Poetry and Industrialism in Liverpool, Sheffield, and Manchester, 1770-1842

Roseanna Kettle

PhD

University of York

English and Related Literature

August 2023

Abstract

This thesis seeks to view the effects of industrial development in the years 1770-1842 in the cities of Manchester, Liverpool, and Sheffield through the lens of their literary output. While the majority of critical responses to urban poetry in this period have centred around London, this project attempts, within these cities, to examine a distinct poetic register reflective of urbanism and local identity, with the focus removed from the capital. Taking into account the social and professional interconnectivity that existed between these three centres, as well as the commercial interests, local history, and political contexts of each site, this thesis offers a complex portrait of the literary worlds that were active, and in some cases significantly influential and commercially successful, within the transpennine region. In doing so, I will demonstrate that the industrialisation, social transformations, and urbanisation that impacted the north of England at this time were not a peripheral presence in what constitutes Romantic-era poetry, but rather central to it, participant in the wider trends that characterise it as a literary movement. Most importantly, this thesis will make a case for these neglected areas as sites of vital poetic innovation, examining an underutilised resource for the conception of the role of literature within this socially, politically, and economically tumultuous period.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I must credit Alison for the unrelenting patience, empathy, and enthusiasm she has consistently shown me during what has not always been an easy writing process. Thank you for always giving me productive and encouraging advice – your work as a supervisor has been exceptional and I am truly thankful to have had you backing me all the way. Thank you also to Jon, for always providing fascinating and helpful insights as my thesis advisory panel member, and thank you to everyone at the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies who has done the utmost to make me feel supported and at home at the department. I will forever owe so much to this research collective for shaping me into the academic I am today.

My friends and colleagues have been invaluable over the course of this thesis, and I would like to thank everyone who has provided both professional and emotional support in the last four years. Especially, I would like to thank Katie, Fran, Rachel, Charlotte, Jenny, and Ed, without whom this project would not have come to fruition.

Lastly, I would like to thank my parents, whose support has been constant and unconditional. I truly could not have made it this far without you.

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 a degree or other qualification at this University or elsewhere. All sources are acknowledged as references.

Introduction

Writing to Horace Walpole, Lord Orford, in 1796, the Liverpudlian poet William Roscoe would venture to share a work of personal and local importance. *Mount Pleasant* (1777) was among Roscoe's first compositions: a landscape poem adapted for Liverpool's urban centre, celebratory of its achievements and critical of its commercial exploits, written in the author's adolescence. After over a year of correspondence, Roscoe appears to have shared the published edition, as Walpole also appraises the ode to Liverpool's society for fine arts, to which it was affixed in this version.[1] Perhaps self-consciously presenting his poem as 'the production of a very early age', and with the disclaimer that it would no longer adequately describe the city almost twenty years later, Roscoe expresses dismay over London's cultural and economic dominance over the nation;

> If the present tradition towards the Metropolis should continue for another
> Century, the rest of the kingdom will only be considered as farms, manufacturers,
> or sea ports, to furnish supplies to the modern Babylon [...][2]

If *Mount Pleasant* is any indicator of Roscoe's own impression of the regional city centre, he clearly intends to stress Liverpool's independent cultural legacy, prosperity, and self-sufficiency; London is not mentioned in the poem, rather than figuring as a central nexus to which Liverpool is simply a provincial connection. As his letter continues, Roscoe quotes Robert Dodsley's *Penshurst*, a topographical poem in whose footsteps *Mount Pleasant* would follow, fearing that 'Mighty London [will swallow] up the land'.[3] This extract likewise expresses an anxiety regarding London's physical growth, imagining a sprawling metropolis

---

[1] William Roscoe, *Mount Pleasant: A Descriptive Poem. To which is added, an ode* (Warrington, W. Eyres, 1777).
[2] Liverpool Record Office, William Roscoe, letter to Lord Orford, 19 May 1796, *Letters of William Roscoe*, ed. by D. H. Weinglass, vol. 1, 1772-1800, Roscoe Letters and Papers, 820.1 ROS.
[3] Ibid.

that literally devours its provincial surroundings. Roscoe's poetic reference points are suggestive of David Fairer's claim that the regional landscape poem was 'a […] reminder that London was not the nation'.[4] Despite this expression of marginalisation from Roscoe, however, and the warmth of their friendship, Walpole's response was somewhat indifferent. Identifying Roscoe's 'jealousy of the Metropolis', Walpole reassures him that Liverpool is indeed a 'dangerous Rival', surpassing London 'at least in an Historian'.[5] Though intended as a compliment to Roscoe's well-received historical writing, Walpole delicately snubs his poetic talent; furthermore, he finds *Mount Pleasant* to have 'many good lines', but prefers Roscoe's pieces translated from Italian.[6] Though Roscoe attempts to have his city recognised as something more than a commercial hub under London's sway, intending to lionise its landscape and culture in poetry, Walpole's response curtly denies him this recognition.

Roscoe would not, however, be the only writer to attempt to apply a new poetic register to the north's urban centres towards the end of the eighteenth century. For all Walpole's polite dismissal, a spread of poetic movements were active, prolific, and widely read beyond London's bounds. This thesis will explore the vast range of urban poetic voices abounding in the north of England in particular, making apparent their relevance to concurrent broader literary movements in the Romantic era and examining their unique and innovative responses to their surroundings. In doing so, I will uncover a literature that, to borrow a phrase from Hannah Barker, 'challenges simplistic understandings of metropolitan cultural dominance', revealing an array of self-sufficient and artistically significant poetic

---

[4] David Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century, 1700-1789* (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2003), p. 205.
[5] Letter from Lord Orford to William Roscoe, 27 May 1796, Roscoe Letters and Papers, Liverpool Record Office, 920. 2840 ROS, p. 2.
[6] Ibid. p. 2.

movements at work across the transpennine region.[7] The literary traditions recovered by this thesis engage with a sense of crisis on a number of fronts – social, economic, technological – but notably combine their resulting anxiety with humanitarian and even euphoric expectation.

Such a study must also adequately represent not only the general literary trends across the region, but also the defining features of distinct urban centres. While these centres share some commonalities, Liverpool poetry is not, and cannot be, Manchester or Sheffield poetry. Each local literary crucible is informed by the patterns of growth, economic and industrial movements, and historic and cultural attributes of their corresponding city. Additionally, I will document the wide diversity of political affiliation, class, profession, and gender of poets in my selection, to depict each literary culture accurately and in its fullness. In doing so, I will illustrate the role played by shipping, manufacturing, and industry in shaping the work of urban poets in the north of England in the period c.1770-1850, a transitional historic moment where the social and technological developments at work in the transpennine region worked as both a baffling novelty and a productive catalyst for poetic innovation.

This thesis will focus on Liverpool, Sheffield, and Manchester as centres of particular literary eminence. According to Emma Griffin, the surrounding areas of each city were among those to experience the highest levels of growth during the early industrial period in the eighteenth century, though no change is so radical as that seen in Lancashire.[8] Over the course of the century, Manchester had grown from less than 10,000 inhabitants to a

---

[7] Hannah Barker, ''Smoke Cities': northern industrial towns in late Georgian England', *Urban History,* 31: 2 (2004) 175-190 (p. 177).

[8] Emma Griffin, *A Short History of the Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 54.

staggering 89,000, while Sheffield had grown from a similar number to 46,000, making the latter one of the smaller significant transpennine cities.[9] Griffin finds that this industrial growth essentially 'reversed the economic significance of north and south', shifting a great deal of Britain's capital towards the north.[10] The transpennine area would not only see large-scale early infrastructural developments such as canals, but would also see the world's first passenger rail service between Manchester and Liverpool in 1830. The area would form the epicentre of industrial development, witnessing changes that would shape the nature of the modern city for decades to come. Likewise, such influential studies of the region's landscape, industry and history as John Aikin's *Description of the Country from thirty to forty Miles round Manchester* (1795) encompass a similar geographical scope. Aikin would single out Manchester as 'the heart of [a] vast system' of commerce, second only to London in terms of 'objects of national importance'.[11] The picture he offers of the transpennine region is one of recent and significant industrial growth, civic collaboration, and commercial importance on a national scale. Indeed, Aikin would himself be involved in a system of communication and cultural exchange at work between each of these urban centres, as will be detailed in Chapter One.

All three cities would host Literary and Philosophical Societies, with members boasting literary aspirations and an array of intellectual friendships both within and without the area. Finally, while each centre would share the concurrent literary cultures of middling-class reformists and radical labouring writers (two extremely productive spheres for poetic innovation), each city would have its own local concerns, moments in civic history, and

---

[9] Griffin, *A Short History of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 57.
[10] Ibid. p. 69.
[11] John Aikin*, A Description of the Country from thirty to forty Miles round Manchester* (London: John Stocksdale, 1795), p. 29.

patterns of growth to which its poetry might respond. It is these local distinctions which have shaped my discussion; the slave trade is thus instrumental to Liverpool poetry, while Sheffield and Manchester's respective interests in metalwork and textiles profoundly inform each city's cultural and intellectual development, as well as shaping the nature of each city's sociable and philanthropic institutions. These cities represent those in which change might be felt most keenly, and those whose Romantic traditions have previously received comparatively little critical attention. With all three working in conjunction, I will provide a detailed and representative picture of the role of poetry in the transpennine region. Crucially, any direct comparison to the poetry produced regarding London in this period will be avoided. The study has been conducted in this manner to consider the works of these regional centres as more than derivative or reactive towards their metropolitan counterparts, to understand them as helpful perspectives on urbanism, industrialisation, sociability and local identity in their own right.

The overwhelming majority of studies concerning urban Romanticism have dwelt either entirely on London, or with London as a large component. While the subject of the capital did provide such foundational works of the urban Romantic canon as Blake's poetry, book seven of Wordsworth's *Prelude* (worked on extensively in 1805, published 1850) and De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), London's virtual monopoly on critical attention is this study's *raison d'être*. Though, as Rudolf Beck has indicated, poetry of this period engaging with industrialism and urbanism can contribute helpfully to understanding the medium's changing role in the Romantic era, Barker has registered a more general

'dismissal of northern urban culture' in the historical criticism of the field.[12] Though Barker approaches the subject as a historian, the same systemic issues apply within literary evaluation of the era, and indeed her valuable work might be considered a parallel study to my own.

Despite the unprecedented levels of growth, systems of cultural exchange, and numerous poetic traditions at work in the north, these caches of literature have not been included in studies to which they might otherwise contribute significantly. Although critics such as Jeremy Tambling and Jason Finch have registered Manchester's importance in the history of urban literature, they perceive its most significant developments to begin with Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), and the factual writings of Friedrich Engels; any pre-Victorian works, or indeed any poetic works, are sadly overlooked, despite their role as the foundation for Manchester's nineteenth-century output.[13] In Manchester's case, this thesis counters the emphasis on Victorian fiction and puts the city on the map, in a literary sense, at least since 1819, the year of the Peterloo Massacre. This approach will also benefit existing understandings of the poetry of Sheffield and Liverpool, extending their Romantic legacies further into the eighteenth century. Though regional poetry, and even regional urban poetry, has not gone totally disregarded in this period, even studies ranging beyond London have not considered the full literary importance of the north. While Stephen Tedeschi has noted the importance of including the 'manufacturing towns and port cities' within urban Romanticism, his study focuses primarily on Manchester as exemplifying the northern town, and its poetic

---

[12] Rudolf Beck, 'From Industrial Georgic to Industrial Sublime: English Poetry and the Early Stages of the Industrial Revolution', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies,* 27: 1 (2004), 17-36 (p. 17); Barker, ''Smoke Cities'', p. 175.

[13] Jeremy Tambling, 'Prologue: City-Theory and Writing, in Paris and Chicago: Space, Gender, Ethnicity', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Literature and the City*, ed. by Jeremy Tambling. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 1-25 (pp. 1-2); Jason Finch, 'Modern Urban Theory and the Study of Literature', in *The Palgrave Handbook of Literature and the City*, pp. 27-44 (p. 29).

representation is explored primarily through the poetry of Percy Shelley, who writes entirely distanced from Manchester for the body of his career.[14] I argue that such an approach does not capture the real effect of Manchester's lived experience upon writers who would render it through the medium of poetry. Ongoing work on the intellectual cultures of cities beyond London, such as those of Birmingham and Bristol, has yielded valuable evidence of their centrality to literary innovation in this period; I will add to these by exploring the specific local intellectual cultures shaping and shaped by poetry in the transpennine area.[15] This study's intent is to bring to light the work and influence of regional writers who have heretofore received little to no critique, and bring them into conversation with the larger literary movements at play in England during the Romantic era.

This thesis will not, however, exclusively dwell on literary unknowns, and cannot do so without failing to deliver an accurate picture of the region's poetic production. Some more well-known figures – for instance Anna Laetitia Barbauld, and to a lesser extent, William Roscoe and James Montgomery – have garnered a higher degree of recognition and critical attention. That said, they often suffer from not being fully understood as poets of place, embedded within, and informed by, specific local literary networks and traditions. Montgomery and Roscoe, too, being consummate polymaths and men of various vocations and professions, often find their poetry overlooked in favour of their other civic roles. In other cases, shorter studies of these poets' work and engagement with place has been productive

---

[14] Stephen Tedeschi, *Urbanization and English Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 3.

[15] See for instance Tedeschi's chapter, 'Coleridge and the Civilization of Cultivation', *in Urbanization and Romantic Poetry* (pp. 76-110) and Kerri Andrews, '"Hunger is not a postponable want": Hannah More's charity reconsidered', in *Hannah More in Context*, ed. by Kerri Andrews and Sue Edney (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 84–99, usefully situating both poets within urbanising Bristol; See Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men: The Friends who made the future, 1730-1810* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002), for an account of the literary and scientific influence of Priestley and his associated social connections in Birmingham.

- Anne Janowitz has touched on the influence of Barbauld's early life in Warrington as influential even after her move to London, and Adam James Smith and Hamish Mathison's work on James Montgomery's early radical poetry capably situates the poet in the social contexts of Sheffield's late eighteenth century.[16] David Higgins, too, has written of the labouring poet Samuel Bamford's perspectives on the English countryside through the lens of his autobiographical prose writing.[17] I will seek, however, to fully contextualise such figures within their northern locales for the duration of their time there, and to read their poetry as expressions of locality and urbanism as the main focus of my study, as well as drawing them into conversation with one another.

An essential component of this thesis will be its focus on labouring poets, including the cargo sailor Edward Rushton in Liverpool, the file-hewer Joseph Mather in Sheffield, and the handloom weaver Samuel Bamford in Manchester. In contribution to what Janowitz has termed 'an E. P. Thompson-derived theme of *plebeian* studies within romanticism', I will involve within my discussion of each urban setting an alternative, often radical perspective, recognising a largely overlooked demographic and a diverse set of associated poetic forms.[18] Not only would labouring poets in this period frequently deliver their work in an entirely different context to that of their middling counterparts, dabbling in oral street performance and highly ephemeral forms, but these voices have the potential to contribute an essential element to our understanding of environmental history. By drawing together narratives of

---

[16] Anne F. Janowitz, 'Amiable and radical sociability: Anna Barbauld's 'free familiar conversation'' in *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, ed. by Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 62-81; *Poetry, Conspiracy and Radicalism in Sheffield*, ed. By Hamish Mathison and Adam James Smith (Sheffield: Spirit Duplicator, 2016).

[17] David Higgins, *Romantic Englishness: Local, National, and Global Selves*, 1780–1850 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

[18] Anne F. Janowitz., *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 3.

labour and industrial-era transformation – I will zero in on the human actors within three of the most transformative trades at work at the turn of the nineteenth century.

This study is heavily reliant on the broad conceptualisation of 'The Industrial Revolution', though it is necessary to consider just how amorphous such a concept is, and the reality of how it would have been experienced during this period. Andreas Malm asserts that Britain is the 'incontestable birthplace' of both industrialism and modern capitalism, due to its particular fixation on fossil fuel combustion in the early nineteenth century.[20] The transition to reliance on fossil fuel was, however, 'protracted […] passing through several phases of stumbling experimentation', rather than an overnight shift; furthermore, Malm is eager to stress that such a change was as much a change in technological processes as it was a social change in power relations.[21] Joel Mokyr adds that such change was 'geographically uneven', with its effects far more visible in the northwest than in areas of the south or east of England.[22] As Griffin also points out, the term 'Industrial Revolution' would not, at any point during the period under scrutiny, be referred to as such, nor indeed would any single individual comprehend the scale and complexity of the social and technological change the country would undergo, even in such areas as this thesis aims to cover, despite themselves being among 'pockets of highly concentrated change'.[23] Contemporary critical accounts of this change, too, retain an air of uncertainty; indeed, as Griffin's study highlights, multiple commercial, social, cultural, and technological triggers have variously been posited as the Revolution's main drive. William J. Ashworth, for instance, has suggested the development of

---

[20] Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016), p. 12.

[21] Ibid. p. 13; Ibid. p. 15.

[22] Joel Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 339.

[23] Griffin, *A Short History of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 5; Ibid. p. 50.

illicit trade was integral to such a restructuring, while Eric Williams and Joseph E. Inikori have both stressed the centrality of transatlantic commerce and slavery to economic growth in England, to list but a few alternate perspectives.[24] This historical phenomenon, then, as monolithic and absolute as it might appear, was a nebulous concept, with multifarious and unclear causes, which worked unevenly across the country, eluding definition at the time much as it does in contemporary historiography. This moment of industrial transformation, Jeremy Davies additionally argues, has great potential for further debate and inquiry; by marrying together literary and economic histories, he suggests, scholars may be availed to the 'full complexity of Romantic-period society', and such study also offers productive avenues in the schools of decolonial and ecocritical thought.[25]

That is not to say, however, that writers in the period this thesis examines did not have any notion that they were on the verge of, or indeed already experiencing, change on a cataclysmic scale. This would, after all, produce a 'radical reorganisation of the urban hierarchy'.[26] Centres in the north would suddenly find themselves critical to the economic functioning of the national body, home to industries which would power an entire empire, subject to massive growth and its concomitant urban difficulties and political divisions. As Saree Makdisi elaborates, writers in this period were jolted into modernity, little by little experiencing the new working structures of what would become modern capitalism.[27] Not only this, but urbanisation itself would bring along with it 'the advent of machine-production',

---

[24] William J. Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production and Consumption in England 1640-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Eric Williams, *Capitalism & Slavery* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961); Joseph E. Inikori, *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[25] Jeremy Davies, 'Introduction: Romantic Studies and the "Shorter Industrial Revolution"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 61.2 (Summer 2022), pp. 187-202 (pp. 193-196).

[26] Griffin, *A Short History of the Industrial Revolution*, p. 59.

[27] Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998), p. 5.

'the transformation of the countryside, or the degradation of the natural environment', all of which, Makdisi claims, would contribute to a more generalised 'alienation of the monad', a terrifying isolation in an unfamiliar and deeply changed world.[28] Though the transpennine region bears witness to a vast array of emotive poetic responses to industrialisation, this type of alienated terror can be read in the works of a number of local poets. Joseph Mather's 'The Black Resurrection' (composed circa 1785) and Edward Rushton's 'To a Redbreast' (1806) form two particularly striking examples, both responding to urban development and social transformation in the city centre, and intriguingly, both written from labouring perspectives.[29]

Industrialisation would also be far from the only nationwide issue which would come to eminence in the work of such regional commentators. The poems this thesis will cover express a range of interests, fears and desires relating to broader issues, including, but not limited to the following: the lack of political representation in the north, the transatlantic slave trade and its abolition, urban poverty, religious dissent, the Corn Laws, rural enclosure, wars with America and on the continent, and a crackdown on radicalism directly influenced by ongoing political instability following the French Revolution. Each of these is bound up in the local concerns of such poets, and forms a necessary part of their creative response, with many directly tied to matters of the city's growth, prosperity, and quality of life. Ian Gilmour describes the late eighteenth century in particular as a time of heightened political instability in Britain; with 'invasion scares, ignominious defeat in the American war, industrial riots, religious disturbances […] a reform movement in the country [and] a government so feeble it

---

[28] Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism,* p. 6.

[29] Joseph Mather, 'The Black Resurrection' in *The Songs: to which are Added a Memoir of Mather, and Miscellaneous Songs relating to Sheffield*, ed. By John Wilson (Sheffield: Pawson and Brailsford, 1862), pp. 44-46; Edward Rushton, 'To a Redbreast' in *The Collected Writings*, ed. by Paul Baines (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), pp. 116-118.

seemed bound to collapse'. [30] As John Gardner also suggests, the years 1819-1821 likewise bore witness to a series of uprisings with the potential to launch Britain into outright revolution, and many of the concerns that seemed symptomatic of governmental weakness are intimately connected to the subjects favoured in the poetry of the industrial towns.[31] Such poems view their own cities as metonymically representative of the nation, but they are not figuratively linked to Britain alone. Higgins describes what he terms the 'glocal context' in which apparently localised regional writers operate, finding that such locales are 'inflected by empire' even in apparently provincial climes.[32] Likewise, Suvir Kaul nods to a propensity on the part of eighteenth-century writers to 'act locally […] but think globally', and it is this duality of scale which similarly marks out the work of transpennine poets writing at a time when Britain's sovereign power faced contestation on both its colonial and regional peripheries.[33] These poets' collective moment of composition is both transitional and wide-ranging, playing out change on local, national, and international levels as it transpires.

As Tedeschi points out, urbanisation would directly impact change in literary markets, and indeed the forms enjoyed by the reading public. 'Improving transportation, concentrating larger potential readerships in space, and fostering increased literacy rates' would all contribute to the new distributive channels of newspapers and magazines, creating a new, popular context in which poetry might be received and read.[34] This would also be a time in which definitions of what it meant to live in a city would change dramatically. If the

---

[30] Ian Gilmour, *Riot, Risings and Revolution: Governance and Violence in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Pimlico, 1993), pp. 342-343.

[31] John Gardner, *Poetry and Popular Protest: Peterloo, Cato Street and the Queen Caroline Controversy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 3.

[32] Higgins, *Romantic Englishness*, p. 6; Ibid. p. 12.

[33] Suvir Kaul, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p. 18.

[34] Tedeschi, *Urbanization and English Romantic Poetry*, p. 2.

macrocosm of the national system of work relations was transforming, these changes were thrown into a sharper relief in the microcosm of the town. Growth on such a dramatic scale would lead, as Mokyr elaborates, to 'serious costs and hazards in terms of housing, sanitization, and public health', a set of complications in which the developing economic system would '[produce] socially undesirable consequences' for perhaps the first time.[35] Prior to this period of growth, literary demonstrations of the function of the city had seized upon its humanitarian potential; if the Enlightenment enshrined human endeavour and knowledge exchange as an inherent good, then the city – itself amassed from the work and sociability of human beings – would form the summit of moral, intellectual, and aesthetic perfection. This trend would have its countervoices, some of whom – such as Samuel Johnson – would utilise Roman satirists in order to critique urban life, as in *London: A Poem, In Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal* (1738). Johnson's concerns also branch out into anxieties over political corruption, however, and rivalry between England and other colonial powers such as France and Spain, rather than taking issue with urbanism as a whole.[36] Despite a variety of opinions on the subject, the prevailing discourse remained assured of urban growth as 'a natural and epochal step in the progressive development of civilization'.[37] Due to the consequences crucially outlined here by Mokyr, however, the general inclination towards urban utopianism would begin to change towards the end of the eighteenth century.

At this time, the city of the cultural imagination would become the arena of instability and violence; a stage for the acting out of cross-class, socially motivated conflict. 1780, the Gordon Riots would see more than 50,000 people moved to violence by anti-Catholic

---

[35] Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*, p. 354.

[36] Samuel Johnson, *London: A Poem, in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal*, 5th edn (London: E. Cave, 1750).

[37] Tedeschi, *Urbanization and English Romantic Poetry*, p. 1.

sentiment, prompting, in Lucy Inglis' opinion, 'a widespread questioning of how urban communities functioned and how they should be administered or controlled'.[38] On a much larger scale, both in terms of numbers involved and further repercussions, the French Revolution abounded in numerous tableaus of urban violence, with the Tuileries Palace effectively becoming a battleground in 1792. Even after the Revolution in France, comparable events such as the Peterloo Massacre, a violent quashing of peaceful protestors for political representation in Manchester, would erupt in England's urban centres, further drawing attention to the city as a theatre for the airing of social grievances, often with bloody consequences. Mokyr suggests that the use of the Riot Act to justify violence against protestors at this time would contradict the 'basic Enlightenment principle' of spontaneous organisation and cooperation with one's compatriots.[40]

These violent instances aside, however, critics such as Tim Fulford have described the city itself as exerting a powerful, almost psychoactive effect on its citizens. Describing Thomas De Quincey's relationship with London as 'akin to drug-dependency', Fulford finds that the modernising capital saw 'individual identity […] threatened by the sheer mass of people' and the omnipresence of commercial interest.[41] Though cities in the north would not challenge London in terms of sheer size, their rapid and disorienting shift into modernity mirrors London's own stupefying and incomprehensible multiplicity. By the mid-Victorian period, literary representations increasingly fixated on urban poverty and suffering, drawing on information provided by such investigatory reports as those of Friedrich Engels, or indeed the surgeon James Phillips Kay, both of whom write about Manchester's slums in the nineteenth

---

[38] Lucy Inglis, *Georgian London: Into the Streets* (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 105.
[40] Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*, p. 355.
[41] Tim Fulford, 'Prophecy and Imagination in the Romantic City', *Wordsworth Circle* 41: 1 (Winter 2010), 52-60 (p. 53).

century. To borrow a phrase from Gregory Dart, the city in general, beyond the capital alone, had become 'a problem to be solved'.[42] Though the defining quality of the city might well be confusion and hybridity, as Fulford suggests, this would not necessarily have a wholly detrimental effect on the literary output of those thrown into its dizzying sphere. Eugene Stelzig's example of Wordsworth's writing on London finds that even the urban arena as the 'site of death, alienation and despair' would still be immensely fruitful for artistic production.[43] Anne Janowitz argues that the city of the Romantic era enacted a productive conversational exchange:

> Polite literature brushed against plebeian songs and doggerel, and romantic period poetry and poetics record the engagement of registers […] The meeting of plebeian and polite poetics opened an area for a conversation, a debate, a conflict, and an interpenetration so powerful as to have residual influences well into our own time.[44]

For Janowitz, the city is not an accidental or marginal presence in Romanticism; it is central to our understanding of the motivations behind its set of artistic shifts. This thesis argues that a similar exchange of registers took place in the corresponding regional centres of the north of England, much as it did in the capital. Though the general trend, it must be said, saw impressions of the city become more negative and reflective of what were perceived as uniquely urban vices, not every writer covered in this thesis would respond in this vein. Indeed, writers such as Manchester's Charles Swain would render transformations in humanity's relation to nature, and changing manifestations of labour and commercial relations, as positive and even utopian, as late as the 1830s. While confusion and sensory

---

[42] Gregory Dart, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 28.

[43] Eugene Stelzig, 'Wordsworth's Invigorating Hell: London in Book 7 of The Prelude (1805)', in *Romanticism and the City*, ed. by Larry H. Peer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 181-195 (p. 184).

[44] Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, pp. 4-5.

overload are the effects conveyed by the 'unmanageable sight' that is Wordsworth's London in the *Prelude*, Wordsworth speaks as an outsider to the city, being more liable to experience such a shock to the system.[45] The majority of writers included in this thesis live in or near the city for most of their lives; their work forms a nuanced and sometimes even positive, reaffirming response to what outsiders might perceive as an overwhelming and upsetting sensory experience.

As I have mentioned, however, the set of poems I will analyse do not simply express a change of heart towards the nature of urbanism, but arguably react to a more general existential crisis point on a variety of fronts. To some degree, the poetry of industrial centres in the north narrates not only social but also environmental change; Seth T. Reno has included such writers as John Holland, writing on Sheffield's changing landscape in the early nineteenth century in the descriptive poem *Sheffield Park* (1821), in his own survey of early Anthropocene literature, using such poems as signifiers of a new idea of geological "deep time" in the literary imagination of the Romantic era.[46] Much like the idea of the Industrial Revolution, the concept of the Anthropocene is difficult to pin down, and in some cases its causes have been traced back to the early modern period and even beyond, due to the early effects of agricultural reform and deforestation in the Americas.[47] Though the term would not be used until the twentieth century, Timothy Clark considers the turn of the nineteenth century to be a key moment for human awareness of the species' impact on the planet.[48] Reno likewise finds that the Anthropocene as we understand it today 'coincides with the

---

[45] William Wordsworth, 'The Prelude' in *The Complete Poetical Works* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1932), Book 7, l. 732.
[46] Seth T. Reno, *Early Anthropocene Literature in Britain, 1750-1884* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), pp. 73-76.
[47] Timothy Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), p. 1.
[48] Ibid. p. 1.

Industrial Revolution' and defines our experience of climate from that temporal point onwards, corresponding with 'the so-called Romantic Century (1750-1850)'.[49] Indeed, commentators of the time were not unaware that a transformation was taking place, even if not fully conscious of the large-scale consequences it would eventually manifest. As early as 1788, a lecture by Benjamin Taylor would complain of the physically and morally deleterious effects of London's atmosphere, induced by a lack of greenery, poor hygiene, and urban overcrowding.[50] By this time, an awareness of the reciprocal relationship between mankind and the environment was in its developmental stages.

Recent criticism suggests that, in the face of such profound change, many writers responded to this shift with a curiously elusive and periphrastic poetic register. Anahid Nersessian's study of responses to ecological and social crisis in the Romantic era finds poets preoccupied by their own incapability to represent the wholeness of the change, responding to a very real sense of industrial 'trauma' through the repeated use of 'parataxis, obscurity, catachresis, and apostrophe'.[51] This unapproachability, this lack of direct engagement, may be considered alongside Clark's contemporary understanding of environmental change as a 'hyperobject' – a system too large and complex to fit into regular ontological categories, or to perceive as a "thing" to write about.[52] Even today, climate change challenges our conceptions of 'scale, effect, perception, knowledge, representation and calculability'; how then might authors of the Romantic era attempt to describe the totality of environmental change, when they are only able to perceive isolated aspects of the full effect, and know less about its causes

---

[49] Reno, *Early Anthropocene Literature*, p. 2.

[50] Benjamin Taylor*, A Lecture on the Atmosphere of London; as read before a public society, June 14th, MDCCLXXXVIII* (London: J. Johnson and C. Stalker, 1789).

[51] Anahid Nersessian, *The Calamity Form: on Poetry and Social Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), p. 2; Ibid. p. 3; Ibid. p. 1.

[52] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 13.

and consequences?[53] That said, Clark also suggests that such challenges to one's reality may be 'intellectually liberating', contributing towards 'disclosure and revision, tempering the sense of alarm with a host of new insights'.[54] Considering the revisionary and experimental attitude towards existing poetic genres, subjects, and registers evident in the selection covered here, the onset of a new era of urban living and ecological crisis would indeed be a rich mine of inspiration for writers across the transpennine area.

The generic matter of a great deal of transpennine poetry, however, would also see the modification of more familiar and time-tested poetic forms, with the georgic as a particularly significant poetical staple. To exemplify one key referential text, John Dyer's *The Fleece,* published in 1757 (and used as an epigram in Aikin's *Description*) would touch on the growth of the country's regional centres:

> So appear
> Th'increasing walls of busy Manchester,
> Sheffield, and Birmingham, whose redd'ning fields
> Rise and enlarge their suburbs.[55]

Dyer's adaptation of the Virgilian georgic for his own time is optimistic about industrial development in England's provinces; jarringly so, as David Fairer and Christine Gerrard surmise, for the modern reader, given the now well-documented environmental and social impacts such changes would enact.[56] Rudolf Beck points to the 'overall impression of historical continuity and social stability' communicated by the georgic of the mid-eighteenth

---

[53] Clark, *Ecocriticism on the Edge*, p. 13.
[54] Ibid. p. xi.
[55] John Dyer, 'The Fleece' in *Poems* (London: J. Dodsley, 1770), pp. 51-190, book 3 (l. 337-340).
[56] Christine Gerrard and David Fairer, 'John Dyer' in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, 3rd edn (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), pp. 283-303 (p. 287).

century, a view echoed in Fairer and Gerrard's appraisal of the 'shared national purpose' of *The Fleece's* regional labourers.[57] Invested as he is, however, in the industrial transformations at work, Dyer's metaphorical repertoire is still reflective of a 'tendency to naturalise the human world'; for instance, the accompanying images of human manual labourers and 'sedulous ants […] eager for their work' suggest Dyer's conception of industry as an extension of a natural, self-sustaining system.[58]

This sense of naturalised harmony becomes disrupted, however, over the turn of the century. Using Holland's *Sheffield Park* as his example, Beck demonstrates a new, Romantic fascination with the 'picturesque', the 'sublime objects' of the industrial landscape which 'appeal to the eye and the ear of the observer through contrast, variety, and roughness'.[59] The imagery of the industrialising world is no longer utilised to reassure the reader with promises of national unity, harmony with nature, or historical continuity – in fact, quite the opposite. The landscapes rendered by such adaptations of the georgic as Holland's poem are alienating, foreign, chaotic and unforgiving. Natural beauty is disrupted, and natural imagery is abandoned for more visceral and violent metaphorical language. Furthermore, the change at hand is represented as unprecedented, and almost apocalyptic in its sense of a break with historical continuity. Beck suggests that such discontinuity may be bound up in the social class of the poet; citing the landed position of many of Holland's Augustan predecessors, he finds that an idea of 'the Industrial Revolution as a driving force of social change' might be better understood by writers situated in closer proximity to the labouring classes who would feel the brunt of such change.[60] I would add, however, that Holland's specific situation in Sheffield

---

[57] Beck, 'From Industrial Georgic to Industrial Sublime', p. 21; Gerrard and Fairer, 'John Dyer', p. 287.
[58] Beck, 'From Industrial Georgic', p. 20; Dyer, 'The Fleece', book 3, l. 316-8.
[59] Beck, 'From Industrial Georgic', p. 31.
[60] Ibid. p. 21.

– experiencing the efflorescence of its radical print culture, the later rise of its Mechanics Institute and the growth of other influential voluntary societies with a number of reformist interests – would also lend him a greater stake in the transformative and revolutionary poetics of the industrial sublime.

Aside from the sublime reinvention of the georgic, several other generic patterns recur in the work of these regional poets. Odes to local societies and institutions (a staple of Roscoe's writing), oral folk ballads as exemplified in the work of Joseph Mather, and elegies to perceived civic heroes (as in the poetry of Elijah Ridings and Ebenezer Elliott) form a broad base of genres employed to express a sentiment of regional pride and cultural alternativity. Each of these, much like the georgic mentioned above, undergoes a re-fashioning for its specific local and temporal context. Considering the wider span of works, however, there are numerous outliers to these general observations. John Bolton Rogerson's impressionistic sketches of poetic circles, urban poverty and commerce in nineteenth-century Manchester, for instance, would not fit easily into any of these classifications.[61] Indeed, the full spectrum of poetry produced within the scope of this thesis cannot be adequately described as a singular tradition, but rather a set of independent and occasionally interlinked traditions, placed into proximity with each other in the urban sphere and made liable to cross-pollination. Despite this wealth of poetic material, some commentators at the time would suggest that poetry was not an appropriate medium in which to describe what the modern city was becoming. For example, Maria Jane Jewsbury, resident in Manchester at the beginning of her literary career, produces a range of prose pieces on the place of literature, selfhood and feeling in the industrial town (as further detailed in Chapter Four) - but does not

---

[61] John Bolton Rogerson, *A Voice from the Town & Other Poems* (Manchester: Bradshaw and Blacklock, 1842).

approach this subject matter through the medium of poetry, despite being a prolific and commercially successful poet.[62] In the case of Manchester, too, the form that would become more prevalent was that of the realist social novel, as epitomised in the work of Elizabeth Gaskell. Nersessian again points to the self-aware aspect of poetry in this period, and its conscious failure of expression.[63] It may be this attempt to frame a supposedly unpoetical or unwieldy subject within more familiar forms (such as the georgic) which itself destabilizes the poetic voice produced in the process of composition.

This is, obviously, an ambitious scope for any thesis, and a complex set of interconnected issues, individuals, and urban centres to unpack. To familiarise the reader with the interconnectivity of the region in this period, Chapter One will work to introduce the culture of conversation that existed between the three cities I have selected for study. By documenting the social and professional links in existence between these urban centres, I will make a case for reading the transpennine region as having a shared and highly productive literary culture. This chapter will also use the poetry of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, composed in Warrington during her early life, to exemplify an influential forerunner of many of the stylistic and thematic features of the poetry this thesis will go on to cover. Chapter Two will focus on the first of the three cities, and arguably the city best posed to comment on the widespread social and political tumult of the late eighteenth century. Through the poetic responses of William Roscoe, Edward Rushton, and to a lesser extent James Walker, I will observe how the question of abolition moulded representations of Liverpool following the high point of its involvement in the slave trade. These poets, distinct from one another by differences of class,

---

[62] Maria Jane Jewsbury, *Phantasmagoria; or, Sketches of Life and Literature*, (2 vols) (London: Hurst, Robinson and Co., 1825).
[63] Nersessian, *The Calamity Form*, p. 4.

profession, and political alignment, scrutinise the morality of commercial exploits in such a context. I will also track the use of Liverpool as a microcosm for Britain as a whole, at a time when Britain's reputation as the epitome of liberality was similarly up for debate. Chapter Three will concern Sheffield, which would claim an array of prolific and commercially successful local writers. Sheffield's local papers were a hugely influential vehicle for the transmission of poetry, and as the proprietor of the *Sheffield Iris* (1795-1825), James Montgomery would play a particularly significant role in garnering a literary culture in the city. With Montgomery as a central figure, this chapter will also include several of his friends and contemporaries – primarily Joseph Mather, Barbara Hoole, John Holland, and Ebenezer Elliott – to demonstrate the various approaches towards questions of selfhood and community as the city faced unprecedented growth, developing infrastructure, and a new significance as part of both the wider country and an international empire.

In the fourth and final chapter, Manchester will be posited as a counterpoint; though initially a much smaller settlement than either of its neighbours, the city would grow at a rate that was historically unparalleled in the final decades of the eighteenth century. Associated heavily with overcommercialisation and (in the wake of Peterloo and new concerns regarding its labouring classes) urban deprivation, the city would struggle to produce an eminent literary figure in the image of Roscoe or Montgomery. Concerns about its 'unpoetical' nature would continue even as new middle-class writers would attempt to forge literary communities in the early to mid-nineteenth century. Linking together the poetry of Peterloo survivor Samuel Bamford, as well as his later successors Elijah Ridings, Charles Swain, and John Bolton Rogerson, this chapter will reckon with Manchester as a city that would decisively transform both everyday perceptions and artistic representations of urban living.

