁶ Carpenter, *Love’s Coming of Age*, pp.40, 50 & 52.

¹⁷⁷ Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations*, p.194.

¹⁷⁸ Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p.128.

such femininity, however, his failure to move beyond traditional gender stereotypes was highly pronounced, and, regardless of his championing of the rights of women, his outlook was highly male-centric, characterising his own Whitmanesque vision of a true democracy as defined by ‘manly love’.¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Carpenter’s conception of homosexuality was a remarkably revolutionary one. Most vitally, he believed that homosexuals had the power to break down boundaries of all kinds through their ability to act ‘as reconcilers and interpreters’, creating a greater degree of mutual understanding.¹⁸⁰ They also had a greater capacity to overcome those of class; as he declared: ‘Eros is a great leveller’.¹⁸¹ Indeed, homosexuals existed in all classes, and so had the potential to create alliances that undermined existing hierarchies. This had been reflected historically, with cross-class homosexual relationships having frequently, although with no public acknowledgment, had ‘a decided influence on social institutions, customs and political tendencies’ throughout the life of mankind, with gay men commonly performing the role of teachers, carers, artists and prophets.¹⁸² He pointed to numerous famous individuals who he believed fitted this mould, and, notably, went on to claim Shelley – who, prior to Whitman, had ‘been [his] own ideal’ – as a typical example of one, who, containing within himself aspects of both the masculine and feminine, had served as a forerunner of a larger conception of love.¹⁸³

Carpenter also presented homosexuality as capable of bridging national and racial divides, and held strong anti-imperialist views of his own. Characterising countries such as Ireland and India as having their ‘life-blood sucked...to feed the luxury of Britain’, he called for the ‘ruin...*the sooner the better*’ of Europe’s ‘fatuous empires’, and lent particular support to the cause of Indian independence, believing

¹⁷⁹ Brown, “Introduction”, p.9. For a discussion of the role ideas of masculinity in Carpenter’s thought and work, see Ruth Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain, 1880-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.102-131.

¹⁸⁰ Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p.14.

¹⁸¹ Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p.114.

¹⁸² Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p.115.

¹⁸³ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.119; Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.427. Edward Carpenter & George Barnefield (pseud. Guy Barnard), *The Psychology of the Poet Shelley* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1925). His co-contributor to this work claimed that Shelley was bisexual.

that ‘the liberation and self-expression of the Indian people would benefit the world’.¹⁸⁴ As Leela Gandhi explains, Carpenter’s anti-imperial sentiments, as well as his ‘sympathies with criminals, prostitutes, workers, women, and animals’, stemmed in part from his own construction of a specific homosexual politics and identity that defined itself less in terms of ‘dissident “sex acts”’ and more as ‘a radical reconfiguration of association, alliance, relationality, community’.¹⁸⁵ Carpenter had, in other words, ‘made it homosexuality’s business to think of itself, first and foremost, as a capacity for radical kinship’, and thus sought out alliances that cut across socially-constructed boundaries.¹⁸⁶ ‘Foreigners, outcastes, [and] outsiders’, all those who had been denied welcome in the constrictive bounds of ‘civilised’ sociality, were the natural allies of the affective homosexual.¹⁸⁷

Carpenter perceived that a masculinist heteronormativity had led to the neglect of the loving, affective capabilities of humanity, and resulted in the widespread dominance of ‘others’ (genders, races, species) by Western patriarchy.¹⁸⁸ Homosexuality, defined in opposition to this as containing within itself a ‘wealth and variety of affectional possibilities’, presented its counter and, perhaps, its most explicit challenge.¹⁸⁹ Carpenter, therefore, came to view homosexuals as:

The advanced guard of that great movement which will one day transform the common life by substituting the bond of personal affection and compassion for the monetary, legal and other external ties which now control and confine society.¹⁹⁰

Through their embodiment of a more equal form of relationship, based not on domination but on a new spirit of loving friendship – the keynote of Carpenter’s

¹⁸⁴ Carpenter, *Towards Democracy*, p.465; Edward Carpenter, “Empire in India and Elsewhere”, *Humane Review* (January 1900), p.207; Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.305. Notably, the ‘Orient’ was viewed as a bastion of homosexuality, both by Western homosexuals and their opponents, who presented homosexuality as an undesirable foreign entity. L. Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.53. Mohandas Gandhi read Carpenter’s *Civilisation: Its Cause and Cure* while in London in 1909, and later mentioned it favourably in his *Hind Swaraji*. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraji*, p.20. See also L. Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.63.

¹⁸⁵ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.36.

¹⁸⁶ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.36.

¹⁸⁷ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, pp.35-36.

¹⁸⁸ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, pp.60-62.

¹⁸⁹ Carpenter, *Love’s Coming of Age*, p.128.

¹⁹⁰ Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p.116.

ideology – they were ‘the teachers of future society’, harbingers of the liberation of all.¹⁹¹

6.5. ‘The Great Kinship’: Carpenter and Élisée Reclus

Ultimately, Carpenter’s belief system rested upon the notion that a free, compassionate relationality was the form to which future human progress should aspire. This would be led by those who had already become alive to this truth, ‘whose spirits have passed in determination and compassion round the whole earth, and found only equals and lovers’.¹⁹² His approach to achieving this was personal, gradual and non-prescriptive. Summarising his own life’s efforts, he framed his transformation of everyday life and relationships as simultaneously modest, yet, through the challenges they made to the existing order, profound. ‘Associating with manual workers’, ‘speaking at street corners’, ‘growing fruit, making sandals, writing verses’ – Carpenter demonstrated the revolutionary nature of simple actions, and how an ethic of friendship, reflected in sexual, class, racial and species solidarity, could lay the foundations for a new world.¹⁹³

In many ways, Carpenter found a likeminded soul in the French geographer Élisée Reclus, whose essay ‘La Grande Famille’ he translated as ‘The Great Kinship’ for the *Humane Review* in 1906.¹⁹⁴ In it, Reclus presented a vision of a sympathetic, ‘fraternal’ relationship between humans and other animals, lost in the development of civilisation, which, through a renewed ‘quest for friendship’, could once again be regained, and, moreover, perfected.¹⁹⁵ He asserted humanity’s ‘enormous’ potential to exert ‘a positive influence over the entire living world’, and criticised its failure to

¹⁹¹ Carpenter, *The Intermediate Sex*, p.14. Carpenter put together a collection documenting such ‘friendships’ crossing various forms of socially constructed divide: Edward Carpenter, *Ioläus: An Anthology of Friendship* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1902).

¹⁹² Carpenter, *The Healing of Nations*, p.227. The quote is from Whitman.

¹⁹³ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.321.

¹⁹⁴ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.252 & 310. Élisée Reclus, “La Grande Famille”, *Le Magazine Internationale* (January 1897), translated by Edward Carpenter, “The Great Kinship”, *Humane Review* (January 1906).

¹⁹⁵ References are to a more recent translation: Élisée Reclus, “The Extended Family”, in *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity*, ed. & trans. John Clark and Camille Martin (Oakland CA: PM Press, 2013), p.136.

do so as stemming from its inability to ‘connect’ this greater nature to its ‘own life’.¹⁹⁶ Through the destruction of the ‘individualist...divides’ we have created, and the development of a renewed understanding of interconnection, a new spirit of cooperation would arise.¹⁹⁷ We would thus ‘expand our love’ to embrace not only our fellow humans, but all sentient life, as well as the world itself, recognising this as both the basis of ‘our common survival’ and path to the realisation of both our collective and individual potential.¹⁹⁸

Reclus had strong links to the Humanitarian League, and was praised as a veritable ‘poet’ by Salt, who considered this essay to offer a ‘luminous’ portrayal of the ‘primeval friendly relations’ that had existed between mankind and other animals, as well as a glimpse ‘at the still more wonderful possibilities of the future’.¹⁹⁹ An anarchist in the vein of Kropotkin and a believer in the benefits of mutual aid in both nature and society, Reclus was a pioneer of ecological thought, as well as an anti-imperialist, feminist opponent of marriage and advocate of free union, and a believer in the benefits of nudity and outdoor life.²⁰⁰

He was also a vegetarian, initially prompted by an acute ‘horror at the sight of the shedding of blood’ experienced during a childhood encounter of the grisly sights of a butcher’s courtyard.²⁰¹ Later, he argued against butchery and meat-eating as morally damaging to human society and destructive of ‘the bonds of affection and kindness that link man to animals’.²⁰² Seeking an ideal of beauty and harmony in both our

¹⁹⁶ Reclus, “The Extended Family”, p.136.

¹⁹⁷ Reclus, “The Extended Family”, pp.136-137.

¹⁹⁸ Reclus, “The Extended Family”, pp.136-137.

¹⁹⁹ Salt, *Seventy Years Among Savages*, pp.204-205. For a discussion of the connections between Reclus and British socialism, see Federico Ferretti, *Anarchy and Geography: Reclus and Kropotkin in the UK* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019).

²⁰⁰ For an account of Reclus’ life and beliefs, see John Clark, “An Introduction to Reclus’ Social Thought”, in *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity: Selected Writings of Élisée Reclus*, ed. & trans. John Clark and Camille Martin (2005; Oakland CA: PM Press, 2013), pp.3-100. Reclus’ work was a notable forerunner of contemporary ‘social ecology’ and ‘bioregionalism’ (pp. 16 & 23). For his feminist connections, see Federico Ferretti, “Anarchist Geographers and Feminism in Late 19th Century France: The Contribution of Élisée and Elie Reclus”, *Historical Geography* 44 (2016), pp.68-88.

²⁰¹ Élisée Reclus, “On Vegetarianism”, in *Anarchy, Geography, Modernity*, ed. & trans. John Clark and Camille Martin (Oakland CA: PM Press, 2013), pp.156-157. This essay was first published in *The Humane Review* (January 1901), pp.316-324.

²⁰² Reclus, “On Vegetarianism”, pp.156 & 160.

lives and surroundings, he declared ‘the horse and the cow, the wild rabbit and the cat, the deer and the hare’ to be ‘more valuable to us as friends than as meat’.²⁰³ Indeed, in the development of the world of sympathetic interconnection that he described, other species should no longer be food, ‘servants’ or ‘machines’, ‘but rather our true companions’.²⁰⁴ Like Carpenter, he came to endorse the fruitarian ideal – a diet based around foods which man can collect ‘without killing the being that provides them’: ‘the eggs of an animal, the seeds of a plant, and the fruit of a tree’.²⁰⁵

Reclus’ body of work, although coming from a more rationalist basis, ultimately provided an all-embracing critique of domination – class, sexual, racial, species – that shared much with Carpenter’s own. Both sought to restore humanity’s organic links with nature, arguing that mankind had a specific, active developmental role to play in the world’s evolution. Like Carpenter, Reclus believed that: ‘Humanity is nature becoming self-conscious’.²⁰⁶ As John Clark explains, Reclus viewed mankind as a vital ‘aspect of the earth’s larger processes of self-realization’, and hoped that its awoken understanding of this role would help it ‘to act consciously and responsibly’ in the development of both a new ‘human’ and ‘earth community’.²⁰⁷ In opposition to the defining contemporary narrative of ‘Western or “civilised” humanity’ as being ‘engaged in a process of triumphant world domination’, Reclus thus envisaged ‘a global humanity, embedded in nature, yet undertaking an open-ended and creative project of liberatory’ self-discovery.²⁰⁸

In this, he stressed the role of individuals as the source of this ‘creative will that constructs and reconstructs the world’, thus viewing the ‘process of self-transformation’ and that of ‘social evolution’ as identical.²⁰⁹ He argued that

²⁰³ Reclus, “On Vegetarianism”, pp.160-162.

²⁰⁴ Reclus, “The Extended Family”, p.137.

²⁰⁵ Reclus, “On Vegetarianism”, p.162.

²⁰⁶ Élisée Reclus, *L’Homme et la Terre* (Paris: Librairie Universelle, 1905-8), vol. 1, p.i. Original quote: ‘L’Homme est la nature pregnant conscience d’elle-même’.

²⁰⁷ Clark, “An Introduction to Reclus’ Social Thought”, p.3.

²⁰⁸ Clark, “An Introduction to Reclus’ Social Thought”, p.4.

²⁰⁹ Reclus quoted in Clark, “An Introduction to Reclus’ Social Thought”, p.6; Clark, “An Introduction to Reclus’ Social Thought”, p.100.

humanity, unlike other species, had the ability to actively choose to embody either the destructive/predatory or the creative/cooperative instinct, as reflected in his advocacy of vegetarianism.²¹⁰ He looked forward, therefore, to ‘a revolution in subjectivity’ – to the development of ‘a deeper respect, reverence, and love for nature, for the earth, and for all beings that share the planet, including humanity in all its diversity’ – that would be expressed through ‘fully engaged, transformative activity’, breaking down the ‘barriers that prevent human beings from relating themselves to these greater wholes’.²¹¹

In acknowledging humanity as part of an interconnected earth, yet possessing a unique power to reject the forces of domination and to embrace, indeed cultivate, their counter, Reclus outlined humanity’s vital duty of care towards the world, and to all its constituent members. Seeking a synthesis between a ‘concern for justice, knowledge and rationality’ and ‘the need for social solidarity and the development of care and compassion’, he championed the ‘convergence of reason, passion, and imagination’ as ‘a practice of active, engaged love’.²¹² This ideal was central to Carpenter’s own belief system, as it is to the form of thought examined throughout this thesis. Moreover, as will be explored in the following section, it is one, particularly in its focus on the development of relationships based upon an ethic of care, which is increasingly expressed as inherently *feminist*.

6.6. ‘An Immature Politics’: Gender and Vegetarianism

It is very telling that in Reclus’ essay *On Vegetarianism* he chooses to depict children and women as those with emotional, compassionate ties to non-human animals. Describing his unfortunate trip to the butcher’s, he associated his own childhood body with that of the slaughtered animals, recounting how a butcher carried him home after fainting: ‘I weighed no more than one of the lambs he slaughtered each morning’.²¹³ He then went on to describe witnessing the ‘childlike

²¹⁰ Reclus, “On Vegetarianism”, p.160; Clark, “An Introduction to Reclus’ Social Thought”, p.33.

²¹¹ Clark, “An Introduction to Reclus’ Social Thought”, pp.99-100.

²¹² Clark, “An Introduction to Reclus’ Social Thought”, pp.7, 33 & 100.

²¹³ Reclus, “On Vegetarianism”, p.157.

moans' of a pig being slowly bled to death.²¹⁴ Dwelling on this, he reflected on their early lives as domestic members 'of the household', 'gorged with food' and responding 'with sincere affection for all [the] care' they received, remaining unaware of any ulterior motive.²¹⁵ Here, he highlighted the potential for a 'meeting of hearts', specifically when a 'housewife charged with caring for the pig befriends her ward...pampers him and speaks to him'.²¹⁶ For this, he laments, she faces ridicule, appearing 'ridiculous, as if it were absurd and almost disgraceful to love an animal who loves us!'²¹⁷

Turning again to his childhood, he recalled an incident of this nature from his own life. His great aunt, 'a good old woman', came into conflict with the members of her village when she 'would not consent to the murder of her fat friend'; after the pig was taken 'by force', a young Reclus watched his great aunt collapse 'on a stool, silently weeping'.²¹⁸ He 'stood next to her and watched her tears, not knowing whether [he] should share her grief or believe like the crowd that the slaughter...was just and legitimate, dictated by both common sense and fate'.²¹⁹ He sided with the old woman and her pig. He decided that their bond of friendship was the only 'legitimate' element of the situation, not the force or cynical, selfish 'rationality' of those, likely men, who stole the pig away for slaughter.

During the period this thesis covers, and, indeed, before and beyond it, children, women, non-human animals, nature, and often non-Western peoples, were typically connected in the eyes of many, usually with a view to disparaging one or more of them. In their supposed embodiment of emotional impulses, intuition, sentiment and irrationality, they represented something intrinsically underdeveloped, standing in contrast to a rational, white male civilisation. Either representing the unruly and wild, or else the inherently passive, they were all typically figured as in need of being, or happiest when, placed under the dominion of this patriarchal order.

²¹⁴ Reclus, "On Vegetarianism", p.157.

²¹⁵ Reclus, "On Vegetarianism", p.157.

²¹⁶ Reclus, "On Vegetarianism", p.157.

²¹⁷ Reclus, "On Vegetarianism", p.157.

²¹⁸ Reclus, "On Vegetarianism", p.157.

²¹⁹ Reclus, "On Vegetarianism", p.157.

The links between them, however, could also be perceived as profoundly positive. Part of the reason they were constructed as being in need of instruction, control, or domination was because what they supposedly represented embodied the exact counter of prevailing orthodoxies and social structures. Compassion, intuitive understanding, the instinctive provision of care, unrestrained creativity and sexual freedom, were discerned by many of the writers discussed so far as some of the typical characteristics which these suppressed groups often possessed, and which held the key to a brighter future beyond the violent dominion of a carnivorous capitalist patriarchy. Indeed, a peaceful, cooperative society based upon mutual aid and transformed relationships of all-embracing fellowship, was frequently depicted by its advocates as rooted in nature, and reflected in both the animal world and amongst many groups of 'primitive' or non-Western peoples.

Children were also routinely praised, almost uniformly from Rousseau to Carpenter, not only for representing a less corrupted humanity, and containing within themselves the seeds of something new, but for displaying an essential disgust at meat-eating, as well as an affinity with non-human animals and the natural world. This affinity, a broadly accepted cultural conception, is itself interesting in appearing to represent a bond that is usually lost, or 'grown out of', in adulthood, through an education that encourages a mentality of 'othering', and the creation of a dividing line between humanity and nature.²²⁰ As Linehan has demonstrated, many fin-de-siècle socialists of an ethical, libertarian or religious persuasion, presented childhood as a corrective to a corrupt modernity.²²¹ As he highlights, in both Morris' and Carpenter's works, childhood is an age of 'natural goodness and spontaneous creativity and freedom'.²²² For Carpenter, it embodied an essential understanding of the 'common life' and 'the liberation of a thousand and one instincts, desires and capacities' which currently lay 'buried within us, concealed and ignored'.²²³ In Morris' *News from Nowhere*, therefore, the vision of humanity's ideal future was

²²⁰ See, for example, Gaard, "Vegetarian Ecofeminism", p.120.

²²¹ Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, pp.98-115.

²²² Linehan, *Modernism and British Socialism*, p.108.

²²³ Carpenter, *Civilisation: It's Cause and Cure* (1921 edition), pp.262-263.

presented in terms of regaining this state of existence: ‘let us rejoice that we have got back our childhood again’.²²⁴

With this in mind, the title of Lenin’s 1920 attack on such ‘utopian’ strands of socialism is particularly striking: “*Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. Building upon Engels’ 1892 critique, *Socialism, Utopian and Scientific*, Lenin similarly attacked the ‘immaturity’ of such ‘primitive’ forms, defining a (Bolshevik) socialism as a political ‘adulthood’ characterised by ‘discipline, firmness, inflexibility’, the ‘strictest centralisation’, an acceptance of ‘Marxism, as the only correct revolutionary theory’, ‘*scientific principles*’, and ‘a single Communist Party’.²²⁵ It sought to define socialism as monolithic, based upon a single, unquestionable rationalist, ‘scientific’ theory, to be propelled into realisation by force and obedience to a central authority. In contrast to this the ideas of other socialists, who conceived of socialism in essentially opposite terms – of gradualism, individual freedom and compassionate relationality – were seen as ‘a piece of childishness that is difficult to take seriously’.²²⁶

Such criticism of ‘immaturity’ or lack of seriousness was levelled by numerous others who believed that socialism needed to ‘come of age’.²²⁷ The Marxist leader of the SDF, H.M. Hyndman, reputedly asserted that it should no longer be:

a depository of odd cranks: humanitarians, vegetarians, anti-vivisectionists...arty-crafties and all the rest of them. We are scientific socialists and have no room for sentimentalists. They confuse the issue.²²⁸

Similarly, George Orwell, in *The Road to Wigan Pier* (1937) despaired at socialism’s attraction of ‘every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, “Nature Cure” quack, pacifist and feminist in England’.²²⁹ Orwell manifested this image as the figure of Carpenter himself in a letter written around the

²²⁴ Morris, *News from Nowhere*, p.132.

²²⁵ V. Lenin, “*Left-Wing” Communism: An Infantile Disorder: An Attempt at a Popular Discussion on Marxist Strategy and Tactics* (1920; rev. trans. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1934), p.44.

²²⁶ Lenin, “*Left-Wing” Communism*, p.22.

²²⁷ This notion of a new dawn of rational adulthood was itself a clear echo of the underpinning concept of the Enlightenment.

²²⁸ Stephen Winsten, *Salt and His Circle* (London: Hutchinson, 1951), p.64.

²²⁹ George Orwell, *The Road to Wigan Pier* (London: Gollancz, 1937), p.206.

same time: ‘the sort of eunuch type with a vegetarian smell, who go about spreading sweetness and light...Edward Carpenter or some other pious sodomite’.²³⁰

These criticisms, although coming from various other leftist perspectives, were united by a concern with a rejection of the ‘silly’ and ‘ephemeral’, the ‘emotional’ and the personal, associated with an essential ‘childishness’. In many ways they were rejections of diversity, which, through the lens of a highly masculinist, rationalist, prescriptive outlook, perceived anything that stood beyond their own narrow field of vision as inherently underdeveloped and irrelevant, belonging to those categories of otherness – children, women, nature – described above. This is made particularly clear by the lumping together of feminists, vegetarians, homosexuals and those ethical and libertarian socialists associated with ‘sentiment’ and ‘back to nature’ schemes.

The association of these groups, and the ideas and concepts they represented, was thus clearly recognised by their detractors from both establishment and anti-establishment standpoints. As has been demonstrated, however, it was also understood, in a highly positive light, by their advocates. Indeed, as Leela Gandhi has demonstrated, the notion of an ‘immature politics’ does not need hold derogatory connotations, for the very ‘confusion’ which Hyndman so disliked, is precisely what gives it the potential to be such a positive, transformative power for change.²³¹ In its shunning of imposed authority, conformity and rigid doctrine and in its stress upon compassionate relationships and diversity of experience, it provides an arena for endless alliances of solidarity between groups, enabling a more gradual, yet more fundamental, societal change. By fostering a new mode of relating that respected the interconnectness, but also the individuality, of all, it would engender a revolution in subjectivity and ethics, leading to the growth of a society of mutualism, peace and individual freedom, as opposed to those of competition, coercion or authoritarianism.

²³⁰ George Orwell to Jack Common, 16th April 1936, in Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., *The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Volume 1, An Age Like This 1920-1940* (London: Penguin, 1970), p.245.

²³¹ Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, pp.177-189.

From Shelley to Salt, such ideas were championed, and their representation in nature, childhood, non-Western peoples and (for Carpenter) homosexuality, celebrated. Despite their common endorsement of women's liberation, however, the feminine, or *feminist*, associations of such ideas were often less pronounced. Such an association has, notably, recently asserted itself in the fields of ecofeminism and feminist ethics of care.²³² An understanding of these connections was also perceived by a great number of women themselves across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and it is to them that we shall now turn.

6.7. 'The smooth cool man of science': Women and Anti-Vivisection

The association between women and the animal welfare movement during the nineteenth century was a well acknowledged one.²³³ Societies like the RSPCA relied upon a large and active female membership to campaign at local level, and their letters filled the pages of journals such as *The Animal World*. Issues that directly involved women, most notably criticisms of 'feather fashion' and subsequent campaigns against 'murderous millinery', were often a central focus. At the time they were frequently derided either for their inconsistency of affection (for condemning one cruelty whilst ignoring another), or else for having succumbed to an excessive feminine 'sentimentality'. Despite attempts to denigrate, however, female involvement in the animal welfare movement certainly seemed to demonstrate some form of affinity between women and non-human animals. This was, perhaps, most pronounced in campaigns against vivisection, in which women played a leading role, and where the notion of 'identification' between subjugated women and subjugated animals became prominent.²³⁴

As Kathryn Gleadle has highlighted, many middle-class women in the nineteenth century involved themselves in movements such as anti-vivisection and

²³² For a good overview of this, see Adams and Donovan, eds., *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, esp. pp.1-15.

²³³ For a discussion, see Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen*.

²³⁴ On the growth of the anti-vivisection movement, see Kean, *Animal Rights*, pp.96-112 and Anita Guerrini, *Experimenting with Humans and Animals: From Galen to Animal Rights* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp.70-92.

vegetarianism, as well as causes such as temperance, as a means to assert reformist ideas in the public sphere.²³⁵ Francis Power Cobbe (1822-1904), founder of the Victoria Street Society, the first anti-vivisection organisation (established 1875), was a prime example. As Hilda Kean explains, Cobbe operated ‘at the very heart of the political process, instituting petitions, organising meetings, lobbying and writing pamphlets’ to effect legislative change.²³⁶ Her work was powerful, using highly charged language to attack and expose the cruelty of experiments on living animals, as most notably expressed in her pamphlet *Light in Dark Places* (1883).²³⁷ She was also a dedicated member of the National Society for Women’s Suffrage and lived for over thirty years in a lesbian relationship with her partner Mary Lloyd.