Chapter One: Transpennine Connectivity

The correspondence of James Montgomery, a Sheffield poet and the President of its Literary and Philosophical Society, reveals a broad and consistent network of communication with a particular focus in the transpennine region. Many of Montgomery's exchanges refer to Society business - for example, letters to a sister Society in Leeds detailing future lectures – while others concern his work as a poet and hymnodist, drawing praise from readers across the area who come into contact with his publications disseminated in literary annuals.[1] Others are intensely personal, such as Montgomery's extensive discourse with the Aikin family, the Liverpudlian poet William Roscoe, or the Manchester-based journalist Joseph Aston.[2] Most commonly, however, these two purposes are tightly interlinked, and the personal is often difficult to extricate from the professional, or indeed, the institutional. In 1809, for instance, shortly after promising to print Montgomery's poem 'The Dial' in his short-lived *Athenaeum*, John Aikin informs the poet that

> Your friends here are all as well as when you left them; & I believe I may truly say, at least for my family, that the pleasing impressions they received from your visit are not at all faded. My sister seems pretty well to have got up her spirits, & we have all felt the soothing influence of time in the misfortunes to which this chequered scene of life is perpetually liable.[3]

Aikin's letter goes on to critique the 'indistinctness' of Montgomery's verse, taking an interest in the latter's work not merely as a friend but as an editor.[4] He speaks not only as John Aikin,

---

[1] Sheffield City Archives, Letter from William Osbourne (Copy), 8 Sept 1827, Sheffield Lit and Phil – Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 36-680; Letter from "a Widow", 1833 [undated], Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 36-1012.

[2] Letter from Lucy Aikin, 29 Nov 1825, Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 222-24; Letter from William Roscoe, 25 March 1809, Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 36-147 (II); Letter from Joseph Aston, 26 Feb 1808, Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 36-114.

[3] Letter from John Aikin, 14 March 1809, Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 36-146.

[4] Ibid. SLPS. 36-146.

but as a mouthpiece for the *Athenaeum* itself. This critical eye, however, does not preclude the warmth of his sentiments on the behalf of himself and his family at their new location in Stoke Newington. It is this mixture of friendly discourse, candid feeling, and professional feedback that characterises Montgomery's exchanges with his fellow writers.

While Montgomery's role as a literary producer and disseminator in Sheffield will be further discussed in Chapter Three, his correspondence serves as an example of the complex sociable connections that existed between actors at different sites within the region. In this chapter, I argue that this communicative tendency in turn gives rise to a shared transpennine culture, with local variations across the area, and a subsequent set of poetic formal and thematic qualities expressive of said culture. This chapter will detail the connections that existed between the three urban sites selected for this study, consisting of three parts. The first will look at connections between individuals, be they personal, professional, or familial. This will concern the influence writers across the area had upon each other's work, facilitated by said connections, and the degree to which their work was consumed, replicated, or disseminated by their local contemporaries. The second will focus on connections between institutions, such as voluntary organisations, religious congregations, and literary coteries, to demonstrate how associational sociability further permitted the exchange of ideas and production of literature in this period. The final section will cover the poetic conventions produced by this web of associations, primarily those employed by Anna Laetitia Barbauld, a precursor to (and influence upon) many of the writers which make up the body of this study, as well as John Aikin's aforementioned sister. Though Barbauld did not spend most of her life in any of the cities this study covers, her influence was felt across the region, not merely due to her friendly and professional connections with significant actors in Unitarian circles, but also to the general popularity and renown of her work. I will explore two poems – 1773's 'The

Invitation to Miss B******' and her 'Epistle to Dr. Enfield, on his Revisiting Warrington in 1789', both of which take the form of a letter to an outsider, advertising the north of England as the site of vital intellectual production. These poems also constitute early examples of industrial landscape poetry, necessitating the formation of a new poetic language to render a swiftly modernising transpennine world.

Although this thesis will seek to individuate the literary spheres of each city it concerns, it is vital to remember that these urban centres remained in a state of constant correspondence with one another. The prevailing impression of sociability in the transpennine region in this period is, to use Mee's phrase, that of a 'conversational culture'; communication between ostensibly provincial towns shaped an organised and rapidly-modernising social and commercial scene.[9] Listing 'business, kinship, and religious ties' as potential channels of communication, Mee also finds that these connections had the power to '[transcend] sectarian differences'.[10] Similarly, Hannah Barker's study of commercial practice and infrastructure in northern cities of the industrialising period finds that, for the most part, different locales encouraged rapid growth in one another. Barker understands mutual growth in her case studies (Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield) to be 'based on admiration and emulation rather than competition', fostering local diversity rather than transpennine 'homogeneity'.[11] According to Paul Elliott, too, this connectivity only increases further into the nineteenth century, as improvements in infrastructure and transport allow existing modes of

---

[9] Jon Mee and Jennifer Wilkes, 'Transpennine Enlightenment: The Literary and Philosophical Societies and Knowledge Networks in the North, 1781-1830', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 38: 4 (Dec 2015), pp. 599-612 (p. 601).

[10] Jon Mee, ''Some mode less revolting to their delicacy': Women's Institutional Space in the Transpennine Enlightenment, 1781-1822', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42: 4 (2019), 541-556 (p. 542).

[11] Barker, ''Smoke Cities'', p. 184.

communication to become more efficient, more frequent, and more numerous.[12] When

seeking commonalities across the region, then, one's expectation might be variations upon a

theme, rather than an identical literary culture across the board, with similarities that become

more evident as different urban centres gain more developed infrastructural connections to

one another. Using these existing frameworks, this chapter will demonstrate how the

connective networks between urban centres stimulated the production and consumption of

a set of specific poetic generic features. These involved, among others, a greater urban or

industrial focus in the georgic prospect poem, introducing a new register of transformation

and development to its sublime, Romantic iteration. Similarly, developments in the ode (to an

individual, collective, or institution), allegorical discussions on the nature of such concepts as

commerce, industry, or science, and political pieces, including oral protest literature, a genre

particularly favoured by labouring-class poets, also played a considerable role. The exact

staples employed within the region will, however, be given in greater detail towards the end

of this chapter.

Barker also stresses that London was not the sole point of reference for

correspondents across the north, and not necessary as a route by which to contact the wider

world. Trade and communication between transpennine cities and the continent, or even the

broader empire, often bypassed London entirely, suggestive of a wider desire for

representation on a worldwide scale.[13] Indeed, Rosemary Sweet finds interactions between

interlocutors in the English provinces to be defined by 'the strength of local self-sufficiency,

pride in achievement and independence', with any relationship to London being largely

---

[12] Paul Elliott, 'The origins of the 'creative class': provincial urban society, scientific culture and socio-political marginality in Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, *Social History* 28: 3 (Oct 2003), 361-387 (p. 364).

[13] Barker, ''Smoke Cities'', pp. 185-6.

indifferent and incidental.[14] A comparative study involving the literature of London as the default from which other cities stylistically stray is therefore inappropriate for representing these literary cultures as self-sufficient and primarily influenced by one another, rather than the metropolitan centre.

Within this chapter, I have attempted to separate these connections into the categories of individual and institutional. But, as Montgomery exemplifies, individuals often stood in for a larger institutional body within this network. The Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society would only be one in a substantial chain of similar societies across the north of England. This intellectual chain is largely asserted to have its roots in Birmingham's Lunar Society, which numbered James Watt and Joseph Priestley among its membership in the 1750s. Priestley's later familiarity with the Unitarian congregation in Warrington, where he taught classics at the dissenting academy from 1761, would cement his role as a key figure in the formation of this sociable model. As mentioned, Thomas Percival, one of the Academy's former students, would become a founder member of one of the first Lit and Phils in Manchester in 1781 (though repeated efforts to form similar societies in Liverpool had already fallen through in the late eighteenth century, as will be detailed in Chapter Two). This prompted many other societies to form elsewhere in quick succession, including a significant Lit and Phil in Newcastle, whose meetings commenced in 1793. Liverpool's successful society emerged next in 1812, followed by Leeds in 1819, and Sheffield in 1822, though Sheffield had a local forerunner in the form of the Society for the Promotion of Useful Knowledge (1804-1805). Smaller societies included those at Warrington, Whitby, and Halifax.[15] While the

---

[14] Rosemary Sweet, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Longman: Essex, 1999), p. 264.

[15] Arline Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 26; Mee and Wilkes, 'Transpennine Enlightenment', p. 607.

membership and content covered by these groups varied – with Leeds foregrounding the 'Philosophical' over the 'Literary' in its name, much like the early Liverpool society mentioned above, to signify the pre-eminence of science and industry over arts in its lectures – Priestley was an honorary member of the early societies (Manchester and Newcastle) that emerged during his lifetime, underlining his centrality to their social and intellectual makeup. The Lunar Society's combination of artistic, industrial, and scientific innovation was a continued, if oblique, influence on the literary producers active in these circles.

While Lit and Phils form a significant trend across the region, to solely use them as a resource to map sociable connections runs the risk of overlooking correspondents who fit a different set of demographics. Normally open solely to men, drawing in primarily Unitarian membership, and appealing to those with middle-class, reformist interests, this method excludes several groups with a significant contribution to poetry in the period: writers of a labouring-class background, political radicals, and women. This would obviously also risk omitting the range of poetic staples such groups might offer. Though such writers certainly existed, their communication can be more difficult to track. Whether problems of literacy, financial struggles, or hostility towards potentially seditious activity may have obscured what connections do exist, the body of available material vastly disfavours writers who do not fit the moderate, male, middle-class model. To combat this bias, consideration will also be given to other forms of sociability beyond the scholarly society; radical societies and publications, as well as philanthropic and trade societies, will also be incorporated into this study in order to gain the widest possible impression of intellectual exchange across the transpennine region, and its resulting literary output.

It is also important to note that the existence of a Lit and Phil did not guarantee a bevy of associated poets; while Manchester did produce many prolific writers whose work revolved around the city, its Lit and Phil would not have much of a relation to any local iconic poet such as Liverpool's Roscoe or Sheffield's Montgomery. Instead, Manchester's intellectual circles had connections rather to industrialists or scientists, which could lead to commentators discrediting Manchester's potential for producing poetic individuals. Moreover, the vast majority of Lit and Phils were open solely to men, though wives and female relatives did gain some proximity to their form of knowledge creation through their male connections. This 'formal institutionalization […] of science', Elliott highlights, would also exclude male non-professional scientists from circles of more legitimised practitioners, and this process of exclusion would become more aggressive into the nineteenth century.[16] This demonstrates the extent to which using a purely institutional method of investigating connectivity is a limited strategy. Writers in a marginalised position, such as women, exist somewhat outside of the institutional framework, and so evidence of their productive connections must be traced elsewhere – through friendly correspondence, or through the patronage of more socially advantaged individuals. Where these exceptions to the institutional rule exist, I will highlight the special conditions under which these authors' works were conceived, produced, disseminated, and consumed.

---

[16] Elliott, 'The origins of the 'creative class'', p. 384.

Individual Connectivity

The most concrete, as well as numerous, resource available in which to observe connections between individuals in the transpennine region can be found in the form of personal correspondence. While Montgomery has been cited as an example, it must be observed that, despite his extremely prolific career as a man of letters and extensive web of communication, Montgomery is part of a wider rule and not an exception. The surviving letters of William Roscoe, for instance, number over 5,000 items. His points of communication across the area are numerous, and similarly point towards a large network of interrelated interlocutors consciously crafting the intellectual and social sphere of the transpennine region. These connections, however, are often very much personal and affectionate ones. For example, his letter to William Enfield (another Warrington dissenter, notably addressed in one of Barbauld's poems) expresses sympathetic grief for Enfield's son, whom Roscoe helped to tutor, and figures both correspondents as 'partners in affliction'.[17] Roscoe's friendly communications also exist within Liverpool, as a surviving letter from his fellow Liverpudlian poet Edward Rushton vouches for the existence of a respectful camaraderie between the two, and a shared sense of social concern.[18] Rushton, in turn, also writes to the Manchester-based anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Walker.[19] Overall, epistolary evidence paints a picture of a thoroughly interconnected social world, in which interlocutors are happy to discuss, if not directly involved in, one another's personal affairs.

---

[17] Liverpool Record Office, Letter to William Enfield, c. 11 Dec 1791, *Letters of William Roscoe*, ed. by D. H Weinglass, vol. 1, 1772-1800, Roscoe Letters and Papers, 820.1 ROS.

[18] Letter from Edward Rushton, 12 Jan 1825, Roscoe Letters and Papers, 920. 4257 ROS.

[19] Edward Rushton, Letter to Thomas Walker (unpublished), 30 Jan 1806, *The Collected Writings*, ed. by Paul Baines (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014) p. 219.

What is striking about many of these lines of communication is the intimacy expressed between interlocutors, and the apparent frequency of their contact. The poet Barbara Hoole's anxieties regarding her recent marriage and everyday familial interactions are recounted to Montgomery with extraordinary sincerity; the 'regular Atrophy' of her worries reveals an emotionally involved friendship in which her wellbeing and developing relationship with her husband are suitable topics for conversation.[20] Aikin's letters to Montgomery often begin with an apology for the lateness of the missive, suggesting that a timelier communication would normally be expected.[21] Roscoe and Aikin also make it clear that, on at least one occasion, Montgomery has been a house guest and met with their families. On the whole, the impression is that of a web of tightly-knit literary communities, caught up closely in each other's personal lives, both within local circles and across regional borders, with regular and detailed updates regarding one another's family, work and health.

When tracing the paper trail of these relationships, however, dividing the professional and personal spheres becomes increasingly difficult. Professional connections between interlocutors are perhaps more complicated, as they involve a wide variety of different power relations and are often dubiously mixed-in with more intimate and affectionate feeling. Relationships consisting both of professional collaboration and personal engagement are a common trend across the board, a primary example being William Roscoe and James Currie. A member of Roscoe's middle-class associated circle in Liverpool, Currie is primarily known for his work as a physician and an editor of the poems of Robert Burns. He also, however, wrote the foreword to Roscoe's Abolitionist poem *The Wrongs of Africa*, as well as apparently collaborating alternately line-by-line with Roscoe on a shorter poem in the same vein, 'The

---

[20] Letter from Barbara Hofland, 15 June [undated], Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 222-12.
[21] Letter from John Aikin, 14 March 1809, Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 36-146.

African'. Scott Krawczyk points out the social significance of this friendship as part of a larger 'collaborative consciousness', a form of creation deemed 'un-Romantic', to use Krawczyk's phrase, in that it relies upon shared work rather than individual endeavour.[22]

This type of working relationship is however the norm, rather that the outlier, in the intellectual environment fostered in transpennine cities. When presenting his word-by-word emendations to Montgomery's *World Before the Flood* (1812), John Aikin refers to his suggested changes as 'carpings', a term suggestive of his self-conscious querulousness in a manner reflective of familiarity and humour at play between the two writers.[23] The offending passage critiqued in this letter also does not appear in the poem's eventual publication, evidencing the respect Montgomery held for Aikin's opinion on this matter. Furthermore, Aikin's comments on Montgomery's 'The West Indies' reveal his influence not only on Montgomery's formal and lexical choices, but also the content and moral message of his verse; criticising Montgomery's praise of the Christianisation of enslaved people, Aikin warns Montgomery that this sentiment might be dangerously wielded as an argument in favour of slavery.[24] While the Manchester poet Elijah Ridings did not collaborate poetically with his acquaintance, the orator Rowland Detrosier, they would work together during the campaign for Manchester's political representation in the early nineteenth century, and after Detrosier's death, he would be elegised as a Mancunian hero in one of Ridings' publications.[25] Even when

---

[22] Scott Krawczyk, 'Mediating Abolition: The Collaborative Consciousness of Liverpool's William Roscoe and James Currie' in *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 34: 2 (2001), 209-226 (p. 223); Ibid. p. 218.

[23] Letter from John Aikin, 20 Nov 1809, Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 36-169.

[24] The John Rylands Library, John Aikin, letter to James Montgomery, 16 March 1808, Aikin's letters to James Montgomery, MAM.PLP 1.26.5.

[25] Elijah Ridings, 'Lines occasioned by the death of Rowland Detrosier', *The Poetical Works* (Manchester: J, Wortham, 1840), pp. 77-79.

collaborators are not strictly literary, poetry has a place within a collective effort for the improvement and representation of the transpennine area and its people.

While personal and professional relationships tend to overlap, familial relationships can also play an important role in the formation of literary communities. A particularly complex dynamic might be observed in the case of James Montgomery and Joseph Gales; after the latter's flight to America to escape the consequences of his radical publications, Montgomery not only took his place as editor of the *Sheffield Register* (a previous iteration of the *Iris*), but also formed a pseudo-familial unit with Gales' sisters. This, too, is expressed in Montgomery's correspondence; it is customary for his interlocutors to pass on their regards to the 'Miss Gales' as well as the poet himself.[26] Marriage also permits individuals to enter key social networks of the north. For example, the marriage of the Mancunian businessman Samuel Greg to Hannah Lightbody, the daughter of a mercantile Liverpudlian family, gave Hannah a degree of proximity to the gatherings of the Lit and Phil system, and access to its educational format which may otherwise have been denied to her on the basis of her gender.[27] Families also had a literary output of their own; Roscoe's daughter, Mary Anne Jevons, would collect and edit Roscoe's family-authored *Poems for Youth*.[28] She would also edit *The Sacred Offering*, a poetic annual containing not only her family's work, but that of many other contributors, including Barbauld, who was a family friend.[29] Aikin's letters also show that, on occasion, his daughter Lucy (a 'warm, but critical' appreciator of the poet's work) lent her own

---

[26] Letter from Jane Hoole, 30 Sept [undated], Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 222-11.

[27] Derbyshire Record Office, Hannah Greg, letter to Thomas Pares III [undated], Pares Family of Leicester and Hopwell Hall – 1306-1901, D5336/3/214/6.

[28] *Poems for Youth, by a Family Circle,* ed. by Mary Anne Roscoe (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, and Liverpool: Robinson and Sons, 1820).

[29] Mary Anne Roscoe Jevons, *The Sacred Offering; a Poetical Journal* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co, and Liverpool: D. Marples and Co., 1833).

appraisals of Montgomery's verse.[30] Hannah Greg, Mary Anne Jevons, and Lucy Aikin exemplify a channel by which women's domestic relations could permit them a connection to the cultural networks of the north; through family and marriage, both women had access to intellectual and literary benefits unavailable to their contemporary peers.

Within cities and their surroundings, there are examples of professional and personal connections between writers of different social stations. Sheffield stands out as a particularly complex site for outreach between authors, featuring Montgomery as a central figure with many lesser-known writers in his orbit. At the helm of the *Iris* Office, Montgomery appears to have established a pattern of publishing the work of female authors (either within the pages of the *Iris* itself or as separate volumes) who otherwise may have escaped public notice. The poems of Ann Sutcliff, for instance, published post-mortem after complications from childbirth, were introduced under Montgomery's editorship in 1800. Though the introduction to her volume describes her as bearing 'little poetical merit', Sutcliff's posthumous preface hopes the volume will serve as a 'remembrancer to her children', though this sentimental language also suggests a charitable motive to the volume's publication.[31] After the appearance of Barbara Hoole's poetry in other Sheffield papers in the 1790s, Montgomery published her *Poems* in 1805, during which time she was a widowed mother to her son, writing primarily to furnish their existence.[32] In 1831, Mary Hutton, the 'wife of a penknife cutter', living in very modest conditions, saw her poetry published after appealing directly to Montgomery and his associate John Holland, with the latter writing the preface to her

---

[30] Letter from John Aikin to James Montgomery, 10 Aug 1806, Aikin's letters to James Montgomery, MAM.PLP 1.26.1.

[31] 'Preface' to Ann Sutcliff, *Poems* (Sheffield: James Montgomery, Iris Office, 1800), p. 8.

[32] Barbara Hoole, *Poems* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1805).

collection.[33] In this case, the aim of the publication is unabashedly charitable, with Holland imploring the reader to '[confer] the means of comfort and happiness on an ingenious and apparently worthy woman and her family'.[34] All of this, too, is predated by the *Sheffield Register* and its publication of the work of the Sheffield-born domestic labourer-turned-poet Sarah Pearson via her connection with then-editor Joseph Gales earlier in the eighteenth century, as documented by Joan Qionglin Tan and Sandro Jung.[35] Sheffield, then, serves as a stark example of how personal and professional connections may be forged in order to overcome social difference and disseminate literary works with the help of a higher-ranking acquaintance, especially in the case of disadvantaged female writers. Thus, another opportunity for cultural exchange is opened to female writers through the medium of local patronage.

Overall, despite the paternalistic systems of societal collaboration such as that at work in the Lit and Phils, and the activities of publishing houses including the *Iris*, the literary and intellectual circles of the transpennine region exhibit a heightened level of gender inclusivity (particularly within religious or philanthropic communities, as will be detailed) than that of wider coeval British society. As Alison Twells details, women such as Mary Anne Rawson (a friend of Montgomery's) were able to wield a great deal of social power, particularly in nonconformist religious circles, entertaining such remarkable connections as Thomas Raffles, William Wilberforce and Frederick Douglass at her residence at Wincobank Hall in Sheffield.[36] That said, Montgomery's interest in the lives and output of female writers is not without

---

[33] John Holland, 'Preface' to Mary Hutton, *Sheffield Manor, and other poems* (Sheffield: J. Blackwell, Iris Office, 1831), p. viii.

[34] Ibid. p. xi.

[35] Joan Qionglin Tan and Sandro Jung, 'Sarah Pearson (1767-1833): A Laboring-Class Sheffield Poet's Career and Work', *ANQ*, 31: 1 (2019), 18-27 (p. 18-20).

[36] Alison Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 99.

patriarchal inflections. At a time when evangelical "civilising" efforts targeted both the foreign

heathen and the domestic labouring class, Montgomery's own reforming interests targeted

'the morals of the lower class of females' as foundational for the improvement of society at

large.[37]

That is not to say, however, that individual connections only occur within the

transpennine region, and that interlocutors never foster friendships or professional

partnerships elsewhere. In several cases, regional writers seek friendships outside of their

local area, perhaps to further their careers, but also due to substantive intellectual and

emotional links with their peers in London or further afield. Roscoe's catalogue of

communicants is impressive; while promoting his historical research and translation of Italian

literature in 1796, he expresses his admiration directly towards some of the cultural giants of

the late eighteenth century – Mary Wollstonecraft, Georgiana Cavendish, and Horace

Walpole, to name but a few.[38] The Manchester writer Maria Jane Jewsbury nurtures a

particularly intriguing literary friendship with William Wordsworth, instigated by her

dedication of her *Phantasmagoria* (1825) to him, and this relationship would prove fruitful for

both of their subsequent writings.[39] Wordsworth's influence on Jewsbury can be observed in

her piece 'To William Wordsworth, Esquire', while Wordsworth's 'Gold and Silver Fishes in a

Vase', followed by its sequel, 'Liberty', form a response to a gift of the fishes in question by

Jewsbury. 'Liberty' would not be published until after Jewsbury's early death in 1833, and the

note to the text expresses the extent of Wordsworth's respect for her talent:

---

[37] James Montgomery, quoted in Malcolm Mercer*, Schooling the Poorer Child: Elementary Education in Sheffield 1560– 1902* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) p. 69.
[38] Letter to Mary Wollstonecraft, 12 Sept 1796, *Letters of William Roscoe*, ed. by D. H. Weinglass; Letter from the Duchess of Devonshire, 19 Dec 1798, Roscoe Letters and Papers, Liverpool Record Office. 920. 1223 ROS; Letter to Horace Walpole, Lord Orford, c. March 1795, *Letters of William Roscoe,* ed, by D. H. Weinglass.
[39] Jewsbury, *Phantasmagoria,* vol. 1 (2 vols).

> There is now, alas! no possibility of the anticipation, with which the above Epistle concludes, being realised: nor were the verses ever seen by the Individual for whom they were intended [...] In one quality, viz. quickness in the motions of her mind, she had, within the range of the Author's acquaintance, no equal.[40]

Writers from the transpennine region, then, are not only interrelated among themselves, but form intellectual and emotional connections across the country, which are often mutually influential and productive for both participants. However, communicants do not necessarily have to contact one another directly to establish a significant connection, or indeed to influence one another. To gain a sense of readership, the subscription lists within volumes of poetry can prove extremely useful, and many such volumes contain a broad spread of readers across the transpennine region, with familiar (and often unexpected) names tending to recur. Lesser-known writers might be widely read by more eminent literary producers within their own city – for instance, it may not be surprising that Elijah Ridings is read by fellow Mancunian writers such as Samuel Bamford and John Bolton Rogerson.[41] Writers with greater reach, however, such as Barbara Hoole, display an impressive array of literary consumers across the board. At home in Sheffield, Hoole is read by local literary movers such as Montgomery, but William Roscoe, James Currie, and Edward Rushton are also among her readers in Liverpool.[42] All in all, it is apparent that readers in different transpennine centres took an interest in the literature and local affairs of their regional neighbours.

Certain printers, too, make it their project to spread information from apparently provincial towns across the country. Helen Braithwaite has already summarised the critical partnership of Joseph Johnson and Joseph Priestley, with the former publishing a vast

---

[40] William Wordsworth, note to 'Liberty', in *Poems* (London: Edward Moxon, 1847), p. 397.
[41] Ridings, *The Poetical Works*, subscription list p. vi, ibid. p. v
[42] Hoole, *Poems*, subscription list p. xxix, ibid. p. xxxiv, ibid. p. xi, ibid. p. xxxv

collection of the latter's teachings and undoubtedly bringing his ideas to a much larger audience in London. However, Braithwaite's portrait of Johnson's publishing activity largely understands this movement of knowledge as originating in the provinces and moving towards London as a central point. Though Braithwaite sees London as the 'centre of religious dissent' in the late eighteenth century and fundamentally the home of Johnson's business, this overlooks Liverpool-born Johnson's frequent returns to the northwest, his stake in Liverpool's local publications, the distribution of his work across the transpennine region, and the significant number of writers with strong ties to the region (Aikin, Montgomery, Barbauld, Percival, Enfield) whose work he would disseminate.[43] Johnson serves not only to bring the provinces to London, but also to connect apparently provincial centres to one another. His continued engagement with printing houses in Warrington and Liverpool (evidenced by his letters to William Eyres and Joshua Lace respectively) suggests a committed return to these regional hubs and a continued knowledge of their literary circles despite his situation in the capital.[44] Similarly, the surviving work of the printer James Molineux suggests a cross-regional interest in social and political affairs across the Pennines. Despite being stationed in St. Mary's Gate, Manchester, a publication by Molineux dated to 1816 documents recent local calls for political representation in Sheffield.[45] Similar publications from Molineux supporting reform societies include one representing gatherings at Middleton (1816) as well as York (1817).[46] Not only, then, can comparable reformist trends be observed across the region, but printers

---

[43] Helen Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing and Dissent: Joseph Johnson and the Cause of Liberty* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), p. 3; Ibid. p. 20.

[44] Letter to William Eyres, 17 May 1802, *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook*, ed. by John Bugg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Letter to Joshua Lace, 12 March 1805, *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook*.

[45] The National Archives of the UK, *Public Distress: Meeting at Sheffield* (Manchester: J. Molineux, 1816), Miscellaneous Papers on Sedition Cases – Printed Pamphlets or Tracts, TS 24/3/91.

[46] The National Archives of the UK, *Proceedings of the Middleton Union Society* (Manchester, J. Molineux, 1816), Printed Pamphlets or Tracts, TS 24/3/75; *Letter by G. Higgins, addressed the Gentlemen of the County of York* [...] (Manchester, J. Molineux and Co., 1817).

such as Molineux find interest enough in their home cities to document reformist activity across the north of England.

There is also the more indirect matter of writers across the area producing works which evidence one another's creative influence. Dedications to, or epigraphs from, transpennine contemporaries are common fare – John Holland credits 'Sheffield's honoured MONTGOMERY' in his descriptive poem *Sheffield Park,* while Manchester's John Bolton Rogerson dedicates his *Voice from the Town* to his local predecessor Samuel Bamford, with the same volume including poems dedicated to his fellow poets and townsmen John Critchley Prince and Robert Rose.[47] These, however, comprise only the more overt demonstrations of mutual influence this body of literature has to offer. More complicated examples include John Walker's *Descriptive poem, on the town and trade of Liverpool* (1789) which uses its predecessor, William Roscoe's 1777 work *Mount Pleasant*, as a structural and aesthetic model.[48] As Chapter Two will explore, however, this poem uses the same prefiguration as Roscoe's to come to an entirely different, pro-slavery conclusion – revealing Walker as less a straightforward mimic of Roscoe but more an innovator upon an existing theme. These examples, too, suggest this exchange only takes place within local urban circles – this, however, was not the case. The network of friendly letters across the region often facilitated direct literary influence, and as Stephen C. Behrendt has helpfully detailed, it seems likely that their mutual connection with Montgomery allowed Barbara Hoole to produce *La Fête de la*

---

[47] John Holland, 'Preface' to S*heffield Park: A Descriptive Poem* (Sheffield: Pawson and Brailsford, 1859), p. v.; Rogerson, *A Voice from the Town*

[48] John Walker, *A descriptive poem, on the town and trade of Liverpool* (Liverpool: H. Hodgson, 1789); Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant' in *Mount Pleasant: a descriptive poem,* pp. 7-39*.*

Rose; or, The Dramatic Flowers (1809), a children's poem in direct imitation of Roscoe's *The Butterfly's Ball, and the Grasshopper's Feast* (first published 1806).[49]

So far, I have mainly touched on connections across the transpennine region, and to other places within the British Isles. There are, however, multiple instances where people of interest in the north of England make demonstrable sociable and professional connections on an international level – some with London as an intermediary step, and others who forgo the metropolis entirely. Braithwaite has suggested that, via friendship with Priestley, Thomas Percival had been put in contact with American tracts and publications supplied by Benjamin Franklin.[50] Similarly, Edward Rushton's anti-slavery efforts were not addressed solely to his local associates in Liverpool, or even England as a whole. He would write directly to George Washington in 1797, highlighting the hypocrisy of the latter's continued ownership of enslaved people. Additionally, this letter was published in Liverpool within the year, suggesting a desire to make this international connection a public matter.[51] Commenting on Johnson's letters to the Edinburgh-born, Philadelphia-based printer Thomas Dobson, John Bugg notes that Dobson was advertising works by Barbauld, Aikin, and Percival.[52] Roscoe's interest in the Italian renaissance and subsequent historical writings led to his having numerous epistolary contacts in Italy, despite never visiting himself. His letters to the clergyman Domenico Moreni introduce him to another transpennine visitor to the country, the MP Benjamin Gaskell, in 1827, and his communications with the scholar of Greek and Italian literature Sebastiano

---

[49] Stephen C. Behrendt, 'Barbara Hofland and Romantic-Era Provincial Poetry by Women', *Women's Writing*. 20: 4 (2013), 421-440 (p. 430); Barbara Hoole, *La Fête de la Rose; or, The Dramatic Flowers*, 2nd edn (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1809); William Roscoe, *The Butterfly's Ball, and the Grasshopper's Feast*, 2nd edn (London: J. Harris, 1808).

[50] Braithwaite, *Romanticism, Publishing, and Dissent*, p. 43.

[51] Rushton, 'Expostulatory Letter to George Washington', *The Collected Writings,* ed. by Paul Baines, pp. 185-190.

[52] John Bugg, note on Letter to Thomas Dobson, 24 August 1796, *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook*, p. 29.

Ciampi further illustrate a reciprocal relationship between Liverpool and the continent.[53] Not only do literary producers within the region partake in a complex web of communication between themselves, but form links in an international chain of social and intellectual exchange.

Institutional Connectivity

Groups and societies such as the Lit and Phils, as well as various charitable and voluntary associations, played a vital role in the creation of political movements, philanthropic missions, literary production, and the formation of local identity within the transpennine region. Connections between such societies, deliberately forged by their representatives, were central to the dissemination of ideas and information across regional centres. Paul Elliott has highlighted the importance of itinerant speakers disseminating knowledge between multiple regional societies in one trip, and Montgomery's letters also evidence the seeking-out of speakers from neighbouring Lit and Phils.[54] A series of letters to representatives of the Leeds Phil and Lit in 1827, for example, would result in the scheduling of series of six lectures on the fine arts towards the end of the year.[55] While friendships and collaborations between society members have already been documented, the peculiar trajectory of Lit and Phil formations in the northeast is particularly fascinating: Jon Mee has traced the influence of Manchester's society on William Turner, leading to the foundation of a similar group in Newcastle.[56] Turner

---

[53] Letter from William Roscoe to Canon Domenico Moreni, 3 Sept 1827, Roscoe Letters and Papers, 920. 2759 ROS; Letter to William Roscoe from Sebastiano Ciampi, 22 April 1815, 920. 796 ROS.

[54] Elliott, 'The Origins of the 'Creative Class'', p. 362.

[55] Letter to the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society (Copy), 25 Sept 1827, Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 36-680.

[56] Mee and Wilkes, 'Transpennine Enlightenment', p. 605.

also fostered a friendship with the Barbaulds and Priestleys, partaking in their sociable networks and promoting Barbauld's talent in his obituary to her in the *Newcastle Magazine* in 1825, as well as maintaining involvement with the Mechanics' Institutes and Manchester College, York.[57] These societies were supportive of one another, seeking out one another's knowledge and furnishing the foundation of new groups across the provinces. Despite this, their contribution to literary knowledge creation was not always consistent. Looking at the memoirs of the Lit and Phil Societies, the Sheffield society is demonstrably more focused on literature, predominating over the other arts and sciences, with James Montgomery himself giving many of the literary lectures.[58] The Manchester Society of the eighteenth century would see multiple literary-based talks from John Aikin, William Roscoe, and John Ferriar, though this literary interest would wane in the nineteenth century, largely to be replaced by lectures of a scientific or industrial nature.[59] Though these memoirs only preserve a selection of the full series of lectures, they are still significant in that they reveal which lectures were thought most necessary for preservation in the Society's records. How much the "literary" aspect of the Lit and Phil was relevant, then, is debatable, and varies both across the region and over time.

While Lit and Phils form the foundation for the broadest spread of poetic contributors in this period, however, they are far from the only societies of note at work. Peter Clark suggests that a number of societies were born from a need for political devolution, as evidenced by the rash of reformist and radical societies – for the most part, with very similar

---

[57] Mee, ''Some mode less revolting', 548; William Turner, 'Mrs Barbauld', *Newcastle Magazine*, April 1825, pp. 183-186.

[58] For instance, see *The First Annual Report of the Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society* (Sheffield: James Montgomery, 1824).

[59] *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*, vol. 3 (Warrington: W. Eyres, 1790); *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester*, vol. 4, part 1 (Warrington: C. Wheeler, 1793).

concerns across the board – which come into being throughout the transpennine area.[60] Given the build-up and aftermath of the Peterloo Massacre in 1819, Manchester is probably the best known for its radicalism of the three case studies, though all three cities would feel the effect of new politically-inclined social activity. Across the region, Anti-Corn Law societies would also address the question of reform, and Ebenezer Elliott would come to be known as the Corn-Law Poet, taking part in the local Sheffield collective. All three cities would feature prominent local anti-slavery campaigns, and one poetic trend to be witnessed across the region is sentimental anti-slavery verse, seen in the works of William Roscoe, James Montgomery, John Critchley Prince, and many of their contemporaries and correspondents. Despite the panic over seditious activity in the late eighteenth century and subsequent flushing out of numerous radical parties, several writers in this period would maintain links with members of the London Corresponding Society, including those who had felt the most severe effects of increased political scrutiny. James Montgomery's 1797 collection, *Prison Amusements*, published after his own imprisonment at York for his implication in radical activity, features a poem dedicated to the recently imprisoned Thomas Hardy, elegising the latter's wife and imagining their heavenly reunion.[61] The growth of radical networks in the north was not only poetically productive, but highly innovative. Marcus Wood illustrates how, after the mass distribution of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* through unconventional mediums in 1791, radical literature became defined by its 'capacity for experimentation, adaptation and parody'.[62] Radical publishers' fascination with new genres and printing methods permitted them to engage with

---

[60] Peter Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational* World (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 95.

[61] James Montgomery, 'Verses, occasioned by the Visit of Thomas Hardy, Immediately after his Acquittal, to the Grave of his Wife', as "J. M.", *Prison Amusements, and Other Trifles: Principally written during Nine Months of Confinement in the Castle of York, by Paul Positive* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1797), pp. 167-168.

[62] Marcus Wood, 'Radical Publishing' in *The Book in Britain*, *vol. 5: 1695-1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 834-848 (pp. 838-839).

audiences beyond the reach of their more traditional loyalist counterparts. Loyalist societies also arose in the north, often in response to a perceived radical threat, and these were prevalent across the country and indeed even more numerous than their radical counterparts. As Clark maintains, however these societies had a tendency to be 'ephemeral' and short-lived, lacking the penchant for adaptation the radical societies championed.[63]

Politics aside, many groups were also knit together by networks of labour, particularly in regional cities with a predominant local trade. Edward Rushton was patronised by the Liverpool Maritime Society, himself being a former naval worker along with the vast majority of the city's adult male population.[64] In Sheffield, the Company of Cutlers would play a significant role in social organisation from its foundation in the seventeenth century onwards. The Cutler's Hall would also be the original meeting place of the Sheffield Lit and Phil. Mechanics' Institutes would flourish across the area, and would find representation in the work of Sheffield's Ebenezer Elliott, who would dedicate a verse to the local society.[65] These would mainly be a phenomenon of the early nineteenth century; as Mabel Tylecote observes, post-war improvements in the commercial sphere in the 1820s led to a desire to reform the wellbeing and education of Britain's labouring population.[66] This impetus was largely acted upon by the upper-middle class, with the movement spearheaded by Henry Brougham; the *Edinburgh Review* would also note in 1826 that many of the movement's supporters were also

---

[63] Clark, *British Clubs and Societies,* p. 96.

[64] Rushton, 'Lines Written for the Anniversary of the Liverpool Marine Society', *The Collected Writings,* ed. by Paul Baines, pp. 99-100.

[65] Ebenezer Elliott, 'Lines written for the Sheffield Mechanics' First Exhibition', *The Poetical Works*, ed. by Edwin Elliott, vol. 2 (London: Henry S, King and Co., 1876), pp. 156-159.

[66] Mabel Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire before 1851* (London: University of Manchester Press, 1957) p. 1.

Unitarians.[67] These societies would find particular success in the transpennine area for a number of reasons; firstly, they frequently relied upon existing libraries as educational resources, and Tylecote highlights the existence of these libraries as important factors in the foundation of Institutes in Liverpool and Sheffield in particular (in fact, these Institutes were supported by close associates of William Roscoe and James Montgomery respectively).[68] Moreover, the sudden growth and associated socio-political instability perceived in these towns' large labouring populations recommended them as being in particularly dire need of intellectual and moral improvement.[69] As noted, the movement would be top-down and paternalistic in nature, perhaps nowhere more so than in Manchester, where only honorary members of the Institute were charged with its management. In this case, Rowland Detrosier would revolutionise the Institute, refashioning it in the hopes that Manchester's labourers might be able to take charge of their own intellectual reformation.[70]

Those with more leisure time, however, might join any number of voluntary associations focused on a particular study or pastime: Roscoe would endorse a Society for the Fine Arts in Liverpool, marking its inauguration with a poem in 1774, and his keen interest in botany would result in the foundation of Liverpool's Botanical Gardens in 1802.[71] A number of private subscription libraries would also be set up, with Liverpool boasting the nation's first of its kind in the Lyceum (1758) and then the Athenaeum (1797), followed by Manchester's Portico in 1806. Each city likewise saw an efflorescence of philanthropic societies, with

---

[67] "A Country Gentleman", 'The Consequences of a Scientific Education to the Working Classes of this Country pointed out, and the Theories of Mr Brougham on that Subject Confuted, in a Letter to the Marquis of Lansdown.' *Edinburgh Review,* 1 Dec 1826, pp. 189-199, (p. 193).
[68] Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes*, pp. 31-2.
[69] Ibid. p. 53.
[70] Ibid. p. 61; ibid. p. 128.
[71] Roscoe, 'Ode on the Institution of a Society in Liverpool […]', in *Mount Pleasant: a descriptive poem,* pp. 39-49.

Liverpool alone boasting the Bluecoat School and Hospital for the Blind, the latter honouring the partially-sighted Edward Rushton as its founder in 1791. These associations would frequently feature in the poetry of each city, with Liverpool's poetic representations particularly opting to represent the population as charitable and socially responsible, if sometimes ironically contrasting this with its continued investment in slavery.

Religious communities – primarily Unitarian, but not exclusively – would also play a role in the everyday spiritual and social lives of several of the writers covered in this thesis. Unitarian congregations include Benn's Chapel in Liverpool, also known as Renshaw Street, which would include Roscoe as one of its congregants, and indeed would bring his family together with that of the Rathbones, among other notable merchant families forming the commercial bedrock of Liverpudlian civic life. Two Unitarian congregations would dominate intellectual life in Manchester, each catering to a specific demographic and political orientation. John Seed highlights this distinction, with Cross Street providing a hub for Manchester's commercial elite, while Mosley Street formed a 'radical alternative', though this dichotomy becomes less clear into the nineteenth century.[72] As Seed points out, despite ostensibly being spiritual communities, these were also centres of 'ideological production', and furnished resources for other important communities; Manchester's Lit and Phil held meetings in Cross Street's rooms until 1799, and it was through dissenting networks that a Unitarian group collaborated to publish the *Manchester Guardian* in 1821.[73]

Besides Unitarianism, other religious denominations would assume a critical position in the north of England, with Methodism becoming particularly associated with the regional

---

[72] John Seed, 'Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Culture in Manchester, 1830-50', *Social History*, 7: 1 (1982), 1-25 (p. 4).
[73] Ibid. p. 2; Ibid. p. 4; Ibid. p. 5.

labouring class and, subsequently, its specific tradition of political organisation. Each denomination would advertise a different set of values regarding work, morality, science, and community, reflected in compositions by members of their congregation. Evangelicalism was a profound influence on Montgomery in his later life, despite his Moravian upbringing, and would not only shape his poetry but also gain promotion through his journalism.[74] But this example also serves to illustrate the potential for division engendered by denominational differences. Despite their early closeness, the ties of friendship between Montgomery and the Aikin families would begin to weaken, in part due to his Evangelical leanings. As much is evidenced in a letter by Lucy Aikin of 1835, expressing her disappointment in the poet's 'devotedness to a monstrous system of religion', with his proximity to Evangelicals similarly bemoaned by his friend Thomas Asline Ward several years earlier.[75] After Montgomery's death, warring biographies by John Holland and Mary Anne Rawson would enact a kind of battle for the poet's spiritual character. Rawson would feel that, without the incorporation of connections to a larger framework of evangelical reform, Holland's depictions of the Montgomery's early radicalism and journalistic innovations were lacking, despite his close and long-lived friendship with the late poet.[76]

One grouping it may be easier to overlook, as it may be less obviously sociable, is the group bound together by print, and which is propagated in published periodicals. In Sheffield, several publications would be essential for the dissemination of poetry, most notably the *Sheffield Iris*, but also the *Courant*, its more conservative counterpart, as well as the *Sheffield*

---

[74] Twells, *The Civilising Mission,* p. 63.

[75] Lucy Aikin, letter to the Rev. Dr. Channing, 13 May 1835, *Memoirs, Miscellanies and Letters of the Late Lucy Aikin*, ed. by Philip Hemery Le Breton (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1864), p. 330; Thomas Asline Ward, *Peeps into the Past*, ed. by Alexander B. Bell, annotated by Robert Eadon Leader (London: W. C. Leng and Co Ltd., 1909), p. 270.

[76] Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, p. 110.

Mercury. Each of these would attract writers both locally and across the transpennine region, featuring poets' work (anonymously or otherwise) as an essential element of public local information.[77] A Mancunian group known as the 'Cottonopolis poets', comprising of writers including John Bolton Rogerson and Elijah Ridings, would forge their own publications with the specific intent of advertising matters of local cultural interest, such as *The Phoenix* and *Falcon* of 1828 and 1831 respectively. E.P. Thompson stresses not only the circulatory power of the *Sheffield Register* (the *Iris'* original incarnation) in particular, with 2,000 copies sold weekly in 1794, but also the originality of the material found in provincial papers at this time, quite apart from the 'paste-and-scissors copying' typical of journalism in the capital.[78] These papers were vehicles for the self-fashioning of local identity, but were also widely distributed across the region, as will be elaborated upon further in the case of the *Iris* in Chapter Three.

Though local publications were essential for the formation of a regional literary culture, many writers would reach out to publishers outside of the region to reach wider circulation across the country. Thus, several transpennine poets attained recognition outside of the area, though arguably this may also have caused some work to be modified for a non-local audience. Samuel Bamford's poetry would reach a national audience in the *Black Dwarf,* a radical paper published in London by T. J. Wooler, despite his work's specific relevance to unrest in Manchester.[79] Writers including Maria Jane Jewsbury would also have their work published in the literary annuals of the early nineteenth century such as Alaric A. Watts' *Literary Souvenir*, printed in London though popular nationwide as a festive gift.[80] James Montgomery's work would feature in the *Saturday Magazine*, read in some of the country's

---

[77] Tan and Jung, 'Sarah Pearson', p. 18.
[78] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1980), p. 166.
[79] Samuel Bamford, 'Ode to Death!' and 'Ode to a Plotting Parson', *Black Dwarf*, 1 Nov 1821, pp. 670-672.
[80] Maria Jane Jewsbury, 'The Singing Bird at Sea', *The Literary Souvenir*, ed. by Alaric A. Watts (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1830), pp. 247-250.

most remote enclaves; the commonplace book of Edmund Pear, composed in the Lincolnshire fens from 1832-1834, features multiple instances of Montgomery's poetry, evidencing his reach in this period.[81] Mary Anne Rawson would feature poets from across the transpennine region in a collection of anti-slavery works entitled *The Bow in the Cloud* (1834), bringing together Montgomery, Roscoe's daughter Jane, and John Holland in print.[82] Barbara Hoole was among those approached by Rawson for contribution; though she would decline, Hoole would offer to pass on the subject to notable friends including Letitia Elizabeth Landon.[83] There is evidence of similar proposed collections in Roscoe's letters, with a missive from the painter and publisher Robert Bowyer inviting the poet to contribute to 'a Tribute of Fine Arts in Honour of the Abolition of the Slave Trade', mentioning Montgomery as another potential contributor.[84]

In some cases, however, documentation of social institutions is less forthcoming, and this is mainly due to a problem with following the paper trails of less formal societies. Though the Cottonopolis poets would later be represented in print, they had originated as an informal coterie at the Sun Inn, maintaining their connection (through Samuel Bamford) to a less legitimised and sanitised radical poetic tradition. Indeed, many of their poems published in *The Festive Wreath* take the form of drinking songs, narrating the gathering of an intimate and friendly group in a specific recreational space. Alexander's Wilson's 'The Poet's Corner' makes specific reference to this public setting:

Where the SUN shines so brightly both daily and nightly,

---

[81]Private Collection, Edmund Pear, Untitled commonplace book (unpublished manuscript, c. 1832-1834). Includes extracts from Montgomery's anti-slavery works 'The Ocean' and 'The West Indies', among others.

[82] The John Rylands Library, Mary Anne Rawson, Contents page for *The Bow in the Cloud,* The Bow in the Cloud, English MS 415/199b.

[83] Letter from Barbara Hofland to Mary Anne Rawson, 6 May c. 1826, The Bow in the Cloud, English MS 415/174.

[84] Letter to William Roscoe from Mr. Bowyer [undated], Roscoe Letters and Papers, 920. 360 ROS.

And glasses drink lightly 'mid poesy and glee' [...][85]

Like Bamford, many of the labouring-class poets covered in this thesis are linked to public spaces, and a community where composition is a far more collective and informal process. Edward Rushton would for a time work as the proprietor of a tavern in Liverpool (with such taverns in the town often associated with the raucous gatherings of "Fireside Clubs", as documented by Mark Towsey and David Brazendale), and the longevity of Joseph Mather's oral poetry among Sheffield workmen has been recorded over a century after his death, existing primarily through spoken or sung transmission.[86] In the public house, or even on the street, informal collectives play a role in the dissemination of ideas, though without the same paper trail, information on their extent and membership are necessarily limited or incomplete. Nevertheless, these communities remain an essential part of poetic and intellectual production.

---

[85] Alexander Wilson, 'The Poets' Corner', *The Festive Wreath: a Collection of Original Contributions read at a Literary Meeting, held in Manchester, March 24th, 1842, at The Sun Inn, Long Millgat*e, ed. by John Bolton Rogerson (Manchester: Bradshaw and Blacklock, 1842), pp. 37-42 (l. 1-2).

[86] David Brazendale and Mark Towsey (ed.), *The First Minute Book of the Liverpool Athenaeum, 1797-1809* (Liverpool: Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 2020), p. 5; Paul Smith, 'Joseph Mather: Filesmith and Ballad-monger', *Folklore,* 116: 3"Essays in Lore and Language Presented to John Widdowson on the Occasion of his Retirement", (2005), 271-323 (p. 271).

Poetic Conventions

Thus far, this chapter's purpose has been to demonstrate the individual and institutional connections that existed between points in the transpennine region, and to argue for the conception of a shared intellectual culture across the three cities included in this study. As discussed, Anna Laetitia Barbauld was a defining influence across the region, and the transplantation of her social circle to London later in life can be said to constitute the movement of a transpennine set of ideas from margin to metropolis. Despite never formally being a member of a scholarly society, Barbauld demonstrates how a familial (and in this case, religious) community allows for a female author to participate in and become influential for a transpennine network of knowledge exchange.

Barbauld's influence upon the creative networks of the north is not simply incidental. Dwelling in Warrington from 1758 until her marriage in 1774, Barbauld was an active participant in the social and intellectual circles based at the dissenting academy founded there in 1756. Her father would teach both classics and divinity in Warrington, cementing the family as a central presence within the congregation. Joseph Priestley would also be among her addressees in poetry (see 'To Dr. Priestley').[87] The values pioneered at Warrington Academy would become transplanted into those of the Literary and Philosophical Societies of the north of England, with alumnus Thomas Percival becoming a founder member of the society in Manchester. Barbauld's continued popularity in the transpennine region, even after her removal from Warrington, suggests her role as a powerful influence upon writers both immediately within her circle and otherwise. Meeting her for the first time in Hampstead in

---

[87] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 'To Dr. Priestley' in *Works, With a Memoir*, vol. 1, ed. by Lucy Aikin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 183-184.

1797, William Roscoe writes that he '[considers her] the first female genius of the age'.[88] In the Lit and Phils, Barbauld was regarded as one of their own; both Barbauld and Mary Hays were proposed for honorary membership of the Newcastle society in 1801, though the proposal was rejected on the basis of sex.[89] In London, Barbauld would entertain the company of many of her transpennine connections; Jon Mee describes Barbauld's work as perpetuating a 'mission of a transpennine Enlightenment', transmitted from a regional to a national (and potentially international) audience.[90] For these reasons, and due to the similarities between her work and that of her literary successors in the region, I have selected Barbauld as a central influence.

This idea of a social mission originating beyond London and its environs is evident even in her early work, and it is through this lens that I will consider her poem 'The Invitation to Miss B******'. The speaker urges its female addressee to flee 'from glittering scenes that strike the dazzled sight / With mimic grandeur and illusive light, / From idle hurry, and tumultuous noise, / From hollow friendships, and from sickly joys'.[91] Barbauld's depiction of London invokes a number of poetic tropes that would come to define it as a city; any attraction London possesses is overbearing and overstimulating, and often turns out to be in some way deceptive or unreal. It is also a place of materiality and manufacture, full of 'gold and gems with artificial blaze', 'where wreaths of curling smoke involve the sky'.[92] London's smoggy darkness threatens to dissolve clarity and distinction both figuratively and literally. The 'rural

---

[88] Liverpool Record Office, Letter from William Roscoe to William Stanley Roscoe, 24 Feb 1797, *Letters of William Roscoe,* ed. by D. H Weinglass, vol. 1, 1772-1800, 820.1 ROS.
[89] Mee, ''Some mode less revolting', p. 549.
[90] Ibid. p. 547.
[91] Barbauld, 'The Invitation to Miss B******' in *Works, With a Memoir*, vol. 1, ed. by Lucy Aikin, pp. 12-22 (l. 9-12).
[92] Ibid. l. 25; Ibid. l. 16.

scenes' from which the speaker writes, however, offer authenticity where London cannot.[93]

This is a place of 'friendship, ardent as a summer's noon' (in contrast to the 'hollow' nature of

London's social connections), and 'smiles unforced; and easy confidence'.[94] While Barbauld

also criticises London's 'vice' and 'interest', the focus here is on what is real and what is

feigned.[95] Truth, transparency and honesty are available here in good stock, where they are

wanting in the capital. While Barbauld refers to these qualities in a social sense here, they are

also in line with the empirical methods of scientific enquiry employed at Warrington Academy.

That is not to say that Barbauld is uncritical of the social and scientific systems

Warrington. How far a sense of Unitarian social equality actually extends is debatable,

particularly in Barbauld's own case. Many authors including William McCarthy have already

written powerfully to make a case for Barbauld as a 'dissenter within Dissent', capable of

questioning (using the Academy's own methods) the very values and processes which she has

been taught to follow.[96] This is often linked to questions of gender, as, being a woman,

Barbauld is surrounded by scientific innovation and education, but cannot participate in it as

her male peers do. As a result, many see Barbauld as both a beneficiary of Enlightenment

thinking, as well as one of its internal critics. Penny Bradshaw finds that this 'double-sided'

understanding of the Enlightenment as both beneficial and harmful finds its voice in

Barbauld's depictions of the early industrial landscape.[97] Initially, the changing, modernising

scene of 'The Invitation' is one of 'pleasing wonder'; there is a childlike whimsy to the 'magic

---

[93] Barbauld, 'The Invitation', l. 14.
[94] Ibid. l. 125; Ibid. l. 129.
[95] Ibid. l. 126-127.
[96] William Mccarthy, 'How Dissent made Anna Letitia Barbauld, and what she made of Dissent', in *Religious dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld circle, 1740-1860*, ed. by Felicity James and Ian Inkster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 52-69 (p. 59).
[97] Penny Bradshaw, 'Gendering the enlightenment: conflicting images of progress in the poetry of Anna Lætitia Barbauld', *Women's Writing,* 5: 3 (Oct 1998), 353-371 (p. 357).

scenes', the 'flying vessels' that seem to glide over the recently-constructed Duke of Bridgewater's canal.[98] For the most part, it seems, Barbauld's speaker revels in the ingenuity of terraforming new technology:

> Now meeting streams in artful mazes glide,
>
> While each unmingled pours a separate tide;
>
> Now through the hidden veins of earth they flow,
>
> And visit sulphurous mines and caves below:
>
> The ductile streams obey the guiding hand,
>
> And social plenty circles round the land.[99]

The landscaping innovations Barbauld observes are not only useful and far-reaching, but 'artful', possessing a mystifying polysemy. The implication is not merely that these water features are ingeniously devised, but also aesthetically pleasing, intricate, and requiring great care and precision. This fascination with the artificial waterway would remain a sustained interest for the Aikin-Barbauld family; Barbauld and John Aikin would collaborate on 'The Canal and the Brook', an allegorical prose piece comparing the practical and aesthetic value of the man-made and natural stream, published in 1773.[100] Barbauld's mention here of 'sulphurous mines and caves below', however, carries an infernal suggestion. That the miraculous streams that encourage industry and society in the world above 'visit', too, a subterranean realm, begins to reveal the more troubling aspects of industrial innovation; that in some way, the developmental projects of the Enlightenment and, in turn, of the embryonic

---

[98] Barbauld, 'The Invitation', l. 66; Ibid. l. 69; Ibid. l. 71.
[99] Ibid. l. 72-78.
[100] John and Anna Laetitia Aikin, 'The Canal and the Brook' in *Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose* (London: J. Johnson, 1773), pp. 79-87.

city, draw their power from a primeval and unseen source. This idea is taken further, as Barbauld describes the manual labour required to carry out these feats of engineering:

> Here smooth canals, across the extended plain,
>
> Stretch their long arms to join the distant main:
>
> The sons of toil with many a weary stroke
>
> Scoop the hard bosom of the solid rock;
>
> Resistless, through the stiff opposing clay,
>
> With steady purpose work their gradual way;
>
> Compel the genius of the unwilling flood
>
> Through the brown horrors of the aged wood;[101]

While the final effect of this labour is to 'cheer the barren heath or sullen moor', presumably to make them more economically useful, or more beautiful, Barbauld's language betrays that this is an act of destruction upon both nature and man.[102] The lexical choices here steer us not only to understand the physical hardship enacted upon the workers ('sons of toil', 'weary stroke') but also to feel the strife felt by the landscape itself. 'Compel[led]', 'unwilling', 'opposing': this is the language of oppression, applied to a nature forced into an unnatural state. Bradshaw indicates that this 'diseased and corrupted' landscape is directly comparable with other 'eighteenth-century projects of exploitation and colonialism'; we cannot afford to read Barbauld's language as solely an indictment of environmental disruption, lest we overlook how it likewise speaks to matters of human exploitation.[103] Conversely, Jeremy Davies identifies the incongruous proximity of agricultural and industrial systems of labour depicted in Barbauld's poetry, along with her often contradictory tonal register, as expressing

---

[101] Barbauld, 'The Invitation', l. 56-63.
[102] Ibid. l. 65.
[103] Bradshaw, 'Gendering the Enlightenment', p. 360.

the simultaneous 'continuity and discontinuity' with earlier economic systems preceding the late eighteenth century in Britain.[104] While frequently expressive of wonder and aesthetic delight, the 'strangeness' of Barbauld's imagery may likewise intimate a sense of 'imminent social fracture and decline', predicated on an unreadable modernised landscape.[105]

Despite these complex implications, the final stanzas of 'The Invitation' make a case for Warrington as the cradle of utopian possibilities. With a certain envious edge, perhaps, she outlines the 'luxury of thought' available to her male peers, with hopes for a 'better age' to come as a result of their Enlightened education.[107] Using the language of commerce and agricultural production, Barbauld declares that 'MAN is the nobler growth our realms supply, / And SOULS are ripened in our northern sky'.[108] Gregory Claeys finds that, among the dissenting academies, Warrington boasted the largest proportion of students of commercial matters, numbering a quarter of the student body between the years of 1757 and 1783.[109] This new subject was a contentious one for such Unitarian figureheads as Joseph Priestley and Richard Price, with the former suggesting commerce's potential for the advancement of civilisation and the latter perceiving it as a 'greater long-term evil', though disguised as an immediate boon.[110] Though Barbauld borrows the lexical register of trade, it is inverted here to emphasise that Warrington's local produce is not material, but intellectual, and social. Though paradoxically effected through the 'gentlest arts and purest manners', Barbauld

---

[104] Jeremy Davies, 'Romantic "Ghost Acres" and Environmental Modernity', *Studies in Romanticism*, 61.2 (Summer 2022), pp. 203-227 (p. 203).
[105] Ibid. p. 215.
[107] Barbauld, 'The Invitation', l. 114.
[108] Ibid. l. 153-154.
[109] Gregory Claeys, 'Virtuous Commerce and Free Theology: Political Economy and the Dissenting Academies 1750-1800', *History of Political Thought* 20: 1, 'Scholastics Enlightenments and Philosophic Radicals: Essays in honour of J. H. Burns' (Spring 1999), 141-172 (p. 146).
[110] Ibid. pp. 156-164.

foresees profound change on the horizon.[111] While transgressive and powerful, the Enlightened revolution is a sophisticated one, made clear by Barbauld's wish that 'words of peace shall charm the listening throng'.[112] While simultaneously striving to 'vindicate the majesty of laws […] and shake the pole with arms', Barbauld tempers this radical expression with an earnest vocalisation of patriotism, a good deed done by 'a little group' for the sake of 'their country' and its future preservation.[113] But Warrington is not only a home for reform; it is also a sanctuary for poetic innovation. Barbauld argues that Warrington has a claim to a Classical poetic lineage, declaring that 'the Muses here have fixed their sacred seats', and questions why this landscape has, until now, gone unsung:

> Here callow chiefs and embryo statesmen lie,
> And unfledged poets short excursions try:
> While Mersey's gentle current, which too long,
> By fame neglected and unknown to song,
> Between his rushy banks, - no poet's theme, -
> Had crept inglorious […]
> […] dares to emulate a classic tide.[114]

Barbauld registers that the region has not yet found a voice in literature – but, critically, that it can, and should do. Her employment, however, of negating prefixes (such as 'unfledged', 'unknown' and 'inglorious') suggests that for now, development in this area has been unnaturally, unfairly stunted.

---

[111] Barbauld, 'The Invitation', l. 110.
[112] Ibid. l. 176.
[113] Ibid. l. 134.
[114] Ibid. l. 80.; ibid. l. 83-90.

In Barbauld's later poetry, however, we may observe an instance of her weaving motif, which is not only suggestive of early industry in the northwest, but also makes a case for both the locality and her own voice as part of a Classical tradition. This would continue to be an aspect of Barbauld's later work: in her 'Epistle to Dr. Enfield, on his Revisiting Warrington in 1789', consider the following passage on the Academy:

> Lo there the sights where Science loved to dwell,
> Where Liberty her ardent spirit breathed;
> While each glad Naiad from her secret cell
> Her native sedge with classic honours wreathed.[115]

Here Warrington is rendered as a pastoral paradise, blessed with the virtues of the most quintessential *locus amoenus* in Western literature. And yet, its situation is anything but vague. This is by 'the western shore / Where Mersey winds his waters to the main', and Barbauld is eager to twine the literary legacy of the land to that of the rest of the country, investing it with poetic longevity:

> Go fling this garland in fair Mersey's stream,
> From the true lovers that have trod his banks;
> Say, Thames to Avon still repeats his theme;[116]

The poem is replete with pastoral imagery, and mirrors of Milton's 'Lycidas' in more ways than one. As with Milton's verse, the tone is elegiac; this poem is, of course, written after Barbauld's residence in Warrington, and mourns the sense of possibility that once defined it as a space. Barbauld had undergone a series of personal crises since her time in Warrington; prior to the

---

[115] Barbauld, 'Epistle to Dr. Enfield, on his Revisiting Warrington in 1789' in *Works, with a Memoir*, pp. 168-172 (l. 17-20).
[116] Ibid. l. 5-6.; ibid. l. 45-47.

composition of this poem, Warrington Academy had been dissolved due to financial problems

in 1786. Barbauld's father, a teacher of Classics at Warrington, had also died there during her

absence, and the mental health of her husband, Rochemont Barbauld, had already begun to

decline. Barbauld's exposure to more radical channels of thought in London would clash with

the ideals of progress and improvement she had come to know at the Academy, and Anne

Janowitz writes that the criticism to which her Warrington ideals would become subject would

eventually lead to a far more 'dystopic' vision of human innovation after her relocation.[117]

Earlier depictions of the Academy had, as Davies demonstrates, expressed Barbauld's sense

of its potential for intellectual renewal through a language that bound together 'forward-

thinking difference with heartening continuity'; the revivifying qualities of her earlier verse,

however, is retired here.[118] Barbauld's speaker now finds that 'cherished thought and fond

remembrance sleep', entombed in a subterranean 'cell', and 'wisdom lies', 'never to return'.[119]

The landscape itself is invited to join a process of mourning; the trees are 'deeply-wounded'

and the streams, or rather, the 'rill', is 'weeping'.[120] 'Rill' denotes either a small shallow

channel or a man-made trench, and so with both of these images, Barbauld portrays a

confounded and damaged nature, left so warped by human interference that it has taken on

an eerily human sorrow. Now 'neglected', Barbauld's lyre lies 'shattered', indicative both of

Warrington's poetic worth and, subsequently, the ways in which it has been squandered and

destroyed.[121]

What, then, does Barbauld pinpoint as the cause for this environmental and cultural

degradation? Earlier in the 'Epistle', Barbauld imagines two fates for Warrington; its

---

[117] Janowitz, 'Amiable and radical sociability', p. 63; Ibid. p. 68.
[118] Davies, 'Romantic "Ghost Acres"', p. 216.
[119] Barbauld, 'Epistle', l. 62; Ibid. l. 61; Ibid. l. 69-70.
[120] Ibid. l. 33; Ibid. l. 49.
[121] Ibid. l. 53; Ibid. l. 55.

abandonment (with 'grass-grown courts and silent halls') or, at the other end of the scale, its

expansion, and an explosion of commerce.[122] Barbauld also makes it clear that 'Trade's harsh

din' may 'succeed the Muse's song', effectively robbing the area of its poetic potency.[123] There

is a classist bent to Barbauld's critique here, as she divorces the 'learned echoes' of

Warrington's past, on the one hand, from the 'vulgar chimes' of the present.[124] Given that

Claeys identifies 'indiscipline' on the part of its pupils as one of the key reasons for the

Academy's downfall, Barbauld's focus on vulgarity might not be surprising.[125] It is hard to tell

which of Warrington's potential fates Barbauld bemoans the more; the depopulated, skeletal

ruin of the Academy at least seems held in a form of aesthetic stasis rather than overrun with

"unpoetical" individuals. In 1796, the landscape poem *Bewsey*, attributed to John Fitchett,

would express a similar concern with the influence of commerce on Warrington's populace:

> So when a shepherd, who has liv'd retir'd
> In his own native vale, and ne'er has stray'd
> Beyond the hamlet that affords him food,
> If chance or business calls to roam abroad,
> From some high hanging steep, amaz'd, he views
> Lakes, rivers, cities, palaces, and tow'rs;
> His thoughts expand, and having seen and join'd
> The hum of men, he looks with other eyes
> Than those of late on his own humble cot,
> And village church that once he deem'd so great.[126]

---

[122] Barbauld, 'Epistle', l. 26.
[123] Ibid. l. 28.
[124] Ibid. l. 31-32.
[125] Claeys, 'Virtuous Commerce', p. 169.
[126] Likely John Fitchett (Anonymous), *Bewsey, A Poem* (Warrington: W. Eyres, 1796), l. 589-98.

Commerce, though 'fair', has heightened the locals' engagement with scenes beyond their immediate locale, and for the poet, this is accompanied with an implicit sense of loss.[127] The village church loses its wonder in comparison; the symbiotic relationship between hometown and inhabitant becomes disturbed, and the shepherd's business and attention are distributed elsewhere. Barbauld's influence can be even more keenly felt earlier in Fitchett's poem, with imagery all but lifted verbatim from 'The Invitation' displayed in 'the windings of the smooth canal' and 'glimmering [sails] between the trees'.[128] Barbauld's rendition of Warrington's changing surroundings, as well as the social and aesthetic conclusions she would draw from them, are definitive for the writers who immediately succeed her. The 'Epistle' also expresses a frustration regarding the moral implications of modern commerce which John Aikin would vocalise in 1799, claiming that 'the present system of trade' was sullied by its association with slavery, brutality, and military-backed claims to state monopoly.[129] For Barbauld, Aikin, and other dissenting writers such as Roscoe, a belief in commerce's ability to '[bind] the nations in a golden chain of mutual peace and friendship' abided, despite their own assertions that commerce in its current incarnation was morally reprehensible; in order to argue effectively against its existing fatal flaws, there had to be a virtuous iteration of the free market to offer as a viable alternative.[130]

To conclude this analysis, I would like to reiterate several qualities of Barbauld's poetry which will also recur in the work of writers across the transpennine region. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, is a fascination with the artificial industrial landscape. For Barbauld, this might be the canal, or the distant smog of the city; later writers may also fixate on the busy

---

[127] Fitchett, *Bewsey*, l. 577.
[128] Ibid. l. 253-256.
[129] John Aikin, 'The Enquirer, No. XVI.' *Monthly Magazine, or, British Register,* Jan 1799, pp. 9-14 (p. 12).
[130] Ibid. p. 12.

soundscape or environment of the city-centre, the bustle of docklands, the workshop, the factory, or furnace; later, as urban crowding increases, the slum, the theatre, the hospital, or public house might feature; the onset of modern transport infrastructure may also induce an interest in railways. These spaces are often associated with a relevant social concern, be it poverty, alcoholism, labour, or violence. This interest, particularly in the cases of poets connected to Mechanics' Institutes or similar associations, may produce a heroic portrait of an industrial innovator or inventor (most usually James Watt) as a Promethean benefactor of the labouring classes, as is the case in Ebenezer Elliott's 'Steam at Sheffield' (published 1835) or Charles Swain's *The Mind* (published 1841).[131] Wider social causes, however, such as the struggle for political or religious representation, against the Corn Laws, or against slavery, may also bear upon the discussion.

These works frequently concern the relationship between art and science – though these nebulous concepts may also become associated with commerce, poetry, beauty, or industry, for instance. While Barbauld's work seeks to instate Warrington as both a home for science and for art, the figure of commerce seems to threaten an end to both; this relationship, however, is rendered in multiple different ways by different authors, with some actually perceiving all of these attributes as being mutually enriching of one another, imagining a truly virtuous commerce in which the production of wealth is built upon 'just and natural principles'.[132] The concurrence or disunity of these aspects is usually related to the author's confidence in the progressive nature of science and industry, or indeed, lack thereof. Barbauld's work evinces a sense of literary neglect for the area of which she writes, and this

---

[131] Elliott, 'Steam at Sheffield', *The Poetical Works*, ed. By Edwin Elliott, vol. 1, pp. 352-361; Charles Swain, *The Mind, and Other Poems* (London: Tilt and Bogue, 1841).
[132] Claeys, 'Virtuous Commerce', p. 166.

too is a common strand; this, however, might result in bolstered local pride for some writers, while others express shame and derision for their supposedly 'unpoetical' surroundings. Thompson describes the onset of the industrial era as intrinsic to a flourishing of 'provincial pride and self-consciousness [...] sharpened by loss', a sentiment certainly evinced by Barbauld here, but also present in the poetry of the labouring classes which Thompson seeks to describe. [133] Finally, Barbauld's poetic portrait is of a changing world; Warrington is not static, but jeopardised by vast, irresistible forces of both social and physical change. This sense of mutability is also palpable in the work of her successors, who write of a place becoming larger, more commercial, more connected, or more learned. This change, however, may happen for better or for worse, and impressions of the city's future range from idealistic to dystopian.

That said, Barbauld's variety of middle-class, lyrical landscape poetry is hardly the only literary tradition at play in the creative worlds of the transpennine area. Across the region, stylistic similarities between labouring-class writers are apparent, and express their own engagement with modernity and regionality in a markedly different way. For instance, writers of this type are more likely to use informal, vulgar, or dialect terms; they may even write entirely in local dialect. They are also more likely to openly express a desire for radical or even violent uprising, as in the case of Rushton's 'Song, sung at the Anniversary of the French Revolution'.[134] This is reflected in the evocation of a corresponding set of referential points; for instance, Burke's image of the 'swinish multitude' is answered in the proudly base, confrontational literature of both Samuel Bamford and Joseph Mather.[135] Formally, these

---

[133] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 448.
[134] Rushton, 'Song, sung at the Anniversary of the French Revolution', *The Collected Writings*, ed. by Paul Baines, pp. 76-77.
[135] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. by F.G. Selby (London: Macmillan, 1890), p. 88; Samuel Bamford, 'Touch Him!', *Miscellaneous Poetry* (London: Britannia Press, 1821), pp. 100-101; Mather, 'Norfolk Street Riots', *The Songs* ed. By John Wilson pp. 38-41.

writers also tend to employ ballad form, with the motive of disseminating their work orally in a bustling public arena. Their engagement with change in the urban sphere is even more ambivalent and nostalgic than that of their middling counterparts; transformation must be social rather than technological for the future to be hopeful. It seems, then, that despite their geographical disparity, these authors hold similar concerns, and react in comparable ways to a shared radical impetus. The existence of these commonalities, despite the apparent lack of visible paper trails between local points, suggests that the network that underpinned the cultural production of the transpennine enlightenment was still far more complex than current evidence permits us to perceive.

Chapter Two, The New Florence: Commerce and Culture in Liverpool Poetry

Writing on the developing industrial town of Birmingham in 1781, William Hutton asserts

that 'a barbarous and commercial people is a contradiction'; commerce and culture, and a

wider sense of civility or humanity, seem to be naturally concomitant attributes.[1] Writing on

a similar statement made by William Blackstone in his *Commentaries on the Laws of*

England, Paul Langford finds the unification of these qualities was regarded as inducing the

'spirit of progress' widely associated with the eighteenth century.[2] However, just over ten

years after Hutton's statement, James Wallace would observe that the town of Liverpool was

> absorbed in the nautical vortex, the only pursuit of the inhabitants is COMMERCE
> […] [it has] not one single erection or endowment, for the advancement of
> science, the cultivation of the arts, or promotion of useful knowledge […] the
> liberal arts are a species of merchandize in which few of the inhabitants are
> desirous to deal, unless for exportation.[3]

Wallace's observation of a complete cultural dearth in Liverpool was hyperbolic, but by the

end of the century, Liverpool's cultural status – and indeed, the relationship the city relayed

between culture and commerce – remained uncertain and contradictory. Though Jon Stobart

has declared the city a cultural 'vanguard' of the eighteenth century, its growth founded

upon wealth drawn in by its mastery of the transatlantic slave trade, Liverpool nevertheless

failed to establish a lasting Literary and Philosophical Society like that of its neighbouring

Manchester until 1812, some decades behind the curve.[4] Though attempts had been made

---

[1] William Hutton, *An History of Birmingham to the End of the Year 1780* (Birmingham: Pearson and Rollason, 1781), p. 62.

[2] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 2.

[3] James Wallace, *A general and descriptive history of the ancient and present state, of the town of Liverpool* (Liverpool: R. Philips, 1795), pp. 283-84.

[4] Jon Stobart, 'Culture versus commerce: societies and spaces for elites in eighteenth-century Liverpool', *Journal of Historical Geography* 28: 4 (2002), 471-485 (p. 473).

in the latter half of the eighteenth century, each successive society struggled to maintain

relevance outside of a restricted circle largely composed of the same dissenting, middle-

class reformist families, and development was further curtailed by the crackdown on

seditious meetings brought on by the 'atmosphere of suspicion' following the French

Revolution.[5] With trade disrupted by the American War of Independence, from the 1770s

onwards Liverpool's populace, previously rising steadily during the first half of the century,

became seriously hindered, starting to decrease for the first time in living memory.[6] Late-

century Liverpool was criticised by outsiders as culturally devalued and unfashionable;

depictions of the city are often two-faced, ambivalent, and heavily politicised.

Primarily through the poetry of the abolitionist and polymath William Roscoe, and

his correspondent and fellow member of the radical Friends of Peace, the sailor-poet

Edward Rushton, this chapter will analyse how both poets problematise commerce and

attempt to reconcile it with their own evaluations of culture and civility. Firstly, I will

delineate the features of the Liverpudlian prospect poem as established in Roscoe's early

abolitionist poem *Mount Pleasant* (1777), comparing these with an imitative work by John

Walker, written in 1789, with the reverse intent of defending the slave trade. Next, I will

display how poetry written by Roscoe (and his contemporary in Rushton), responding to the

War of American Independence and the gradual emergence of a more concentrated

abolitionist movement, questions Britain's symbolic claim to liberty. This chapter will

conclude by analysing Rushton's works revolving around maritime life and labour in

---

[5] Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture,* pp. 26-27. The 1779 and 1782 iterations of the Society featured James Currie, Roscoe's close associate, as a key member. See Roy Porter, 'Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England' in *The Eighteenth-Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820,* ed. by Peter Borsay (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 243-267 (n. p. 265). Additionally, some sources credit Edward Rushton as a member of the Society of 1790; see 'The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society', *The Popular Science Review,* 1: 1 (Jan 1862), 367-368, (p. 367).
[6] Ramsay Muir, *A History of Liverpool* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1907), p. 218.

Liverpool at the turn of the century, expressive of dehumanisation and displacement often understood as an analogue to the experience of the enslaved, as the question of abolition continued to loom in the early years of the nineteenth century. In doing so, I will illustrate how the ideal union of commerce and culture, as variously imagined by Roscoe and Walker, fails to incorporate fully the maritime class into its optimistic picture of civil urban society.

Though the triangular Atlantic trade, as manifest in Liverpool, comprised a large system of exchange reliant upon not only slavery but the interconnected trades in sugar and cotton, it is slavery itself that would see the most representation, and become subject to moral debate, within the city's literary circles. Abolitionist poetry would flourish in a number of port towns with particular proximity to the slave trade, with Bristol perhaps the most present in existing literary criticism. Liverpool, however, would offer a comparable body of anti-slavery works, and arguably had a greater stake in the abolition debate, as the city would establish a sustained dominance of the slave trade until its abolition in 1807. Literature on the subject of Liverpool's slaving traffic also retained its association with colonial imports such as sugar, with Thomas Trotter's 'Verses, written in the Ladies' Walk at Liverpool' (composed 1783) and Edward Anderson's *The Sailor* (c. 1800) both pairing their Abolitionist rhetoric with the language of excessive physical consumption.[7] Liverpool had already become the primary port of England's north-west, as from the fifteenth century its main competition in Chester had been faced by serious setbacks due to the silting of the River Dee.[8] According to Peter Fryer's history of black Africans in Britain, Liverpool first seized upon a slaving venture in 1700, when the *Liverpool Merchant* trafficked 220 enslaved

---

[7] Thomas Trotter, M. D., 'Verses, Written in the Ladies' Walk at Liverpool, in January, 1783' in *Sea Weeds: Poems, written on various occasions, chiefly during a naval life* (Newcastle: Edward Walker, 1829), pp. 43-44 (l. 13-16); Edward Anderson, *The Sailor; a Poem* (Newcastle: M. Angus and Son, c. 1800), l. 1361- 1452; see also Robert Glen, 'Anderson, Edward (1763-1843).' [accessed 31 May 2023].
[8] Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture*, p. 9.

people to Barbados (although James Walvin dates this first voyage back to the 1690s).[9] The

port had many advantages, both geographical (in terms of its location, serving to avoid

disruption by enemy ships in the English Channel) and economic, given the lower dues

payable at its docks, and the austere wages of sailors aboard slaving ships compared to its

competitors.[10] Liverpool then rapidly overtook Bristol as Britain's primary slaving port, its

population expanding five times faster than its rival for the majority of the eighteenth

century.[11] It would prove an immensely lucrative trade:

> According to the most recent estimate, Britain's slave-merchants netted a profit
> of about £12,000,000 on the 2,500,000 Africans they bought and sold between c.
> 1630 and 1807, and perhaps half of this profit accrued between 1750 and 1790.[12]

According to Ramsay Muir, the slave trade 'invigorated every industry, provided the capital

for docks, enriched and employed the mills of Lancashire, and afforded the means for

opening out new and ever new lines of trade'.[13] It would also shape Liverpool's local

government and pool of public resources. Fryer goes on to detail the powerful local

influence wielded by slave traders:

> A list, compiled in 1752, of 101 Liverpool merchants trading to Africa included 12
> who had been, or were to become, mayor of the town, and 15 who were
> pewholders in the fashionable Benn's Garden Presbyterian Chapel. At least 26 of
> Liverpool's mayors […] from 1700-1820, were or had been slave-merchants or
> close relatives.[14]

---

[9] Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), p. 34; James Walvin, *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law and the End of Slavery* (London: Yale University Press, 2011) p. 21.