Here, through her simultaneous anti-vivisectionist and suffragette activism, as well as her homosexuality, an apparent notion of ‘identification’ between oppressed groups could be asserted. As Lansbury has demonstrated through her discussion of the overlaps of the language of domination and forced restraint shared between vivisection, contemporary pornography and gynaecological practice, Cobbe was, indeed ‘always aware of the connections between vivisection, pornography, and the condition of women’.²³⁸ However, to automatically amalgamate her activities as one unified progressive political outlook would be mistaken, for she was also a committed Conservative and meat-eater, with a penchant for feathered hats.²³⁹ Indeed, as Kean points out, the anti-vivisection movement, ultimately based upon individuals’ own conceptions of morality, contained most political and personal viewpoints.²⁴⁰

For women, however, an identification with animals as fellow objects ‘of the male gaze and physical violation’, or, more simply, as common victims of a society based

²³⁵ Kathryn Gleadle, “Rethinking gender and domesticity”, in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850*, ed. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). See also Livesey, *Socialism, Sex, and the Culture of Aestheticism in Britain*, p.108.

²³⁶ Kean, *Animal Rights*, p.106.

²³⁷ Francis Power Cobbe, *Light in Dark Places* (London: Victoria Street Society for the Protection of Animals from Vivisection, 1883); Kean, *Animal Rights*, p.103.

²³⁸ Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, pp.99, 111 & 129.

²³⁹ Hilda Kean, “The ‘Smooth Cool Men of Science’: The Feminist and Socialist Response to Vivisection”, *History Workshop Journal*, no.40 (Autumn 1995), p.24.

²⁴⁰ For a discussion, see Kean, “The ‘Smooth Cool Men of Science’”, pp.23-26.

upon ‘male sexual authority’, did provide a unifying cause for their involvement in anti-vivisection.²⁴¹ Anna Kingsford (1846-1888), a theosophist and vegetarian, embodied this sense of identification to its most dramatic extent, detailing in her writings her ‘dreams of agonising self-identification with tortured animals’, and describing her visions of vivisected beings that crossed back and forth in front of her eyes between human and animal form.²⁴² The feminist Edith Ward expressed a perhaps more typical, widespread version of this feeling, explaining that the:

similitude of position between women and the lower animals, although vastly different in degree, should inspire from the former the most unflinching and powerful support...[for the latter]...What, for example, could be more calculated to produce brutal wife-beaters than long practice of savage cruelty towards the other animals? And what, on the other hand, more likely to impress mankind with the necessity of justice for women than the awakening of the idea that justice was the right of even an ox or a sheep?²⁴³

For some women, to challenge the oppression of non-human animals could thus serve to challenge other forms of injustice.

The most notable incident illustrative of this was the ‘Brown Dog Affair’, and the riots which resulted from this in 1907.²⁴⁴ Louise Lind-af-Hageby (1878-1963), a Swedish-British women’s rights activist, anti-vivisectionist and vegetarian, and her friend Leisa Schartau, had, after deliberately witnessing first-hand the practice of vivisection at one of its leading sites, University College London, recorded and published their experiences in a damning, provocative account, *The Shambles of Science* (1903).²⁴⁵ A particular focus of this was the case of a brown terrier dog, whose subjection to multiple vivisections was described as having been conducted in

²⁴¹ Kean, “The ‘Smooth Cool Men of Science’”, p.27; Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p.99.

²⁴² Gandhi, *Affective Communities*, p.104. See Anna Kingsford, *Dreams and Dream Stories*, ed. Edward Maitland (London: George Redway, 1888). On her vegetarianism, see Anna Bonus Kingsford, *The Perfect Way in Diet: A Treatise Advocating a Return to the Natural and Ancient Food of Our Race* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench & Co, 1881).

²⁴³ Edith Ward, “Review of Animals’ Rights, by Henry Salt”, *Shafts* (19th November 1892). Ward was also a theosophist, for a discussion see Matthew Beaumont, “Influential Force: *Shafts* and the Diffusion of Knowledge at the *Fin de Siècle*”, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, no.3 (2006), pp.1-19.

²⁴⁴ For an account, see Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*.

²⁴⁵ Louise Lind-af-Hageby and Leisa Schartau, *The Shambles of Science: Extracts from the Diary of Two Students of Physiology* (London: Ernest Bell, 1903).

a lecture hall imbued with an atmosphere of levity, with ‘jokes and laughter everywhere’.²⁴⁶ It was this section of the book, titled ‘Fun’, that ultimately led to a very public libel case, eventually won by the vivisectors.²⁴⁷

Following the publicity generated by this, however, a statue, instigated by Lind-af-Hageby, and endorsed by a progressive local council, commemorating the brown dog, was erected in Battersea, in the Latchmere Recreation Ground in 1906. This site was at the heart of a new working-class housing estate, within an area with existing associations with radical politics, and which, as Kean highlights, was served by a nearby anti-vivisection hospital that explicitly sought to provide medical care for the working classes that was more humane and patient-focussed than that received in more prestigious institutions.²⁴⁸ The statue itself took the form of a large drinking fountain (designed for both human and animal use), surmounted by a bronze of the dog. The inscription it bore was dedicated to he who had been ‘Done to Death in the Laboratories of University College in February 1903’, as well as to the ‘Memory of the 232 dogs’ vivisected there in the same year, and ended with the declaration: ‘Men and women of England, how long shall these Things be?’²⁴⁹ Such a statement was deemed highly provocative by the medical establishment, causing the statue to become the focus of frequent clashes on the streets of Battersea between medical students, who desired its removal, and the statue’s various defenders.

As Lansbury reveals, the champions of the brown dog statue were largely composed of feminists, socialists, trades unionists and local working-class residents, and it was this coalition that fought off repeated attempts to destroy it by vivisectionist medical students. Indeed, when the latter came with sledge hammers, police were assisted in their arrests by ‘Battersea men’ who ‘rushed out of the council houses’ to lend a hand, trades unions such as the Operative Bricklayers’ Society ‘pledged its members to defend the statue’, and Lind-af-Hageby ‘had a guard of Battersea workers’ surrounding her when attending an anti-vivisection meeting that its opponents sought

²⁴⁶ Lind-af-Hageby and Schartau, *The Shambles of Science*, p.19.

²⁴⁷ Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, pp.10-11.

²⁴⁸ Kean, *Animal Rights*, pp.152-154.

²⁴⁹ Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p.14.

to infiltrate.²⁵⁰ The medical students themselves certainly recognised its links to the women's movement, violently and indiscriminately attacking suffrage meetings (including those with no connection to anti-vivisectionist activity) 'with howls, barks, and cries of "Down with the Brown Dog!"'.²⁵¹ It was during this time that the statue became 'a symbol of feminist outrage and working-class resentment', and in which the cause of anti-vivisection became entangled with both feminism and working-class socialism in the public mind.²⁵²

The removal of the statue ultimately came in 1910 after the socialists and progressives lost their majority on Battersea Council. This resulted in a petition signed by over 20,000 local people, as well as a subsequent demonstration in Trafalgar Square.²⁵³ The coalition which formed around the brown dog was certainly a remarkable one, for, as Lansbury highlights, working men and middle-class feminists were far from common bedfellows, and sympathy for each other's causes was often lacking.²⁵⁴ What united them in this instance was their common opposition to elite male power, and its forcible, often violent, control of the lives of others – be they women, the working classes or non-human animals. As both Lansbury and Kean have argued, this period witnessed the rising moral authority of a middle-class, male, rationalist science, displacing, in particular, that of religion.²⁵⁵

What Cobbe termed 'the smooth cool man of science' thus came to form a self-assured 'new priesthood', with an ever-increasing capacity to command obedience from his 'subjects'.²⁵⁶ Indelibly 'bloodstained' in the eyes of Lind-af-Hageby, throughout the 'Brown Dog Affair', these 'priest[s] of vivisection' consistently 'declared that they were rational and reflective men of science', in opposition to the women and workers who were 'emotional and irresponsible'.²⁵⁷ Framed by these

²⁵⁰ Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, pp.16 & 18. Kean also notes the strength of support for anti-vivisection from trade union leaders more broadly: Kean, "The 'Smooth Cool Men of Science'", p.28.

²⁵¹ Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, pp.16-17.

²⁵² Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, pp.3 & 22.

²⁵³ Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p.20; Kean, *Animal Rights*, p.153.

²⁵⁴ Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, pp.22-23.

²⁵⁵ Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p.152; Kean, *Animal Rights*, p.100; Kean, "The 'Smooth Cool Men of Science'", p.23.

²⁵⁶ Cobbe quoted in Kean, *Animal Rights*, p.103; Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p.152.

²⁵⁷ Lind-af-Hageby and Schartau, *The Shambles of Science*, p.19; Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, pp.3-4.

men as a case of ‘sentiment’ versus ‘reason’, the women who took up the anti-vivisectionist cause challenged the very values attached to such labels, adopting (whether consciously or unconsciously) a sympathetic relationality with another subjugated group in order to open-up a further means by which to attack the patriarchal order which constrained their own lives.

Lind-af-Hageby argued that a blinkered focus on rationality had led to a skewed, tyrannical science and society:

The intellect has become the sovereign to which everybody bows, and this self-adorning ruler hates to acknowledge the dominions of the heart, the soul, and the spirit, over which he has no power.²⁵⁸

In contrast to this instrumental rationality, figured as an overbearing male sovereign, she presented the expanding power of these other, implicitly feminine, ‘dominions’ as holding the key to social change. Indeed, if the former masculine approach had led to a world of war, violence and domination, then the latter – ‘what is called effeminacy by some, but what is really greater spirituality’ – would provide a vital antidote, restoring the essential unity of the intellectual and the emotional.²⁵⁹

Ultimately, she argued that if women, either biologically or culturally, embodied the restoration of heart, soul and spirit, thus presenting a fuller, truer form of ‘reason’, then their ‘coming into social and political life’ could be seen as ‘identical with the process of civilisation itself’.²⁶⁰ She identified this development of civilisation as a growing ‘realisation of solidarity and kinship’, grounded in evolutionary theory, that all living beings were bound by an essential sameness, and thus that sympathy and rights were owed to all. These relational and social implications of this kinship were, however, dependent on the awakening of a ‘new spirit of compassion, and fellow-feeling’, that was itself, as discussed, fundamentally dependent upon ‘the uprising of women’.²⁶¹ Through this, the emancipation of women came to imply that of other

²⁵⁸ Lind-af-Hageby and Schartau, *The Shambles of Science*, p.ix.

²⁵⁹ *The Vegetarian Messenger and Health Review*, vol.11 (1914), pp.158-159.

²⁶⁰ *The Vegetarian Messenger and Health Review*, vol.11 (1914), pp.158-159.

²⁶¹ *The Vegetarian Messenger and Health Review*, vol.11 (1914), pp.157-158; *The Anti-Vivisection Review*, vol.1 (1909), p.5.

oppressed groups, and opposition to the abuse of non-human animals served to develop the new spirit, and new rationality that would aid the victory of their cause.

6.8. ‘Uncomprehended Lives’: Vegetarianism and the Women’s Suffrage Movement

Lind-af-Hageby was not alone in her outlook, particularly within the Women’s Freedom League (WFL), the militant suffrage organisation of which she was a member. Indeed, her conception of the conjoined plight, and interrelated liberation, of women and non-human animals, was shared by a number others in such groups. As Leneman has shown, opposition to vivisection and, more radically, vegetarianism were keenly held beliefs for many suffragists. The latter was especially prominent amongst the more militant WFL and the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU), as observed by WSPU member Maud Joachim: ‘It is a strange fact that the ranks of the militant suffragettes are mostly recruited from the mild vegetarians’.²⁶²

As Leneman highlights, in these groups, vegetarianism was not just an interest for the odd member but part of the very ‘ethos’ of the organisation.²⁶³ The president of the WFL, Charlotte Despard, was a committed vegetarian, the League opened vegetarian restaurants across the country, and vegetarian lectures and cookery appeared throughout its journal *The Vote*.²⁶⁴ The vegetarianism of incarcerated suffragettes was also frequently commented upon. Advised to ask for vegetarian food because it was typically better, a good number were already converts, as Margaret C. Clayton wrote of her time in Holloway: ‘many of us are always vegetarians’.²⁶⁵ Leneman provides numerous examples of notable WSPU members who practiced the diet, including Marion Wallace Dunlop, the first suffragette to adopt the hunger strike, Jane Brailsford, Edith Rigby, Dr Alice Ker, Victoria Lidiard, the last surviving suffragette who died in 1992, Lenora Cohen, imprisoned for smashing the glass case of the Crown Jewels at the Tower of London, and Charlotte

²⁶² Quoted in Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct”, p.271.