[10] Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture,* p. 10; Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 36.

[11] Bill Hunter*, Forgotten Hero: The Life and Times of Edward Rushton* (Liverpool: Living History Library, 2002) p. 12.

[12] Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 36.

[13] Muir, *A History of Liverpool*, p. 194.

[14] Fryer, *Staying Power,* p. 36.

After the granting of the charter of 1695, the town council was composed almost uniformly of an independently governing set of traders who largely acted to preserve their own interests and to furnish their continued dominance.[15] Many of these councillors were either directly or indirectly involved in the slave trade, at the very least benefitting as citizens from its revenue. As the end of the century approached, revolutionary upheavals in both France and its colonies had left the trade open for seizure, and by the 1790s Britain dominated slaving traffic, responsible for the transport of approximately 60 per cent of all enslaved people.[16] This uptick would also be marked by a higher level of opposition to the trade. It is the Liverpool of the late eighteenth century, with its central trade under increasing moral scrutiny, that Roscoe and Rushton operate within. Even after the 1807 ruling to abolish the trade, however, Liverpool's connection with slavery endured, and many viewed the town's amenities as being indebted to its profits. An 1811 article in *The Tradesman*, while reticent to comment upon the morality of the trade, concedes that

> To consider only its *commercial* effects […] it has coincided with that spirit of bold adventure which has characterised the trade of Liverpool, and rapidly carried it to its present flourishing state. It has occasioned vast employment for shipping and sailors, and greatly augmented the demand for the manufactures of the country; and the recent abolition of the slave trade has already caused a considerable diminution in the exports.[17]

The matter of slavery and its supposedly ameliorative effect upon both the industrial and cultural life of Liverpool would become hotly contested over this period, and this most controversial of trades would centre Liverpool within a debate questioning the legitimacy of any form of commercial expansion.

---

[15] Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture*, p. 13.
[16] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 352.
[17] Anonymous, 'Commercial History of Liverpool (Part 1)', in *The Tradesman: or, Commercial Magazine*, Jan 1811, pp. 37-42 (p. 41).

While its commercial growth had been paralleled with a new cultural eminence and a degree of fashionable appeal for the majority of the eighteenth century, this upward momentum appeared by the period in question to begin to be reaching its limits. The old town was now 'congested', the ports expanding, and the formerly fashionable middle-class settlements now absorbed into local manufacturing works.[18] It was now apparent that the council's bias towards trade was beginning to impact the town's cultural appeal and public facilities negatively. Vigier notes that there had been many 'abortive schemes to pipe water into the town', severely impacting general wellbeing especially in the poorer neighbourhoods, due to the 'lacunae of municipal government' on the council's part.[19] Though the Bluecoat Hospital numbered one of many charities furnished by the town's wealth, there was a failure to recognise such poverty as symptomatic of the local government, instead turning a focus towards the so-called 'deserving poor'.[20] These problems contributed greatly to the negative impression of the town for outsiders, adding to a depreciation in Liverpool's earlier eighteenth-century status as a fashionable forerunner of modern civility, with the city instead becoming known solely for its commercial interests, as Stobart suggests, in the 1780s and 90s.[21] In the early decades of the nineteenth century, however, the city's economy and popularity would resurge significantly, prompting some to announce a flourishing new chapter in its history.

Within the remit of this thesis, Liverpool's urban makeup differs from its contemporaries (i.e. Manchester or Sheffield) in that it is not strictly an industrial city, though on a smaller scale, it did maintain involvement in local artillery manufacture and the

---

[18] Francois Vigier, *Change and Apathy: Liverpool and Manchester during the Industrial Revolution* (London: M.I.T. Press, 1970), p. 52.
[19] Ibid. pp. 55-58.
[20] Ibid. p. 59.
[21] Stobart, 'Culture versus commerce', p. 474.

salt refinement industries of Lancashire and Cheshire. Its period of primary growth predates the typical "industrial" period, occupying instead the first three quarters of the eighteenth century. Being a commercial port, its demographics are also strikingly different; a history of the town, using a census from 1801, accounts for '77,653 persons, being 24,367 males and 43,286 females, of whom 11,269 were returned as employed in trade, handicraft and manufactures'.[22] The disproportion between men and women is here explained by the fact that 'the whole of the seafaring class of inhabitants is not reckoned', giving a sense of how profoundly maritime trade dominated the concerns of the population.[23] A large portion of the city's adult men were employed in a trade which essentially rendered their citizenship fluid and liminal, being at once at home and away. It is this group, often physically removed from the city and thus ontologically detached from many imaginings of what constitutes "society", that are frequently overlooked as full citizens or contributors to civic life in Liverpool, despite their key role in the facilitation of its maritime trade.

The Liverpudlian Prospect Poem: *Mount Pleasant* and *A descriptive poem*

Born outside of the city centre in 1753, William Roscoe's multifaceted career can be seen as a sustained attempt to both reinvigorate Liverpool's cultural status and to instate himself as a key figure in its cultural renewal. Roscoe was primarily known as a historian during his lifetime, having published his *Life of Lorenzo de' Medici* in 1796 and found international renown as a result. Arline Wilson describes his success as having been partially founded on the cultural repercussions of the French Revolution; Roscoe's effort to re-popularize Italian

---

[22] Anon. 'Commercial History', p. 37.
[23] Ibid. p. 37.

literature and history filled the vacancy left by a 'now-suspect French corpus' prevalent for

the majority of the eighteenth century.[24] In Roscoe's historical writings, he upholds

renaissance Florence as exemplifying the virtuous possibilities afforded by the commercial

city-state:

> Earnest in the acquisition of wealth, indefatigable in improving their manufactures
> and extending their commerce, the Florentines seem not, however, to have lost
> sight of the true dignity of man, or the proper objects of his regard.[25]

Indeed, one might surmise that Roscoe's cornucopia of careers and projects – as a poet,

abolitionist politician, lawyer, botanist, historian and land developer, among others –

indicates his confidence in the renaissance 'man of action' and the power of the individual in

wide-scale cultural upheaval.[26] Interestingly, slavery is barely mentioned across all four

volumes of the *Life of Lorenzo* – it is often only invoked to suggest the tyranny or barbarism

of Florence's rivals, such as the Venetians or Ottomans. In his correspondence with John

Aikin, Florence is figured as a commercial and intellectual zenith, which Liverpool may

emulate through Roscoe's own attempts to nurture its cultural life, in such endeavours as

the foundation of the Athenaeum Library (1797), the Liverpool Royal Institution (1814), and

its Literary and Philosophical Society.[27] Roscoe's poetry, however, expresses a doubt implicit

in this vision of Liverpool as a commercial utopia; his abolitionist verse insists that a moral

and cultured existence necessitates a compromise on the part of commerce. Despite

Victorian Liverpool's selection of Roscoe as a figurehead for its nineteenth-century

---

[24] Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture*, p. 61.

[25] William Roscoe, *The Life of Lorenzo De'Medici, called The Magnificen*t, seventh edn (London: D. Bogue, 1846) p. 136.

[26] Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture*, p. 36.

[27] Liverpool Record Office, Dr. Aikin, letter to William Roscoe, 10 Jan 1818, Roscoe Letters and Papers, 920.26 ROS. Notably, the Institution was founded in collaboration between abolitionists such as Roscoe and others with direct involvement in the slave trade including Thomas Parr, whose house would become the Institution's headquarters.

'renaissance', Jessica Moody argues, his abolitionist views would place him in the minority, and indeed many mouthpieces in favour of slavery, such as his contemporary John Walker, would produce poetry in direct debate with Roscoe's over the course of this period.[28]

Tim Burke notes an 'awkward complicity' on Roscoe's part, supported broadly by many representatives of the slave trade (who accepted him on the grounds of his comparative moderation) and, as a comfortably wealthy citizen and sometime politician, having indirectly benefitted from the trade itself.[29] Regardless, Wilson finds Roscoe to have capitalised on the town's 'need for a cultural hero' during the slump of the late eighteenth century.[30] Though Roscoe's life and historical writings have met with some attention, his poetry is extremely valuable to this study, constituting some of the Romantic period's most overt demonstrations of local urban identity and cultural self-fashioning. This section will outline how Roscoe's early work sets a precedent for Liverpool's poetic representation at this time, and how later poets, such as Walker, rework this model for their own political purposes.

Roscoe and Walker, despite their divergence on the point of slavery, share a similar stylistic register when approaching the subject of Liverpool's topography. Both authors convey a strong sense of social class and their place within its framework; the city centre is portrayed with an oxymoronic sense of double vision; there is a strong sense of sympathy for the town's unfortunate and impoverished; there is a demonstrable relationship between Liverpool and the wider world, either mutually beneficial or exploitative; and a repeated

---

[28] Jessica Moody, *The Persistence of Memory: Remembering Slavery in Liverpool, 'Slaving Capital of the World'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), p. 146; p. ibid. 153.
[29] Tim Burke, '"Humanity is now the pop'lar cry": Laboring-Class Writers and the Liverpool Slave Trade, 1787-1789', *The Eighteenth Century*, 42: 3, "Eighteenth-Century Laboring-Class Poets" (Autumn 2001), 245-263 (p. 250).
[30] Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture*, p. 3.

motif of sight and perception. Most notably, though, commerce and culture are seen as reciprocally advantageous to one another and combine to benefit the city itself, though in Roscoe's Liverpool the beneficial potential of commerce has its moral limits. On the reverse of this positive image, however, there is an ever-present fear of potential ruin which haunts Liverpudlian poetry, and one which is often politically motivated to urge the sympathies of the reader one way or another. It is this last feature, the threat of total financial and social collapse, which both authors use as their most persuasive rhetorical device regarding the continuation or cessation of Liverpool's slaving traffic.

Roscoe's early descriptive poem, *Mount Pleasant* (1777), composed in the poet's adolescence, is notable in that it predates the majority of abolitionist verse, which would not appear until after the American War of Independence. Despite its apparently urban focus, however, it opens with a pastoral invocation, knowingly distanced from the city centre:

> Freed from the cares that daily throng my breast,
> Again, beneath my native shades I rest […]
> -- Untaught the toils of busier life to bear,
> The fool's impertinence, the proud man's sneer;
> Sick of the world, to these retreats I fly,
> Devoid of art my early reed to try:[31]

Though the poem's purpose is 'to paint the prospects which around me rise', the speaker cannot delineate the town without physically and temporally retreating to a pastoral childhood.[32] Rousseauvian in its assertion that care, impertinence and pride are uniquely urban, sociable aspects which are learnt from society at large, the opening lines instantly

---

[31] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 1-8.
[32] Ibid. l. 9.

contextualise the reader's perception of the urban scenes to follow. Indeed, all of the

models Roscoe explicitly cites for his work – Dyer's *Grongar Hill* (1726), Jago's *Edge Hill*

(1767) and Pope's *Windsor-Forest* (1713) – are equally removed from the urban nexus.

Though their influence can be felt in this poem, all three are far more preoccupied with their

locale's 'natural Beauty, and historical Importance' than any urban development.[33] However,

Roscoe's 'equal theme' seeks to place Liverpool on the same aesthetic level as these sites of

rural beauty, even as it prophesises a city one day 'sunk in ruin'.[34] Immediately aware of the

city's ephemerality, *Mount Pleasant's* purpose is to lend Liverpool the literary atemporality

of the natural landscape.

On approaching the city, a divided landscape arises, and Roscoe's use of pacing forces

the reader to register the jarring change of scene:

How numerous now her thronging buildings rise!
What varied objects strike the wandering eyes!
Where rise yon masts her crowded navies ride,
And the broad rampire checks the beating tide;
Along the beach her spacious streets extend,
Her areas open, and her spires ascend;[35]

There is a profound sense of the city immediately unfolding; instead of simply informing the

reader of new constructions and fashionable wares, Roscoe places a stressed rhyme,

occupied by a simple present tense verb, at the end of each line ('rise', 'ride', 'extend',

'ascend'), using the first half of each line to invoke a landscape and elevating it into present

---

[33] Richard Jago, 'Preface' to *Edge-Hill or, The Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralized* (London: J. Dodsley, 1767) p. vi.
[34] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 13-20.
[35] Ibid. l. 21-26.

existence as the line comes to a close. This pattern of upward momentum may be borrowed

from Dyer, whose Welsh forests 'unnumber'd rise' in a similar manner.[36] The general picture

is strongly regularised: Roscoe's use of 'checks', seen above, particularly speaks of a

controlled civic space. Given that Roscoe was writing at a time during which David Fairer

claims landscape poetry was still transitioning from its preoccupation with environments

that are 'restrained and bounded', *Mount Pleasant* does not strictly depart from this trend,

even given his bustling urban situation, up to this point.[37] This sense of control however

completely dissolves in the following lines:

> In loud confusion mingled sounds arise,
> The docks re-echoing with the seamen's cries,
> The massy hammer sounding from afar,
> The bell slow-tolling, and the rattling car;
> And thundering oft the cannon's horrid roar,
> In lessening echoes dies along the shore.[38]

The chaos of the Liverpool docks bleeds uncannily into the picture of the ordered town, and

the sensory image Roscoe conveys is vividly transformed. Roscoe's sentence structure from

earlier has altered: now the final syllables are preoccupied with onomatopoeic sound ('cries',

'roar'). Roscoe's use of 'echo' which, here, echoes itself within this extract, creating a heady

soundscape of repetitive and cacophonous noise. This is not a closed system, however;

sounds from 'afar', particularly that of the 'cannon', signals the docks' liminal position

between the mainland on one hand, and the danger of trade and warfare on foreign shores

on the other. Liverpool's city centre is populated by a very different species of urban dweller

---

[36] John Dyer, 'Grongar Hill' in *Poems* (London: J. Dodsley, 1770), pp. 9-16 (l. 57).
[37] Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century,* p. 192.
[38] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 27-32.

to the poet's reclusive speaker; spurred on by Commerce's 'genuine glow', these 'anxious

votaries' of Liverpool's patron goddess 'each calm, sequestered scene of life, despise, / And

all those sweets the vacant hour supplies'.[39] Though the speaker cannot sympathise with this

industrious worldview, Roscoe's description is not explicitly critical; rather, he is alienated by

a modern world whose affinity for business has usurped his simpler way of life. But Roscoe

cannot linger long on the physical signifiers of Liverpool's trade without turning to criticism

of its practice.

It is common for critics to characterise Roscoe's abolitionist stance as one of

moderation: having taken the needs of slave traders into consideration when formulating

the terms of abolition, Roscoe can appear to represent a more conciliatory facet of the

movement. Indeed, Roscoe's view of abolition was a gradualist one, with his 1788 pamphlet

A general view of the African slave-trade calling not for its immediate cessation, but rather

advocating for the improvement of life on plantations for existing enslaved populations.[40]

This mellow critical portrait, however, exists despite Roscoe's active involvement in such

radical groups as the Liverpool Friends of Peace. Katrina Navickas has argued, however, that

due to heightened governmental repression after the Terror in France, members of this

group (including Roscoe himself) appear to have abstained from correspondence regarding

nakedly political matters.[41] *Mount Pleasant*, however, is far from apolitical, initiating

Roscoe's poetic career with an uncompromising portrait of the slave trade's propagators.

Without yet mentioning slavery, Roscoe attacks the 'Sons of Wealth', who

with ceaseless toil,

---

[39] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 33-36.
[40] William Roscoe, *A general view of the African slave-trade, demonstrating its injustice and impolicy: with hints towards a bill for its abolition* (London: R. Faulder, 1788), pp. 29-30.
[41] Katrina Navickas, *Loyalism and Radicalism in Lancashire, 1798-1815* (Oxford: University Press, 2009), p. 38.

> Add gold to gold, and swell the shining pile […]
>
> Your general course to happiness ye bend,
>
> Why then to gain the means neglect the end?
>
> To purchase peace requires a scanty store, –
>
> - O spurn the grovelling wish that pants for more! – [42]

Roscoe holds traders – their quarry still unspecified - to account over unnecessary greed that surpasses the regular desire for personal happiness. Though Roscoe was part of a Unitarian congregation, a faith which Joel Mokyr notes did not perceive commercial aspirations to be necessarily incompatible with religious piety, the pursuit of wealth for its own sake is unambiguously characterised as deplorable here.[43] Moreover, Roscoe's critique specifically targets the amassment of wealth without any fit 'end', any cultural or philanthropic object towards which it might be directed; this is commerce, then, at the expense of culture, and therefore a violation of Roscoe's commercial ideal. One might also note here the beginning of a motif in Roscoe's work, the insistence that the 'grovelling wish' for excessive wealth is a trait that is endemic in the Western, apparently civilised world, only appearing elsewhere if it has been taught to indigenous people, which will be scrutinised in his later works in the following sections.

Proclaiming that 'o'er the wondering world [Liverpool's] name resounds', Roscoe makes a sweeping visit to every shore that 'resigns' its goods to the city's fleets, as she 'makes the wealth of every clime her own'.[44] It is at this point, however, that Roscoe's commentary turns to the Americas, listing the exotic produce the 'occident' provides to Britain– while the 'strong cordial that inflames the brain, / The honeyed sweetness of the

---

[42] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 45-50.

[43] Mokyr, *The Enlightened Economy*, p. 362.

[44] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 73-82.

juicy cane, / The vegetative fleece [and] azure dye' – may create a sense of a multisensory,

dazzling heterotopia, the prevailing implication is that all of these are surrendered out of

fear to a marauding maritime invader.[45] This focus on the sensory pleasure of the material

good then turns back to its origin in chattel slavery:

> There AFRIC'S swarthy sons their toils repeat,
>
> Beneath the fervors of the noon-tide heat;
>
> Torn from each joy that crown'd their native soil,
>
> No sweet reflections mitigate their toil;
>
> From morn, to eve, by rigorous hands opprest […]
>
> Till broke with labour, helpless, and forlorn,
>
> From their weak grasp the lingering morsel torn;[46]

Roscoe's prospect for the enslaved individual is grim; his emotive catalogue of their

sufferings imagines death alone as a release from their pains. Relying upon the motivational

power of sentimentality, Roscoe uses pathos to appeal to his audience's sympathies –

though, as will be demonstrated, this sentimental angle does become problematised later,

even by Roscoe himself. Roscoe stresses the endlessness of slavery's work, and its lack of

reward; the capitalist free market's ideal exchange of labour for profit does not take place

here, and the enslaved subject cannot even grasp the 'morsels' required to sustain their own

life. Linda Colley indicates that Britain's more liberal merchant population had a stake in

abolition as unpaid labour was 'an affront to free-market economics', and Roscoe

demonstrates this by depicting the blatant disparity between the successful civic

businessman and the enslaved person who cannot profit within a supposedly liberal

---

[45] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 85-90.
[46] Ibid. l. 91-99

economic system.[47] Roscoe goes on to indicate the hypocrisy of permitting oneself endless

personal freedoms while denying the same to others:

> Shame to Mankind! But shame to BRITONS most,
>
> Who all the sweets of Liberty can boast;
>
> Yet, deaf to every human claim, deny
>
> That bliss to others, which themselves enjoy:[48]

In betraying the freely given English 'Liberty' of others, then, Roscoe opines that slavery is

not only immoral but unpatriotic. Indeed, as this chapter will later explore, the identification

of liberty as a nationalised allegorical attribute becomes further complicated by the body of

abolitionist poetry in the following decades. Culture and civility necessitate the curtailing of

a rampantly violent commerce, a sacrificial practice whereby wealth may be 'purchas'd by a

brother's blood'.[49]

> Roscoe does not, however, simply view commerce as a force of unmitigated evil:

> When COMMERCE, yet an infant, rais'd her head,
>
> 'Twas mutual want her growing empire spread:
>
> Those mutual wants a distant realm supply'd,
>
> And like advantage every clime enjoy'd [...]
>
> An open welcome met the stranger crew;
>
> And whilst the whitening fleet approach'd to land,
>
> The wondering natives hail'd them from the strand;
>
> Fearless to meet, amidst the flow of soul,
>
> The lurking dagger, or the poison'd bowl.[50]

---

[47] Colley, *Britons*, p. 355.
[48] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 106-109.
[49] Ibid. l. 127.
[50] Ibid. l. 131-140.

The prelapsarian, purified world of intercontinental exchange only exists for Roscoe in the past tense, or in some undisturbed corner of the earth. Note the repetition of 'mutual' here, occupying the same metrical position in both line 132 and 133 respectively; this grammatical repetition forms a mirroring effect, evocative of the equal exchange and respective understanding characteristic of Roscoe's virtuous commercial ideal. The 'growing empire' and 'distant realm' are placed on level footing, symbiotically enriching one another. Commerce is transformed, however, by human luxury into a 'bloated monster', 'by no restraints controul'd'.[51] This allegorical figure in her modern form is unrecognisable as a benefactor of universal good:

> - Can this be she, who promis'd once to bind
> In leagues of strictest amity, mankind?
> This fiend, whose breath inflames the spark of strife,
> And pays with trivial toys the price of life?[52]

This 'fiend' is no longer the virtuous commercial exploit initially touted by Roscoe's Unitarian contemporary Joseph Priestley, who, as outlined by Gregory Claeys, perceives commerce as having the potential to foster peace and mutual understanding between nations in line with his belief in 'human perfectability'.[53] The term 'strictest amity', particularly when paired with the need for 'restraint' above, contributes to a general semantic field emphasising the importance of moderation and control. The limits of what constitutes commerce must be narrowed – the enlargement of the definition permits violent exploitation and distorts the allegorical body of Commerce, making her monstrous. A similar idea was expressed many

---

[51] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 142-145.
[52] Ibid. l. 157-160.
[53] Claeys, 'Virtuous Commerce', pp. 155-157.

years later by Roscoe in a letter of 1811 to fellow abolitionist Thomas Clarkson, where he

would consider it an 'abuse of language' for slavery to be included within the remit of

regular trade.[54] Roscoe's ideal of 'mutual' commerce recalls a form of 'doux-commerce'

identified by Jon Mee as extant in the earlier eighteenth century, a vision of the

cosmopolitan city as an international stage facilitating the 'collaboration' of commercial and

cultural enrichment.[55] This sentiment perhaps finds its clearest voice in a 1711 account of

the Royal Exchange in the *Spectator*, where London bears witness to a benevolent 'mutual

Intercourse' between nations.[56] But this prevailing idea of healthy commercial exchange has

now, in Roscoe's opinion, become dangerously derailed. For Roscoe, it is necessary to insist

upon the possibility of humane trade to argue effectively against its most glaring violations.

When commenting on the various social amenities made available to Liverpool's

population, Roscoe's poem however shows little interest in connecting these institutions to

the sources of wealth upon which they are founded. Chosen by the 'arts' and 'muses', home

to the 'public blessings' of the Infirmary and Bluecoat Hospital, Liverpool seems blessed by

every virtue; the 'big tear' of 'tender Pity' herself has provided for her citizens.[57] Though

Roscoe praises what these institutions have done for the city's unfortunates, he ironically

omits the fact that these benefits have likewise sprung from profits made from human

traffic. Bryan Blundell, for instance, the founder of the Bluecoat School, was a direct

profiteer of the slave trade, and John Whale has already indicated Roscoe's failure to address

how these apparent forces of good may be otherwise 'tainted by collusion'.[58] Whale figures

---

[54] William Roscoe, letter to Thomas Clarkson, 13 Jan 1811, Roscoe Letters and Papers, 920.861 ROS.
[55] Jon Mee, ''Mutual Intercourse' and 'Licentious Discussion' in *The Microcosm of London*', *The London Journal*, 37: 3 (2012), 196-214 (p. 198); Ibid. p. 201.
[56] Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, vol. 1, May 19 1711, (pp. 292-296), p. 296.
[57] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 174; Ibid. l. 193; Ibid. l. 251; Ibid. l. 240-241.
[58] John Whale, 'The Making of a City of Culture: William Roscoe's Liverpool', *Eighteenth-Century Life,* 29: 2 (Spring 2005), 91-107 (p. 98).

this poem as an 'attempt at historical redemption' for Liverpool, and in order to facilitate this redemption, *Mount Pleasant* sustains the idea that wealth gained through avarice might be turned towards humanitarian ends.[59] Roscoe metaphorically figures the city as 'some industrious man', formerly preoccupied with commercial gain, but now 'satiate with success' and prepared to share that gain with the less fortunate.[60] But as this section follows immediately after Roscoe's critique of slavery, which would have powered the wealth of many of Liverpool's civic innovators and fed into public funding via subscription, it suggests the speaker is able to connect the product and means of production in some circumstances, but in others praises the end product as magically decoupled from its iniquitous origins. Thus, Roscoe's early venture into forging civic pride for Liverpool runs into treacherous territory, conversely attempting both to lionise and criticise an ambiguous political landscape. John Barrell and Harriet Guest have illustrated that this apparent contradiction at the heart of the eighteenth-century digressive poem would not be an inherent mark against its quality; due to the emergence of literary periodicals and verse anthologies, readers were more likely to read passages of these works divorced from their original context, and diversity of subject or discursive positioning were at times considered as representative of the talent and versatility of the author.[61] These factors may have lead Roscoe's contemporary readership, then, to take less issue with apparent disruptions within the text's internal logic than the modern reader; as Daisy Hay suggests, however, the nation's preoccupation with the War of American Independence, and the reluctance of

---

[59] Whale, 'The Making of a City of Culture', p. 97.
[60] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 161-167.
[61] John Barrell and Harriet Guest, 'The uses of contradiction: Pope's 'Epistle to Bathurst'', in *Poetry, Language & Politics*, ed. by John Barrell (New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 79-99 (pp. 95-96); Ibid. p. 92.

contemporary critics to engage with *Mount Pleasant's* commentary on slavery, may have

further smothered the poem's abolitionist fervour at the time of its publication.[62]

The conclusion of *Mount Pleasant* sees Roscoe employ a common motif of invoking

former fallen empires to prophesise the city's inevitable ruin. Rhetorically asking 'what now

remains of TYRE's imperial pride', Roscoe warns of the vicissitudes of maritime trade:

> The time may come, - (O distant be the year)
> When desolation spreads her empire here.
> When Trade's uncertain triumph shall be o'er,
> And the wave roll neglected on the shore;
> Returning verdure cloathe the pathless plain,
> And not one trace of former pride remain.[63]

It is when he refers to the urban environment in the past tense that Roscoe's work is most

reminiscent of his earlier models – this passage, for instance, mimics Pope's 'levell'd Towns

with Weeds […] cover'd o'er'.[64] The comparison to Tyre is particularly incisive, categorising

Britain as a maritime commercial power (and one conquered by its more powerful

neighbours) rather than a continental empire in the image of Rome. Moreover, other

abolitionists would utilise this comparison to criticise Liverpool's involvement with slavery:

writing in 1776, Granville Sharp would consider 'TYRE and ZIDON' to be, respectively, the

'Liverpool and Bristol' of the ancient world, their inhumane slaving traffic justly deserving

divine retribution in the form of eventual conquest, and in 1792, by which time abolitionist

literature had gained far more traction, Abraham Booth would make the same direct

---

[62] Daisy Hay, *Dinner with Joseph Johnson; Books & Friendship in a Revolutionary Age* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2022), pp. 98-99.
[63] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 369.; Ibid. l. 375-380.
[64] Alexander Pope, *Windsor-Forest. To the Right Honourable George Lord Lansdown* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1713) l. 75.

comparison, stating that these ports both ancient and modern were likewise 'infamously conspicuous […] for their trading in the persons and rights of men'.[65] Despite the intimations of this comparison, Roscoe's speaker does not wish for Liverpool's ruin to come to pass any time soon – but, in order to argue persuasively against the city's continued involvement in slavery, he must prefigure a ruinous end to Liverpool's current commercial trajectory. Roscoe's warning concerns the fragility of investment in overseas trade, and the near-monoculture of slavery – and his anxieties are not unfounded. As Stobart explains, the 'vicissitudes' of Liverpool's colonial trade often precipitated the downfall of once-prosperous commercial families, immediately sunk by a capricious and unstable economy.[66] Roscoe's closing couplets in mourning of this 'mart of nations' downplay the importance and indeed the longevity of his own text; deriding it as a 'faint essay', merely 'the short-liv'd offspring of a vernal day', Roscoe then goes on to emphasise the lasting fame of Liverpool in contrast with his own ephemeral commentary:

> Her name, in perennial lists enroll'd,
> Shall rank with those which Commerce lov'd of old;
> And teach mankind, how vain the pride, that springs
> From the short glory of terrestrial things.[67]

The speaker's final verdict here is potently ambiguous: Liverpool's future fame is secure, but what will its lasting reputation be? The city's legacy, Roscoe suggests, is not as a beacon of civility and prosperity but rather as a cautionary tale, sunken like Tyre into infamy. Liverpool's ill-gotten gains place it in sequence with 'those which Commerce lov'd of old',

---

[65] Granville Sharp, *The Law of Retribution; or, a Serious Warning to Great Britain and her Colonies […]* (London: W. Richardson, 1776), 219; Ibid. 235; Abraham Booth, *Commerce in the Human Species, and the Enslaving of Innocent Persons* […] (London: L. Wayland, 1792), p. 25.
[66] Stobart, 'Culture versus commerce,' p. 476.
[67] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 383-384; Ibid. l. 385-387.

and the implication is that Liverpool, too, will be remembered as a decadent, failed city-state which now lies in ruin.

Mount Pleasant, however, is one of Roscoe's more ambivalent loco-specific poems. His 1774 poem 'An Ode, on the institution of a society in Liverpool, for the encouragement of designing, drawing, painting, &c.', imagines a brighter future for Liverpool and its relationship with culture, commerce and civility. As the title suggests, the poem is composed for a specific time and place – the poem is to be read to a society formed in 1773 of which the poet was a contributor, and is arguably Roscoe's most positive statement of intent in terms of establishing Liverpool as a form of 'new Florence'.[68] Initially, Roscoe is eager to divorce Liverpool 'From climes where Slavery's iron chain / Has bound to earth the soaring mind'; instead these are associated with the Greece and Italy of antiquity.[69] 'Freedom' and 'The Arts' then find their new retreat in the form of 'ALBION's ever grateful isle', their 'happier home'.[70] The main purpose of the 'Ode' is to install Liverpool metonymically as a stand-in for Britain as a whole as the new inheritor of cultural capital, and the poem goes on to narrate an epoch of cultural and intellectual renewal:

> The clouds of Ignorance decay.
> First came the MUSE – her great design
> Each dull sensation to refine;
> To plant in every rugged breast
> The seeds of GENIUS and TASTE;
> To bid the heart expand with woe […][71]

---

[68] Anonymous, 'Obituary – William Roscoe, Esq.', in The Gentleman's Magazine, Aug 1831, pp. 179-181 (p. 180).
[69] Roscoe, 'Ode' in Mount Pleasant: a descriptive poem, l. 1-2.
[70] Ibid. l. 8-14.
[71] Ibid. l. 18-23.

Roscoe's lexical choice here is telling – 'Ignorance', 'dull', and 'rugged' are suggestive of a lack of refinement, though may also signify an attempt to divorce the city's legacy from the barbarism of slavery by assigning it a new, enlightened cultural significance, heralded by the society to which the poem is dedicated. Roscoe then proceeds to suggest that cultural production (here music specifically) can effect real change in the physical world – 'to still the raging deep, / To damp the gay, to warm the cold' and even to 'free the slave'.[72] Though art may 'moralize the heart', however, it also has the 'wondering sense' to 'charm' it; though the potential connotations of this latter verb are manifold, most definitions are suggestive of magical bewitchment, deception or control.[73] These more negative conceptions of culture as having the potential to warp reality, far more damningly and explicitly voiced by Walker, will be explored later, though the suggestion that art involves some form of dissociation from reality is not entirely absent, even in Roscoe's more celebratory piece.

As the poem proceeds, Roscoe attempts to redress a false dichotomy constructed between aesthetic enlightenment and lowliness of station, addressing the reader directly:

> And if beneath a rough disguise,
> The latent gem of Genius lies,
> Do thou impart thy friendly aid,
> Thy loveliest polish o'er it spread;
> So shall its beams, with genuine lustre bright,
> Pour radiance on thine head, who call'd it first to light.[74]

As Roscoe warns, the boundaries of class are illusory; that which seems vulgar and base may conceal something worthy of notice. However, the imperative tone of his delivery reveals a

---

[72] Roscoe, 'Ode' l. 28-32.
[73] Ibid. l. 70; 'charm, v.1'. OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press. accessed May 30, 2023.
[74] Roscoe, 'Ode', l. 145-149.

paternalistic edge to this appraisal. The undiscovered artist can achieve nothing without the 'polishing' effect of a critic's attention, and the latter two lines suggest the true benefit of revealing such a 'gem' is the favourable aspect it will throw upon its excavator, rather than the artist themselves. Roscoe writes not as creator but critic, self-advertising as the trendsetter who will bring Liverpool to cultural eminence through his personal sense of taste. Roscoe proceeds to make his Anglo-Italian comparison clear, placing British artists on the same level as the greats of the Italian Renaissance:

> Let ANGELO with MILTON vie;
> Oppos'd to WALLER's amorous song,
> His art let wanton TITIAN try;
> Let great ROMANO's free design,
> Contend with DRYDEN's pompous line;
> And chaste CORREGIO's graceful air
> With POPE's unblemish'd page compare;[75]

Roscoe does not compare creatives of the same medium straightforwardly with one another. Though Milton, Waller, Dryden and Pope are all English poets, these are compared with Michelangelo, Correggio, Romano and Titian as a set of Italian painters. This blending of different mediums recalls, to borrow Roscoe's own term, a 'visual concert' where the barriers between the arts are destroyed, or, alternatively, the notion that the ideal renaissance individual is – like himself – a master of all disciplines.[76] Conversely, it is also expressive of what Jon Klancher identifies as a Nonconformist desire for 'intersubjective discussion' with regards to the fine arts and sciences during this period.[77] Roscoe then

---

[75] Roscoe, 'Ode', l. 71-78.
[76] Ibid. l. 95.
[77] Jon Klancher, *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences: Knowledge and Cultural Institutions in the Romantic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 185.

appeals directly to his audience, who are 'with wealth supremely blest', urging them to befriend 'the suppliant train of Arts'.[78] As important as culture is, it cannot flourish without the notice and generosity of wealthy patrons. Such an idea might find its continuation in Roscoe's later address to the Liverpool Royal Institution at its opening in 1817, where, using the historical example of early modern Italy, he draws a direct connection between 'stability, wealth, and competency' and an advancement in both the arts and sciences, suggesting that the preservation of this reciprocal relationship is essential to defend against cultural decline.[79] Intriguingly, the supposedly intellectually deadening practice of 'manufactures', as opposed to commerce, is exempt from this culturally enriching system – according to Roscoe, manufacturers are not 'conducive to the formation of intellectual character', reducing human creative capacities to the limited and programmed output of a 'machine'.[80] This statement of reciprocal benefit between culture and commerce stands at odds with *Mount Pleasant*'s assertion that a rampant commerce needs to be checked and controlled. With the two poems (*Mount Pleasant* and the 'Ode') published together in 1777, Roscoe's poetic career is marked by this struggle from its beginning.

As a counterpoint to Roscoe's liberal, abolitionist vision of Liverpool, I will consider *A descriptive poem, on the town and trade of Liverpool* by John Walker, a shoemaker, written in 1789 with the patronage of the anti-abolitionist Banastre Tarleton, a local veteran of the American Revolutionary War. Burke notes an 'overlap of pro- and anti-slavery arguments' evident in the literature of this period, and Walker's work bears some stark similarities with

---

[78] Roscoe, 'Ode', l. 150-155.
[79] William Roscoe, *On the Origins and Vicissitudes of Literature, Science and Art and their Influence on the Present State of Society; A Discourse, delivered on the opening of the Liverpool Royal Institution, 25th November, 1817* (Liverpool: Harris and Co., 1817), p. 27; Ibid. p. 40.
[80] Ibid. p. 43.

Mount Pleasant despite its oppositional purpose.[81] Hoping to 'launch his little Bark [..] whether it splits on the Rocks of Criticism, or sinks in Oblivion', Walker places his poem (which he acknowledges might never be registered by the world at large) at the mercy of his audience.[82] By its end, Walker's posturing becomes almost farcically sycophantic:

> [The poet] begs Leave thus publicly to return his most grateful Acknowledgements to the Ladies and Gentlemen of Liverpool, who have honoured him with their Names to this local Essay, and thereby conferred a lasting Obligation on their and the Public's
>
> devoted,
>
> much obliged,
>
> most obedient,
>
> and,
>
> most humble servant,
>
> The AUTHOR. [83]

Besides this overt performance of deference, Walker's selling point is his perceived authenticity, and commonality with the labouring people of the town – even as his text is demonstrably pivoted towards his social superiors, and not those on his same standing. Burke begins his commentary with a note on the role of what he describes as the "peasant" poet:

> Laboring poets are almost always introduced to the public by a patronly announcement, which typically rehearses the miraculous discovery of a native genius-in-rags, while assuring the reader of the author's gratitude and contentment, but which serves, more importantly, to guarantee the genuine and authentic nature of the composition. Authenticity […] had always been the "peasant" poet's stock-in-trade […][84]

---

[81] Burke, '"Humanity is now the pop'lar cry"', p. 245.
[82] Walker, 'Preface' to *A descriptive poem,* p. 2.
[83] Ibid. p. 3.
[84] Burke, '"Humanity is now the pop'lar cry"', p. 249.

In the preface to Walker's text, marks of Burke's observation are immediately apparent. Self-characterising as 'a Person, whose Circumstances in Life will never procure him the Favour of the merely Fashionable and Gay', Walker is quick to divorce his poetic persona from any sense of worldliness or affectation.[85] Shoemaker poets, as documented by Bridget Keegan, formed a notable trend within labouring poetry of the long eighteenth century, and one quality that Keegan identifies as having enabled them to write prolifically and successfully is the potential for their trade to connect the writer with clientele both rich and poor.[86] While this would help poets secure subscribers or patrons in the higher ranks of society, I would add that their lower-class connections are a boon in that the poet does not forgo their alignment with popular politics or the authentic experience of the common man, adding to their aforementioned veracity as a popular mouthpiece. Contrasted with his own status as humble poet-pauper, Walker launches his invective against the affectations of urbanity and opulence:

> The modern luxuries of polish'd life,
> That fire our passions and augment our strife,
> Offensive weeds, which spring in folly's field,
> Manur'd by time, were from their eyes conceal'd,
> Bare human knowledge only makes us crave,
> And grasp at objects which we ne'er can have. – [87]

'Bare human knowledge' here, and the unsatisfied desire that comes with it, are positioned as preferable in contrast to the superfluous and ridiculous trappings of luxury. Walker's use of personal pronouns ('us', 'we') suggests that the supposed vices of the metropolitan class

---

[85] Walker, 'Preface', p. 2.
[86] Bridget Keegan, 'Cobbling Verse: Shoemaker Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century', *The Eighteenth Century,* 42: 3. (Fall 2001), 195-217 (p. 203).
[87] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 45-50.

are infectious, with the potential to invade even the countermovement embodied by his

readership. In general, modernity and urbanity are viewed as corruptive by Walker, part and

parcel of 'the vicious follies of this present age', and the abolition movement is tied in with

this conservative distaste.[88] In this case, abolition is the unreachable luxury good,

superficially attractive, but according to Walker, unrealistic and impossible to realise. *A

descriptive poem* functions as a parody of Roscoe's work, making conspicuous mention of

'PLEASANT MOUNT' – literally inverting the poem's title, but also rhetorically inverting its

argumentative purpose.[89]

Keegan also notes the shoemaker poet's frequent demonstration of his own literary

knowledge, and Walker is no exception here – but his oppositional tenor sees him utilise his

knowledge of his literary forerunner to disparage and critique Roscoe's position.[90] In

Walker's description of Liverpool's topography, the same sense of contrast evident in *Mount

Pleasant* prevails:

> […] the muse,
> Intent the town more closely to peruse,
> That clust'ring rises and confus'd appears,
> And one deep hum of bus'ness fills the ears;
> Thus an encampment when at distance view'd,
> An undistinguish'd group of figures rude;
> But enter'd in the lines you clearly see,
> Exact proportion and just symmetry,
> A reg'lar plan throughout the whole laid down […]
> At last the town a fairer face assumes […][91]

---

[88] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 299.
[89] Ibid. l. 114.
[90] Keegan, 'Cobbling Verse', p. 209.
[91] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 347-356.

Walker's Liverpool is a curious oxymoron: appearing 'confus'd' though actually 'regl'ar';

'rude' but endowed with 'peculiar grace'; an 'encampment', but also a 'palace fair'.[92] This

may gesture towards a separation between the chaotic buzz of human activity versus the

ordered nature of the city's physical layout, but Walker's metonymic use of the word 'town'

(i.e. denoting not only the physical city but also its inhabitants) does not make this

distinction clear. It also seems, according to Walker's use of present tense, to be immediately

coming into being, or growing exponentially before the speaker's eyes. Walker is quick to

note the 'new houses', and 'shops cramb'd full of ev'ry kind of ware'; the image of Liverpool

the poet seeks to communicate is one of success, constant growth and public

contentment.[93] This is made more apparent by Walker's mention of the 'wholesome laws'

that 'secure / The subject's property, both rich and poor'.[94] The social system Liverpool exists

within is apparently one of justice and universal social benefit.

Where Roscoe avoids discussing the connections between the profits of slavery and

the city's charitable institutions, Walker explicitly argues that Liverpool's commercial

exploits, including the slave trade, should be understood as foundational to the public good.

'Brave Tarleton', the poem's patron, is even featured as a sort of local hero.[95] There are,

however, pitfalls of Liverpudlian life that Walker conspicuously fails to explain within his

optimistic paradigm. He cannot help but mention the 'meagre want' assailing the 'lab'ring

poor', their 'cellar' dwellings, or the 'scenes of lewdness' on the part of 'young harlots'.[96] A

lengthy portion of Walker's text also laments the 'sad calamities' which frequently attend

---

[92] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 359; l. 361.
[93] Ibid. l. 361-362.
[94] Ibid. l. 379-380.
[95] Ibid. l. 451.
[96] Ibid. l. 808-810.

the families of Liverpudlian seamen - clearly, Liverpool's commercial system does not

provide safety and security for everyone.[97] Hunter explains that, by 1801, 2,306 individuals

inhabited cellar dwellings in Liverpool, and Vigier also expounds on the prevalence of

ginshops and bars permitted by the council, leading to common reports of public

drunkenness.[98] But critically, Walker's text fails to account for the poverty to be found in the

town, the poor life expectancy of its sailors, or the ubiquity of the sex trade. He is held in a

position by his patronage where he cannot attribute these failings to the ruling classes'

commercial interests.

Walker is eager, however, to engage with Liverpool's range of charitable projects: he

boasts that 'within the bound'ry of this present year, / Two younger charities bring up the

rear'.[99] These latter two could potentially include the city's Lunatic Asylum, proposed by

James Currie (a physician and close friend of Roscoe's) in the same year as the poem's

publication. Indeed, numerous sources on Liverpool in the period stress the centrality of

philanthropic efforts to its civic character; John Aikin is likewise careful to note the city's

peculiar 'spirit of charity'.[100] To Walker, this is a signifier of the town's liberality, though it is

arguable that the presence of so many charities for the support of the town's deserving poor

are indicators of the extent of its destitution, a breakdown in the text's internal logic not

dissimilar to that in *Mount Pleasant*. According to Walker, this 'fund exhaustless' of

philanthropic effort might be owed to 'lib'ral British hearts'.[101] Liverpool, often here aligned

---

[97] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 202.
[98] Hunter, *Forgotten Hero*, p. 13; Vigier, *Change and Apathy*, p. 53.
[99] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 893-894.
[100] Aikin, *A Description of the Country from thirty to forty Miles round Manchester*, p. 337.
[101] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 896-897.

with the allegorical figure of Commerce herself, is figured as a personification of universal

liberality, with a world-encompassing reach:

> At length the genius of the British isle,
> Deign'd on this spot auspiciously to smile,
> Bid commerce waft her treasures to this port,
> And 'stablish here Britannia's second mart;
> Commerce obey'd, and forth in triumph rode,
> The sov'reign mandate to proclaim abroad,
> Her arms expanded round the globe she threw,
> And half its wealth to LIVERPOLIA drew [...][102]

What begins as an invocation of international goodwill and communication in the mould of

doux-commerce - as emblematised here in the form of a world-wide embrace – is

immediately undercut by an assurance of Liverpool's financial domination of her foreign

rivals. Walker couples acts of colonial exploitation with the language of sentiment and

humanitarianism, liberally shared with the outside world, though solely to Britain's benefit.

Similarly, his account of Scottish and Irish immigration to the town sees Liverpool 'improv'd'

by new arrivals, while their 'separate int'rests [are] melted down' as they become

'incorp'rate' into society.[103] In what Walker compares to a new Rome (as opposed to

Roscoe's Tyre), difference is dissolved and reduced in a system that mutually benefits both

town and migrant, a process reflected in the Romans' perceived 'refinement' of barbarous

peoples, as observed by Richard Bourke in eighteenth-century historical literature.[104]

---

[102] Walker, *A descriptive poem,* l. 63-70.
[103] Ibid. l. 74; Ibid. l. 100-101.
[104] Ibid. l. 102; Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015) pp. 179-180.

Walker's most extreme argument, however, is voiced in his opinion of the 'civilising' effect of the slave trade:

> With hopes of gain and just ambition led,
>
> In all directions see the vessels spread.
>
> But chief this town it claims the Afric trade,
>
> The merchant's toil this amply has repaid;
>
> Some sweep the Guinea coast their ships to slave,
>
> And negro convicts from destruction save,
>
> With honest traffic and advent'rous toil,
>
> Transplants them in a civilized soil,
>
> Where knowledge dawns on the chaotic mind,
>
> And tastes the joys of human life refin'd.[105]

Here the trade is depicted not only as morally sound but heroic and ameliorative – 'honest traffic', 'advent'rous toil' and 'just ambition' on the part of slaving ventures are painted as genuine virtues (though they each require a positive qualifier in order to make them so – Walker writes at a time when the profitability of the trade required supplementation by an assurance of its moral value). The idea of morally justified slavery was not a difficult concept for Walker's readers to grasp – Muir elaborates upon the 'romantic picture' of a supposedly cut-throat African society from which European slavers might liberate their quarry, a popular method of detaching the question of morality from an otherwise heinous trade.[106] Though Walker's argument – that slavery is in fact a 'blessing' – is the total reverse of his abolitionist detractors, it still relies on a shared worldview.[107] The Christianised, 'civilised' world of western civilisation, in Roscoe's model as well as Walker's, holds the power to judge the

---

[105] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 995-1005.
[106] Muir, *A History of Liverpool*, p. 196.
[107] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 1086.

civility and indeed the humanity of the world at large. Having been 'bless'd with British

freedom', Walker imagines the formerly enslaved, having found liberation, as having been

'commended' for their service by British society when they are aptly deserving.[108] As Burke

posits, Walker's work is devoid of the 'individual bodies' of enslaved people, instead

focussing on the 'metonymic' function of Liverpool as a stand-in for a wider economic

system.[109]

Walker's view of abolition returns frequently to the charge that the movement is

fashionable and fleeting. Abolitionism is characterised as sanctimonious and even

blasphemous, 'pretending' after an imagined religious motive.[110] Asserting that 'the pop'lar

cry / Some years ago [was] Wilkes and Liberty', he suggests that abolitionism is an

ephemeral fad that will soon pass out of the public consciousness.[111] However, Walker's

rhetoric is ineffectual without positing abolition as a genuine threat. In danger of becoming

'stretch'd to the extreme', abolitionist sensibility has powers to distort reality:

> It melts the bosom, drowns the weeping eyes;
> Like optic glasses fitted to deceive,
> We grasp the object but we nothing have.[112]

Slavery's detractors are ignorant and misguided by overzealous emotion: the problems they

rail against are illusory. Note here the return to the motif of sight and perception, here

specifically the failure of sight. Here, Walker's implication is not only that slavery's injustices

are a mirage, but that the 'melting bosoms' and 'weeping eyes' of sensibility are entirely a

---

[108] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 1016-1017.
[109] Burke, '"Humanity is now the pop'lar cry"', pp. 257-259.
[110] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 1027.
[111] Ibid. l. 1033-1034.
[112] Ibid. l. 1038.; Ibid. l. 1041-1043.

piece of middle-class social spectacle. Walker's prime example of the dangers of abolition, however, plays on the popular fear that Britain might 'give the Slave-trade up to France and Spain', weakening the nation against its colonial competitors.[113]

The social upheavals of the American War of Independence, Liverpool's resulting economic downturn, and the growing abolition movement would challenge the city's relationship with commerce and, indeed, the idea that commerce is conducive to culture or civility. Roscoe's career was built on the assertion that 'utility and pleasure are […] bound together in an indissoluble chain', that commercial innovation and aesthetic purpose were part of the same creative process.[114] But this association was tested under a local government that consistently favoured economic growth over any other element of urban improvement.

Redefining Liberty, 1781-1790

Liverpool's poetic landscape would take on a new set of associations, as well as a new relevance to Britain's self-conception, as war with America began to take a toll on the lives of its maritime labourers and tradesmen alike. In the wake of the war, the campaign for abolition would gain more popular support, spearheaded by the Clapham Sect, and abolitionist poetry would also experience a parallel eminence. As Seymour Drescher argues, the primary period of abolitionist sentiment did not emerge as a direct result of defeat in America, but rather in a period of comparative peace and plenty in the following decade.[115]

---

[113] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 545.
[114] Roscoe, *On the Origins and Vicissitudes of Literature, Science and Art,* p. 72.
[115] Seymour Drescher, 'The Shocking Birth of British Abolitionism', *Slavery & Abolition,* 33: 4, (December 2012), 571-593 (p. 571).

My concern is less with the engendering of abolition, however, and more with the critical reworking of concepts of liberty and nationhood that occurred during and immediately after the wartime period. While a demonstrable increase in America's slaving traffic and its subsequent cultural association with slavery in the eyes of British commentators had powered criticism of the trade, Britain's continued involvement in the triangular trade forced many to the nation's association with liberty. While opinions remain mixed on the war's influence on abolition, Colley views this change of national values as being a direct result of the conflict.[116] As Britain's primary transatlantic port and an epicentre of wartime financial downturn, Liverpool was aptly placed to comment upon the shift in perception of these nationalised attributes. In the latter years of the war with America, and in the years approaching the first push for abolition, William Roscoe and Edward Rushton demonstrate these conflicts of interest through various works which question existing concepts of liberty, the British nation, and the entire commercial project as based in Liverpool. Though, like Walker, Rushton writes from a labouring position, Rushton's 'identification with the dispossessed', to borrow a phrase from Franca Dellarosa, permits him a heightened awareness of the actual human cost of slavery, as well as an empathetic connection to other disempowered British subjects, including those left at home in Liverpool.[117]

Unlike Roscoe, Edward Rushton had seen first-hand the destructive power of the triangular system. Rushton's own experience as a sailor aboard a slaving ship in 1773 had not only displayed to him the extent of the trade's cruelty to its cargo, but an encounter with infectious ophthalmia while treating enslaved Africans had permanently damaged his sight,

---

[116] Colley, *Britons*, p. 354.

[117] Franca Dellarosa, *Talking Revolution: Edward Rushton's Rebellious Poetics, 1782-1814* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014), p. 102.

and these experiences cemented his abolitionist stance in later life. The *West Indian Eclogues*, perhaps Edward Rushton's most famous work, introduces the poet as having

> painted from actual observation. He writes from the heart: for he feels what he describes. In striving to give simplicity of stile to the dialogue, he may have too much neglected those ornaments, of which Poetry ought never, perhaps, to be entirely destitute.[118]

Rushton self-styles as an authentic reporter much in the same way Walker does; it is his ethos, as a labouring poet, that remains his prime selling point. Existing epistolary evidence suggests a collaborative friendship or at least a mutual awareness between Rushton and Roscoe, with the former writing to the latter in 1825 regarding his concerns for the improvement of Liverpool's Insane Asylum.[119] Rushton's context of reception was, however, markedly different from that of his contemporary, in that he claims he has 'no poetical reputation to lose', and can thus speak unmindful of the same critique from which Roscoe would shield himself from by way of anonymity.[120] Bill Hunter claims Rushton to be 'far, far in advance', in terms of his radical expression compared with Roscoe; either way Rushton provides a view of both the city and its relationship with trade that is heavily inflected by his own radical politics and personal experience of maritime labour.[121] Though he would later write on the experiences of enslaved people in the West Indies, Rushton's poetic career commences with commentary on the final years of the American War of Independence, by which time it appeared defeat in the colonies was inevitable.

1781's 'An Irregular Ode' constitutes a more positive nationalist stance than can be seen in Rushton's later contributions. The text opens by lauding the bravery of the British

---

[118] Rushton, advertisement for 'The West-Indian Eclogues' in *The Collected Writings*, ed. by Paul Baines, p. 42.
[119] Edward Rushton, letter to William Roscoe, 12 Jan 1825, Roscoe Letters and Papers, 920.4257 ROS.
[120] Rushton, preface to 'The Dismember'd Empire' in *The Collected Writings*, p. 33.
[121] Hunter, *Forgotten Hero*, p. 8.

spirit, praising Britain as the home of Liberty, now banished from Europe. Rushton begins

the poem *in medias res*, invoking the elemental imagery of the shipwreck:

> As when the rugged blast spreads uproar wide […]
>
> Then on some shatter'd vessel's crazy side,
>
> With all-destroying force its fury hurls:
>
> The staggering bark reels to and fro,
>
> Stunn'd with the dreadful thund'ring blow,
>
> Then instant hoists her tatter'd sail […][122]

Though such instances are unsurprisingly common in Rushton's oeuvre given his career, the

maritime conceit is a constant in the work of numerous literary works concerning Liverpool,

with the association so strong that, as in the case of the frontispiece to Aikin's *Description*, a

ship alone may be used as a shorthand for the city at large.[123] The sea carries great symbolic

potential, variously depicted as the source of exotic bounty and adventure or, as here, the

arbiter of chance, sudden change, and destruction. The naval physician Thomas Trotter,

writing in 1783, would use a prospect of the Mersey estuary at Liverpool as a starting-point

by which to launch into a broader discussion regarding the evils of slavery and a lament for a

lost era of virtuous maritime commerce.[124] Conversely, Thomas Harpley's 1789 drama *The

Genius of Liverpool* would see the god Neptune preside over a sexually charged union

between a female Commerce and the masculine embodiment of Liverpool (as played by

Stephen Kemble and his wife Elizabeth), wholeheartedly praising this tripartite exchange

with no mention of slavery or any other critique of Liverpool's trade.[125] Edward Anderson,

---

[122] Rushton, 'An Irregular Ode' in *The Collected Writings*, pp, 27-29 (l. 1-7).
[123] Aikin, *A Description of the Country from thirty to forty Miles round Manchester*, p. ix.
[124] Trotter, 'Verses, Written in the Ladies' Walk', l. 1-4; Ibid. l. 21-24.
[125] T. Harpley, 'The Genius of Liverpool' in *Dramas and Poems* (Liverpool: H. Hodgson, 1790), pp. 73-85; see also Dellarosa, *Talking Revolution,* pp. 33-37, for more detail on Harpley's allegorical characters.

writing in the early nineteenth century, would insert a short prospect of Liverpool (and one highly redolent of *Mount Pleasant*) within his larger narrative poem combining tales of maritime adventure with his personal spiritual autobiography.[126]

In the work of Rushton and Roscoe, however, the sea is particularly treacherous. Fairer's assessment of the coeval landscape poetry of George Crabbe posits that the sea may be used as an embodiment of Britain's own 'economy of plunder and exploitation'.[127] This idea is only furthered when Liberty's bark touches land. Rushton's depiction of Britain is oddly ambivalent; she is a 'stranger', liable to opposition by 'all the warring world'.[128] This image of Britain standing alone, unaided and envied by her rivals, is a popular nationalistic motif of the period. But by introducing her from the outside, through the newcomer's eyes, Rushton places Britain on the opposite side of the cross-cultural encounter, as unknowable, exotic, and unapproachable, inverting the familiarity of this device. Despite not being a native to Britain, Liberty becomes enshrined as a natural British virtue:

> Still may her liberal blessings wide extend
> To every clime, in ample bounty given;
> Free as the fostering vernal showers descend,
> Free as the pure unbounded light of heaven.[129]

For much of the eighteenth century, as Paul Baines indicates, Liberty had become symbolically aligned with Britain in opposition to 'continental tyranny and surveillance' since the Glorious Revolution of 1688 (though this connection would undergo significant change in just a few years; by 1791 Rushton himself reconnects Liberty with Revolutionary

---

[126] Anderson, *The Sailor,* l. 1416-1428.
[127] Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 201.
[128] Rushton, 'An Irregular Ode', l. 25-26.
[129] Ibid. l. 33-36.

France).[130] The grammatical repetition of these two latter lines foregrounds the significance of freedom to Rushton's text, but also opens up its ironic potential. Written in 1781, in the wake of the 1772 Mansfield Decision, Britain arguably has "given" freedom to enslaved people - but only if they are on her own shores. There is a covert reminder that, on Britain's watch, freedom is not as universal as it seems. Even though this early poem may seem patriotic, Rushton implies that apparently inherent national attributes are not innate and are instead reliant upon specific governmental legislation.

This idea is furthered in 'The Dismember'd Empire', where Rushton locates his narration more specifically within Liverpool's environs, with the city and the date ('November, 1782') included as a preface to the text.[131] This text is potentially written to be read aloud – Rushton does not seem to have been a stranger to ephemeral poetry written for a specific civic performance, an attribute he shares with Roscoe. Here, Rushton argues that Britain's overseas expansion has

> hurl'd destruction 'cross th' Atlantic waves [...]
> Deny'd to others what themselves enjoy'd;
> Since they resolv'd to banish freedom's reign,
> And bind three millions with oppression's chain,
> Or raise aloft grim warfare's crimson'd head,
> And strew their wide domain with mangled dead.
> Such your resolves, O Britons![132]

Rushton's standpoint problematises not foreign people or places but the acts of British people upon entering a foreign space; English sailors '[become] another race of men', losing

---

130 Paul Baines, editorial note on *The Collected Writings,* p. 225.
131 Rushton, note on 'The Dismember'd Empire' in *The Collected Writings*, p. 33.
132 Rushton, 'The Dismember'd Empire', pp. 33-41 (l. 1-11).

all sense of civility or humanity, after overseas travel.[133] Rushton invokes a familiar trope of

colonial horror here, and this exotic shore is rendered dangerous for the demoralising effect

it has on a newcomer. As Alan Bewell details, the colonial encounter frequently involved

exposure to unfamiliar physical maladies on both sides, fast becoming a staple of medical

and literary texts of the Romantic era.[134] Rushton, however, takes this association between

the colonial environment and disease further, evoking a sense of a corresponding moral

contagion. But this corrupting influence is not wholeheartedly attributed to the colonial

environment itself – this meditation is carefully prefixed by Rushton, rendering it merely an

assumption on the part of the British imperial agent ('perchance ye thought') where

responsibility for one's action is displaced onto the foreign landscape.[135] This sense of doubt

is furthered as Rushton satirically sets up this conception as ridiculous: 'As if', he continues,

the mere 'soil' of the foreign land has the power to 'disarm' the moral fortitude of the

transatlantic traveller.[136] Rushton thus works to deconstruct this narrative of the morally

corruptive colonial landscape subtly, instead of simply reaffirming it. Claiming that, after this

moment of moral failure, 'Commerce no longer [swells] the spacious tide' – the trading ports

of Britain, Liverpool included, have been karmically punished, suffering severe financial

losses.[137] Rushton then introduces the disembodied voice of Britain herself, addressing her

own citizens:

> Britain, from her horrid frenzy woke,
> And to her Offspring thus compunctive spoke:—
> Oh! my lov'd sons, this deadly strife forego,

---

[133] Rushton, 'The Dismember'd Empire', l. 16.
[134] Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), p. 3.
[135] Rushton, 'The Dismember'd Empire', l. 15.
[136] Ibid. l. 19-20.
[137] Ibid. l. 81.

> Great are your wrongs, but greater far my woe;
>
> Claims of disputed power I now resign,
>
> And in return, be filial duty mine;
>
> O grant me this, the furious contest cease,
>
> And welcome Liberty, ally'd with peace.
>
> Thus Britain spoke;[138]

Through Rushton's positioning, Britons are rendered as acting against Britain's own interests. To usher in 'Liberty, ally'd with peace', Britain renounces her 'Claims of disputed power' over her colonies, trading imperial supremacy for moral duty. This conflict between real and ideal states is enacted as an identity crisis within the mind of the allegorical nation. The circularity of this speech's structure, parenthetically enclosed in the repeated phrase 'Britain spoke', stresses the importance of its speaker; this message must not be removed from its context, and its oppositional patriotism must not be ignored. However, Britain's subjects are 'deaf to nature's call', leading Rushton to summon a second image of Britain, now physically weathered and aligned with the sea:

> Britannia on a western craig reclin'd,
>
> Her sea-green locks disorder'd in the wind,
>
> The laurel wreath which bound her brows, decay'd,
>
> And frequent throbs her inward woe betray'd;
>
> And oft her sorrowing eyes were anxious cast
>
> Where deep-mouth'd ocean roar'd with every blast;[139]

Rushton summons an emotive and damning portrait of the present moment in history; the nation has been left 'dismember'd' and 'robb'd of half her pow'r'.[140] Having lost her moral

---

[138] Rushton, 'The Dismember'd Empire', l. 91-99.
[139] Ibid. l. 103.; Ibid. l. 133-138.
[140] Ibid. l. 163.

claim to liberty, she is now subject to the sea and to the impassive whims of nature, the

symbolic wreath of victory 'decay'd' upon her head. With the nation losing control of her

colonies to foreign enemies, Rushton observes the de-civilisation of both home port and

colony, with 'Commerce', 'Power, industry, and ev'ry polish'd art' departing at once from the

empire.[141] Rushton's description of a ruined port town sees all vestiges of modern urban

experience vanish:

> Depopulated streets will then relate,
>
> In mournful terms, her lost commercial state;
>
> The domes, assign'd for want and pale distress,
>
> Will then o'erflow with human wretchedness;
>
> The drooping tradesman, with dejected face,
>
> Will then lament his country's sad disgrace,
>
> Will view, with sorrow swelling at his heart,
>
> The crowded once, but now forsaken mart:
>
> The hollow warehouse, and the grass-grown quay,
>
> The empty docks, swift crumbling to decay,
>
> The mold'ring moles, and harbours chok'd with sand,
>
> All, all will shew – a ruinated land! [142]

Though Liverpool is not mentioned outright, Rushton's focus on places of charity and refuge,

warehouses and docks is heavily redolent of Liverpool's urban makeup. The 'mold', 'sand',

and 'grass-grown quay' bear resemblance to Roscoe's rhetorical images of the city regressing

into a pre-modern ruin. Though Roscoe's image is used to warn against material vanity and

implicitly the slave trade in particular, Rushton's suggests instead that this outcome would

follow from the current trend of tyranny, and the failure to reconcile with an America that is

---

[141] Rushton, 'The Dismember'd Empire', l. 216-218.
[142] Ibid. l. 229-240.

at this point a lost cause. Rushton's poem serves to enact dramatically a moment at which Britain's claim to liberty has become seriously jeopardised.

While Liverpool experienced the commercially deleterious aftershocks of war with America, the campaign for abolition was meanwhile gaining ground. The Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade formed in London in 1787, and in Liverpool, Roscoe's poetic register would also undergo a marked shift as public opinion of the slave trade began to depreciate rapidly. Where *Mount Pleasant* is emblematic of Roscoe's tentative attempt to both compliment and critique Liverpool's place in the system of international trade, 1787's *The Wrongs of Africa* stands out as perhaps Roscoe's most radical poetic contribution to the abolition movement. Notably, however, this poem's first iteration was published anonymously. Burke points out that much abolitionist writing in Liverpool – more so than in Bristol – was anonymised, which though it may suggest a certain danger to the author, also implies 'a greater conviction that such works would be noticed'.[143] Where Roscoe's former contributions might be muddled or contradictory, *The Wrongs of Africa* provides a more straightforward insight into the poet's stance, unadulterated by the pitfalls of writing against the interests of his regular audience. Furthermore, Roscoe may ventriloquise his concerns for Liverpool's relationship with liberty, reframing the city's commercialism in a less mediative light.

As in *Mount Pleasant*, Roscoe begins by delineating an idyllic pre-existence before the onset of modern economic constraints: a 'fruitful earth', with 'exhaustless springs', bestowing her wares willingly upon her 'children' indiscriminately.[144] However, this is soon

---

[143] Burke, '"Humanity is now the pop'lar cry"', p. 248.
[144] William Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa, a poem,* part 1 (2 parts) (London: R. Faulder, 1787), l. 49.

followed by a picture of the modern economic system and its associated evils. As

mentioned, the popular conception amongst anti-abolitionists at this time was that African

lives are at best improved, or at least unchanged, by enslavement – Walker claims in *A*

descriptive poem that slavery is already extant as a trade on the African continent before

European intervention.[145] Depicting the exact reverse of Walker's hypothesis, wherein he

argues that slavery is already endemic in a supposedly barbarous and regressive Africa,

Roscoe portrays the 'quenchless thirst of gold' as a uniquely European trait, inflicted on

Africans who previously lived without its influence:

> Thou to their dazzled sight disclosest wide
>
> Thy magazine of wonders, culled with care,
>
> From all the splendid trifles, that adorn
>
> Thine own luxurious region; mimic gems,
>
> That emulate the true; fictitious gold,
>
> To various uses fashion'd, pointing out
>
> Wants which before they knew not; mirrors bright […]
>
> all fantastic folly's jingling bells,
>
> That catch'd th'unpractised ear, and thence convey
>
> Their unsuspected poison to the mind.[146]

As in *Mount Pleasant*, the dangerous aspect of the cross-cultural encounter is figured as

'poison', and furthermore, an 'unsuspected' one. The natives of Roscoe's poetry are

strangers to sin and underhanded violence; their existence is Edenic, though arguably

Roscoe's depiction also renders Africans as simple and gullible. Mark again a preoccupation

with sight and its failure: the gems are 'mimic', the gold 'fictitious', and mirrors completely

---

[145] Walker, *A descriptive poem*, l. 1084-1085.
[146] Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa*, part 1, l. 111.; Ibid. l. 135-147.

without substance save for what they reflect. The naivete of the Africans and duplicity of the

Europeans has made this trade completely unequitable, as the worth of the wares they

desire is fallacious. But 'European avarice' has spoiled the natural amity of international

trade, likened to a 'plague', spread by a devilish 'white deceiver'.[147] 'Liberty and life' are the

cost of this practice; instead of perpetuating newfound freedoms, British interference

sacrifices that of others.[148]

It is in this text that Roscoe employs what Burke has called his 'problematization of

sympathy'; as *The Wrongs of Africa* proceeds, the speaker does not allow his readers any

sentimental enjoyment.[149] Instead, he directly implicates them as indirect contributors to

the trade, an argumentative strand which runs through the entire piece. This idea is

introduced early on, within the poem's first few lines:

> from the noisy haunts
> Of mercantile confusion, where [Humanity's] voice
> Is heard not; from the meretricious glare
> Of crowded theatres, where in thy place
> Sits Sensibility, with wat'ry eye,
> Dropping o'er fancied woes her useless tear;[150]

The figure referred to in the second person here is Humanity itself – to which the poem is

dedicated, and which has been supplanted by the inferior and false Sensibility. Unlike

Humanity, Sensibility's woes are 'fancied', implying a distortion of reality, and her tears are

performative and useless – made even more apparent by her situation within a theatre, not

---

147 Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa*, part 1, l. 150; Ibid. l. 198; Ibid. l. 311.
148 Ibid. l. 221.
149 Burke, '"Humanity is now the pop'lar cry"', p. 255.
150 Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa*, part 1, l. 6-11.

merely a place in which to see a performance but notoriously a place of being seen. This figure strongly resembles the caricature of abolitionists themselves seen in Walker's poem – ironically, the personifications of social evils denigrated by these opposing factions are remarkably similar despite their differing aims. It is interesting that Roscoe associates this emotional performance with 'the noisy haunts / Of mercantile confusion', implicating Liverpool - and her sister port, Bristol - as the strongholds of pointless pity. This argument is politically flexible, as both pro- and anti-slavery commentators benefit by suggesting that performative sensibility is effectively useless; one because it believes the emotive, sensational injustices associated with slavery are not real to begin with, and the other because such grief is applied to 'fancied woes' i.e. the tragic, fictitious scenes exhibited at the theatre, rather than the realities of slavery. Markman Ellis has argued that the anti-slavery movement, emerging coeval to the main body of sentimental literature, permitted 'commercial experiments' expressive of this sentimental attitude without threatening the larger social status quo.[151] Roscoe, however, remains among a number of abolitionist writers to use their poetry to voice concerns about the employment of sentiment within abolitionist thought, and the *Wrongs* can be usefully compared to Anna Laetitia Barbauld's 'Epistle to William Wilberforce', especially given the two poets' documented correspondence. Barbauld's figure of 'Pale Beauty', a similarly feminised figure emblematising false feeling, particularly echoes Roscoe's own personified Sensibility (though notably Barbauld's poem follows the failure of Wilberforce's Abolition Bill, and is written at a time when arguments in the vein of sensibility had proved frustratingly ineffective).[152] Another example of this

---

[151] Markman Ellis, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996), p. 124.

[152] Barbauld, 'The Epistle to William Wilberforce, Esq. on the Rejection of the Bill for abolishing the Slave Trade, 1791' in *The Works, with a Memoir*, vol. 1, ed. by Lucy Aikin (2 vols), pp. 173-179, (l. 57).

argument against 'bastard sensibility' might be found in Coleridge's lecture on the slave trade, likewise published after the defeat of the Wilberforce bill. [153] Though written prior to this more widespread attack on sensibility as a rhetorical tactic, Roscoe's text pre-empts a great deal of this anti-sentimental discourse.

Roscoe goes on to deny his audience any chance to purge themselves of grief through sentimentality, as even the apparently uninvolved citizen partakes the guilt of slavery:

> for is not Man
> The author of the wrong? And shall not they,
> In colour, nation, faith, - associate all –
> Who see, yet not resent it; hear of it,
> Yet stand regardless; know it, yet partake
> The luxuries it supplies; shall these not feel
> The keen emotions of remorse and shame?[154]

To benefit from the spoils of slavery, whether directly or indirectly, is to be complicit, and until one's complicity is recognised, no feeling evinced in response can ever be genuine or productive. However, this more general condemnation stands in contrast to Roscoe's second-person address to the actual slave-master:

> But thou, the master of the sable crew!
> Lord of their lives and ruler of their fate […]
> […] what powers unknown
> Of keen enjoyment can thy nature boast,

---

[153] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'On The Slave Trade' in *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation Writings in the British Romantic Period* vol. 2: 'The Abolition Debate', 9 vols, ed. by Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 1999), pp. 209-220 (p. 218).
[154] Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa*, part 1, l. 365-371.

> That thus thy single bliss can grasp the sum
>
> Of hapless numbers, sacrificed to thee?
>
> - Say, can their tears delight thee? Can their groans
>
> Add poignance to thy pleasures? Or when death
>
> Alarms thee with his summons, canst thou add
>
> The total of their ravish'd lives to thine?[155]

Scott Krawczyk has demonstrated that while James Currie's preface to the 1787 edition of Roscoe's poem serves to reassure the reader that those involved in the business of slavery are not necessarily guilty of 'deliberate wickedness', and his 'rhetorical filter' is clearly meant to temper Roscoe's less gradualist stance.[156] Roscoe's own portrait of these traders, however, is one of sadistic tyranny.

As in *Mount Pleasant*, Roscoe destroys any illusion that slavery can fit comfortably into the free market, or that complies with Christian ethics. At the time of Roscoe's publication, attempts were being made to reconcile Christian belief with the problem of slavery – for instance, the Reverend R. Harris' 1788 tract, *Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave-Trade*, which he had been contracted to compile by profiteers of slavery.[157] As has been discussed, anti-abolitionists such as Walker tended to characterise their opposition as blasphemously usurping the moral high ground, where only God may judge. Here it is the slave masters themselves who ape God as the 'ruler of [the enslaved's] fate'. By referring to human lives and deaths as 'the sum / Of hapless numbers', a 'total' totted up by their master, Roscoe displays the inhumanity of treating enslaved people as nothing but trade stock. Roscoe's broader depiction of 'commercial gain' is notably different

---

[155] Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa*, part 1, l. 69-78.

[156] James Currie, 'Preface' to *The Wrongs of Africa, a poem,* part 1, p. vii; Krawczyk, 'Mediating Abolition', p. 215.

[157] Raymund Harris, *Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave Trade* (London: J. Stockdale, 1788).

from the 'Commerce' of *Mount Pleasant* in that it is masculine: this is affirmed by an

unusual trochee at the beginning of line 468, upending Roscoe's general iambic meter and

forcing the reader to stress this gendered pronoun:

> he, the foulest fiend that ever stalk'd
> Across the confines of this suffering world;
> He, the dread spirit of commercial gain [...][158]

This change not only detaches masculine 'commercial gain' - not quite the same as

'Commerce', perhaps deliberately - from feminine Liverpool, but also from Britain as a

whole, the 'mistress of the main' and 'Queen of Isles'.[159] Roscoe has changed his rhetorical

technique; the need for abolition has become so desperate that he cannot speak of

Liverpool and Commerce interchangeably as before. Similarly, by detaching the act of

commerce itself from its *gains* – which are presumably yielded by any successful commercial

interaction – the poet idealises the immaterial process but derides the material profit. The

only escape from the cognitive dissonance of his earlier work – both laudatory and

condemnatory, refusing to reconcile these oppositional points of view – is to ideologically

unfix unwholesome commercial action from the city, rendering it an externalised problem

rather than one endemic to its society.

Roscoe's final address to Britain at the conclusion of the *Wrongs*' first part contrasts

typical assertions of inherent British liberty with its continued implication in slaving traffic:

though 'prizing freedom dearer than the blood', the country is marked by a 'universal blot',

signifying that Britain '[merits] not [its] blessings'.[160] There is a warning implicit here in

---

[158] Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa*, part 1, l. 466-468.
[159] Ibid. l. 546-548
[160] Ibid. l. 550-555.

Roscoe's use of allusion. Roscoe already compares Britain with classical Greece, but this island queen, 'of faith unblemish'd, of unconquer'd soul,' also strongly resembles Venice, another seaborne commercial state in the style of Tyre – and one which, already declining, within ten years of Roscoe's publication would come to be known as fallen and corrupt, and later associated with tyranny and slavery in Roscoe's own history.[161] If Liverpool, and Britain by extension, fail to learn from this fate, they will destroy everything they hold in high esteem:

> From [Greece's] fate,
> Ye nations learn, that what ye free receive,
> Ye freely give : and O beware the touch
> Of foul domestic slavery! that instills
> Its deadly venom thro' each secret pore,
> And taints the vital source of public weal.[162]

Note the shift from *Mount Pleasant* here – the apparent disconnection between the source of 'public weal' and its effects has been overcome, with slavery 'tainting' both the prosperity and wellbeing of the population. In the same vein, the contradictions that characterise British liberty are no longer to be tolerated. While the appellation of 'domestic slavery' had been applied largely to the tyrannical practices utilised in the classical world, there are examples of its extension also to the contemporary enslavement of Africans.[163] Though Liberty and Britain have not become completely detached from one another, Roscoe's warning is that a symbolic claim on these qualities is not ensured – and should the current trend continue, Britain will not be remembered as the flagbearer of freedom. Liverpudlian

---

[161] Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa*, part 1, l. 549.

[162] Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa, a poem,* part 2 (2 parts) (London: R. Faulder, 1788), l. 480-485.

[163] For example, see John Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (London: R. Hawes, 1774), p. 2.

poets, then, are uniquely positioned to comment upon Liberty's figurative shift of allegiance in this period; as both the epicentre of the slave trade and one of the sites most heavily impacted by the American war, Liverpool acts as the stage upon which international discourse and conflicts of national identity are played out in miniature.