²⁶³ Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct”, p.272.

²⁶⁴ Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct”, p.272.

²⁶⁵ Quoted in Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct”, p.272.

Marsh, imprisoned multiple times and one of the first suffragettes to be forcibly fed.²⁶⁶

Another was Lady Constance Lytton (1869-1923), who had adopted the diet to alleviate a health complaint she had suffered since infancy, but retained it on an ethical basis, after reflecting that ‘the untold suffering’ and ‘unnatural death of an animal should not be necessary’ to provide her with food.²⁶⁷ As her sister observed, the diet: ‘apparently to a great degree cured her rheumatism, but her heart remained permanently affected’.²⁶⁸ Importantly, this ultimately ethical grounding was true of the vegetarianism of most suffragettes.²⁶⁹ As previously discussed, the connections between meat-eating and patriarchy were plain, and links between the subjugation of women and that of non-human animals were frequently noticed. Most illuminating on this latter point is the 1908 women’s petition, organised by the Humanitarian League, against the hunting of pregnant hares by Eton schoolboys, which united leading figures from across the suffrage movement who on other, strategic, matters often disagreed.²⁷⁰ These included moderates Millicent Fawcett and Lady Frances Balfour, as well as the more militant Christabel Pankhurst, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence and Charlotte Despard.

Lytton herself attributed part of her conversion to the suffrage cause to an encounter with the abuse of a sheep on the streets of Littlehampton. Upon first seeing it, ‘old and misshapen’, she imagined it ‘on its native mountain-side with all its forces rightly developed, vigorous, independent’.²⁷¹ Now on its way to the slaughterhouse, it had slipped loose and been surrounded by a circle of onlookers, it ran about

²⁶⁶ Others include Agnes Leonard, Grace and Aethel Tollemache, Elizabeth Finlayson Gauld, and Jean Lambie. Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct”, pp.272-274. Anne Cobden-Sanderson, the socialist suffragette and wife of the prominent Arts and Crafts bookbinder T.J. Cobden-Sanderson, was also a vegetarian. Sarah Richardson, “Transforming the Body Politic: Food Reform and Feminism in Nineteenth-Century Britain”, in *Picturing Women’s Health*, ed. Francesca Scott, Kate Scarth and Ji Won Chung (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), pp.52-57.

²⁶⁷ Constance Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners: Some Personal Experiences* (London: William Heinemann, 1914), p.2.

²⁶⁸ Constance Lytton, *Letters of Constance Lytton*, ed. Betty Balfour (London: William Heinemann, 1925), p.113.

²⁶⁹ Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct”, p.275.

²⁷⁰ “The Eton College Hare-Hunt: Women’s Protest”, *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (November 1908), pp.82-83.

²⁷¹ Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, p.13.

‘clumsily’ ‘with growing fear and distress’ as they ‘laughed and jeered’, before being recaptured and given ‘a great cuff in the face’.²⁷² After remonstrating with the crowd, she reflected that witnessing this sheep:

seemed to reveal to me for the first time the position of women throughout the world. I realised how often women are held in contempt as beings outside the pale of human dignity, excluded or confined, laughed at and insulted because of conditions in themselves for which they are not responsible, but which are due to fundamental injustices...and to the mistakes of a civilisation in the shaping of which they have had no free share.²⁷³

Lytton asserted that ‘from my babyhood I have felt a burning indignation against unkindness to animals, and in their defence I have sometimes acted with a courage not natural to me’.²⁷⁴ Now, their abuse had revealed to her the ‘sufferings peculiar to women...endured by women of every class, every race, every nationality’, and she responded again with immense determination.²⁷⁵ Imprisoned on four occasions, including once, suspecting that conditions were worse for lower-class women, disguised as her working-class alter-ego Jane Warton, she dedicated her life to the suffragette cause and to that of women’s rights more broadly.²⁷⁶

Whilst imprisoned in Liverpool as Warton in 1910 Lytton was forcibly fed eight times, including at least on two occasions with Bovril, to which she ‘had the strongest objection...of a vegetarian kind’.²⁷⁷ In a notable echo of the sheep’s ‘cuff in the face’, she described the doctor, after having conducted his ‘repulsive job’, giving her ‘a slap on the cheek’ in order to make plain ‘his contempt’.²⁷⁸ Here, the image of a real Jane Warton was revealed to her, a working-class woman ‘despised’ and ‘helpless’, likely ignored by all once released from prison, and here, within its

²⁷² Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, p.13.

²⁷³ Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, pp.13-14.

²⁷⁴ Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, p.13.

²⁷⁵ Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, p.14.

²⁷⁶ For her account of her time as Warton, see Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, pp.234-295. For an account of Lytton’s life, see Lyndsey Jenkins, *Lady Constance Lytton: Aristocrat, Suffragette, Martyr* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2015) and Michelle Myall, “‘Only ye be strong and very courageous’: the militant suffragism of Lady Constance Lytton”, *Women’s History Review* 7, no.1 (1998), pp.61-84.

²⁷⁷ Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, pp.276-277, 280 & 309.

²⁷⁸ Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, pp.269-270 & 289.

walls, subjected to the authority of a male middle-class doctor who, after having ‘fed her by force and tortured her body’, would strike her, simply because he could, and ‘to show how he despised her’.²⁷⁹

Her detailed, harrowing accounts of force feeding illustrated the brutal nature of the suppression of women who attempted to assert their liberty, as well as the apparent power men believed they had over women’s bodies. Indeed, as Lansbury highlights, the force-fed suffragette was another image which blurred with that of the vivisected animal in this period.²⁸⁰ Lytton’s earlier attempt, whilst in Holloway, as herself, in 1909, to carve the phrase ‘Votes for Women’ into her body using enamel from a broken hair pin, ‘beginning over the heart’ and ending with the ‘last letter and a full stop...upon my cheek’, could, in this context, be seen not only as an act of defiance but also one of reclamation.²⁸¹ Ultimately, she only managed to complete the ‘V’ before being out-manoeuvred by the prison authorities, but she considered it a ‘very fine’ job regardless; ‘placed exactly over the heart’ it ‘visibly recorded the pulsation of that organ as clearly as a watch hand’, meaning that the doctor ‘no longer’ needed to ‘trouble [with] the stethoscope’, ‘evidently’, she recorded, he was ‘much put out’.²⁸²

The association of vegetarianism with more militant forms of women’s suffrage activism was, in large part, a reflection of the way in which organisations such as the WFL and WSPU encompassed more radical feminist outlooks, those which combined a desire for the acquisition of legal and political rights, with more holistic conceptions of women’s advance.²⁸³ As Dr Alice Ker put it upon leaving the moderate National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) for the militant WSPU: the latter ‘is a true spiritual movement...I don’t think the National Union have at all the same deep feeling of the inward meaning’.²⁸⁴ A belief in such greater

²⁷⁹ Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, p.270.

²⁸⁰ Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog*, p.24.

²⁸¹ Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, pp.164-165. For a discussion of Lytton’s politicisation of the body, see Carolyn M. Tilghman, “Autobiography, activism, and the carceral: an analysis of the prison writing of Lady Constance Lytton”, *CLIO* 37, no.1 (2007), pp.69-92.

²⁸² Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*, p.167.

²⁸³ For a discussion, see Laura E. Nym Mayhall, *The Militant Suffrage Movement: Citizenship and Resistance in Britain, 1860-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁸⁴ Quoted in Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct”, p.274.

‘meaning’ was sometimes part of a closer focus on the politics of the personal, or, as seemingly in Ker’s case, the result of an emphasis on the spiritual, with movements such as theosophy closely tied to such feminist (and vegetarian) perspectives. Quite often, however, the conjunction of militant suffragism and vegetarianism resulted from an individual’s adherence to a broader view of women’s liberation, one that sought more fundamental change to the structures of patriarchal society, and thus that encompassed larger political critiques. As Liz Stanley observes, talking of the militant suffragette friendship group surrounding Emily Wilding Davison, the suffragette killed by the king’s horse at the 1913 Derby: ‘Their feminism was a complex phenomenon, blending socialism, animal rights, vegetarianism, pacifism, support for Irish unity and opposition to British colonialism’.²⁸⁵

In embodying a new radical feminist ethic, allied to broader leftist, anti-war, anti-imperialist and vegetarian outlooks, it was ‘a feminism of *practice*’, which infused ‘all aspects of their lives’.²⁸⁶ This linking of an active feminist suffragism to a wider reform agenda was clearly reflected even by the vegetarians found within the ranks of the more moderate NUWSS, who, as Leneman points out, were most likely to be its ‘more left-wing, socialist-oriented members’.²⁸⁷ These included the Irish labour activist and pacifist Eva Gore-Booth, the working-class ILP organiser and trade unionist Ada Nield Chew, and the dedicated socialist Isabella Ford.²⁸⁸ It was also on display in the journal *Shafts* (1892-1899), announced on its front cover as ‘A Paper for Women & the Working Class’, the aim of which, as one editorial typically expressed, was to enlighten women in order to progress a ‘vigorous crusade against injustice, oppression and cruelty in all of its many forms’.²⁸⁹ This covered subjects including women’s suffrage, educational and sexual rights, dress reform, anti-vivisection and vegetarianism. Strikingly, such dietary reform was assumed as a natural interest for its readership, as shown by two articles of 1893 entitled ‘To

²⁸⁵ Liz Stanley, *The auto/biographical I: The theory and practice of feminist auto/biography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp.220-221.

²⁸⁶ Stanley, *The auto/biographical I*, p.221.

²⁸⁷ Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct”, p.275.

²⁸⁸ Leneman, “The Awakened Instinct”, p.275.

²⁸⁹ “Editorial”, *Shafts*, vol.5 (1st January 1897), p.1.

Beginners', designed to provide an introduction to adopting vegetarianism, but accompanied by no justification for doing so, it being apparently self-evident.²⁹⁰

The Humanitarian League was another arena where radical women blended suffragism, feminism, socialism, vegetarianism and a host of other reformist causes. Lind-af-Hageby was a notable member, as were Despard and Ford, but it also contained a host of lesser known women, whose wide-ranging ideas and activities appeared throughout the pages of its journal. It certainly revealed women, such as Jeannie C. Brace co-founder and secretary of the Letchworth Garden City branch, to have been highly conspicuous as League organisers at local branch level.²⁹¹ At a higher level, Alice Drakoules was another typical example, having helped to establish the league, and serving as its treasurer, she spent her life campaigning for vegetarianism, animal welfare and a variety of other humanitarian causes.²⁹² It also gave occasional insight into the relation of such causes with the 'New Woman' ideal of the period, as was more clearly embodied in *Shafts*. This was an image of new type of woman, educated and independent, who pushed the boundaries of patriarchal society and reflected an essential progressivism and sense of liberation in her appearance, occupations and interests.²⁹³ The vegetarian cyclist Rosa Symons was a typical example, and her account of her 'seventy thousand miles' of exploration around Great Britain, 'without injuring a man, woman...child, dog, cat, or rabbit', was warmly reviewed.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ Leneman, "The Awakened Instinct", p.276.

²⁹¹ "Meeting at Letchworth", *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (April 1912), pp.25-26. Notably, Ebenezer Howard himself became a member of this branch, see "Salvation for Criminal", *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (October 1912), p.76. See also Jeannie C. Brace, "Cabbage-Eaters and Carnivora", *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (September 1913), p.168.

²⁹² For an overview of her outlook, see Alice M. Drakoules, "Treasurer's Appeal", *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (December 1916), p.198.

²⁹³ The novelist Mona Caird (1854-1932), another anti-vivisectionist, vegetarian suffragette, was a typical 'new woman'. For an account, see Ann Heilmann, *New Woman Strategies: Sarah Grand, Olive Schreiner, Mona Caird* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004). For a discussion of the 'New Woman', see Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin-de-Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

²⁹⁴ "New Books", *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (July 1908), p.55; Rosa Symons, *Seven Times round Great Britain, or Cycling for Health and Strength, with practical hints on physical culture* (Plaistow: W.S. Caines, 1908).

Some female contributors were, however, very direct in their formulation of a left-feminism that considered vegetarianism an inherent component. This was exemplified in a two-part article of 1912 by ‘Miss M. Little’ titled ‘The Wider Socialism’. In this article, Little outlined her vision of socialism, defining it as a state of equality and cooperation where the rights, desires and talents of all, regards of class, race or gender, were recognised, and thus in which all individuals could achieve self-realisation.²⁹⁵ It was, indeed, ‘in this respect for individuality’, she argued, ‘that the true life of Socialism lies’.²⁹⁶ To move towards this understanding, and this new state, however, it was first necessary to ‘extend our sympathies’, for, she claimed, the more we do so ‘the more beauty and significance we can see in every human life’.²⁹⁷ This was not, though, only true of for mankind, for condemning the ‘delusive gulf’ that was imagined to exist ‘between humans and other animals’, she made the case for extending this perceptive sympathy beyond our own species, and asserted the ‘physical’, ‘ethical and psychical kinship’ between all sentient life.²⁹⁸ She did not see this as a far-fetched notion, but as a natural development. It had not so long ago ‘seemed farcical to white men to regard black men as their brothers...to young men at the university to receive young women as classmates’ or ‘to seriously consider Women’s Suffrage’.²⁹⁹

Little thus proceeded to argue for vegetarianism and the claims of non-human animals alongside those of ‘the Working-man and the Suffragette’.³⁰⁰ In part, she contended, that the oppression of animals was grounded in a refusal to engage with them ‘as individuals’, enabling them to become ‘a great chaos of uncomprehended lives that do not matter’.³⁰¹ Here appeared echoes of the ‘uncomprehended lives’ of women and other groups, excluded from full membership of society. She described women, the working class, and non-human animals as relegated to excluded spheres – women were kept from ‘social...political and commercial life’, the workers were

²⁹⁵ M. Little, “The Wider Socialism”, *The Humanitarian: The Journal of the Humanitarian League* (May-June 1912), p.37.

²⁹⁶ Little, “The Wider Socialism”, p.37.

²⁹⁷ Little, “The Wider Socialism”, p.37.

²⁹⁸ Little, “The Wider Socialism”, p.38.

²⁹⁹ Little, “The Wider Socialism”, p.38.

³⁰⁰ Little, “The Wider Socialism”, p.45.

³⁰¹ Little, “The Wider Socialism”, p.44.

kept in ‘slum...work-room or...gaol’, and other animals, ‘denied their right to live their lives side by side with human lives’, were, by and large, pushed out of the ‘clique of men and women’ altogether, although man did sometimes ‘apportion them...a little place – generally inside of himself’.³⁰² To solve this, she indicated that people must learn to look beyond themselves, to re-admit the ‘outcast’ and recognise the common humanity, and individuality, of every being. Through the reconnecting and reintegrating of individuals through the transformation of relationships, exclusive barriers of all kinds – and the oppressions they facilitate – could be overcome. It was in arguments such as this, that the feminism, socialism and vegetarianism of many radical women in this period, became difficult to separate.

6.9. ‘The Larger Feminism’: Isabella Ford and Charlotte Despard

The arguments of women like Miss Little played a central role in the emergence of all-embracing leftist-vegetarian ideologies during this period. By forwarding arguments similar to those of Salt and Carpenter, but merging them within a broader feminist critique, they offered a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of oppression, as well as the means of emancipation. There was also a significant degree of mutual influence, with several of these women – most notably, Despard, Ford and Olive Schreiner – having a close relationship with Carpenter in particular.³⁰³

Carpenter was an active, campaigning member of the Men’s League for Women’s Suffrage.³⁰⁴ He corresponded with Lytton whilst she was in Holloway, and his writings were popular with a number of left-wing suffragettes.³⁰⁵ As Rowbotham highlights, his vision of the ‘Larger Socialism’ had much in common with the ‘Larger Feminism’ of such women, both embodying his depiction of ‘Vegetarianism, Theosophy...the Women’s Movement...[and] the Socialist Movement’ as ‘small streams’ converging ‘as one great mighty river’, and sweeping along for ‘the

³⁰² Little, “The Wider Socialism”, pp.37, 44 & 46.

³⁰³ Salt also frequently drew upon female animal welfare authors in his writings (particularly in *Animals’ Rights*), including Cobbe, Florence Dixie and the novelist Ouida.

³⁰⁴ See, for example, Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.262-263.

³⁰⁵ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.322-324.

betterment of humanity'.³⁰⁶ His liberationist sexual politics, in particular, based upon a recognition of the essential equality of all, were also admired by many, and his capacity to form 'real and satisfying' friendships with women was noted by several of his female associates.³⁰⁷ This was ascribed by his friend Evelyn Sharp, a suffragette, socialist and pacifist, in part to his homosexuality, which she believed enabled him to circumvent engrained gender relations, and to interact, with no recognition of 'difference', with both sexes on the ground of 'common...humanity'.³⁰⁸

The publication of *Love's Coming of Age* in 1896 marked the point at which his female following, and his association with femininity, began to gain ground.³⁰⁹ Numerous women drew inspiration from his writings, such as the 'new woman' author Emma Brooke and socialists Enid Stacey and Katharine Bruce Glasier, the latter describing how a 'new power of love and worship woke within' her upon discovering his writings.³¹⁰ Indeed, for the 'clusters of socialist and feminist women' around the country, 'wondering about sexuality and questing for intellectual and spiritual fulfilment', Carpenter became the preeminent guide.³¹¹ This was especially true for Kate Salt, who navigated her sexuality through their relationship, as she declared in a letter: 'You are like a sign post Chips!'³¹²

In reality, however, it was a relationship into which Kate invested the most emotion and energy, and Carpenter certainly came to rely on her at various times.³¹³ As both Henry Salt and Rowbotham have pointed out, Carpenter was often markedly *un-*perceptive, or even a little disinterested, when it came to his female friends, and they offered him just as much as he did them.³¹⁴ As Rowbotham highlights, Ford,

³⁰⁶ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.326; Carpenter, "The Larger Socialism", p.167.

³⁰⁷ Evelyn Sharp, "Towards the End of Life", in *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*, ed. Gilbert Beith (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), p.211.

³⁰⁸ Sharp, "Towards the End of Life", p.208-209.

³⁰⁹ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.220-222.

³¹⁰ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.212 & 221; Glasier, "Edward Carpenter's Influence", p.83.

³¹¹ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.327.

³¹² Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.224. See also Winsten, *Salt and His Circle*, p.9.

³¹³ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.224-226

³¹⁴ Henry S. Salt, "A Sage at Close Quarters", in *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*, ed. Gilbert Beith (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), p.188; Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.228.

Schreiner, Kate Salt and the lesbian and women's rights activist Edith Ellis, formed a personal and intellectual community around Carpenter, from which he drew great insight in terms of issues of sex and politics.³¹⁵ Carpenter himself asserted that numerous women had provided him with 'an extraordinary inspiration'.³¹⁶

One was Isadora Duncan (1877-1927), the American-French dancer, whose free, expressive performances, reflecting bohemian, new woman ideals, captured Carpenter's imagination.³¹⁷ Their admiration was mutual, and Duncan's leftist and vegetarian sympathies echoed Carpenter's own: 'While we are ourselves the living graves of murdered animals, how can we expect any ideal conditions on the earth?'³¹⁸ Duncan, however, despite Carpenter's potential influence, had arrived at such ideas on her own account, informed by a broader fin-de-siècle political and intellectual culture conducive to the amalgamation of socialist, feminist and vegetarian perspectives. Indeed, the women who presented such arguments, such as those who surrounded Carpenter, were just as active in their creation as 'figures' such the 'sage' himself.

Olive Schreiner (1855-1920), the South African feminist novelist, was a typical example, blending pacifist, anti-imperialist, socialist and vegetarian ideas in her writings, and forming a close personal and intellectual relationship with Carpenter.³¹⁹ Isabella Ford, with whom Carpenter became friends when working in Leeds, provides another. The pair met in 1875 after Carpenter had moved to the city from Cambridge, and it was the Ford family home, and their radical connections, that had provided him with a stimulating, educative political space during this period.³²⁰ Here, he was certainly instrumental in introducing Ford to concepts that were to

³¹⁵ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.210.

³¹⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.245-246.

³¹⁷ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.354.

³¹⁸ Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (1927; New York: Liveright Publishing, 2013), p.276.

³¹⁹ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.91-93; Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, 226-231. For an account of Schreiner, see Carolyn Burdett, *Olive Schreiner and the Progress of Feminism: Evolution, Gender, Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001) and Liz Stanley, *Imperialism, Labour and the New Woman: Olive Schreiner's Social Theory* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

³²⁰ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.49.

shape her politics. They did, however, speak to existing inclinations, and her subsequent intellectual and organisational output was entirely her own.³²¹

Born into a radical Liberal Quaker family, Ford shared from a young age with her mother and sisters, Bessie and Emily, a passionate concern with the rights of both women and workers.³²² Her political activism began in the 1880s and 90s, as she became active in the trade union movement, playing a leading role in the Leeds tailoresses' strike of 1889, as well as in that of Bradford mill workers in 1890/1.³²³ She then joined the ILP, becoming a founder member of the Leeds branch. In time, she sat on the national executive, and, in 1904, was the first woman to speak at a Labour Party conference. Later, she also involved herself in the campaign for women's suffrage, sitting on the executive of the NUWSS. She added to this the cause of non-human animals, advocating vegetarianism, opposing vivisection, sitting on the board of the Humanitarian League and even, despite its establishment credentials, serving as the chair of the Leeds branch of the RSPCA.³²⁴

Through these activities, Ford sought to fuse the causes of socialism and feminism, arguing that the two movements had 'the same common origins and...aims'.³²⁵ The former lay in the unjust capitalist system of 'economic dependence, or rather, economic slavery', that maintained both a sexual and class hierarchy, and the latter in their shared embodiment of a conception of 'justice that demand[ed] freedom for all'.³²⁶ The connection between them was, however, also grounded in her view of social change, which, she believed, was inescapably based upon the transformation of relationships, particularly those of men and women.³²⁷ How, she asked, if this most essential relationship was one of inequality, or even oppression, could broader societal relations ever hope to be just?³²⁸ She thus positioned sexual equality as the

³²¹ Carpenter notes in his autobiography the great value he placed on his lifelong friendship with the Fords. Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.83.

³²² Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.49.

³²³ For a biographical account, see June Hannam, *Isabella Ford* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

³²⁴ Hannam, *Isabella Ford*, pp.13 & 93.

³²⁵ Isabella O. Ford, *Women and Socialism* (London: Independent Labour Party, 1904), pp.2-3. This attempt was particularly reflected in her central role in securing Labour Party support for the NUWSS in 1912.

³²⁶ Ford, *Women and Socialism*, p.2.

³²⁷ Ford, *Women and Socialism*, pp.2-3.

³²⁸ Ford, *Women and Socialism*, pp.2-3.

basis of socialism, and identified the plight of women as underpinning that of all subjugated groups.

With this socialist-feminist outlook, Ford rejected any form of socialism that maintained sexual inequalities, or that excluded women from full participation in social, political and economic life. In particular, she shunned the ‘class war’ Marxist politics of the continent – ‘socialism, on what I should call chiefly masculine lines’ – arguing that only a socialism that looked beyond a ‘narrow’ focus on ‘sex [or] class distinction’ would be able find a broad ‘universal growth’.³²⁹ Here, she put great emphasis on the cultivation of a new ethic of ‘friendship’ as the key to restructuring society: ‘My Socialism regards men and women as equals, as co-workers, as each other’s helpers and friends’.³³⁰ Throughout her writings, Ford championed the power of platonic friendship between the sexes as a means of fostering more equitable gender relations.³³¹ This, in turn, would aid the growth of a larger societal ethic of fellowship. For, to destroy the inequality of the sexes, she believed, would open up even greater opportunities to reformulate relationality, enabling us to ‘bring an ever widening justice...[and] love...into all the relationships of life’, including those with non-human animals.³³²

Not, therefore, until ‘men and women stand together, helping and teaching one another as equals and friends’ would we reach the higher conception of ‘love, justice and compassion’ that would mark the dawn of a fully-formed socialism of all-embracing freedom.³³³ Centrally, for Ford, it was ‘woman, strong and free’, who would enable the growth of ‘this better life’, for it was their development of a self-conscious agency, and recognition of ‘their own worth, their own infinite value’, that would drive a demand for an equality capable of transforming the relational structures of society.³³⁴ Indeed, she indicated that it was, perhaps, women’s ‘very

³²⁹ Isabella O. Ford, “Why Women should be Socialists: The New Vision in Politics”, *Labour Leader* (1st May 1913), p.10. See also Ford, *Women and Socialism*, p.12.

³³⁰ Isabella O. Ford, *On the Threshold* (London: Edward Arnold, 1895), p.31.