The Road to Abolition: A Liverpool "Renaissance"?

Though the Mansfield Decision of 1772 had meant enslavement in Britain was technically illegal, the trade abroad, which Liverpool still dominated, would continue until 1807, and slavery in the British Empire was totally abolished in 1833. Roscoe, during his stint as MP for Liverpool, played a part in the 1807 Slave Trade Act. The following election would see Roscoe lose his seat as a result, to be replaced by George Canning, the future Prime Minister. Roscoe's support for abolition had been his political downfall, as many members of the commercial class he strove to represent now resented him for endangering their livelihoods. Immediately after the successful passing of the 1807 act, Roscoe faced physical violence from supporters of slavery upon his return to Liverpool, compared by his correspondent William Boyd to the height of politically-motivated violence during the French Revolution.[164] Slavery's centrality to Liverpool's wealth concerned many of its trading families; the swelling naval power of Britain's rivals, and the possibility of war and ruin as a result, weighed heavily on the mind of pro-slavery commentators. One Liverpudlian election tagline of 1790 had suggested an apocalyptic outcome to the suspension of the trade:

If our slave trade had gone, there's an end to our lives,

---

[164] William Boyd, letter to William Roscoe, 27 June 1809, Roscoe Letters and Papers, 920.376 ROS.

Beggars all we must be, our children and wives:

No ships in our ports their proud sails e'er would spread,

And our streets grown with grass, where the cows might be fed.[165]

Pro-slavery popular poetry relies on scaremongering to motivate its reader emotionally. By figuring the trade as central not only to Liverpool's existence but that of the nation, it both plays into loyalist patriotism and a more localised fear of the city's financial and physical decline. The success of the Abolition movement in 1807 however did not lead to Liverpool's ruin, instead uncovering new avenues into cultural relevance and prosperity in the early nineteenth century, as trade in newly developing nations in the Americas became open to maritime trade.[166] This period also saw an upsurge in Liverpudlian cultural life, as its longest-lived Literary and Philosophical Society to date emerged in 1812, with Roscoe as a founding member.

That said, suggestions of a Liverpudlian "renaissance" in the early nineteenth century are not wholly reflected in the local poetry of the period. Despite efforts to redeem the city's legacy and to divorce it from its slaving past, Rushton's poetry at the turn of the century relates the persistent devaluation of the city's most vulnerable inhabitants. The city's 'hardy seamen' are celebrated as nationalistic heroes throughout virtually all of Rushton's oeuvre.[167] But as Fryer illustrates, in many ways seamen were also victims of the slave trade and its particular practice in Liverpool, where trade was orchestrated as cheaply as possible in order to dominate maritime commerce. When their mistreatment of enslaved people was curtailed out of concern for the quality of the stock, captains would redirect their anger

---

[165] "Dicky Sam", quoted in Fryer, *Staying Power,* source unknown, pp. 57-58.
[166] Muir, *A History of Liverpool*, p. 251.
[167] Rushton, 'The Dismember'd Empire', l. 305.

towards their crew. By the end of the eighteenth century, it had become difficult to recruit

sailors, as the profession had become notorious for its associated dangers and the lack of

regard for seamen's wellbeing. Between 1784 and 1790, the mortality rate for sailors on

slave ships was worse than that of the people they transported, at a rate of one in five.[168]

Pressganging, too, escalated during the Revolutionary period in France and into the

Napoleonic wars, seeing many seamen unwillingly forced into naval service. Muir documents

the profound effect of the French Revolutionary War upon the demand for new sailors in

1795, which saw 1,700 new men conscripted from Liverpool alone.[169] This section will cover

the poetry of Rushton's later career and how it depicts the city as consistently plagued by

the dehumanisation and mistreatment of maritime labourers, even as abolition became a

more realistic prospect.

Firstly, I will consider Rushton's depiction of the Liverpool maritime profession, its

importance to both local and national security and the extreme dangers of the work itself, in

three short narrative ballads: 'The Neglected Tars of Britain', 'Will Clewline', and 'Seamen's

Nursery'. All three poems are strongly didactic, asking for the observation and action of his

local audience, and essentially calling for an intervention into the sad state of his colleagues.

'The Neglected Tars' functions as a reminder to the British people of the debt they owe to

sailors (or 'hardy tars'), primarily through a refrain which runs through several verses,

concluding that 'when again you're plunged in war, / [The tar]'ll shew his daring spirit'.[170]

Initially Rushton presents the reader with exotic images of hardship braved by his heroic

protagonist, a singular stand-in for the maritime class as a whole:

---

[168] Fryer, *Staying Power*, p. 55.
[169] Muir, *A History of Liverpool*, p. 208.
[170] Rushton, 'The Neglected Tars of Britain' in *The Collected Writings*, pp. 62-63 (l. 12).

When long becalm'd, on southern brine,

Where scorching beams assail him:

When all the canvas hangs supine,

And food and water fail him;

Then oft he dreams of Britain's shore,

Where plenty still is reigning [...][171]

However meagre and desolate his foreign surroundings, the memory of home sustains the tar's spirit. Adding that on 'that noxious coast [...] death so oft befriends him', the speaker's romanticised image retains a pertinent awareness of the high mortality of sailors.[172] But there is an ironic suggestion in Rushton's use of present tense ('plenty *still is* reigning'), especially given that, in 1787, Liverpool was recovering financially and socially from the effects of war with America. Approaching the poem's conclusion, Rushton offers a grim contrast to the sailor's expectations of his homecoming:

Behold him move along the pier,

Pale, meagre, and dejected!

Behold him begging for employ!

Behold him disregarded!

Then view the anguish in his eye,

And say, are tars rewarded?[173]

Rushton's imperative demand for us to 'behold' the degraded tar – and the insistence that the reader views his eye specifically, simultaneously viewing and being viewed – calls up again the theme of sight remarked upon in the work of Roscoe and Walker. This subject cannot be more relevant to Rushton especially, given his own loss of vision on a slaving

---

[171] Rushton, 'The Neglected Tars', l. 31-36.
[172] Ibid. l. 40-41.
[173] Ibid. l. 51-56.

venture. That the eye is the situation of suffering in the returning sailor is hardly surprising, but Rushton's motive here is more complex. Burke notes a tendency in Rushton's work to not show violence and degradation (associated mostly with slavery) directly, but to urge his audience to imagine it themselves, thus recognising their complicity in its enaction.[174] Here, again, the poet invites a reader to partake in the work of visualising real suffering, an action by which 'the failure of conventional modes of seeing […] offers a moment of radical and desirable possibility'.[175] Rushton's tone then takes a turn for the accusatory, adopting the second person to demand a reply from his audience:

> To them your dearest rights you owe;
> In peace then would you starve them?
> What say, ye Britain's sons? —[176]

The appellation of 'Britain's sons' is expansive, and implicates all of his domestic readers, regardless of their social standing, in the neglect of the maritime class (though is heavily gendered, with no suggestion of a female readership playing a role here). Warning that 'grim War shall come again', the conclusion of 'Neglected Tars' stands as a caution to those who would take seamen for granted.[177] Though this poem is hardly pacifistic in its expression, it suggests a dangerous ambivalence at work towards the human instruments of warfare, and one which ultimately will leave Britain undefended against her maritime foes. Already there is an emergent sense that the dehumanisation of the individual bodies of labour, war and trade consistently endangers the individuals in question.

---

[174] Burke, '"Humanity is now the pop'lar cry"', p. 253.
[175] Ibid. p. 259.
[176] Rushton, 'The Neglected Tars', l. 58.
[177] Ibid. l. 64.

'Seamen's Nursery' (1794) comments upon the poor living conditions of slaving ships, and the alien dangers awaiting mariners in the tropics, approaching the abolitionist argument from an alternative angle than that of the oft-sentimentalised enslaved African. The title refers to a popular defence of the triangular trade employed by its patrons: that it provided a 'nursery', or a mode of professional training, for future seamen. Rushton joins the ranks of prominent abolitionists including Thomas Clarkson in his condemnation of this logic; for the reasons given above, and as Peter Kitson and Debbie Lee explain, the trade was 'a destroyer rather than a nurturer of seamen'.[178] The same argument is made by Coleridge's essay, published a year after Rushton's poem, and given that both texts appear after the failure of Wilberforce's Bill, they can be considered as part of the same change of rhetorical tactics on the part of abolitionists, departing from an emotive presentation of the suffering of the enslaved to a logical deconstruction of the trade's impact on Britain's own citizens.[179] The idea recurs again in *Anderson*'s The Sailor, published in the following decade; upon observing a 'Guinea ship' at Liverpool's docks, his autobiographical speaker marvels at 'How many [sailors] die' and, respectively, 'how few are sailors made'.[180]

Opening with a call to destroy 'Afric's trade', a practice 'whose every feature / A horrid wildness wears', Rushton introduces us to his seafaring protagonist Jem, who follows a similar professional trajectory to his own.[181] Having been 'lur'd by the promise of promotion', Jem embarks for Africa aboard a slaving ship.[182] Already, there are clear parallels between the sailor and the enslaved person– like the Africans of Roscoe's work, Jem is taken

---

[178] Peter J. Kitson and Debbie Lee, 'Introduction' to *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period* vol. 2: 'The Abolition Debate', 9 vols, p. xvii.
[179] Coleridge, 'On the Slave Trade', p. 215.
[180] Anderson, *The Sailor*, l. 1390.
[181] Rushton, 'Seamen's Nursery' in *The Collected Writings,* pp. 83-84 (l. 2-6).
[182] Ibid. l. 9.

in by the promise of material gain, and will pay a deadly price for it. The moment he

broaches Africa's 'baneful soil', Jem is doomed to die: the thought of home 'possesses' his

final thoughts as he is overcome by 'deadly nausea'.[183] Just as Rushton's other fictionalised

sailors remember home in their moment of peril or death, the poignancy of Jem's death is

augmented by the stress upon his distance from his home port. Rushton's final lament upon

Jem's passing highlights again his spatial and social displacement:

> Thus far from every dear connexion,
>
> In sorrow doubly dear,
>
> No tongue to whisper kind affection,
>
> Nor soothe each boding fear,
>
> Uncheer'd, unnurs'd, nay unattended […][184]

Here we see reflected the darker aspect of Liverpool's relationship with the wider world.

Unlike Walker and Roscoe, Rushton cannot imagine Liverpool as a plentiful provider and

mediator between Britain and the rest of the globe; all there is to reap from this relationship

is disconnection and loss. Added lines from a reprint of the poem in 1806 further this

sentiment, as the exotic plants and animals that furnish the tropics overrun Jem's resting

place:

> Now o'er his grave, with breezy motion,
>
> The drooping wild-cane sighs,
>
> And from the ever-beating ocean
>
> Hoarse gloomy murmurs rise.
>
> Swift thro' the weeds and flowers that cover
>
> His turf, the lizards play,

---

[183] Rushton, 'Seamen's Nursery', l. 18; Ibid. l. 22-23.
[184] Ibid. l. 33-36.

> While o'er the spot dark vultures hover,
>
> And eye the earth for prey.[185]

While invoking a perhaps familiar register of the colonial gothic, it is important to note that Rushton's implicit reference to the experience of enslavement and its commonalities with the mistreatment of sailors gestures towards a larger commercial system unmindful of the collateral damage it deals to society's unfortunates, and one that is ultimately self-destructive.

Carrying a similar didactic message, 'Will Clewline', distributed in 1801 as a broadside ballad, follows the story of its eponymous protagonist, pressganged after his return from life at sea. A 'clewline' is a part of a ship, and stock sailor characters bearing this name date back to Tobias Smollett's *Launcelot Greaves*, first published in 1762. At first, Rushton seems to open Will's story at what should be its logical conclusion, using present perfect tense to suggest an action that is permanently completed:

> From fever, storm, famine, and all the sad store
> Of hardships, by seamen endured,
> Behold poor Will Clewline escaped! And once more
> With his wife and children safe moor'd![186]

Rushton again asks us to observe his protagonist's state physically, in a manner reminiscent of his technique in 'Neglected Tars'. After this treacherous but rewarding voyage, Will is eager to share the details of his travels with his family, promising 'cocoa-nuts, sugar, and tamarinds […] soon to arrive from the ship'.[187] Unusually for Rushton, the colonial landscape

---

[185] Edward Rushton, 'The Seaman's Nursery', in *Poems* (London: T. Ostell, 1806), pp. 107-110 (l. 33-40).
[186] Rushton, 'Will Clewline' in *The Collected Writings*, pp. 108-109 (l. 5-8).
[187] Ibid. l. 15-16.

suggested here is not one of horror and estrangement, but exotic delights and riches to be shared with one's home country. As Rushton continues however, it is revealed that the true site of oppression is in fact Will's hometown, as 'like a tempest that sweeps through the sky, / and kills the first buds of the year', the 'ruffian' pressgang abducts him from his home in a heavily sensationalised, emotive scene:

> They seize on their prey, all relentless as fate,
>
> He struggles – is instantly bound,
>
> Wild scream the poor children, and lo! His lov'd Kate
>
> Sinks pale and convulsed to the ground![188]

Having undergone one naval journey, Will returns home only to be pressganged into another by force. At this point the function of Rushton's choice of tense makes a notable shift, forcing the reader to confront the idea that scenes such as this are currently taking place around them. The fate that now awaits Will bears likeness to the conditions in which enslaved people were transported; in 'the hold of a tender, deep, crouded and foul', 'confined' and 'unfriended' – upon arrival at Plymouth, Will is actively described as 'enslav'd', and the poem's culmination sees him die in battle.[189] Finally, Rushton rounds off with a stark message for those who allow these moral failings:

> Ye statesmen who manage this cold-blooded land,
>
> And who boast of your seamen's exploits […]
>
> Like felons no more, let the sons of the main
>
> Be sever'd from all that is dear;
>
> If their sufferings and wrongs be a national stain,
>
> Let those sufferings and wrongs disappear.[190]

---

[188] Rushton, 'Will Clewline', l. 25-28.; Ibid. l 29-32.
[189] Ibid. l. 33-36; Ibid. l. 41.
[190] Ibid. l. 49-56.

Rushton's language conveys the more general expression of displacement, one that may be felt both here and in his abolitionist verse – 'sever'd from all that is dear', the demand for naval military forces at work in Liverpool facilitates the disruption of social and familial groups. The mention of 'felons' likens pressganging to the common practice of transportation as punishment, another process sanctioned by law that severs familial and social connection. As Britain's gateway to the world, Liverpool offers travel and all manner of goods from foreign shores – but it is equally the situation of unwilling departure, separation, and loss. Rushton's candidness on this subject saw his professional life suffer as a result; Baines documents that he lost his post as editor of the *Liverpool Herald* due to his controversial writings against the injudicious practices of the British navy.[191]

Rushton's most complete depiction of Liverpool itself is to be found in one of his later poems, entitled 'To a Redbreast'. Published in 1806, the year before the Abolition act, the poem begins with a brief invocation of a lost pastoral sphere, much like *Mount Pleasant*, offering a comparative vision of nineteenth-century Liverpool in response:

> Poor bird, 'tis strange that thou shouldst roam
> So far from thy sequester'd home,
> Shouldst leave the pure, the silent shade
> For all this filth, this crash of trade […]
> Shouldst hither come, sweet fool, to waste thy warbling strain.[192]

If the above stanza does not make the speaker's urban disenchantment apparent enough, the poem continues to demonstrate the regressive and even inhumane conditions the city

---

[191] Baines, note on *The Collected Writings*, p. 278
[192] Rushton, 'To a Redbreast', in *The Collected Writings*, pp. 116-118 (l. 5-10).

centre exhibits: the robin becomes exposed to 'half nutrition [which] wastes his form', watching the sufferings of 'the crowd below'.[193] The city is not only an incongruous setting for a natural creature, but an inhospitable one. The root of this problem is revealed by the speaker to be the townspeople's fixation on material gain:

> Sweet are thy notes, yet minds intent
> On life's prime object – cent. per cent.
> Heed not thy soft delicious strain,
> Nor any notes, save notes of gain;
> Oh Ruddock, couldst thou name some shore
> By Britain's trade uncurs'd before,
> Where Afric's injur'd race would come
> In crowds, for half the present sum,
> Or couldst thou aid the speculating throng,
> The great commercial few would pause, and praise thy song.[194]

The supposed 'moral economy', the system of compassionate exchange that forms the backbone of traditional rural society, is unceremoniously usurped by the urban material economy.[195] Though 'cent. per cent' is in itself a complete phrase, its usage here introduces some intriguing metrical and allusive features; the regularity of Rushton's tetrameter is disrupted by the repetition of 'cent. per cent', and is preceded by a sudden caesura. The poem's own 'soft delicious strain' is brought to a halt and is pushed forward in unnatural regularity. Employing polysemy to transform the 'notes' of a song into banknotes, the entire catalogue of the pastoral is pushed into an uncompromising commercial sphere where it cannot survive. The only possibility to ensure its survival, Rushton suggests, is to somehow

---

[193] Rushton, 'To a Redbreast', l. 28-29.
[194] Ibid. l. 31-40.
[195] Fairer, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century*, p. 200.

make it profitable. Rushton's image of the 'unperverted taste' of the African crowds calls to mind Roscoe's own sympathetic African characters, morally poisoned by a heretofore unknown European greed.[196] Rushton's further description of the noise of the docks then descends into atonal chaos:

> why forsake the lonely glen
> For this dire deaf'ning din of men;
> The rattling cart, the driver's bawl,
> The mallet's stroke, the hawker's call,
> The child's shrill scream, the windlass-song,
> As slow the vessel moves along,
> All these commix'd, with many a harsh sound more,
> Rise to thy bleak abode in one discordant roar.[197]

The culminating couplets of each stanza, three syllables longer than the preceding lines, add a clumsiness here as each separate sound is reduced to a meaningless drone. Just as the boundaries between distinct sensory experiences collapse, intrusive metric devices (such the three consecutive stressed syllables of 'harsh sound more') interrupt the natural flow of each line and mimic the very soundscape Rushton seeks to describe. 'To a Redbreast' finishes on the speaker's assertion that 'thou canst not feed on slates and stone', the urban landscape appropriating the 'callous' nature of its self-serving commercial populace.[198] The poem stands out as one of the few physical descriptions of Liverpool in Rushton's work, presenting a strong contrast to the sense of local pride previously bolstered by his contemporaries.

---

[196] Roscoe, *The Wrongs of Africa,* part 1, l. 163.
[197] Rushton, 'To a Redbreast', l. 43-50.
[198] Ibid. l. 58-60.

Edward Rushton's later work expresses a profound and widespread anxiety about the place of the individual within a capricious commercial system that prizes material gain over human dignity. In doing so the poet contributes to a trend that can be traced all the way back to *Mount Pleasant*: the uneasy striking of a balance between culture and commerce, a debate which seems to form the backbone of virtually all poetic depictions of the city. While for both Roscoe and Walker, a specific definition of commerce can harmonise with the city's civil and cultural existence, the same cannot be said of the economic system at work in Liverpool as depicted by Rushton. Speaking on the part of the city's maritime class, Rushton lends a voice to a group that, in the work of his contemporaries, is voiceless. Reduced to disruptive background noise in *Mount Pleasant*, and treated as the necessary victims of inevitable peril at sea in *A descriptive poem*, maritime labourers – despite their centrality to Liverpool's wealth, and their formation of a significant sector of the city's population – are not considered as full citizens to whom the urbane benefits of commerce and culture in tandem might be availed. Understood as 'Amphibious', their treacherous work rendering them 'neither living properly nor dead', the liminal nature of these individuals leaves them exempt from the social protections that any positive projection of Liverpool's potential improvement can afford, even if such a projection is abolitionist and liberal in its bent.[199]

Though the city's profits did not see a total downturn after the cessation of slavery, the tension between commerce and culture did not come to an end – the figuration of human beings as merely agents of labour or profit was not limited to the treatment of enslaved people, but also extended to its own less fortunate townspeople. During Rushton's own time of writing, notable radicals such as William Cobbett had opposed abolition,

---

[199] Walker, *A descriptive poem,* l. 308-309.

proclaiming it to be a distraction from the virtual enslavement suffered by domestic workforces.[200] This sentiment would intensify into the nineteenth century, even after abolition. The pamphleteer Richard Oastler would condemn the journalist, politician and abolitionist Edward Baines, in 1835, on the basis that he had allowed the continuation of child factory labour in Leeds, and Oastler's pamphlet would emotively juxtapose 'little freeborn English slaves' with 'full grown BLACK "apprentices"', going so far as to erroneously claim that chattel slavery in the Americas had 'spared the little ones'.[201] But Rushton's foregrounding of the maritime class is not undertaken to undercut support for abolition – rather, to indicate, through its subtle use of allusion, that both British workers and enslaved people had fallen victim to the same endemic problem of commodification.

---

[200] Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2006) p. 10.

[201] Richard Oastler, *Slavery in Yorkshire – Monstrous Barbarity !!!* (Bradford: J. Atkinson, 1835), p. 2; Ibid. p. 4; Ibid pp. 3-4.

Chapter Three, 'To love like brothers': Community and Connectivity in Sheffield Poetry

A memoir of James Montgomery in an 1827 edition of the London *Lady's Magazine* provides a portrait of a rather contradictory literary figure. While at present enjoying '*otium cum diginitate'* and renowned for his 'public character', the article nevertheless unfurls Montgomery's history of political stigmatisation:

> At length, in 1792, he repaired to Sheffield, and became an assistant to Mr. [Gales], the proprietor of a popular newspaper called the Register. At that time, the spirit of party had been raised by the French revolution to a great height, and all who were not slavishly devoted to the existing government were stigmatised as Jacobins ; and, as Mr. Montgomery was not ashamed to acknowledge that he was attached to the glorious cause of freedom, he fell under the odium in which many respectable men were involved [...][1]

Recalling an episode during which Montgomery was imprisoned twice for seditious activity, this article attempts to reform the poet's character; distancing its subject from the 'spirit' of the late eighteenth century, the clarity of hindsight emphasises Montgomery's 'respectability', and the 'glorious' nature of his cause. Values had shifted since Montgomery's early days, and by the 1820s, the repressive measures of the past were widely regarded as unreasonable. But this piece illustrates the dramatic trajectory of Montgomery's career from its beginnings in localised radicalism to nationwide respectability and recognition in the next century. Montgomery is notable in that his influence as a cultural actor in Sheffield was widespread; as editor of the *Iris*, as the *Sheffield Register* was rebranded under his direction, Montgomery frequently published the works of local poets, and this continued when the *Iris* office became the printing house for a number of monographs by local writers, many of whom had found their start in one of Sheffield's numerous influential papers.

---

[1] Anonymous, 'A Memoir of Mr. Montgomery; with a Portrait of that distinguished Poet', *Lady's Magazine; or, Mirror of the Belles-Lettres, Fashions, Fine Arts, Music, Drama, etc,* 30 Nov 1827, pp. 614-615 (p. 615).

For the most part, this thesis contends with cities whose reputations during the era in question as overcommercialised or "unpoetic" impacted attempts to demonstrate literary identity, or denied national recognition to emergent poetic voices in the provinces. For instance, Chapter Two has demonstrated Liverpool's struggle to be recognised as a cultural centre due to its heavy association with a supposedly all-consuming commercial interest, and Chapter Four will document a similar phenomenon present in Manchester, intensified by its association with manufacturing. Described by Joan Qionglin Tan and Sandro Jung as a 'thriving cultural center' by the end of the eighteenth century, Sheffield provides a counterpoint to these examples.[2] While the city retained a reputation for provinciality and a perceived lack of refinement, the highly productive socio-literary networks forged by individuals such as Montgomery created an effusion of both oral and printed literature written about the city, by and for its own citizens though also appealing strongly to a national readership. This chapter will excavate the foundations of Sheffield's collaborative, highly oral poetic tradition during the eighteenth century, and follow this trend through the subsequent boom of journalistic print culture at the turn of the century. In turn, I will demonstrate how, alongside advances in technology and transport, the collectivism characteristic of eighteenth-century Sheffield develops into a far more individualistic form of poetic expression into the 1800s.

Due to Sheffield's particular literary productivity in this period, this chapter will cover a larger group of authors, some of whom utilise pseudonyms or write anonymously, and some about whom little biographical detail is available. Several well-known and prolific figures, however, will occupy the main body of the chapter. Montgomery (1771-1854), with his role at the *Iris* and position at the head of the city's Literary and Philosophical Society, might be

---

[2] Tan and Jung, 'Sarah Pearson', p. 18.

considered as part of a connective tissue between many of these figures. Montgomery's literary works, first finding readership in Sheffield and then expanding outwards onto a national stage, can be regarded as a template for those of several of his local contemporaries. Other key figures include Joseph Mather (1737-1804), whose oral street poetry roughly coincides with Montgomery's early journalism and radicalism; Barbara Hoole (1770-1844), an Evangelical children's author whose work Montgomery published, and John Holland (1794-1872), a later contributor to the *Iris* and Montgomery's biographer. Lastly, the chapter will consider the work of Ebenezer Elliott (1781-1849), also known as the 'Corn Law Poet', whose poetry documents a city transformed after successive physical and social transformations in the early- to mid-nineteenth century.

In order to contextualise Sheffield's unique literary culture, the development of the city in the eighteenth century must be taken into account. Despite possessing a wealth of natural resources such as coal and iron ore, Sheffield's industrial growth was hindered, as David Fine notes, due to its degree of isolation from trade networks. While the scarcity of its metal produce rendered their manufactures more valuable, the town had not seen significant growth or redevelopment since the late fifteenth century.[3] A number of technological advancements in the early eighteenth century would finally see an urban upsurge take place in Sheffield, however. By 1709, steel could be produced in Sheffield rather than imported from Europe, and the extension of the navigable Don to neighbouring Tinsley in 1732 would drastically reduce the difficulty of transporting goods into the town.[4] Between 1672 and 1736, Sheffield's population would triple from under 3,000 to 10,121 inhabitants.[5] Later into the

---

[3] David Fine, *Sheffield: History & Guide* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003), p. 46.
[4] Ibid. p. 56; Ibid. p. 13.
[5] Ibid. p. 58.

century, however, further innovations in the metal trade would decisively transform Sheffield's social and physical landscape. The invention of Sheffield plate by Thomas Bolsouver in 1743 would revolutionise the industry; by combining silver and copper, items could be quickly and cheaply produced that might exactly replicate more expensive sterling silver originals. As Helen Clifford notes, Sheffield plate's success lay in the eighteenth-century taste for 'novelty and variety', complimented well by the substance's vast range of potential applications.[6] This success would trigger a drive to reclaim the city's governance over their own trade from the London merchants, with a parallel movement taking place in Birmingham. Furthermore, the introduction of the first steam engine for iron manufacture in 1782 would centralise factory production and urban growth in Sheffield, much in the same manner it would in Manchester.[7]

Throughout this period, Sheffield's social systems were presided over by a series of labouring and literary communities who would have their own impact upon the city's poetic output. Since the seventeenth century, the local abundance of water power had brought individual workers into collective and convivial workplaces.[8] The erection of the first Cutler's Hall in 1638, followed by the formation of their autonomous company four years later, would further cement a sense of shared culture, which would emerge in the late eighteenth century in an idiosyncratic, highly oral poetic form.[9] It was at a meeting held at the Cutler's Hall in 1822 that the Literary and Philosophical Society was formed, with Montgomery as a central member. Outside of this genteel sphere, however, the influence of local labour still shaped

---

[6] Helen Clifford, 'Concepts of Invention, Identity, and Imitation in the London and Provincial Metal-Working Trades, 1750-1800', *Journal of Design History*, 12: 3 "Eighteenth-Century Markets and Manufactures in England and France" (1999), 241-255 (P. 242).
[7] Fine, *Sheffield: History & Guide*, p. 68.
[8] Ibid. p. 49.
[9] Ibid. p. 54.

the city's social life. In 1832, the city would establish its Mechanics' Institute, to which Ebenezer Elliot would belong, and to whom a number of his poems are addressed. Elliot would famously play a part in the establishment of the city's Anti-Corn Law Society, continuing in a tradition of political opposition inherited from the poets of the preceding century. Sheffield's poetic output was predominated by a front of writers producing literature written for, and delivered on behalf of, a wider collective, linked by professional, political, or intellectual common interests.

Outside of this intellectual network, however, Sheffield was also becoming more interconnected on a physical level. After years of setbacks, the city would establish a national canal link in 1819, and in 1821 would finally gain a turnpike road connecting it to Glossop and ultimately on to Manchester.[10] In 1838, the opening of the Sheffield and Rotherham railway would connect the city to a growing national transport network, and it is this transformed and modernised landscape that Elliott's own brand of politically motivated poetry speaks to. By this point, poets such as Elliott and Montgomery had found an audience on a national level, and were altering their poetic outputs to accommodate for more generalised tastes. This chapter will demonstrate the ways in which this change of audience resulted in a transformation of their poetic output formally and thematically, with a secondary focus on the figure of the individualised poetic ego on the part of editors and reviewers, as the nineteenth century progressed.

---

[10] Fine, *Sheffield: History & Guide*, p. 62.

Joseph Mather and Oral Street Lyric

To properly represent the oral street culture of late eighteenth-century Sheffield, John Wilson's 1862 collection of Sheffield verse will provide a valuable reference point for my discussion. While including the output of several labouring-class poets, Wilson's text acts primarily as one of the few printed editions of Joseph Mather's *Songs*. Mather worked as a file cutter in the workshop of Nicholas Jackson, and his highly ephemeral poems narrate a series of local happenstances and concerns for inhabitants of the city during the 1780s and 1790s. As my discussion of his work will illustrate, Mather's urban world is ruled by social inclusion and exclusion, and is one dominated by commonalities of social class.

Though little biographical detail is known about Mather, Wilson offers some nineteenth-century perspectives on the circumstances of his life and career. There is a broad suggestion of his Methodism, and knowledge of the Bible; his 'satirical productions' seem often to have been performed in public houses, and Wilson figures him as a popular 'champion of labour'.[11] Indeed, the popular legacy of Mather seems to be that of an idealised working man, and one who represents not merely himself but 'the thoughts and feelings of his class'.[12] There is also some sense of Mather's radicalism, and the inference that his 'singing' had the deliberate effect of persuading others to a similar cause, perhaps due to the comparative efficiency of spreading the spoken rather than the printed word.[13] John Crome, his first publisher, infers that Mather's lyrics went some way toward forcing masters away from unpopular management practices, his poetic voice effectively crystallising his colleagues' discontent.[14] Whether these rather folkloric assumptions are true remains to be seen, but

---

[11] John Wilson, 'Preface to the reader', Mather, ed. By John Wilson, p. vii; ibid. p. iii; ibid. p. xi.
[12] Ibid. p. xi
[13] Ibid. p. ix.
[14] John Crome, *The poetical works of the late Joseph Mather*, (2 vols.) vol. 1 (Sheffield: J. Crome, 1811) p. i.

Mather as a popular figure embodies much of the style and delivery of a particular form of street poetry. Employing a highly theatrical and comic performance in order to disseminate his *Songs*, Mather's oeuvre provides a wealth of loco-specific poetry which also manages to refer directly to local instances and events of importance. Mather's work enjoyed a brief period of rediscovery in the folk revival movement of the 1960s, during which Paul Smith and John Widdowson found that Mather's song 'Roundlegs' was still in oral circulation among Sheffield workmen, testament to the longevity of this particular mode of transmission.[15] That Wilson undertakes his study in the mid-nineteenth century, some half decade after Mather's death, however also suggests that at the high point of Sheffield's subsequent industrial explosion and urban growth, Mather's compositions had a particular resonance among local historians.

It is difficult to overstate how important a sense of shared trade is in the oral poetry of this period. In his collection, Wilson illustrates the difficulties of editing texts which have only rarely been transcribed previously. Though he refers to Crome's 1811 edition of the *Songs*, Wilson also credits the 'Sheffield workmen', for whom the *Songs* have remained an oral inheritance.[16] In this case, the instability of Wilson's edition should be recognised – having been transcribed from oral dictation after the poet's death in 1804, it is hard to ascertain whether these are the exact versions of the *Songs* Mather himself would have sung. Wilson owns that 'some defects may have occurred' in the original transcription, and these mistakes would have been carried over into his own collection.[17] It is also difficult to attribute the poems composed in this manner to a single individual; the public nature of both their

---

[15] Smith, 'Joseph Mather: Filesmith and Ballad-monger', p. 271.
[16] Wilson, 'Preface to the reader', p. iv.
[17] Ibid. p. iii.

conception and performance, and thus the potential for imitation or referentiality, is a staple of their subject matter and form. The poets who craft these works speak less for themselves, and more for a specific sector of society. In this way, Sheffield oral poetry may be likened to the output of the metalworkers themselves. Robert Rowe suggests that

> It is not possible to associate a particular design exclusively with one man, or even with one family, resulting in an almost medieval anonymity about this aspect of Sheffield production […] one has to think in terms of a Sheffield manner rather than a characteristic touch of any individual maker […][18]

Furthermore, Clifford goes on to describe the elusive nature of originality in any craft or artistry of the eighteenth century, due to a difference of values prior to the Victorian era. Clifford finds imitation to be 'central not only to the practice of art, but also a crucial stimulus to design and consumption' not carrying a negative connotation during this time of both industrial and poetic experimentation.[19] This could, then, go some way to explain the ways in which poetry in this context is collectively owned, and representative not so much of an individual but of a group with shared experiences.

To use an example from one of Mather's contemporaries, 'The Cutler's Song', credited to 'Alex. Stephens' in Wilson's 1862 collection, introduces what can be considered to be some of the key generic features of this specific variety of labouring lyric.[20] A note on the text suggests the poem was 'sung at the theatre with great applause'; the theatre is a recurring location for many poems, including several in the emerging print culture of the following

---

[18] Robert Rowe, *Adam Silver 1765-1795* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965) p. 15.
[19] Clifford, 'Concepts of Invention, Identity, and Imitation', p. 250.
[20] Wilson, editorial note to *The Songs*, p. 91.

decades, which will be touched on presently.[21] Stephens' speaker presents the reader with now-familiar references to Sheffield's local industry:

> You beaus and you bloods, you bucks and you rakes,
>
> You ne'er eat a meal sweet industry makes.
>
> Despise us mechanics! We're tradesmen, 'tis true;
>
> But without us mechanics, what would the world do?
>
> Could trees be clipp'd, sheep be shorn, clothes be cut out,
>
> Without Sheffield shears? No, no, without doubt.
>
> Nor let landed men our black smithies be scorning,
>
> For without scythes and sickles how could folk get corn in?[22]

Stephens delivers a convincing account of Sheffield's centrality to the nation and its prosperity. The production of daily necessities such as cereals and textiles are figured as a network of interrelated industries, of which Sheffield's metal trade is a key component, to the extent that these 'other trades' could not function without it.[23] But even as Stephens reiterates the importance of Sheffield's manufactures within a national industrial system, there is a clearly demarcated in-group related by Stephens' use of personal pronouns and collective nouns ('us mechanics', 'our black smithies'), and an excluded group of fashionable elites. It may be productive to understand the overt theatricality of this piece (given its place of performance and use of comic dialect) as being written with a fashionable, theatre-going audience in mind, and playing on the ironic distance between these two disparate social groups. It is this trend of inclusion and exclusion that defines the sense of community within labouring-class street poetry of this period. Stephens' poem also hints to the place of Sheffield's metalwork within

---

[21] Wilson, editorial note to *The Songs*, p. 91.

[22] Alex Stephens, 'The Cutler's Song'*, The Songs of Joseph Mather*, ed. by John Wilson, pp. 91-92 (l. 9-16).

[23] Ibid. l. 24.

the empire as well as the nation; exhibited in the 'Indies', 'Afric' and 'America's coast' alike, the goods produced in Sheffield's workshops are already circulating on an international scale, despite their provincial origins.[24]

The main body of Wilson's text, however, concerns Joseph Mather, and so bearing that in mind I will turn now to his two-part poem entitled 'Sheffield Races'. This drinking song quickly establishes the social divisions drawn in Mather's imaginary, presumably narrating an event dated by the Unitarian minister and historian Joseph Hunter back to 1713, taking place at nearby Crook's Moor.[25] Though Mather's exact date of composition is uncertain, by the point of publication, this event had become a thing of the past. As Wilson notes, the races had been discontinued by 1782; the land was privately enclosed in 1791, contributing, as David Price writes, to the popular agitation that would trigger the Broomhall Riots of the same year. James Wilkinson, the vicar of Sheffield, would see his house targeted by destructive rioters in an event also commemorated, as Price notes, by a verse of Mather's.[26] Depending on when 'Sheffield Races' was contrived, then, it is possible to understand this poem as either celebrating an ongoing local tradition, or elegising part of a way of life lost to recent local development.

A sense of familiarity is immediately communicated by Mather's use of personal names, again perhaps of more apparent relevance to an insider than an outsider. Naming 'Johny', 'Harry and Ruth', as well as some characters who are defined by physical traits ('Dolly, that crooked old woman', 'full-breasted Mary' and 'squint-ey'd Poll'), Mather summons a

---

[24] Stephens, 'Cutler's Song', l. 26-28.

[25] Joseph Hunter, *Hallamshire; The History and Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor and Jones, 1819), p. 196.

[26] Wilson, editorial note to *The Songs*, p. 12; David Price, *Sheffield Troublemakers: Rebels and Radicals in Sheffield History* (Andover: Phillimore and Co., 2008), pp. 13-14.

highly visual social world, not unlike the carnivalesque chaos of a caricature.[27] Some of these markers of physical difference are more pointedly used as a shorthand for physical labour; for instance, 'splay-footed Harry' and 'Bandy legg'd Ralph and Mick' seem to be exhibiting impairments caused by work and impoverishment.[28] The use of pronouns such as 'that', in this context, implies a degree of closeness or relation to the subject which, instead of alienating a reader, initiates them into this social circle as one to whom these figures are actually known. Furthermore, the run-on sentence that lists off almost all of these characters over the course of seven lines manages to connect all of them in a sociable chain. Dolly and Mary are sisters; they are assisted by Harry; they are going to meet Dick, and so on. One cannot know anything about one of these people without discovering their situation within a larger patchwork. These festive 'lasses and lads', however, are divided from the 'Misers [who] stay with their treasure', embraced only by 'mammon'.[29] The most pointed criticism of these individuals Mather makes, apart from their excessive wealth, is their apparent lack of sociability.

The second part of Mather's lyric, however, sharpens this sense of social unity into a source of transformative power. Amidst the innocuous festivity of the races, Mather instructs 'each friend and neighbour' to be 'All as one united'; familial and local connection strengthen the public body into a single symbiotic being, with the accompanying image of the 'Man and horse' similarly combined into a sum greater than their parts.[30] Using the refrain to further distance the 'Free-born sons' of Bacchus and the 'Bastards' who oppose them, Mather then unfurls the imagined result of this fertile sociability:

---

[27] Mather, 'Sheffield Races', part one, in *The Songs,* ed. by John Wilson, p. 11 (l. 5); Ibid. l. 7; Ibid. l. 13; Ibid. l. 18.
[28] Ibid. l. 16; Ibid. l. 19.
[29] Ibid. l. 1-4
[30] Mather, 'Sheffield Races', part two, p. 12 (l. 4-5); Ibid. l. 8.