³³¹ Ledger, *The New Woman*, p.54.

³³² Ford, *Women and Socialism*, p.13.

³³³ Ford, *Women and Socialism*, p.14.

³³⁴ Ford, *Women and Socialism*, p.14; Weinbren, “Against All Cruelty”, p.93.

subjection' which enabled them to perceive the importance of such structures, and to identify more readily with the oppression of others, enabling them to address the problems of society with 'a purer aim and a keener insight than is possible for man'.³³⁵

These ideas of the subjugation and exclusion of women as forming the basis of a society of hierarchy and domination were also reflected in the work of Charlotte Despard. Praising 'her ardour and indomitable resolution', Carpenter described how he always pictured Despard in his 'mind's eye marching gloriously to some encounter'.³³⁶ He recalled sharing platforms with her in Trafalgar Square and at the Sheffield Women's Freedom League, where she 'lectured on the subject of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*', holding 'her audience for nearly two hours in rapt accord and attention'.³³⁷ 'I need hardly say', he continued, like Shelley, for whom she had had a passion since childhood, she was 'an ardent vegetarian'.³³⁸

She was, certainly, incredibly active in a plethora of causes, including socialism, women's rights, pacifism, vegetarianism, Irish unity and Indian independence. A supporter of the SDF and ILP, she later became active in the Battersea Labour Party, where she aided and organised the working class, as well as played a leading role in the battle over the Brown Dog. In 1906 she joined the NUWSS, was imprisoned twice in Holloway, subsequently joined the more radical WSPU, and finally co-founded the WFL. She was also a Sinn Féin activist, helped to establish the Women's Peace Crusade, and sat on the councils of the No-Conscription Fellowship, the Theosophical Society, the London Vegetarian Society and the Home Rule for India Committee.³³⁹

³³⁵ Ford, *Women and Socialism*, p.14. Ford identified the influence of women in politics, in other countries and other official bodies, as conducive to the growth of a socialistic ethic (pp.8-10).

³³⁶ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.263.

³³⁷ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.263-264.

³³⁸ Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, p.264. See also Andro Linklater, *An Unhusbanded Life: Charlotte Despard, Suffragette, Socialist and Sinn Féiner* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp.30, 32 & 62.

³³⁹ For an account see Linklater, *An Unhusbanded Life*. Notably, Despard met Gandhi and discussed non-violent resistance in 1909. Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.350.

In Despard's view, however, such a diversity of activism was part of one unified endeavour. Like Ford, she saw the causes of labour and women in particular, as inherently bound.³⁴⁰ The 'masculinity' and 'materialism' that characterised the growth of patriarchal capitalism over the course of the nineteenth century had, she argued, marked the dramatic rise of relationships based upon subjugation – especially that of women and workers.³⁴¹ Such relations were 'wrong and unnatural', and formed the essential basis of society's ills.³⁴² This was most fundamentally true of the relationship between man and woman, for this served to shape every aspect of public and private life, and its distortion, through the exclusion and oppression of women, had resulted in a fundamentally incomplete humanity, unable to realise its true nature and potential.³⁴³

Due to their 'effect...upon society', therefore, 'before any real progress can be made' 'present relations between man and woman' needed to be 'radically changed' – 'woman must be free'.³⁴⁴ Central to this would be the 'full recognition of the common humanity of man and woman', for, she explained, it was the false idea of 'difference', used to construct 'a right to domination', where 'wrong relations begin'.³⁴⁵ Importantly, she opposed such notions of fundamental 'difference' more broadly, asserting 'the Unity of all life' and rejecting barriers not of only of sex, but of class, race and species.³⁴⁶ Despard believed that 're-adjustments in human relations' were key in making 'possible the acceptance and practical working out' of the ideal form of society that she ultimately sought: an all-embracing fellowship, a 'Brotherhood without distinctions'.³⁴⁷

She depicted this as a 'return to the old simple relations of the family – mutual love, mutual service, mutual help and a common reverence for that in which "we live and

³⁴⁰ Charlotte Despard, *Theosophy and the Women's Movement* (London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1913), p.9.

³⁴¹ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women's Movement*, pp.10-11.

³⁴² Despard, *Theosophy and the Women's Movement*, pp.3-4.

³⁴³ Charlotte Despard, *Woman in the New Era* (London: The Suffrage Shop, 1910), pp.34, 36 & 38.

³⁴⁴ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women's Movement*, pp.1-2 & 46.

³⁴⁵ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women's Movement*, pp.4 & 7.

³⁴⁶ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women's Movement*, pp.4 & 7.

³⁴⁷ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women's Movement*, p.43.

move and have our being”’.³⁴⁸ This new mutualistic relationship was to be engendered by the rise of ‘one Fundamental Principle’ – a ‘love-principle’, primarily manifested in the service of others.³⁴⁹ ‘Ever-widening its scope as it moves outwards’, this principle underpinned ‘every one of the modern movements’.³⁵⁰ Channelled through both the women’s and labour movements, it also worked ‘itself out as food reform’ and as a ‘strong protest against the cruel methods of experimental research’.³⁵¹ It was thus her perception of a unity of motivations and aims that led Despard to see a ‘close unison’ between causes such as vegetarianism and anti-vivisection and ‘the demands being made by women’.³⁵²

These causes were part of one ‘spiritual quest’ to overcome the materialism, inequality and division of existing society and to lead humanity to a higher state of being.³⁵³ The women’s movement, she argued, represented this more than any other because women themselves embodied this new ethic.³⁵⁴ They were the half of humanity which had been excluded to the detriment of all, and so to them belonged the ‘constructive power’.³⁵⁵ ‘Woman’, she declared, ‘with her intuition, her love-instinct and her life-force’ was to ‘play a large part’ in society’s refashioning – ‘building up visions of a world in which masculinity should be set in its proper place, [and] in which the voice of the woman, mother and worker, [would] be heard’.³⁵⁶ They had to break down the barriers that ‘men, in their lust for dominion’ had placed between them and social, political and economic life, ‘until true reconciliation [was] achieved’, and guide ‘the love instinct’ to its triumph over ‘the predatory instinct’ of capitalist patriarchy.³⁵⁷ Through this process they would aid the development of a new mutualistic relational ethic, stressing sympathetic unity, that would reform society and bring people into ‘full accord *with all that lives*’.³⁵⁸

³⁴⁸ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, p.8.

³⁴⁹ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, pp.44-46.

³⁵⁰ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, pp.45-46.

³⁵¹ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, p.44.

³⁵² Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, p.44.

³⁵³ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, p.46.

³⁵⁴ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, pp.45-46.

³⁵⁵ Despard, *Woman in the New Era*, p.43.

³⁵⁶ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, pp.15 & 49.

³⁵⁷ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, pp.49-50.

³⁵⁸ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, p.50.

Vegetarianism, peace, anti-imperialism – all could be seen as concurrent with the ‘great...ever-widening-out...of woman’s newly-awakened consciousness, making for itself fresh modes of manifestation in the world of life’.³⁵⁹

Despard frequently framed her arguments in terms of ‘theosophy’, and the sense of ‘deeper revelation’ which this helped her to reach.³⁶⁰ Theosophy, an esoteric religious movement that drew upon Eastern faiths, particularly Hinduism, appealed to a significant number of British feminists in this period. As Joy Dixon has shown, predominantly led by women, it provided the opportunity to formulate a specifically ‘feminine’ spirituality, and offered a bridge between faith and science.³⁶¹ Ultimately, it aided women in tying the personal to the political, in formulating progressive visions of ‘womanhood’ and in developing new expansive, liberationist ethics that envisaged the spread of equality, peace and harmony.³⁶² Through this, it formed another element of the nexus that drew together women’s suffrage, socialism and vegetarianism.

Annie Besant, who became president of the Theosophical Society in 1907 provides a key illustration of this. Originally drawn to socialism through her friend George Bernard Shaw, Besant was associated with both the Fabian Society and the SDF and was involved in the famous London matchgirls’ strike of 1888.³⁶³ Through the 1890s her interest in theosophy grew, emerging as one of its leading lights, and, after spending time in India, she also became a significant figure in the Indian independence movement, serving as president of the Indian National Congress in 1917. The essence of her theosophy was a belief that the ‘world [was] climbing upwards slowly towards a divine ideal’, and that ‘every Soul that recognise[d]’ this

³⁵⁹ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, p.2.

³⁶⁰ Despard, *Theosophy and the Women’s Movement*, p.43.

³⁶¹ Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2001).

³⁶² Dixon, *Divine Feminine*.

³⁶³ For an account, see Anne Taylor, *Annie Besant: A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Annie Besant, *An Autobiography* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1893). For Carpenter’s discussion of her, see Carpenter, *My Days and Dreams*, pp.221-222.

‘should lend its own hand’, for such ‘co-operation with the divine life in nature’ was itself the route to humanity’s own happiness.³⁶⁴

Mankind, as the most highly evolved form of life, with the ‘power of self-conscious determination’, was the only creature with the capacity to ‘choose’, to ask themselves ‘will this act...make the world better or worse?’.³⁶⁵ The world’s positive ‘growth’ thus depended upon individuals changing their outlooks and lives. This was certainly true in terms of humanity’s relation to other animals, with Besant envisaging a stewardly role: ‘wherever he goes, [he] should be the friend of all, the helper of all, the lover of all, expressing...[this]...in his daily life’.³⁶⁶ She praised the human-animal friendships, based upon a ‘spirit of love and compassion’, that she had frequently witnessed in India, and asserted that in time such things could come to pass in Britain too, if only we would change our approach: ‘thus it would be, if we were friend instead of foe’.³⁶⁷

Besant condemned the ‘pain’, ‘misery’ and ‘fear’ to which the meat industry subjected animals, as well as the brutalising influence of their slaughter on those who conducted it, as well as the society which demanded it.³⁶⁸ Such practices, she claimed, retarded ‘the whole of human growth’, for ‘you cannot...go on in evolution yourself while you are trampling others down’ – ‘we have to rise together or to fall together’.³⁶⁹ Her vegetarianism was, therefore, not for the sake of ‘personal improvement’ but, like her other progressive, liberationist activities, advocated ‘on the higher basis of duty, of compassion, of altruism’, ‘on the evolution of the higher nature everywhere, and the harmony which it is man's duty to increase, and finally to render perfect in the world’.³⁷⁰

³⁶⁴ Annie Besant, *Vegetarianism in the Light of Theosophy* (1913; third ed., Adyar, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1932), pp.25-26.

³⁶⁵ Besant, *Vegetarianism*, pp.6-7 & 26.

³⁶⁶ Besant, *Vegetarianism*, pp.7-8.

³⁶⁷ Besant, *Vegetarianism*, pp.9-10.

³⁶⁸ Besant, *Vegetarianism*, pp.18-19.

³⁶⁹ Besant, *Vegetarianism*, p.19.

³⁷⁰ Besant, *Vegetarianism*, p.20.

6.10. A Feminist Ethic: Conclusions

Not all visions of holistic future progress advanced by women in this period were framed in such a spiritualistic form. They do, however, highlight the way in which women formulated an alternative politics characterised by ideals that opposed those of dominant patriarchy. This was, finally, perhaps best expressed in the work of the American feminist author Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935). In her classic utopian-feminist novel *Herland* (1915), Gilman depicted the discovery of an all-female society, completely devoid of patriarchal domination, gender norms and capitalistic competition, and instead animated by a natural ethic of mutuality and cooperation.³⁷¹ In this, all forms of violence and exploitation were absent, with every individual forming part of one larger loving family community, based upon the practice of communal child rearing. Here, not only were women free, but so too were non-human animals. It was a vegetarian, if not vegan, society where other species no longer suffered for the appetites of humanity.³⁷² This was notably revealed through a discussion of milk, where the women's shock at the practice of robbing the mother cow and her calf is used to associate the exploitation of both female and animal bodies in patriarchal society. The women of Herland recognised the autonomous ownership of both: 'Milk? We have milk in abundance – our own'.³⁷³ There were, in fact, no longer any 'domestic' animals at all, other than their cat companions – 'our friends, and helpers' whom 'we love'.³⁷⁴

As indicated by scholars such as Adams and Donovan, who have elucidated the connections between the subjugation of women, non-human animals, nature and other marginalised groups, the quest for a universal emancipation is an inherently feminist one.³⁷⁵ As has been demonstrated, many women recognised this historically,

³⁷¹ For an account of Gilman, her ideas and writings, see Cynthia J. Davis, *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Biography* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010) and Judith A. Allen, *The Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Sexualities, Histories, Progressivism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). Notably, Gilman was an admirer of Carpenter, and visited him at Millthorpe in 1896, obtaining a pair of sandals. Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, pp.220-221.

³⁷² Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Herland" (1915), in *The Yellow Wall-Paper, Herland, and Selected Writings*, ed. Denise D. Knight (London: Penguin, 1999), pp.49-50.

³⁷³ Gilman, "Herland", pp.49-50.

³⁷⁴ Gilman, "Herland", p.52.

³⁷⁵ See, for example, Adams and Donovan, eds., *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*.

but their voices have often been obscured by those of the male writers and theorists who dominated public debate. Despite this, the fundamental elements of what is now often termed a feminist ‘ethic of care’ regarding our treatment of other animals – an ‘ethical attentiveness and sympathy’ with them ‘as individuals’ combined with a critique of the political and ideological structures that maintain oppression – has run through these arguments regardless of the sex of their promoter.³⁷⁶ Indeed, an essential belief that we should reformulate our relationships – with each other, with other animals, and with nature itself – in line with a new, active ethic of all-embracing love, cooperation and friendship, is what, to differing extents, animated many of the individuals discussed in this thesis.

In this sense, its connection to both libertarian socialist/anarcho-communist and eco-feminist ideas is stark. Moreover, its relation to a more narrow liberal, utilitarian ‘rights’ tradition is significantly weakened. As Donovan highlights, in Singer’s ground breaking *Animal Liberation*, he began with an explicit condemnation of those ‘emotional “animal lovers”’ he viewed as unhelpful to the cause.³⁷⁷ Following a patronising anecdote of one such *woman*, he proclaimed that he was ‘not especially “interested in” animals’, had never ‘been inordinately fond of dogs, cats, or horses’, and certainly ‘didn’t “love” animals’.³⁷⁸ His masculinist rationalism stood, as Donovan asserts, in deliberate contrast to the ““womanish” sentiment’ of those who he feared would ‘trivialise’ his cause.³⁷⁹

In this light, Singer’s and Preece’s particular attempts to claim Salt appear ill-founded, for his belief system was, ultimately, concerned with the development of a new ethic of fellowship based upon ‘profound emotional sympathies’.³⁸⁰ For the individuals explored in this thesis, it was loving attachment, not rational distance, that characterised their endeavours. Carpenter, for one, had sought strong bonds with individual animals since childhood, and, as one friend recalled, in the last few years

³⁷⁶ Adams and Donovan, eds., *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics*, pp.2-3.

³⁷⁷ Donovan, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory”, pp.350-351; Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976), pp.ix-x.

³⁷⁸ Singer, *Animal Liberation*, pp.ix-x.

³⁷⁹ Donovan, “Animal Rights and Feminist Theory”, p.351.

³⁸⁰ Salt, *Animals’ Rights*, p.123.

of his life, when out walking, still ‘always...used to like to make friends with all the dogs’.³⁸¹

³⁸¹ Rowbotham, *Edward Carpenter*, p.17; Edward Inigan, “The Last Years”, in *Edward Carpenter: In Appreciation*, ed. Gilbert Beith (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1931), p.119.

Conclusion

‘I became [vegetarian] at twenty when I was working in a pig farm. I got attached to the pigs’ – Jeremy Corbyn.

This thesis has demonstrated the ways in which the vegetarian diet evolved alongside the British Left from the close of the eighteenth century to the dawn of the twentieth, revealing the significant presence of vegetarian ideas within many of the key moments and movements of the Left’s history. From the intellectual ferment of the French Revolution, through Romanticism, utopian socialism and Chartism, to the socialist revival and the birth of the Labour Party, vegetarianism has been prominent within both its thought and culture. Over the period c.1790-1900, vegetarian-leftist ideas were shaped by the political, cultural, religious and scientific developments of their time, formulated by individuals responding to specific personal and contemporary concerns, yet also speaking to larger, shared aims and forming part of a longer tradition of radical societal critique.

Across this period, vegetarian-leftist ideas were adapted to suit the purposes of their exponents. Initially forming part of a revolutionary agenda that repudiated the power of elites, they became increasingly associated with gradualism and reform, exemplified by their relation to the doctrine of non-violent resistance, as developed by Shelley, Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi. Indeed, over the course of the nineteenth century, although frequently expressed in terms of millenarian salvation, they became steadily wedded to movements that sought practical social change. For many, vegetarianism thus embodied a utopian vision of the future, whilst also serving as a means to effect and embody humanity’s positive evolutionary development – a focus that became particularly predominant following the popularisation of the theories of Darwin and Wallace.

There did persist a tension between the diet’s role as part of a programme of social improvement, and its tendency to sometimes become more inward-looking,

especially when a greater focus was placed on individual physical or moral 'health'. However, the expansive, emancipatory outlook it frequently symbolised, as manifested through various conceptions of all-embracing 'oneness' or the existence of a 'universal life', led it to primarily represent an ethical, political societal critique. With the growth of a more organised Left at the end of the nineteenth century, vegetarian-leftist principles were more widely expressed and increasingly sophisticated arguments were presented, explicitly combining vegetarianism with socialist and anarchist ideology, as most notably formulated in the writings of Salt and Reclus. Importantly, by this later period such ideas also became increasingly associated with sexual politics. This was articulated through Carpenter's influential ideas regarding sexual liberation, as well as by the significant number of socialist and feminist women who viewed vegetarianism as central to a critique of patriarchal systems of power.

Despite this evolution of vegetarian-leftist thought, and the numerous divergences in focus and motivation that it contained, the fundamental continuity of such ideas was, nonetheless, highly apparent, with similar arguments and counter-arguments continuing throughout the period. Amongst its exponents, a view of human nature as malleable, yet ultimately positive, tended to predominate, and a belief in humanity's positive potential, grounded in its innate impulses of compassion, fellowship and love, often sustained their beliefs and activism. Certainly, they viewed such instinctual, and perhaps inevitable, elements of the human character as paramount in recasting the structures of society. They conceived of current 'civilisation' as a fundamentally interconnected system of oppression, in which all manifestations of violence and exploitation were mutually dependent.

Specifically, vegetarian-leftist thinkers developed a highly distinct argument that characterised all forms of oppression as acts of predatory consumption. Most Westerners, they contended, particularly the elite, lived off the flesh of other animals, as well as the goods and services created via the alienated labour of other humans under an iniquitous economic system. They thus perceived around them a hierarchical society based upon the 'consumption' of life, be it actual or metaphorical. From Oswald's 'devourers of the people' to Salt's 'cannibals in cap

and gown', this idea acted to fundamentally shape not only the language and symbolism they employed but also their essential arguments and critical analyses of existing society. Consumption could be seen as the ultimate form of subjugation, as it represented the complete violent annihilation and absorption of one being by another. For vegetarian-leftists it provided a powerful symbol, as, ultimately, it was based upon what they saw as a brutally explicit reality.

Such a conception of society was echoed by the British establishment and elites themselves, as they recognised and celebrated the fact that both actual and symbolic hierarchical predation, be it in the form of economic inequality, imperialist domination or the violent exploitation of other species and the natural world, were quintessential expressions of their variety of 'civilisation'. Similarly to other types of violent subjugation such as blood-sports, corporal punishment and forms of racial and sexual violence, conspicuous flesh-eating as a display of dominion has long played an important role within systems of domination, including monarchy, capitalism and patriarchy. An apparently unconscious reverberation of this fact can be observed historically within broader leftist dialogues, which frequently referred to a wealthy privileged class eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the masses, as well as in societal discourses of meat and masculinity which, as Adams has shown, frequently allude to the 'consumption' of women. Vegetarian-leftists thus elucidated symbols and realities of oppression that were central to the very nature of their society, and with which contemporary theorists are now increasingly concerned.

The solution they ultimately offered was a necessarily holistic 'universal emancipation', which represented the ending of this system in its entirety. This would be achieved through the development of an individual, and thence societal, 'compassionate consciousness' – a joining of instinctual compassion with an enlightened freethought, that would reveal an understanding of the unity of all life and encourage the growth of an all-embracing sympathetic fellowship. Embodied as a new ethic of 'friendship' or 'kinship', this would serve to simultaneously break down the barriers of class, race, gender and species upon which the interconnected structures of capitalism, patriarchy, racism and speciesism depended. Universal emancipation, as an ideology, thus represented the rejection of all forms of violence

and exploitation, and sought to shift society's underlying ethic from one of hierarchy and domination to one of equality and compassionate solidarity.

By seeking to create a new society within the shell of old through the development of a new consciousness, leftists who subscribed to this ideology came to emphasise the confluence of means and ends. Changing lifestyles and everyday relationships to embody and propagate this new ethic in the present became vital to the advancement of their larger political aims. Vegetarianism represented this most starkly, serving as an explicit recognition that mutuality and cooperation, not competition and predation, was humanity's destiny. As this thesis has illuminated, the specific *function* the vegetarian diet served for its leftist adherents during this period, was, therefore, as an essential means by which to live their conception of socialism – to embody a new ethic and a new form of relationality. Indeed, by asserting a relation of solidarity, friendship, or love with non-human animals, reconceiving the most exploited and 'othered' creatures on the planet as our fellow-beings, vegetarianism represented the fundamental rejection of relationships based upon hierarchy and dominion. Its importance thus came from its embodiment of this larger endeavour, serving to aid the shift of societal consciousness.

The links between a vegetarian-leftist ideology of universal emancipation and other traditions of left-wing thought have been explored throughout this thesis. Its ties to 'ethical' and 'religious' socialism stemmed from its emphasis upon individual and moral transformation, as well as from the essential religious/moral ethic that many of its adherents believed it represented. Despite the atheism of many vegetarian-leftist thinkers, the notion that such beliefs formed the heart of a 'true religion' was common across the period. This was frequently expressed in terms of the 'Golden Rule' of treating others as you would want to be treated – a fundamental ethic underpinning most world religions. This mixed with a broader interest in Eastern faiths and cultures, which many vegetarian-leftists perceived as being closer to such an essential morality, and as embodying a clearer recognition of the oneness of life.

The links between vegetarian-leftism and libertarian socialism were, however, the most profound. In rejecting the legitimacy of all forms of domination, and stressing

the development of a cooperative society grounded in a new mutualistic ethic that would enable the freedom and self-realisation of all, vegetarian-leftist ideas fundamentally embodied an anarcho-communistic vision. Moreover, the means by which this was sought – non-violently, through the reformulation of relationships and the shifting of consciousness, manifested in both individual change and collective organisation – mirrored that of the contemporary libertarian left. The influence of figures like Kropotkin, and the centrality of thinkers such as Shelley, Gandhi, Carpenter and Reclus in the formulation of vegetarian-leftist ideas, alone serves to indicate this strength of connection.

Vegetarian-leftist ideology, similarly to left-libertarianism, was also closely allied to the peace, women's and early environmental movements. Its emphasis on non-violence connected it to the first. Its links with feminism, as discussed, resulted from the relationship between meat-eating and patriarchy, women's identification with other oppressed groups, their self-identified promotion of an alternative egalitarian, cooperative ethic, as well as the emphasis upon sexual equality and liberation that vegetarian-leftist outlooks commonly embraced. Whilst its association with early ecological thought came largely from its concern with the commodification and destruction of the natural world, based in part on a view of the world as an interconnected whole, and the consequent need to adopt an attitude of sympathy and respect for the lives of all – humans, non-human animals, trees, plants, landscapes, and the earth itself.

Significantly, the vegetarian-leftists discussed were not only connected by shared intellectual spheres and a common set of essential beliefs and arguments, they also explicitly perceived themselves as part of a specific ideological tradition. From Oswald, Ritson and Nicholson in the 1790s, to Shelley and Salt, many vegetarian radicals sought to construct a lineage for both vegetarian thought and their larger compassionate, emancipatory ethic. The continuity of language and symbols was particularly striking – from notions of 'rooted repugnance' and appeals to innate compassion to imaginings of Eden and ideas of 'oneness' and 'kinship' – individuals built upon inherited traditions of expression and meaning, fighting the same battles – against violence, exploitation and authority – across different historical contexts.

Through this they formed a counter-culture – a set of alternative reference points and practices that rejected dominant societal orthodoxies and embodied an opposing way of being. This was, and is, a typical practice of the Left. As the author Michael Rosen recently observed, in contrast to the symbols and histories drawn upon by the establishment, the Left has always had its own traditions, less visible, but which frequently resurface at key historical moments.¹ Here, Rosen was discussing the continued importance of Shelley for the Left, and the repetition of his famous lines from *The Masque of Anarchy* by leftist movements across the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: ‘You’ve got a sense of continuity...Shelley was campaigning for freedom, for free thought, for free love...for a fairer society...well, of course that applies now’.² Shelley, in particular, has resonated because his message embodied the essence of leftist belief. As this thesis has revealed, just as vegetarianism was an essential embodiment of Shelley’s politics, so too does it form a fundamental expression of the Left’s underlying purpose – to challenge power and exploitation, and to seek a more peaceful, egalitarian and cooperative world. Its endurance within the culture of the Left, similarly to the public recital of Shelley’s radical poetry, is thus a reflection of its power as both ideological symbol and practice, and as a means by which an individual can bear witness to a larger ideal.