> Hark, the bells begin to ring
>
> To invite all loyal people,
>
> Enemies to church and king
>
> Wish they may shake down the steeple.
>
> Such to him may lie and prate,
>
> Cant and censure man and woman [....][31]

Loyalty is an extremely charged concept in the political environment that Mather has chosen to contribute to; we have already seen the curious political flexibility of oppositional patriotism, and the capricious nature of religious justification in matters as morally questionable as the slave trade. But the actual political ideals of these loyal parties, as well as those of their 'Enemies', is somewhat irrelevant. It is very unclear who the figure ('him') referred to in line 17 is. More significant, and more socially potent, is the overriding sense of belonging and opposition. These lines funnel directly into an evocation of lively group activity ('We'll go and see who wins the plate, / Come let's haste towards the common'), and these collective, quasi-imperative statements implicate the speaker as not only a partaker but an instigator within a particular social group.[32] Wilson's edition, however, may not have picked up the formatting conventions, lost in translation from an oral source. 'Church and King', in a more definitive sense, may also refer to a contemporary political party, and one which may have been known to Mather, as in 1793, Joseph Gales documents an instance in which their assembly was met with an opposing gathering who sang 'God Save Great Thomas Paine', one of Mather's more overtly radical compositions.[33] It may be the case, then, that what may seem

---

[31] Mather, 'Sheffield Races', part two, l. 9-11; Ibid. l. 13-18.

[32] Ibid. l. 19-20.

[33] Joseph Gales, letter to Joseph Aston, 26 Sept 1793, quoted in John Holland and James Everett, *Memoirs of the Life and Writing of James Montgomery*, (7 vols.) vol. 1 (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1854), p. 168.

a general assertion of public belonging and loyalty actually carries a far more radical suggestion when situated in its original time and place.

Mather complicates any sense of universality, however, by direct reference to events of local controversy in some of his broadside-style narrative poems. 'Norfolk Street Riots', according to Wilson, refers to an event on the 4th of August, 1795, a violent suppression not dissimilar to the later Peterloo massacre, despite the cause being 'trivial'.[34] James Montgomery would fall foul of the event, as the *Iris* reported that Colonel Athorpe, a local magistrate, 'plunged with his horse among the unarmed defenceless people, and wounded with his sword men, women and children promiscuously'.[35] When this claim was found libellous, the resulting trial led to the second instance of Montgomery's imprisonment in York Castle in 1796.[36]

Mather's emotionally charged register focuses upon this act of 'wilful murder' as a traitorous crime against the community. These 'arm'd assassins dress'd in blue / Most wantonly their townsmen slew', and Mather also implicates 'magistrates and jurors' in this attack.[37] Though Mather's tone is hyperbolic and perhaps exaggerates the premeditation of any violence, especially considering the spontaneous nature of the event, his focus is upon the tragic irony of a society's protectors harming one of their own. The speaker also claims to have been present, and to have witnessed the outbreak of the attack:

> I saw the tragic scene commence;
> A madman drunk, without offence
> Drew out his sword in false pretence,

---

[34] John Wilson, editorial note to *The Songs*, p. 38.
[35] 'SHEFFIELD, Thursday Evening, August 6.', *Sheffield Iris*, 7 Aug 1795, p.2.
[36] William Odom, *Two Sheffield Poets: James Montgomery and Ebenezer Elliott* (Sheffield: W. C. Leng, 1929), p. 21.
[37] Mather, 'Norfolk Street Riots' in *The Songs*, (p. 38-41), l. 5-7.

> And wounded some more wise;
>
> Defenceless boys he chased about,
>
> The timid cried, the bold did shout,
>
> Which brought the curious no doubt
>
> To see what meant the noise.[38]

Here, Athorpe is not merely violent and tyrannical, but a careless, dishonourable dipsomaniac. He acts 'without offence' i.e. unprovoked; his attack is in 'false pretence', made in an underhand manner, his victims 'defenceless'. The crowd drawn by the commotion, including Mather himself, are depicted here as the dispensers of justice, ironically substituted for Athorpe; they understand that Athorpe 'should know good', and Mather's speaker takes this as an instructive moment, illustrating how 'A sword put in a madman's hand […] Must terminate in death'.[39] The ensuing violence is extreme in its depiction, with 'stones besmeared with blood and brains', and 'widows' and the 'fatherless' subject to a torment that is 'more than [the devil] required'.[40] The focus upon bodily trauma is remarkably lurid, markedly different from Shelley writing on Peterloo, for instance, and Mather's burlesque style seems to delight in provoking disgust in its reader. But Mather's narrative is not merely content with pressing its own version of the truth: it also seeks to discredit any other retellings of the story:

> The "Courant" may her columns swell,
>
> Designing men may falsehoods tell,
>
> Not all the powers of earth and hell
>
> Can justify the fiend.[41]

---

[38] Mather, 'Norfolk Street Riots', l. 9-16.
[39] Ibid. l. 18; ibid. l. 22-24.
[40] Ibid. l. 49; Ibid. l. 38-40.
[41] Ibid. l. 29-32.

The 'Courant' here refers to Sheffield's Tory paper, *The Sheffield Courant*. Even as Mather's oral form thrives, it exists in competition with an efflorescence of print culture which, as dramatized here, can contradict and clash with the former. Between radical papers, Tory papers, and street poetry, the event is rendered through an array of different lenses who place blame upon diverse parties. What marks out Mather's poetic form, however, is its decisively labouring-class perspective. Not unlike his fellow commentators in other cities, Mather invokes the image of the 'swine' to describe the common people cut down by so-called 'gallant heroes'.[42] Mathers' poem rounds off, in fact, much as Stephens' poem begins: implicating 'Ye wanton coxcombs, fops, and fools, / Aristocratic dupes and tools'.[43] Playing constantly on a class divide in order to designate enemies of the common people, Mather's verse inserts itself into a widespread sense of contempt for the well-to-do. Like Stephens, Mather is eager to highlight the fanciful, fashionable nature of these men, and possibly attempts to feminise them for these qualities, but also perceives them as 'dupes and *tools*'; the latter makes for a particularly intriguing metaphorical language when employed by an actual manual labourer.

The authority figures Mather strikes out at, however, are not always necessarily violent. Two poems concerning the character of 'Watkinson', thought by Wilson to be Jonathan Watkinson, a workshop master presiding over the manufacture of scissors, suggest a different variety of crime against the community. According to Wilson, Watkinson was 'the first master who compelled his men to make thirteen for a dozen', and Mather's poem 'Watkinson and his Thirteens' gives an idea of his popular reputation as a miserly tyrant:

> That monster oppression, behold how he stalks,
> Keeps picking the bones of the poor as he walks,

---

[42] Mather, 'Norfolk Street Riots', l. 47-48.
[43] Ibid. l. 57-58.

> There's not a mechanic throughout this whole land
>
> But what more or less feels the weight of his hand;
>
> That offspring of tyranny, baseness and pride
>
> Our rights hath invaded and almost destroyed [...][44]

Bear in mind there is no 'I' in Mather's register; he virtually always speaks as a collective, for 'the poor' or the 'mechanics', but scarcely ever for himself. As the poet himself promises, the collective is 'unanimous' – or rather, the narration forces them into conformity.[45] This rather generalised figure of 'oppression' becomes more specific, however, as Mather identifies him as a 'wicked dissenter, expelled [from] his own church'.[46] That Watkinson has already been pushed out of one social circle is significant, and seems to contribute to the negative presentiment towards him. Similarly, the backlash Watkinson endures is not merely from the poet himself; he is subject to 'public reproach'.[47] There is a general agreement among the 'true Yorkshiremen' that 'no man should work for him at any price'; the poem here even manages to act as a public warning against a tyrannical master for any potential workmen.[48] As observed in Stephens' poem, too, the theatre becomes the epicentre for matters of public concern:

> Hark! How the streets rings [*sic*] with his infamous name,
>
> The boys at the playhouse exhibit strange scenes
>
> Respecting big W------n with his thirteens.[49]

---

[44] Wilson, editorial note to *The Songs*, p. 64.; Mather, 'Watkinson and his Thirteens' in *The Songs*, pp. 63-65 (l. 1-6).

[45] Ibid. l. 42.

[46] Ibid. l. 13.

[47] Ibid. l. 16.

[48] Ibid. l. 29-30.

[49] Mather, 'Watkinson and his Thirteens', l. 18-20.

Through the figurative stand-in of the 'streets' for the public body, the unanimous voice of the people becomes appropriated and relayed by the urban landscape itself. The public edifices and streets of Sheffield bear witness to Watkinson's crimes; the playhouse in particular sees them physically re-enacted. Here, the town and its populace are amalgamated, speaking as one against individuals who violate a particular social code, partially through the motif of sonic reverberation. This motif, however, becomes even more stark in a follow-up entitled 'Watkinson's Repentance'. For this piece, Mather assumes the first person to speak from Watkinson's perspective, an act of positioning that, perhaps surprisingly, manages to evoke a great deal of pity. Watkinson's wickedness is 'sung thro' the town', and it seems even sleep cannot help him escape from this hostile aural landscape:

> I seldom can sleep, but I constantly dream
> I hear thousands shouting "I will have thirteen."
>
> Once I was walking the street up and down,
> The most that pass'd by me spoke with a frown,
> Singing "there goes old W---n who hath lost his brain,
> And never must recover his senses again."[50]

What was once an external social and physical presence has become internalised. Now, the crowd do not even need to actually speak, but do so 'with a frown'. Due to Mather's suggestion that Watkinson has become psychically disturbed by his ostracization, it may be interpreted that Watkinson is imagining this silent communication – or, perhaps, that public hatred for him is so widespread that it may be visually inferred rather than outright said. The use of embedded speech within the poem presents the reader with a grim observation of the

---

[50] Mather, 'Watkinson's Repentance' in *The Songs*, pp. 67-68 (l. 9); Ibid. l. 13-18.

titular character from the outside; one might see Watkinson both from his internal narration and the perception of others, not only inviting sympathy for his condition but demonstrating the ways it has outwardly manifested and is seen as an object of public disdain. The phrase 'I will have thirteen', ironically mimicking what can be presumed to be Watkinson's own trade slogan, recurs at the end of each stanza as a mocking pedal note, following him even to the 'play', where the 'whole gallery' taunts him with it.[51] John Baxter has found that this may refer to a specific event, one during which Watkinson's public shaming was so intense that he was 'forced to leave' the auditorium.[52]

It might be tempting to question why Mather uses this nightmarish picture of public shaming and mental deterioration as seen from the point of view of the victim, particularly when earlier poems actively encourage the harassment of the man in question. The latter stanzas may offer some insight: begging the 'masters' to 'take warning' from his narrative, 'For fear you should share the same fate you see', Watkinson truly does repent, acknowledging the harm he has done to Sheffield's workmen.[53] The point of Mather's sympathetic alignment, then, is as a caution to anyone else who would transgress the social codes of Sheffield's trade network, by offering an insight into the psychological terrors of the resulting social backlash. Other poems similarly identify figures of public rebuke – for instance 'Stevens and Lastley's Execution', following the trial and killing of two local petty thieves in 1789, targets the prosecutor, John Wharton, who was widely blamed for what was seen as an exaggerated charge against the culprits. According to Wilson, Wharton's house had been 'beset' by the townspeople, with 'the figure of a man on a gibbet' hung by his door.[54] Mather's poem on the

---

[51] Mather, 'Watkinson's Repentance', l. 19-22.
[52] John Baxter, quoted in Smith, 'Joseph Mather: Filesmith and Ballad-monger', p. 282.
[53] Mather, 'Watkinson's Repentance', l. 23-26.
[54] Wilson, editorial note to *The Songs*, p. 21.

occasion relays this event, condemning Wharton, but also implicating the 'equally vile' legal authorities responsible for the handling of the case.[55] Mather even goes so far as to suggest that 'They ought to be hung on a tree, / And then be suspended in chains'.[56] Mather's inflammatory rhetoric reserved for unpopular public figures, then, does not shy away from calls for actual violence against these figures.

Deliberate exclusion from the social in-group Mather creates is largely framed as a pitiful situation, warranting harassment and violence, and causing some level of mental disturbance. But other poems by Mather concern the tragedy of forceful removal from community, and none more dramatically than 'The Black Resurrection'. This poem refers to a controversial urban development in 1785, where the widening of Church Lane necessitated the unearthing of several graves in a neighbouring churchyard.[57] Mather speaks as one of these displaced bodies:

> I lived for a series of years
> Not far from the toll of the bell,
> My house was pull'd over my ears,
> And I was consigned to my cell.
> Before my remains were dissolved
> The BLACK RESURRECTION took place,
> My troubles upon me revolved […][58]

The ambiguous identity, and even gender, of this speaker again appeals to a sense of universal applicability; that the body has been unearthed 'before [its] remains were dissolved' suggests

---

[55] Mather, 'Stevens and Lastley's Execution', in *The Songs*, pp. 21-22 (l. 25).
[56] Ibid. l. 31-32.
[57] Wilson, editorial note to *The Songs*, p. 44.
[58] Mather, 'The Black Resurrection', in *The Songs*, pp. 44-46 (l. 1-7).

a recent death, and one whose relations might yet be living. Surrounded by 'strangers and paupers […] in the peaceable clay', the speaker does not exist necessarily in a classless state, but rather in one where all are reduced to the same social standing and are stripped of individual identity.[59] There is an almost utopian aspect to this post-mortem levelling of station. This is disrupted, however, by the 'serpent' - Mather's appellation for the Rev. James Wilkinson - who 'robs [the widow] of her mite'.[60] Interestingly, Mather and Montgomery seem to once again share the same enemies – Wilkinson was also a magistrate presiding over both of Montgomery's prison sentences.[61] But as these bodies are 'mangled and torn' in view of their still-living 'weeping friends', a parallel upheaval consumes the physical city.[62] The narrator, 'raised by […] infernal power', takes in a modernised, unfamiliar Sheffield:

> I went the old ruins to view,
> I saw in the course of an hour
> Wide streets and high buildings all new,
> And heard a lamentable cry
> Of many a serpent-stung friend […][63]

Here the significance of the speaker's recent burial comes into play; the 'old ruins' they visit are to them a familiar fixture of the town in which they lived, but have already been usurped by new development, and become unrecognisable. These ruins may be those of Sheffield Manor, for the most part dismantled in 1706, with the lands sold on to tenant farmers; the remnants of this structure would prove incredibly fruitful for successive poets after Mather, as this chapter will go on to discuss, and its deconstruction would have occurred within living

---

[59] Mather, 'The Black Resurrection', l. 9-10.
[60] Ibid. l. 12; Ibid. l. 16.
[61] Odom, *Two Sheffield Poets,* p. 21.
[62] Mather, 'The Black Resurrection', l. 33-34.
[63] Ibid. l. 18-22.

memory. When viewed from the stasis of the grave, the speed of urban change is almost too much to take in. Mather directly compares the destruction of the speaker's 'remains' with that of their 'mansions', and as the above passage illustrates, the living are not exempt from the horror of this alienation.[64] Displaced from their ancestral home, the speaker's 'detestable dust' has been 'scattered thoroughout [*sic*] the whole globe'.[65] Sheffield's modernisation has robbed them of any sense of belonging or community, instead disseminating and disembodying them.

Bearing this sombre conclusion in mind, I would like to revisit the question of inclusion and exclusion within Mather's work, and the relation this has to Sheffield in the late eighteenth century. Demonstrably creating an in-group, defined by their local proximity, shared trade, or familial relation, Mather deliberately excludes individuals from the group and renders their condition humiliating and unenviable, even if they are in a position of institutional power. In fact, some of these figures – Watkinson, for example – are excluded *because* they are in a position of power, and weaponise this to the detriment of Mather's own class. Though this tendency to strike out at authority figures and undermine their standing may be the source of Mather's subversive quality, it should be noted that the impulse behind these texts is not necessarily that of social amelioration. Roger de V. Renwick suggests that the conflicts within Mather's oeuvre 'cannot be resolved with existing perceptions and means – indeed, the indication is that the conflict will only grow greater and the gulf between interactants widen'.[66] The antipathy abounding in Sheffield will only grow – and in part, because Mather continues to encourage a sense of inherent difference between groups, as it

---

[64] Mather, 'The Black Resurrection', l. 30.

[65] Ibid. l. 41-42.

[66] Roger de V. Renwick, *English Folk Poetry: Structure and Meaning* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), p. 138.

is via ritual exclusion that the in-group becomes defined. Paradoxically, the sense of inequality that permeates Mather's *Songs*, and which they rail against, is the very dynamic upon which their social system operates.

This sense of fruitful opposition, however, is disrupted by poems such as 'The Black Resurrection'. Here, as the speaker becomes the excluded party (through no apparent fault of their own, unlike Watkinson or Wharton), divided not only from their companions but also from life, and physically torn apart, Mather chooses to align this process with the sudden onset of Sheffield's modernisation. Indeed, Sheffield's growth during this period was rapid; Smith states that, due to the recently-improved transport infrastructure and a corresponding upsurge in local industry, the city's population would have quadrupled in the poet's lifetime.[67] But what becomes apparent in Mather's highly communal lyric form is that this growth, and the enhanced connectivity that comes with heightened urbanisation, does not create a more empathetic or unified population. Rather, as the print culture of the turn of the century would begin to demonstrate, social disparity would further increase, and a far more individualised poetic form would strive to contend with this increased division.

---

[67] Smith, 'Joseph Mather: Filesmith and Ballad-monger', p. 273.

The *Iris* and the 'Bower of the Muses'

Montgomery's first impression of Sheffield, made while travelling after the death of his parents in the West Indies, would sit at odds with his later role as the city's civic icon. His biographer, William Odom, documents his description of 'an ugly town in a great black hole', physically marred by its local industry.[68] Sheffield's association with blackness in the literature of labourers such as Stephens and his ilk has been briefly touched on, but Montgomery's comment, however, points towards another type of obscurity: environmental blackness, specifically that caused by the atmospheric conditions related to Sheffield's smithy trade. Though he would not initially settle in Sheffield, Montgomery would find favour when introducing his early poetry to Earl Fitzwilliam at Wentworth Park, initiating a reciprocal relationship whereby the Fitzwilliams would frequently act as patrons for Montgomery and his associates.[69] Despite this early recognition, however, Montgomery's journey to widespread appeal and respectability in the city would not be simple.

Credited by Odom to a failure of success with publishers in London, Montgomery would return to Sheffield in 1792, at that time 'a town with but three churches, narrow ill-paved streets and mean houses, and a population of thirty thousand'.[70] The city's sole newspaper was the *Sheffield Register*, under the editorship of Joseph Gales, regarded retrospectively by Odom as a Republican extremist, a perhaps unsurprising stance given Odom's work as a royal historian.[71] Montgomery would find success in the *Register*, publishing 'The Mad Man's Petition', a satire on the futility of professional ambition and the vast disparity

---

[68] James Montgomery, quoted in Odom, *Two Sheffield Poets,* p. 11.
[69] Odom, *Two Sheffield Poets*, p. 11
[70] Ibid. p. 12-14.
[71] Ibid. p. 14.

between rich and poor, in the paper's columns in August, 1793.[72] This poem would not earn him much personal fame, however, as it was credited solely to "J. M. G.", an alias he would utilise many times in his immediate future. This paper, to which Montgomery was initially a pseudonymised contributor, would eventually come under his editorship, propelling him to both local and national renown. The transition from Gales' *Register* to Montgomery's *Iris* would take place as a result of the suppression of corresponding societies in 1794, a trend itself in response to the French Revolution. Gales' continued support for the London society marked him out as a political threat, and when this resulted in a narrow escape from arrest, Gales elected instead to flee the country. By this time, Montgomery had already been assigned a post as the paper's bookkeeper, and he would assume control of the paper in Gales' absence.

Though Montgomery would continue to write politically motivated poetry, and to face the consequences of his radical sympathies, in many ways the *Register* lost much of its radical momentum during this transaction. Upon its reappearance in 1794 as the *Sheffield Iris, or, Sheffield Advertiser for the Northern Counties*, it would bear a new slogan: 'Ours are the plains of fair delightful peace, / Unwarped by party rage, to love like brothers'.[73] Its new message was one of unity – a decidedly apolitical unity, without partisan bias. This move, however, may have been necessary to ensure the paper's survival in a hostile political environment, and to secure a large casual readership – according to Montgomery's own recollections of this transitional moment, it was Gales who selected the paper's new slogan and approach, though he would also clarify in the paper's opening address the ongoing reformist interests of its editors. This would see Gales and Montgomery reject the label of 'Jacobin' for 'Reformer',

---

[72] James Montgomery (as "J. M. G"), 'The Mad Man's Petition', *Sheffield Register, Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire Universal Advertiser*, 23 Aug 1793, p. 4.

[73] *Sheffield Iris, or, Sheffield Advertiser for the Northern Counties*, 4 July 1794, p. 1.

framing the former as a gross mischaracterisation of their politics. Though Montgomery had taken the helm at the *Iris* in Gales' absence, the poet attributes this political re-branding entirely to his predecessor in his collected works of 1850.[74] For the most part, this strategy was successful; the *Iris* gained a large degree of popularity and traction even beyond the bounds of Sheffield itself. Each issue of the *Iris* announces its distribution in London, as well as the 'Market Towns of Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Cheshire and Lancashire', as well as an option to be sent to 'any Part of England or Scotland' at the reader's behest.[75] Similarly, its articles would report on a number of both national and regional concerns, borrowing stories from other areas, with one report from 1808 on a public meeting in Oldham taken from a story in the *Leeds Mercury* (itself parroting the *Manchester Mercury*).[76] This breadth of distribution and broad spread of content would make the *Iris* a powerful vehicle for the dissemination not only of timely international and local events, but also of literature.

Initially, at least, the back page of each issue of the *Iris* would feature a section entitled 'Cemptucet, or, the Bower of the Muses', reserved specially for poetry (its ubiquity would decline in its later incarnations, with some successive issues not including it at all). 'Cemptucet' was a word concocted specifically for this publication, being an acronym of the names of the nine muses according to Montgomery's biographers, John Holland and James Everett.[77] This feature may be a left-over from its parent publication, as poetry also commonly featured in the *Register* (where the poetry section took the form of the 'Repository of Genius'), though the commitment and ceremony allotted to this iteration suggests a high esteem attributed to poetry in Montgomery's particular editorial mission. The selection of

---

[74] James Montgomery, *Poetical Works, complete in one* volume (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1850), pp. 137-138.
[75] *Sheffield Iris,* 4 July 1794, p. 4.
[76] *Sheffield Iris*, 19 Jan 1808, p. 2.
[77] John Holland and James Everett, *Memoirs,* vol. 1 (7 vols) , p. 175.

poetry was widespread, and would not limit itself solely to Yorkshire writers, though some, such as "Alexis", located in Bridlington according to the *Iris* (despite being identifiable as Thomas Browne, a poet based in Kingston-upon-Hull, given the recurrence of this same poem in his later, named publications) would contribute from within the county.[78] Authors would range from the mainstream – Henry James Pye, then Poet Laureate, makes an appearance in 1795 – to the downright obscure, with many pseudonymous contributors including "Brittanicus" and "Verax" still unknown.[79] Montgomery also includes the work of those outside of the region with whom he fostered friendly connections, including that of Anna Laetitia Barbauld, John Aikin, and William Roscoe.[80] Hamish Mathison and Adam James Smith find both the *Iris* and its predecessor to be '[attempts] to document and promote a network of poets across Yorkshire'; it may be ventured to say that the *Iris*' scope of influence actually expanded beyond these immediate regional bounds, and partook in a network of knowledge involving, but not limited solely to, the web of connections already documented across the transpennine area.[81]

Mathison and Smith have also observed the conversational nature of such papers as the *Iris* and *Register*, with poetry essentially playing out debates between various actors in the city. Discerning that 'no poem is itself a complete statement of the newspaper's ethos', but rather 'a fragment of [...] the literary sensibility of Sheffield', their impression seems to be that of a publication which speaks for an entire community rather than any sectarian party.[82]

---

[78] Thomas Browne (as "Alexis"), 'To Spring', *Sheffield Iris,* 20 March 1795, p. 4.; Thomas Browne, 'To the Spring', *Poems on Several Occasions* (Liverpool: Merritt and Wright, and Hull: Thomas Browne, 1800), pp. 111-113.
[79] Henry James Pye, 'Ode to the New Year', *Sheffield Iris*, 9 Jan 1795, p. 4; "Brittanicus", 'Verses dedicated to the Right Hon. Thomas Erskine' in *Sheffield Iris,* 12 Dec 1794, p. 4; "Verax", 'Invocation to War', *Sheffield Iris*, 10 July 1795, p. 4.
[80] John Aikin and Anna Laetitia Barbauld (anon.), 'The Goldfinch and Linnet'. *Sheffield Iris*, 19 Sept 1794, p. 4; William Roscoe, 'Sonnet', *Sheffield Iris*, 22 May 1800, p. 4.
[81] Mathison and Smith, *Poetry, Conspiracy and Radicalism in Sheffield*, p. 63.
[82] Ibid. p. 66.

Contradicting this idea of the *Iris* as an impartial mouthpiece, however, are the very deliberate elisions and omissions made by Montgomery in the editing process. One *Iris* of 1812 features four lines of a presumably longer poem, cut down as the editor '[agrees] with him in all his sentiments, though not in the expression of them', suggestive of a more radical message elided for the sake of palatability.[83] Instead, Montgomery opts to include only four lines of the poem, removed from context, in rather anodyne praise of peace. Furthermore, another issue of 1808 responds directly to 'CANTAB', the author of 'PAPER PELLETS', to reject the submission publicly, stating that 'THE EDITOR OF THE IRIS *should be the last man in the world to publish them'*.[84] Clearly, Montgomery's personal taste (and in the latter case, potentially even personal pride) influenced his editorial hand, and if the *Iris* were intended to be perceived as the unadulterated voice of an entire community, certain voices did not escape the publishing process unscathed.

Montgomery would, on frequent occasions, feature his own poetry on the *Iris'* back page. For the most part, however, it would not be under his own name. The poetry of "J. M. G." would reappear, alongside that of "Paul Positive", in the pages of the *Iris'* first volume. J. M. G.'s poem of 1795 would express sympathy for members of the London Corresponding Society, including Thomas Hardy and John Thelwall; it is possible that this alias was adopted in order to conceal the author's identity when voicing politically dangerous ideas.[85] Indeed, in his exhaustive study of Montgomery's use of pseudonyms, Michael James Daly claims that these monikers were a response to impositions placed upon Montgomery by his business partner, Benjamin Naylor, dating back to their early years of collaboration in the *Sheffield*

---

[83] 'To Correspondents', *Sheffield Iris*, 8 Sept 1812, p. 3.
[84] 'To Correspondents', *Sheffield Iris*, 26 Jan 1808, p. 3.
[85] James Montgomery (as "J. M. G."), 'Hymn in memory of the acquittal of T. Hardy, J. Horne Tooke, J. Thelwall, &c. Tried upon a charge of High Treason. Sung at a public meeting of the Constitutional Society of Sheffield, Dec 29, 1794', *Sheffield Iris*, 2 Jan 1795, p. 4.

Register.[86] In many cases these aliases are clearly linked to radical expression, and not difficult to connect with Montgomery; "Paul Positive", for instance, is credited as the author of Montgomery's prison poetry, alongside his legal name.[87] The purpose of these aliases, however, may be something beyond the expression of dangerous ideas, and may also be utilised to create the illusion of a much larger pool of authors contributing to the *Iris* than might initially appear. This would not be unheard of as a strategy for producing large amounts of print material for new publications – Holland and Everett claim in their biography of Montgomery that Winifred Gales, Joseph's wife, had already written anonymous articles to flesh out the pages of the *Register* – though Montgomery's tendency to use these pseudonyms when signing off personal letters may weaken this argument.[88] If considering this possibility, however, the theory is suggestive of an anxiety on Montgomery's part about the paper becoming an editor-centric monograph, or at least its being perceived as such. The *Iris'* multivocal role would be compromised had it so obviously been the work of a single poet and editor, and so these aliases, while protecting Montgomery from political scrutiny, may also help to obfuscate the degree of his editorial control.

Even when Montgomery was imprisoned in 1795, his poetry written in captivity would continue to appear, though still as J. M. G. and Paul Positive. 'To Celia' and 'Verses to a Robin Redbreast' would both appear in the paper during his jail time.[89] Montgomery was imprisoned twice at York; in 1795 for the publication of a poem in support of the French Revolution (a publication prior to his commencement at the *Iris*, according to his biographer Samuel Ellis),

---

86 Michael James Daly, 'From Sheffield to Raleigh: a Radical Publishing Network in the Age of Revolution' (doctoral thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, 2011), p. 217.
87 Montgomery (as "Paul Positive"), 'Venus Bewitched, or the Mountain in Labour, Part 1', *Sheffield Iris*, 25 July 1794, p. 4.
88 Holland and Everett, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 145; Ibid. p. 199.
89 Montgomery (as "J. M. G."), 'To Celia', *Sheffield Iris*, 3 April 1795, p. 4; Montgomery (as "Paul Positive"), 'Verses to a Robin Redbreast', *Sheffield Iris*, 15 Feb 1795, p. 4.

and again in 1796, as already discussed, regarding his allegations against Athorpe after the Norfolk Street Riots.[90] The above poems were written during his first period of imprisonment, and Montgomery's first published volume, *Prison Amusements,* would appear the following year. *Prison Amusements* would go a long way towards amplifying Montgomery's fame. Introducing new readers to a 'young' and 'unfortunate' poet, his punishment is figured as the result of bad luck, or even erroneous and unfair judgment; his transgressions against the state are 'imputed', for instance, rather than actually confirmed.[91] In 'To Celia', a poem written in response to an anonymised note from an admirer at home in Sheffield, Montgomery is drawn as a romantic figure, sympathetically undeserving of his punishment. For all this heroic posturing, however, Montgomery's return to the *Iris* offices would not be characterised by radical fervour. To quote the *Iris'* new year's address of 1796:

> Moderation and Independence shall characterise the Iris, but should this Paper ever become the despicable tool of any party, or the prostituted flatterer of any man in power: either alternative will be a signal for its friends to forsake it.[92]

Once again decisively abstaining from political alignment, imprisonment further curtailed Montgomery's will to use his paper for radical expression. That said, the city itself retained a reputation for political upheaval in connection with Montgomery. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, writing in 1796, would elect to distribute 'only about thirty numbers' of his publication *The Watchman* in Sheffield, for two reasons. Firstly, Coleridge was reluctant to encroach on the success of the *Iris*, edited by in his opinion 'a very amiable and ingenious young man'; he also

---

[90] Samuel Ellis, *Life, Times, and Character of James Montgomery* (London: Jackson, Walford and Hodder, and Sheffield, Leader and Sons, 1864), p. 14; according to Ellis the poem in question was the anonymously composed 'Patriotic Song, by a Clergyman of Belfast'.

[91] "S —", 'Preface' to James Montgomery (as "J. M."), *Prison Amusements, and Other Trifles: Principally written during Nine Months of Confinement in the Castle of York, by Paul Positive* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1797), p. 9.

[92] Odom, *Two Sheffield Poets*, pp. 23-24.

felt, however, that any public promotion of his paper would be ill-advised after the tumultuous events of the riots.[93]

As much as the *Iris* worked to engineer Montgomery's own fame, however, the very first poetic piece featured in the 'Bower of the Muses' would be a contribution by another local poet. 'To the Iris', by Barbara Hoole – then going by her maiden name, Wreaks – would quickly work to establish the paper's socially unifying motive. Even if the paper's impartiality is something of an illusion, this poem neatly outlines the *Iris'* assumed role as a moderator between groups. Stating its intent to 'lay the wars of faction low, / And bid the wars of discord cease', Hoole understands the paper as a balm to both interpersonal and political unrest – certainly, the evocation of war suggests a reach beyond petty local disagreements.[94] To add to this, Hoole also introduces an element of social amelioration and public goodwill to her verse – the *Iris* is to act as a catalyst to 'the various forms of good intent', to render them materially effective 'in one pure social league'.[95] Hoole lingers on the *Iris'* chosen symbol – the rainbow, not merely a biblically significant image of divine benevolence, but itself a vision of unity between diverse parties.[96] Her poem is a declaration of levelled political difference, but also of the charitable aims which would come to characterise the work of not only herself, but the paper's editor in the succeeding decades.

Hoole would later come into the public eye as a children's writer and evangelical novelist in the nineteenth century, though her very first published poetical works featured in Sheffield's local papers. Her role, however, in establishing a poetic tradition and a broad

---

[93] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, quoted in Odom, *Two Sheffield Poets*, pp. 22-23.

[94] Barbara Hoole (as "Obeltoh"), 'To the Iris', *Sheffield Iris*, 4 July 1794, l. 7-8. Hoole would marry twice and later be known as Barbara Hofland; for the purposes of clarity (and to avoid confusion with her fellow Sheffield poet, John Holland), this thesis will refer to her primarily as Barbara Hoole.

[95] Ibid. l. 9-10.

[96] Ibid. l. 17.

readership in Sheffield's influential print arena has been somewhat overlooked in favour of her more famous male counterparts. Some of Hoole's early contributions to the *Iris* – including 'Stanzas to Melancholy', 'Sonnet to Wealth', and 'Stanzas dedicated to Dr Browne' – are also pseudonymous, utilising the appellation "Obeltoh".[97] Though she would not marry until 1796, it is possible that this alias is an acronym of 'B. T. Hoole', or possibly 'T. B. Hoole', in reference to the name of her first husband, Thomas Bradshawe Hoole. Obletoh seems especially favoured by the *Iris'* editor, declared 'always welcome' to submit her work in a short notice of 1794.[98] Whether Hoole and Montgomery were already well acquainted and aware of each other's work is uncertain, but this special recognition of her poetic talent potentially signifies an existing cooperative relationship, with Hoole helping Montgomery by contributing to the *Iris'* early pool of writers. Additionally, further anonymised poems by "—A. — S." at Attercliffe, including 'Lines addressed to Mr. Erskine' and 'Sonnet to Eloquence', as well as the 'Sonnet, on Climbing some Rocks in Derbyshire', attributed to "Penserosos", would make their first appearance in the *Iris* only to later reappear in Hoole's first published volume, suggesting that Hoole, like Montgomery, re-published initially anonymous works under her own name.[99]

---

[97] Hoole (as "Obeltoh"), 'Stanzas to Melancholy' and 'Sonnet to Wealth', *Sheffield Iris*, 18 July 1794, p. 4; Hoole (as "Obeltoh"), 'Stanzas dedicated to Dr Browne', *Sheffield Iris*, 7 Nov 1794, p. 4.
[98] 'Stanzas dedicated to Dr. Browne', *Sheffield Iris*, 7 Nov 1794, p. 4.
[99] Hoole (as "—A. — S."), 'Lines addressed to Mr. Erskine', *Sheffield Iris*, 16 Jan 1795, p. 4; Hoole (as "—A. — S."), 'Sonnet to Eloquence', *Sheffield Iris*, 6 Feb 1795, p. 4; Hoole (as "Penserosos"), 'Sonnet, on Climbing some Rocks in Derbyshire', *Sheffield Iris*, 5 June 1795, p. 4.

Poetry of the Institution

Despite her early association with the *Iris*, Hoole would also contribute to other local papers, including the *Courant*. A poem of 1794, addressed to the *Courant's* editor, reveals Hoole's level of familiarity with a number of local actors in Sheffield, commenting humorously on each persona with a short literary quote or excerpt. Some are associated with the city's government, such as the magistrate present at Montgomery's trial, the 'twice blest' James Wilkinson.[100] Others, such as, Dr. Browne or Thomas Worris, are part of significant local institutions (in this case the Sheffield Infirmary and the Company of Cutlers, respectively).[101] Interestingly, a large quantity of the individuals she singles out were to later be part of Sheffield's Literary and Philosophical Society, such as John Staniforth, Dr. Wainwright, and Lieutenant Brookfield.[102] Though her comments are often humorous or suggestive, they are not cutting; these are not intended to be criticisms of these figures, with one simply described as 'a good companion and a generous friend'. [103] Many of their names are additionally censored, solely inferred from context. Given the amount of extraneous information required to comprehend this poem, it is possible Hoole's work was composed specifically for those encompassed within Sheffield's local examples of associational sociabilityand intended to represent those she considers its social leaders in a gently comic manner. This is further suggested by the republication of Hoole's poem by the Lit and Phil, along with an accompanying lecture on the piece, given in 1889, posited as part of a rediscovery of local

---

[100] Sheffield City Archives, Barbara Hoole (as "Clericus"), 'To the Printer of the Sheffield Courant', (undated) Jackson Collection – Miscellaneous Printed Items, JC/1610, l. 1.
[101] Ibid. l. 3-4; Ibid. l. 39.
[102] Ibid. l. 23-24; Ibid. l. 34; Ibid. l. 40.
[103] Ibid. l. 40.

literature, but potentially also absorbing the piece into the Society's broader legacy.[104] Hoole's poem draws a picture of a communal and flourishing society, connected along lines of friendship, civic improvement, and intellectual intercourse.

During this period, multiple writers would also highlight Sheffield's particular institutions and societies as centres of public good, even outside of the literature published in the city's papers. As early as 1791, Sarah Pearson (alternately known as Susanna), a domestic labourer and poet, would follow up her Gales-published collection of 1790 with 'An Address, Spoken by Mrs Kemble, at the closing of the Sheffield Theatre', a later contribution to the *Sheffield Register's* 'Repository of Genius'.[105] This poem makes use of the Theatre's physical structure – with verses scripted to be addressed to the 'Boxes', 'Pit', and 'Gallery' by turns – in order to appeal to various subsets of society for continued financial support.[106] A reciprocal relationship is drawn by Pearson here, with patronage offered by theatregoers in return for the 'sadly pleasing sigh', or relief from 'private cares', offered by the players.[107] The city's merchants are appealed to by the wish that their 'trade will thrive from pole to pole'; the social picture conceived here is one in which arts and entertainment enhance commerce and sensibility, receiving mutual enrichment as a result.[108] Pearson's invocation of sentiment, instigated by the viewing of a theatrical performance, does not veer explicitly into matters of

---

[104] Barbara Hofland (Wreaks), *Characteristics of the Leading Inhabitants of Sheffield, at the close of the Eighteenth Century: a paper; read, before the members of the Sheffield Literary & Philosophical Society, 5th March, 1889* ed. by William Smith (Sheffield: Leader and Sons, 1889).

[105] Susanna (Sarah) Pearson, *Poems, dedicated, by permission, to The Right Honourable the Countess Fitzwilliam* (Sheffield: J. Gales, 1790).