From the early twentieth century onwards vegetarianism retained a strong connection to leftist politics. Numerous figures on the Labour Party left practiced the diet, including the noted pacifist and anti-imperialist Fenner Brockway (1888-1988), the staunch campaigner for animal rights Tony Banks (1942-2006), and the influential former cabinet minister and anti-war campaigner Tony Benn (1925-2014). Brockway, in a 1978 debate in the House of Lords regarding animal welfare, exemplified this continuation of vegetarian-leftist thought.³ Here, he claimed that Darwin’s theory of the survival of the fittest had been ‘corrected very largely by Kropotkin in...Mutual Aid’, which had revealed ‘cooperation’ as equally

¹ Chakelian, “‘Rise like lions after slumber’”.

² Chakelian, “‘Rise like lions after slumber’”.

³ 397 *Parliamentary Debates*, H.L. (5th series) (1978), 387-389.

‘responsible for evolution as...competition’.⁴ This capacity for cooperation, he argued, should find its fullest expression in human beings, for with the development of mankind ‘a new level of consciousness was reached’, and, vitally, ‘for the first time living beings’ had become ‘able to plan according to ethics’.⁵ In Brockway’s eyes, this higher consciousness should mean the growth of ‘compassion, a hatred of cruelty...a sense of the universal life’ and a ‘spirit of identity’ with all that lives.⁶ Echoing his vegetarian-leftist predecessors, he thus contended that the development of a new compassionate, cooperative humanity was tied to the realisation that ‘we are all a part of one family’, and the subsequent recognition that ‘the campaign against cruelty to animals and cruelty to human beings’ was, therefore, one and the same.⁷

The connection between vegetarianism and ideas of all-encompassing liberation has, in addition to its growth within contemporary feminism, also come to form part of critiques of racial oppression. Most notably, the diet has been incorporated into the political outlooks of numerous members of the civil rights movement in the USA. Angela Davis, the activist and academic, has described veganism as ‘part of a revolutionary perspective’ in fighting capitalism’s commodification of life, and in cultivating ‘compassionate relations’ with both humans and non-human animals.⁸ Other high profile figures in the movement who have adopted the diet include the wife and son of Martin Luther King, Coretta Scott King and Dexter Scott King, as well as Dick Gregory, who explained how his vegetarianism, as well as his support for a variety of emancipatory causes, developed through his involvement in civil rights activism: ‘Under the leadership of Dr. King, I became convinced that nonviolence meant opposition to killing in any form’. This ‘applied to human beings

⁴ 397 *Parliamentary Debates*, H.L. (5th series) (1978), 387-388.

⁵ 397 *Parliamentary Debates*, H.L. (5th series) (1978), 388.

⁶ 397 *Parliamentary Debates*, H.L. (5th series) (1978), 388.

⁷ 397 *Parliamentary Debates*, H.L. (5th series) (1978), 389.

⁸ Films for Action, “Angela Davis on Veganism as Part of a Revolutionary Perspective”, video interview, accessed 10th August 2019, <https://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/angela-davis-on-veganism-as-part-of-a-revolutionary-perspective/>.

not only in their dealings with each other – war, lynching, assassination, murder...but in their practice of killing animals for food and sport'.⁹

A concern with vegetarianism is, however, in addition to its continued association with larger political and ethical belief systems, also increasingly key to a new ecological outlook. As has been widely reported in both academic research and popular media, the reduction of meat consumption has been shown to be essential in tackling the climate crisis.¹⁰ This has formed part of a broader realisation of the need to alter the way we live, to seek systemic change and reject an economic system, based upon endless growth and consumption, which has encouraged the thoughtless, dangerous exploitation of other humans, species and the planet itself. Within this, the mutually reinforcing nature of individual and societal change has become central to the conversation, notably crystallising around debates regarding diet. Greta Thunberg, the inspiration behind the global school climate strikes, has made this clear, illustrating her argument that 'system change' is vital, yet impossible 'without individual change', by adopting a vegan diet for both 'ethical...and ecological reasons'.¹¹

This focus on individuals embracing an ethos of interconnection and cooperation, changing their outlooks and personal behaviours, as well as involving themselves in larger collective action, has also been embodied in the Extinction Rebellion movement. This draws upon a tradition of non-violent resistance, bottom-up organisation and direct democracy associated with left-libertarianism, and represents

⁹ Dick Gregory, *Dick Gregory's Natural Diet for Folks Who Eat: Cookin' With Mother Nature* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp.15-16.

¹⁰ For the largest study to date, see J. Poore and T. Nemecek, "Reducing Food's Environmental Impacts Through Producers and Consumers", *Science* 360, no.6392 (June 2018), pp.987-992. For typical media coverage, see Damian Carrington, "Avoiding meat and dairy is 'single biggest way' to reduce your impact on Earth", *Guardian*, 31st May 2018, accessed 10th August 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/31/avoiding-meat-and-dairy-is-single-biggest-way-to-reduce-your-impact-on-earth>.

¹¹ Greta Thunberg, "'They see us as a threat because we're having an impact'", *Guardian*, 21st July 2019, accessed 10th August 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jul/21/great-thunberg-you-ask-the-questions-see-us-as-a-threat>; Democracy Now!, "School Strike for Climate: Meet 15-Year-Old Activist Greta Thunberg, Who Inspired a Global Movement", video interview, 20:43-21:09, accessed 10th August 2019, https://www.democracynow.org/2018/12/11/meet_the_15_year_old_swedish.

the importance of *people* in driving the creation of new systems of thought and life.¹² Through their attempts to re-configure our relationship to the world around us, such movements, blending environmental, economic and political critiques, have much in common with the form of vegetarian-leftist belief explored in this thesis. Indeed, the latter's emphasis on a holistic transformation and the creation of a new, cooperative life in tune with each other and the natural world, appears highly relevant at our present historical juncture.

As the Left stands within the tumult of political unrest, environmental disaster and the failure of long-dominant ideologies, it is to alternative schools of thought such as this that its attention is increasingly turning. Past vegetarian-leftist thinkers prefigured many of the ideas, methods and concerns of a number of those on the modern Left, as well as of those engaged in current debates regarding animal rights, feminism and the environment. It is particularly noteworthy to observe the present growth of vegetarianism/veganism in Britain, as well as the resurgence of a Left offering an alternative to both a twentieth-century Marxism and an early twenty-first-century social democracy wedded to the status quo.

These dietic and political trends can both, perhaps, be embodied in the figure of Jeremy Corbyn. Vegetarians like Corbyn are still painted as cranks by their critics, just as figures such as Salt and Carpenter once were, with their diet often forming part of a larger caricature of a certain type of left-winger – most famously expressed in Orwell's condemnatory tying together of vegetarianism, environmentalism, pacifism, feminism and sexual liberation as part of one earnest, yet ineffectual, 'utopian dreamer' outlook. The fact that such a view persists is revealing not only of the longevity but also of the embedded cultural recognition of a vegetarian-left tradition. What is more interesting, however, is the fact that the connotations surrounding this ideological outlook are shifting, and what has long been depicted as 'fringe' or 'immature' has, amongst generations born post-c.1985, become a

¹² For an account of the movement's ideas, methods and aims, see "The Emergency", "Our Demands" and "About Us", *Extinction Rebellion*, accessed 10th August 2019, <https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/>.

mainstream perspective, suggesting that the progression of this form of thought is far from over.¹³

An understanding of the intersections between different forms of oppression – class, sex, race, sexual orientation and species – has become central to academic analysis, as well as leftist political activism globally.¹⁴ In the West, younger generations are increasingly subscribing to a progressive politics that embraces humanity’s diversity and recognises the threat of environmental destruction, expressing this through growing support for new left-wing movements. With their faith in humanity’s potential and a long-view of progress, individuals such as Shelley, Salt and Carpenter would not have been surprised. By defining and elucidating, for the first time, this ‘ideology of universal emancipation’, composed of fundamentally interlinked and mutually-reinforcing vegetarian-leftist principles, this thesis has thus illuminated the foundation and development of a type of belief-system that is becoming increasingly relevant to contemporary scholarly, political and ecological discourses.

For scholars of the Left in particular, it has demonstrated the importance of exploring and understanding the diversity of both historical and contemporary leftist thought, and how specific ideas, concerns and practices – in this case in relation to diet and the treatment of animals – can reveal much about the nature and purpose of progressive ideology, culture and political action. It has also indicated the necessity to escape restrictive grand narratives, to expand beyond traditional focuses on economic theory, the development of the working class, and party politics, and to instead investigate the ways in which individuals and groups contested established

¹³ A study in 2014 suggested that 12% of UK adults now follow a vegetarian diet; this figure rises to 20% among 16-24 year olds: Abby Young-Powell and Natalie Gil, “Should everyone become vegetarian?”, *Guardian*, 10th April 2015, accessed 10th August 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/apr/10/>

should-everyone-become-vegetarian. Regarding the support for the politics of Jeremy Corbyn amongst younger generations see, for example, Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett, “Who’s backing Jeremy Corbyn? The young”, *New Statesman*, 23rd July 2015, accessed 10th August 2019, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2015/07/whos-backing-jeremy-corbyn-young>.

¹⁴ The two foundational works on ‘intersectionality’ are Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (London: Routledge, 1990) and Kimberle Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color”, *Stanford Law Review* 46, no.6 (July 1991), pp.1241-1299.

ideas and structures and constructed and advanced new future visions through reconfigurations of the personal and the everyday – of relationships, consumption, occupations, lifestyle, identity and self-presentation. Through analyses of the ideological underpinnings and practical purpose of such changes, a greater understanding as to how those on the Left have attempted to cultivate shared counter-cultural traditions, symbols, practices and history, can be reached.

More broadly, and of particular relevance for historians of consumption and everyday life, the thesis has provided an exposition as to how past individuals recognised the interconnection of the personal and the everyday with larger societal, political and ethical issues and structures. Specifically, it has shown how individuals reshaped their lifestyles and habits in order to actively challenge the status quo and to personally embody and propagate alternative ways of being. Most prominently through its examination of the significance and various potential functions of consumption – as part of an existing or counter- culture, as a political act or symbol, or as a way of figuring personal ideology – it has thus presented a new perspective on the historical role and evolution of what we now term ‘lifestyle politics’.

The thesis has, in addition, also uncovered the consistent presence, and importance, of religious discourse in historical attempts to contest the status quo, as well as in communicating more radical, egalitarian, cooperative visions of the future, suggesting a more complex relationship than is often considered between religion and the Left, of relevance for scholars of both. Commonly presented as a rejection of religion, or else as a somewhat simplistic ‘replacement’ that utilised pre-existing symbolism, leftist belief was for many in the period more akin to the restoration and development of an essential morality upon which religious systems had often initially been founded. Once the trappings of centuries of organised religion were stripped away, a collection of basic ethical and philosophical concepts (common to multiple faiths) remained, as well as particular interpretations of the stories of their early practitioners and the age-old symbolism that accompanied them. Frequently imbued with an implicit pacifistic egalitarianism, much of this could (and did) serve as the underpinnings for radical political self-presentation, symbolism and practice. This centrality of the moral and the spiritual within the intellectual and cultural

history of the Left suggests, therefore, that with a more diverse definition of leftism should also come a similarly expansive understanding of what may constitute ‘the religious’, one that recognises the shared basis of various forms of progressive belief in longstanding, yet ever developing, bodies of emancipatory practical ethics.

Above all, the thesis has provided a novel examination as to how an ethical tradition, as well as a language, was constructed in order to support the advancement of a new, radical platform regarding the treatment of non-human animals. For scholars working in the fields of animal studies and ethics it has shown how the formulation of such new perspectives frequently took place as part of the broader development of progressive ethical and political systems, indicating the value of situating investigations into the history of the human-animal relationship within larger intellectual and cultural histories. Indeed, the thesis has fundamentally served to illuminate the ways in which past thinkers embraced the interconnection of apparently disparate causes. In so doing, it has revealed the necessity of more holistic scholarly approaches in developing deeper understandings of the nature, dynamics and articulation of historical systems of political belief and action.

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