[106] Sarah Pearson (as 'S. Pearson'), 'An Address, Spoken by Mrs Kemble, at the closing of the Sheffield Theatre on Friday last, and received with the greatest applause', *Sheffield Register,* 28 Jan 1791, p. 4 (l. 15); Ibid. l. 19; Ibid. l. 25.

[107] Ibid. l. 5; Ibid. l. 9.

[108] Ibid. l. 22.

charity or social improvement, but the Theatre is understood as a place for the generation of affective power, and the nurturing of an audience's capability for sympathy.

This connection between sensibility and charity, however, is drawn much more sharply in Montgomery's 'Address, spoken at the Theatre, Sheffield'. This poem documents a performance of Voltaire's tragedy *Mahomet* in 1796, at which an appeal was given 'for the benefit of poor widows'.[109] Montgomery's phrasing here is slightly unclear – whether the address, or the performance itself, is for the benefit of charity, it is hard to discern – but from its outset, Montgomery's poem addresses the audience's capacity for sensibility:

> The first of blessings – is the power to bless;
> The first of pleasures – to relieve distress:
> That soul-expanding bliss, that dear delight,
> You all experience who are met this night.[110]

Montgomery centres the Theatre as an epicentre of charitable endeavour, arguing that an audience interested in theatre is especially capable of charity. Theatre, along with the 'power to bless' conferred upon the audience, is a 'soul-expanding' experience for the viewer; it is, Montgomery suggests, an emotional exercise which this particular audience has already consented to undergo. The play is a tragedy, and so necessarily excites 'ponderous passions', forcing its audience to confront suffering and loss.[111] This poem's motive is, however, not to stimulate its listener emotionally, but to move them to action, and Montgomery carefully steers his listeners toward that end:

---

[109] Montgomery, note to 'Address, spoken at the Theatre, Sheffield', in *Prison Amusements, and Other Trifles*, p. 49.
[110] Montgomery, 'Address', p. 49 (l. 1-4).
[111] Ibid. l. 9.

secure of your applause –

We plead the widow's – plead the orphan's cause;

We plead for her, who stretched in mournful plight,

Consumes, in lingering agonies, the night;

We plead for her, who sees her hopes decay –

Her sorrows swell, with each renewing day:

For her, who spends her ebbing soul in sighs,

And weeps, to dew, the fountains of her eyes,

For her, whose famished babes besiege her bed,

And cry, importunately cry – for bread![112]

G. J. Barker-Benfield stresses the proximity of the sentimental drama of the eighteenth century to preaching, and such a comparison is invited by the rhetoric Montgomery employs here; the opportunity is offered to the audience not only to improve those less fortunate than themselves, but also to improve themselves morally.[113] Voltaire's drama, which the 'Address' is positioned to follow, concerns the events of the siege of Mecca in 629 AD, and so Montgomery borrows the image of the siege to carry the audience from the lofty tragic scenes of the play to the humdrum suffering of those in their immediate surroundings.

Throughout the 'Address', the focus on the aural – the weeping, sighing and crying of the bereft mother and children - is paired with a recurring image of the tear. This results in some rather hackneyed figurative language – eyes as 'fountains', or tears as 'dew'. This imagery continues, however, as Montgomery impresses his lachrymose language onto the audience themselves. He singles out 'Soft, blooming maids', 'Bathed in the sweet suffusion of

---

[112] Montgomery, 'Address', l. 11-20.
[113] G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), p. 298.

a tear', whose 'eyes in pity's weeping language speak'.[114] Montgomery's stylistic choices may reveal a more complex motive behind his apparently cliched metaphors, borrowing from the repertoire of abolitionist verse (which Montgomery, aside from his poetry covered in this chapter, would also extensively compose) in its criticism of the ineffectuality of performative tears.[115] Drawing a comparison between the tears of the tragic actor, the widow, and the audience, the latter is forced to confront whose sufferings are the more genuine, and their comparative lack of substantial woes. Montgomery finally adopts the imperative voice to direct his listeners to take action to commit to their tearful sympathy:

> Friends of humanity! – admit our claim;
> Friends of humanity! – deserve that name.
> Husbands! – to you we earnestly appeal:
> Look at your wives, and guess what widows feel.
> Ye mothers! – strain your infants to your breast,
> And think, O think! How orphans are distressed.[116]

Obliging his listeners to envisage themselves as the victimised party by imagining the loss of their own familial connections, Montgomery powerfully persuades the audience to fulfil their charitable social duty. The poem designates the audience 'Friends of humanity' before they have carried out this work of imaginative sympathy – only to then repeat it, allowing a listener to question whether they actually 'deserve that name'. Using the conventions of a tragic performance and the actual arena of the playhouse to his advantage, Montgomery establishes a clear link between the theatre itself and the virtues of sympathy and social responsibility.

---

[114] Montgomery, 'Address', l. 29-30; Ibid. l. 47.
[115] For Montgomery's anti-slavery poetry, see 'The Ocean', and 'The West Indies'; the latter was commissioned specifically to celebrate the 1807 Act.
[116] Montgomery, 'Address', l. 23-28.

Likewise celebrating another of Sheffield's public institutions, Hoole's 'Lines Composed near the Sheffield Infirmary, 1797' would address a recent addition to Sheffield's locale. First considered at a public meeting in 1792 and funded by subscription, the hospital would open its doors in October of the same year of Hoole's composition, suggesting this poem was in fact written to mark the event. Poems celebrating key stages of the Infirmary's establishment were not unheard of, as another anonymous poem, occasioning the laying of its foundation stone, had appeared in the *Register* in 1793.[117] Located in the suburb of Upperthorpe, half a mile from the centre of Sheffield, tactically placed to make use of clean upland streams, the hospital would indeed '[Beam] o'er the plain', acting as Hoole's vantage-point over the landscape.[118] 'Lines' initially unfolds similarly to the traditional landscape poem, conveying a sense of nature and humanity working in perfect unity:

> While bland Benevolence surveys around
> Each verdant beauty grace the fruitful ground
> Each undulating spring salubrious flow,
> Each grateful gale appease the sense of woe,
> He feels the scene reflected on the mind,
> And thanks the Power who bade him love mankind.[119]

Hoole's versification is satisfying, with the alliteration of the '[salubrious] spring' and 'grateful gale', the grounding rhythm of her perfect masculine rhymes ('flow'/'woe'). Nature is 'bland' (i.e. soothing, harmless) and strangely detached from time. Hoole's vision penetrates distance both physical and temporal, moving 'thro' times unborn', witnessing a renewal of 'present

---

[117] "W. N---s---n.", 'Thoughts on the Ceremony attending the laying of the First Stone of the Sheffield General Infirmary', *Sheffield Register*, 13 Sept 1793, p. 4.
[118] Barbara Hoole, 'Lines Composed near the Sheffield Infirmary, 1797', in *Poems*, pp. 238-241 (l. 1).
[119] Ibid. l. 3-8.

[blessings]', and this continuation of bliss is connected to the humanitarian effort undertaken at the Infirmary:

> the long train of penury and grief
> Which sicken life here find their blest relief;
> The Sons of Physic here, with skilful hand,
> Aloft shall wave HYGEIA's mystic wand;
> At the kind touch behold Disorder fly [...][120]

Hoole's description of the medical process is miraculous. The industrious detail characteristic of the georgic mode is absent here, with Hoole's ambiguity more mystifying than clarifying the actual work of physical treatment. Her verse however figures this (largely clerical) work as a type of manual labour akin to georgic agriculture – requiring a 'skilful hand', rather than a capable mind, betraying the poetic tradition on which she draws. Hoole points to 'penury and grief' as the root causes of physical ailment, suggesting that it is a society, rather than simply a body, that requires healing – added to by her polysemic mention of 'Disorder', which may of course refer to either physical illness or social disunity. Healing is also accompanied, in Hoole's verse, by harmonious sound: the healed person 'Attunes to praise the renovated note', their family uttering 'Sounds sacred to the ear'.[121] Summoning the image of a choir in unison, Hoole invites the Infirmary's founders and donors to lend their voice, figuratively speaking, to the endeavour. Mrs. Fell, a donor reportedly contributing £1,000 to the Infirmary's campaign, is called to 'join the lay', while Dr. John Browne, one of the hospital's founders, is permitted to enjoy the pleasures of the rhapsodic performance:

---

[120] Hoole, 'Lines Composed near the Sheffield Infirmary', l. 9-10; Ibid. l. 11-15.
[121] Ibid. l. 18; Ibid l. 21.

> BROWNE shall view, while bending from the skies,
>
> The lovely visions mellowing as they rise,
>
> Watch his own Genius tower to endless fame,
>
> And hear applausive whispers bless his name.[122]

Though indeed all of Sheffield would mourn Dr. Browne's passing in 1810, at the point of Hoole's composition he was still alive; what Hoole does here is to imagine a future day when Browne is remembered by his townsmen as a local hero. Hoole prophesises a grandiose futurity not only for Browne, but for the institution itself; promising that its successors will 'catch the living fire', in an oblique echo of the Prometheus myth, Hoole hopes that the knowledge generated in her own time will benefit a future society.[123] The volcanic imagery Hoole settles on here, too, would become a staple of Sheffield writing in years to come, as will be explored later in this chapter. For Hoole, the Infirmary is the ideal product of, and beneficiary for, Sheffield's unified populace; produced like harmonious music as a joint effort, the Infirmary also possesses the resources necessary to replenish those it was created by, both spiritually and physically. But as it is a wholly new contribution to Sheffield's surroundings, Hoole's poem must invent an illustrious future for the Infirmary, and so writes a benevolent legacy, a 'people's praise' where one does not yet exist. [124]

Assisting Hoole in the publication of her first collection of poetry in 1805 (containing her lines on the Infirmary, as well as a number of her poems from the *Iris*), Montgomery would also help to nurture the success of a number of local poets in the following decades. As noted in Chapter One, Montgomery, the *Iris* Office, and his close associates (most notably John Holland and Joseph Gales) appear to have had a particular interest in promoting the work of

---

[122] Hoole, 'Lines Composed near the Sheffield Infirmary', l. 39; Ibid. l. 31-34.
[123] Ibid. l. 25.
[124] Ibid. l. 54.

disadvantaged or labouring female poets. Besides Hoole, Sarah Pearson's 1790 collection was followed successively by those of Ann Sutcliff (posthumously in 1800), Mary Roberts (1822) and Mary Hutton (1831). This particular interest in female poets, and especially those such as Hutton, Hoole, and Pearson who either wrote for subsistence or were from a labouring background, may play into Montgomery's evangelical leanings, encouraging poetry as a suitable and morally enriching act of labour for women, with Anne Frey suggesting that writing demonstrated a 'willingness to work' that could be happily subsumed into evangelical conceptions of domestic femininity.[125] The publication of this writing also performed a charitable function; Stephen C. Behrendt points out the explicitly charitable motive behind the publication of Hoole's *Poems*, and similar suggestions towards the financial needs of Hutton, and Sutcliff's remaining family, are evident in their prefatory materials.[126] Even in cases where the writer in question was not in need of any form of financial support, such as that of Mary Roberts, her volume, *The Royal Exile,* would be undertaken not only to rehabilitate her female protagonist in the form of the 'opposed, afflicted, and calumniated' Mary, Queen of Scots (who had been imprisoned in Sheffield Manor for a period), but also to raise money for local charitable endeavours, namely Sheffield's Aged Female Society, of which Montgomery was a founder.[127] Alison Twells understands labouring women as central to Montgomery's personal conception of social and spiritual improvement, conducted through 'circuits of voluntary association' such as the Aged Female Society; perhaps then this

---

[125] Anne Frey, 'Barbara Hofland's Profession: Questioning the Calling', *Wordsworth Circle* 36: 3 (Summer, 2005) 110-112 (p. 110).

[126] Behrendt, 'Barbara Hofland and Romantic-Era Provincial Poetry by Women', pp. 422-423; Holland, 'Preface' to Hutton, *Sheffield Manor, and other poems*, p. xi; 'Preface' to Sutcliff, , p. 8.

[127] Samuel Roberts, 'Dedication' in Mary Roberts (as "A Young Lady") *The Royal Exile; or, Poetical Epistles of Mary, Queen of Scots, During her Captivity in England: with Other Original Poems*, vol. 1 (2 vols.), ed. by Samuel Roberts (Sheffield: J. Montgomery and London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1822), pp. ix-x.; Twells, *The Civilising Mission* , p. 54.

particular trend within his career as a publisher formed the foundation of his larger evangelical

inclination towards the improvement of society as a whole.[128]

For all the transformation in Sheffield's literary life Montgomery had wrought,

however, the success of his radical mission remains debatable. J. Wigley argues that

Montgomery's evangelicalism obfuscated any radical impetus over the course of his career,

despite Sheffield's unique suitability for sustaining a politically motivated population.

> In 1792 Sheffield had been unique in that it had certainly possessed both an
> unusually articulate working class, a Constitutional Society which was the largest
> in the kingdom with ideas in advance of Radicals in London, and a newspaper
> whose editor was committed to the propagation of ideas which implied a
> complete re-structuring of the political system. Within ten years that uniqueness
> had been destroyed […][129]

Indeed – perhaps as a result of his imprisonment – Montgomery's politics did shift further

towards the centre over his career, with Wigley citing his receipt of a government pension

from Sir Robert Peele in 1835 as convincing evidence of his endorsement of the incumbent

regime. Arguably, Montgomery's control over the *Iris*, one of the key cultural distributors in

Sheffield over the turn of the century, did more to hinder and reduce radical feeling,

particularly with its insistence on having no political affiliation, than to stoke the fires of

resistance. While this may be an uncharitable assertion, considering Montgomery's support

of good causes and not-inconsiderable contribution to the anti-slavery movement, change is

certainly palpable across the spread of the *Iris* in regard to its format and distribution.

Poetry plays less of a role in later editions of the *Iris*, no longer appearing in every

issue, and no longer under the 'Cemptucet' header but as simply 'Poetry'. Granted, during the

---

[128] Twells, *The Civilising Mission*, p. 63.

[129] J. Wigley, 'James Montgomery and the "Sheffield Iris", 1792-1825: a study in the weakness of provincial radicalism', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society,* 10: 4, 1971-1977 (1977), 173-181 (p. 180).

wars on the continent from 1803 to 1815, it may be unsurprising that more room was reserved for current affairs, though the paper was hardly established in uneventful times, with its first issues still covering the fallout of the revolution in France and its aftereffects in Britain. Its price would also increase from four pence to sixpence, though this is likely to be the result of inflation rather than any significant change in either business models or clientele for the *Iris*. Either way, as Wigley stresses, Montgomery would sell the *Iris* to John Blackwell in 1825 for significantly less than he had bought it. When it had initially changed hands, the paper had cost Montgomery £1,670, only to sell for £900 thirty years later, when its proprietor had cultivated significant fame and respectability within and without Sheffield.[130]

Community in Crisis: Holland's *Sheffield Park*

By the early nineteenth century, a fresh theme begins to become a staple in the works of Sheffield writers: that of dramatic growth and redevelopment due to new connective infrastructure and a subsequent boom in population. Despite this, however, the same preoccupation with community – and particularly, anxiety over the loss of community – may be tracked through the early decades of the new century and into the first years of the Victorian period. A short lyric poem published by Hoole in 1805, 'Stanzas on the River Dun', strives to adapt an admittedly overused theme: lamenting the River's 'Polluted Name', in reference to 'many bad Verses which had been written' on the subject, Hoole incorporates a portrait of Sheffield Manor, once the prison of Mary, Queen of Scots, lending her poem an antiquarian's interest in Sheffield's past.[131] Mary's incarceration in Sheffield becomes a focus

---

[130] Wigley, 'James Montgomery and the "Sheffield Iris"', p. 181.
[131] Barbara Hoole, note to 'Stanzas on the River Dun', in *Poems*, p. 6.

of local poetry dating back to at least 1791, when an anonymous poem would appear in the

Sheffield Register, introducing a romanticised vision of Mary and a subsequent condemnation

of Queen Elizabeth I.[132] Given its sentimental rendering of Mary's loneliness and persecution,

as well as the gothic appeal of her imprisonment, interest in her as a subject for both historical

study and literary portrayal would continue into the nineteenth century. In 1819, Joseph

Hunter would publish his history of Hallamshire, posited as a unique study wherein many

details of Sheffield's past were 'for the first time submitted to the public', including 'letters

hitherto unpublished' by Mary herself.[133] The next year, Walter Scott's *The Abbott* was

published, with the Queen of Scots as one of its characters, further popularising her legacy,

and the novel would share a publisher with the majority of Montgomery's volumes.[134] Hoole's

poem is one of the first among many authored by local female writers – including those by

Mary Hutton, as well as an extensive poetic meditation by Mary Roberts – to touch on her

imprisonment in Sheffield as a poetic theme.[135] The 'ivy'd tower', mentioned in almost every

poetic iteration of the site, becomes a metonymic signifier of the city's past, and its associated

sentimental tragedy.[136]

As much as The Queen of Scots' historical presence might anchor the area to its past,

Hoole's rendering of archaic Sheffield is paired with signifiers of modern industry, driven by

the river itself:

And now with renovated smile,

To aid the Artist's useful toil,

---

[132] "R. B. S.", 'Mary Queen of Scots, A Monody. Written near the Ruins of Sheffield Manor', *Sheffield Register*, 7 Oct 1791, p. 4.
[133] Hunter*, Hallamshire; The History and Topography,* p. vii; ibid. p. 63.
[134] Walter Scott, *The Abbot* (3 vols) (Edinburgh and London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Browne, 1820).
[135] Hutton, 'Sheffield Manor', in *Sheffield Manor, and other poems*; Mary Roberts, *The Royal Exile* (2 vols.), pp. 13-29.
[136] Hoole, 'Stanzas to the River Dun', *Poems*, pp. 6-11 (l. 27).

> On SHEFF'S industrious shore,
>
> Thy strong waves turn the rolling wheel,
>
> Lave in chill streams the hissing steel,
>
> And tame the stubborn ore.[137]

The river not only accompanies, but actively drives industry in Sheffield; it powers its water mills, and plays a role in the metal casting process. The wave that 'weeps on Beauty's classic grave', in the very next line '[aids] commercial sway'; the old city and the new are wedded neatly by a topographical constant.[138] The invocation of 'renovation', too, suggests a wholly positive turn in Sheffield's history, and ultimately leads the entire piece to look forwards rather than turn back.

Fifteen years later, however, John Holland's extensive prospect poem, *Sheffield Park* (1820), would see even more extensive change take place on Sheffield's waterways:

> A navigable stream, along whose banks
>
> Sheffield of late pour'd forth her various ranks,
>
> What time the INDUSTRY her pennons spread,
>
> And the hope-laden gay flotilla led
>
> To their baptismal font, around whose flood
>
> Parents and sponsors nobly anxious stood:[139]

This section is taken from a larger meditation on Holland's native local area; the waterway in question here, however, is the Sheffield and Tinsley Canal, opened the year prior to Holland's publication, and the *Industry* was the 'first vessel' to travel into Sheffield via this new route.[140]

---

[137] Hoole, 'Stanzas to the River Dun', l. 19-24.
[138] Ibid. l. 14-15.
[139] Holland, *Sheffield Park*, l. 277.
[140] Ibid. l. 283.

The 'ranks' here are Sheffield's inhabitants, and spectators of this maiden voyage, which was celebrated as a general holiday by the locals. This passage fanfares the beginning of a new era of transport and trade for the city, now that the River Don, the 'baptismal font' of the arriving flotilla, has been made navigable all the way from the North Sea to Sheffield (a process that had been proposed as early as the seventeenth century). While it may resonate with Hoole's imagery of 1805, considering the river's role in the city's manufactures, Holland's scope for the potential of this new connectivity is drastically broader. The celebration of this voyage is one he compares to the 'hopes and wishes, once from Spain, / [which] Wafted Columbus o'er the Atlantic main'.[141] For Holland, then, this event marks not just a matter of local significance for Sheffield, but a crucial moment of expansion which will vastly alter the city's relationship to the wider world – intimated to include the New World – in its immediate future.

Although composed in a familiar Augustan mode, dominated by heroic couplets and stylistically reminiscent of the preceding century, Holland's poem is beset with the startling signifiers of drastic transformation. This is only made more apparent, as shall be detailed, by the glosses provided by Holland in its 1857 edition, wherein the poet not only explains contextual points of his text but also remarks on further changes that have taken place since his original publication. Evidently, the city and its surroundings are changing so rapidly that the text no longer suffices as an accurate depiction of the area, and must be updated with running commentary. Holland's overall impression is surprisingly forgiving of the city's appearance: Sheffield is 'peaceful', a place where 'industry retires from toil', though still 'capp'd with its cloud of smoke' and accompanied by 'ceaseless sound'.[142] References to the city's 'blackness' are noticeably absent here. Though the confluence of both peace and noise

---

[141] Holland, *Sheffield Park*, l. 287-288.
[142] Ibid. l. 38-40; Ibid. l. 69-70.

may seem paradoxical, Holland's overall summation suggests that the two are not necessarily at odds. If anything, the sounds of industry in Sheffield appear to contribute to a contained, harmonious wider system. As much might be observed in further depictions of the city and the River Sheaf working in collaboration:

> The Sheaf, unknown to song, unknown to fame,
> A humble river, unadorn'd its name ;
> No classic guerdon decks the crystal tide,
> To art and industry alone allied ;
> Which cools to temper exquisite the steel,
> And pours its sluices round the' impetuous wheel ;
> Gushing, it loudly rages, foams, and curls,
> While swift within the mill the quick machinery whirls.[143]

Here, the city's natural river works in conjunction with its industrial processes, continuing the motif of harmony and discord. This process brings together two chaotic elements – the steel that must be 'tempered', and the 'raging' river – into perfect unity. While Holland nods to the area's historical reliance on waterpower, it is important to note that, at this point, steel production would have relied primarily on steam power, and so this earlier process was slowly dying out. Furthermore, the idea of the 'unknown' Sheaf – a phrase extremely redolent of Barbauld's 'Epistle to Dr. Enfield' and its ode to the Mersey – is a remarkable one, considering that Hoole's 1805 poem laments the Don's oversaturated poetic representation. That the Don can already have significant, even excessive poetic attention, but the Sheaf is neglected in comparison, suggests a disharmony between Sheffield's image in the wider world and that known to its actual inhabitants. Hunter's *History of Hallamshire* offers some observations on

---

[143] Holland, *Sheffield Park*, l. 321-328.

the disparity between the rivers, remarking that while the Don borders the more populous areas of the town, the Sheaf 'steals silently along its low channel, approaching the town to which it has given name by a less perceptible fall', its 'uncertain character' is further complicated by its history of destructive flooding – Hunter alludes to a catastrophic instance of this phenomenon in 1768.[144] He also points to the utility of Sheffield's rivers, providing a 'strong motive power' for its manufactures; while the details of its destructive potential might, then, add a threatening edge to Holland's description of the 'raging' river, it also enhances his portrayal of a formerly uncontrollable natural power now harnessed for industrious use.[145]

In representing Sheffield itself, Holland both draws on and refutes previous poetic representations of the urban environment. Rather than envisioning the city itself as rising out of the earth, the 'dome of smoke' enfolding 'chalybean Sheffield' emerges to greet the speaker.[146] This reference to the ancient Chalybes of Asia Minor highlights Sheffield's fame for its iron and steel manufactures, aligning the city's industry with Classical accounts of human endeavour. Moreover, Holland credits the city as a humanitarian triumph; the 'cradle of genius, industry, and art [...] where blessed philanthropy resides'.[147] Holland is keen to identify the Infirmary as the epicentre of this efflorescence of humanity:

> Yon noble pile – the monument of BROWNE –
> Where sick, and halt, and maim'd may freely share,
> In that Bethesda, medicine and care.[148]

---

[144] Hunter, *Hallamshire; The History and Topography*, p. 2-3.
[145] Ibid. p. 5.
[146] Holland, *Sheffield Park*, l. 743-44.
[147] Ibid. l. 746-7.
[148] Ibid. l. 752-4.

Holland reifies Sheffield's local monuments by imagining them as biblical set-pieces; his intertextual references are designed to elevate the city's quotidian life into the sphere of cultural and spiritual importance. Alighting on the same imagery as Hoole, Holland is mindful of the landmarks that have historically warranted civic pride. Snobbery regarding the city's industrial processes is somewhat side-stepped; traditional depictions of the city as dark or unwholesome are hinted at rather than fully played into, and its more positive aspects are emphasised. It is through the later glosses, however, that Holland reveals a more pessimistic outlook. For instance, a note to the text reveals that the aforementioned Sheaf is 'now so hemmed in with buildings that it retains scarcely a trace of those many sweet little gardens which were once so proudly and successfully cultivated by the artizans of Sheffield along its banks'.[149] A sense of loss comes to define Holland's attitude towards urban development further into the nineteenth century, specifically connected to Sheffield's local labouring tradition. This may explain Holland's somewhat outdated depiction of steel production earlier on, and this nostalgia permeates his depictions of the smelting process earlier in the narration:

> Along the winding margin of the DUN ;-
> There, black and huge, the haunt of Cyclop bands,
> And crown'd with spiry flames, a furnace stands;
> Incessant, day and night, its crater roars,
> Like the volcano on Sicilian shores.
> Its fiery womb the molten mass combines,
> Thence, lava-like, the boiling torrent shines :
> Down the trench'd sand the liquid metal holds,
> Shoots showers of stars, and fills the hollow moulds.[150]

---

[149] Holland, note to *Sheffield Park*, p. 31.
[150] Holland, *Sheffield Park,* l. 201-210.

Holland imagines the interior of the furnace as a hellish world in microcosm; his classical allusions alter from laudatory to monstrous. Even as he considers the produce of this process, he can only envision the 'iron-throated cannon', the 'death-winged orbs' and other 'engines of Britannia's war'.[151] While his note explains the influence of Waterloo and Trafalgar, too significant in the public memory not to mention, his description of the engines of war hardly resonates with patriotic fervour. Instead, his focus is upon Waterloo's 'dread field of graves' and the 'still increasing and consuming rust' that must inevitably overcome British artillery.[152]

Accompanying this preoccupation with decay, Holland's glosses continue to detail his subject's afterlife; he informs the reader that Sheffield Manor is now 'literally part of a vast and most unsightly colliery work', and the 'Manor-Wood' succeeding to 'a colliery, mountains of shale', 'disfigured' by the new development.[153] The lone furnace is recontextualised by these later passages not as an anomaly, but as a harbinger of yet more drastic industrial transformation and, in the author's opinion, aesthetic degradation. Holland's notes demonstrate an awareness of this aesthetic problem:

> Dr. Johnson, in his life of Cowley, observes that a coalpit has not often found its poet, and it may be objected that a blast-furnace is at least as unattractive. This in Sheffield Park is an object sufficiently conspicuous and characteristic; how far susceptible of poetical embellishment must rest with the stanzas themselves [...][154]

While recognising the struggle to render the industrial landscape poetically, Holland's commentary does not see him decisively single out *himself* as the poet of the coalpit. While, as will be detailed, he does linger on this topic, there is a reluctance to commit to this subject

---

[151] Holland, *Sheffield Park,* l. 213-215.
[152] Ibid. l. 217-224.
[153] Holland, note to *Sheffield Park*, p. 16; Ibid. p. 18.
[154] Ibid. p. 22.

matter, or to allow it to define his poetic output – instead, this call is for his reader to make rather than himself. There are moments where Holland's description of Sheffield's industrial environs exhibits momentary flashes of beauty, but as in the example following, this quickly succeeds to the hellish vision of a battlefield:

> We pass a hill with scarce a verdant trace,
> Where flaming ovens burnt along its base, -
> Globes hot as Aetna, whence the glowing coke
> Belch'd, from each fiery crater, clouds of smoke,
> Which form'd, beneath the sapphire arch of night,
> A dusky canopy of lurid light;
> Now cold, disrupted, spread their fireless wombs,
> Like the rent fragments of exploded bombs,
> Such as are oft from hostile mortars thrown
> Within the walls of some beleaguered town.[155]

Unusually here, the semantic catalogue used to describe Sheffield industry is not one of darkness, but of light – unnatural light, as the phenomenon Holland appears to invoke is that of man-made light pollution. This imagery by Holland seems also to have been influential; Mary Hutton's 'Prospect from Sheffield Manor Hill', published in 1831 with the help of both Holland and Montgomery, similarly observes that the blast furnace '[casts] a bright and glaring glow' which seems to pollute the natural darkness of the night.[156] Both Holland and Hutton's depictions may also stem from Hunter's 1819 observation of the 'perpetual flame' of the furnace by night , positively rendered as an illuminating guide for the 'belated traveller'.[157] In the introduction to this thesis I have already considered Rudolf Beck's assertion that Holland

---

[155] Holland, *Sheffield Park*, l. 343-352.
[156] Hutton, 'The Prospect from Sheffield Manor Hill', in *Sheffield Manor, and other poems*, pp. 30-38 (l. 158).
[157] Hunter, *Hallamshire; The History and Topography*, p. 238.

partakes in an aesthetic turn from the georgic towards an industrial sublime; this may explain the poet's complex emotional reaction to his changing environs, occupying an ambiguous space between wonder and terror.[158] But as Seth T. Reno points out, Holland was not merely interested in the transformative effects of the coal trade on aesthetic level, publishing his own amateur history of the coal-mining process some years later in 1835.[159] Given Holland's sustained intellectual interest in both the science and commercial practice of fossil fuels, *Sheffield Park'*s conflicted meditations on the subject may be read not only as an attempt to render a challenging aesthetic object in verse, but also an attempt to chart the poet's own process of understanding when confronted with a disorienting signifier of modernity.

While this passage dwells on the transformation of the landscape, other excepts from *Sheffield Park* begin to associate the landscape of industry with an accompanying moral disfigurement. Describing the work taking place at Norfolk Park, a property on the former grounds of Sheffield Manor, Holland expresses contempt for the 'ironstone pits, cranky windlasses, hills of black shale, pitmen, pit-*women*, and pick-axes' to be found at the site.[160] Incorporated into a scene of visual disarray, the women at work seem to be a particular object of distaste:

> Lo, numerous coal-black hills deform the vale,
> Of ore ferruginous and crumbling shale;
> Where female forms, of nature's sternest mould,
> Writhe at the windlass, scorning heat and cold –
> Forms, which with love's own tenderness had charm'd,
> Had kindness nursed them, or instruction warn'd;
> Now, hard, ungracious, the soft sex at length

[158] Beck, 'From Industrial Georgic to Industrial Sublime', p. 31.
[159] Reno, *Early Anthropocene Literature* , p. 96.
[160] Holland, note to *Sheffield Park*, p. 6.

Grow men in heart, as masculine in strength;

- But shall creation's flower degrade its stem, -

Man's crown of glory lose each valued gem,

And claim no sigh, and bid no bosom ache?

Here WOMAN claims it for her sex's sake.[161]

As the natural world is warped, Holland observes a reciprocal effect upon the female body and behaviour; labelling these individuals as 'forms', seemingly emerging out of the shale and not entirely human at their first appearance, has the effect of uncannily blending his subjects with their surrounding environment. By making this figurative connection, Holland reiterates that these women are out of the house, carrying out an entirely different sort of labour to domestic work or the morally and spiritually enhancing literary production that the *Iris* Office would appear to sanction. Alexis Easley suggests that extra-domestic work was becoming an increasingly common phenomenon for labouring women in the early nineteenth century, and that this would often lead to retaliation from their male counterparts over fears for their own employment.[162] Holland expresses a certain masculinising quality to their work, their labour rendering these women essentially male – or rather, Holland associates masculinity with manual labour, a theme that would become more pronounced in the critical reception of Ebenezer Elliott's poetry.

That said, the underground tunnels of 'Lithanthrax', the domain in which their work takes place, is described in a strikingly female manner.[163] The caverns resemble a 'womb' - the stone is 'pregnant' with precious ores, and the machinery 'labouring'.[164] One might assert

---

[161] Holland, *Sheffield Park*, l. 633-644.
[162] Alexis Easley, 'Ebenezer Elliott and the Reconstruction of Working-Class Masculinity', *Victorian Poetry*, 39: 2. (Summer 2001), 303-318 (p. 304).
[163] Holland, *Sheffield Park*, l. 660.
[164] Ibid. l. 657; Ibid. l. 666; Ibid. l. 667.

that, rather than the land becoming feminised by the female workers it supports, the masculine role of the land worker who cultivates and exploits the feminised landscape has become appropriated by woman – '[claimed] for her sex's sake', as Holland puts it. The disturbance this supposed masculinisation triggers in the speaker is intriguing when considered alongside what Easley describes as a new 'rhetoric of domesticity' emergent in this period, prompted by women's pronounced role in contemporary labouring agitation.[165] As a counterpoint to this perceived aberration, however, Holland's picture of the 'fearless' male mine worker is consummately heroic in nature.[166] His concluding stanzas on the mine modulate into a lament expressing social concern for the plight of the collier:

> How seldom thinks the happy midnight guest
> Of the poor collier's brief and broken rest;
> He now must rise, and seek, though night-storms rave,
> His destined labour – deeper than the grave;
> Alike to him, whose taper's flickering ray,
> Creates a dubious subterranean day […][167]

The melancholy nature of this employ aside, Holland is eager to stress that the collier's environment is itself hostile towards him: Nature's 'deadliest essence', the 'mephitic air' present beneath the earth, threatens to 'scorch or suffocate' him, while 'threatening rocks' present additional dangers.[168] Holland's conclusion to this episode, however, finds the collier's treatment to be exemplary of more general societal ills. His fate, whereby he is condemned 'to dig for others' wealth. / To earn subsistence, and to bury health', is linked to a wider

---

[165] Easley, 'Ebenezer Elliott and the Reconstruction of Working-Class Masculinity', p. 305.
[166] Holland, *Sheffield Park*, l. 679.
[167] Ibid. l. 683-688.
[168] Ibid. l. 694-8.

'superstructure' wherein the welfare of the national labouring population is sacrificed.[169] This is not a problem for Sheffield alone, or even just Britain – the traces of this exploitative system are tracked to 'far Potosi's mines' before the narration reroutes quickly back to Sheffield.[170] Calling up the Cerro di Potosí, the famous site of silver mines in then-revolutionary Bolivia, Holland invokes a sense of universality in his depiction of labourers, finding commonalities across the Atlantic and across diverse empires. Though *Sheffield Park* remains ever ambivalent about Sheffield's local transformations, the speaker's narration is closely checked by a growing awareness of the city's role and relations within the wider world. Compounding both Sheffield's past and a myriad of potentially world-expanding futures, Holland centres the city in his broader social critique as the epicentre of universal labouring-class concern.

One of Holland's 1857 glosses, however, points to a particularly painful episode in Sheffield's local history. A 'conspicuous monumental Cross', mounted on a grave site, itself formerly a 'naked, unsightly scar of shale-mounds and brick ponds', commemorates the dead after an outbreak of cholera in 1832, and the eminence in question is also the subject of Montgomery's 'The Cholera Mount'.[171] Composed amid the outbreak, the crux of this poem is the controversial mass burial of the victims, and commemorates an event in Sheffield's history, even amid a period of growth and prosperity, that would jeopardise a variety of communal and familial ties. In an echo of the argument made by Mather's 'Black Resurrection' in the previous century, Montgomery's narration problematises the disruption of traditional burial practices and the sense of removal from community that this incurs:

> In death divided from their dearest kin,
>
> This is "a field to bury strangers in:"

---

[169] Holland, *Sheffield Park,* l. 709-710; Ibid. l. 714.
[170] Ibid. l. 718.
[171] Holland, note to *Sheffield Park*, p. 30.

> Fragments, from families untimely reft,
>
> Like spoils in flight or limbs in battle left,
>
> Lie here: - a sad community, whose bones
>
> Might feel, methinks, a pang to quicken stones;[172]

While first and foremost Montgomery's speaker expresses horror at this division from family and community –both of which 'stand aloof, and eye this mount from far' – there is also a profound sense of division from Nature itself, which, personified here, is found 'recoiling' from the dead.[173] The purpose of Montgomery's verse is to traverse these diverse senses of removal and to install a new sense of connection in their place.

Firstly, while relatively short, the poem is surprisingly polyvocal, with numerous speakers interrupting its central narration. The voice of 'shuddering humanity' asks the nature of the 'crime' suffered by the unfortunates in question; cholera sets a 'mark' upon the dead, a request to 'Bury me out of sight and out of call'.[174] A detached 'traveller', separate from the narrator, offers their commentary, while Nature herself intervenes on the part of her lost 'Children'.[175] Most significantly, however, the dead themselves are given a voice to address 'ye passersby', and to outright question their own fate.[176] This voice is a shared one – Montgomery finds reassuring commonality, and a new sort of community, in the shared state of the cholera dead. The disease strikes 'At noon, at midnight', overcoming 'the weak, the strong, / Asleep, awake, alone, amid the throng'; it acts as a leveller, demolishing social

---

[172] James Montgomery, 'The Cholera Mount', in *A Poet's Portfolio; or minor poems: in three books* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1835), pp. 206-212 (l. 1-6).
[173] Ibid. l. 37.
[174] Ibid. l. 13-14; ibid. l. 30-32.
[175] Ibid. l. 90-91; ibid. l. 66.
[176] Ibid. l. 8.

difference.[177] Nature, however, has a particularly important role, and Montgomery acts out

her reconciliation with the abhorred dead on his allegorical stage:

> "Give us a little earth for charity!"
> She linger'd, listen'd, all her bosom yearn'd,
> Through every vein the mother's pulse return'd;
> Then, as she halted on this hill, she threw
> Her mantle wide, and loose her tresses flew:
> "Live!" to the slain, she cried, "My children, live!
> This for a heritage to you I give;
> Had death consumed you with the common lot,
> You, with the multitude had been forgot,
> Now through an age of ages shall ye *not*."[178]

Montgomery's depiction is one of not only reunification but resurrection; moreover, Nature

is responsible for the committal of the dead to public memory. Here, their unusual demise is

not only overcome but overturned, earning them a particular eminence instead of being

forgotten along with the broader mass of the dead. This is then physically represented, as

Montgomery's speaker foretells 'A forest land-mark on the mountain's head, / Standing

betwixt the living and the dead', a visual reminder of Nature's particular blessing.[179] The

speaker and, by extension, the poet, plays a significant role in the mediation of this

relationship. He is Nature's 'echo', '[Taking] up her parable, and prophesy'.[180] Reuniting place

and person here symbolically, Montgomery also helps to inscribe matters of local importance

onto the environment in a far more literal way, as he was selected to lay the monument's

---

[177] Montgomery, 'The Cholera Mount', l. 25-26.
[178] Ibid. l. 62-71.
[179] Ibid. l. 88-89.
[180] Ibid. l. 73.

foundation stone. In this instance Montgomery is representative of an entire community. Considering, however, that despite Montgomery's fearful noting of the de-individuation of the dead, the only names on the monument's plaque are his own, and that of one of the more eminent cholera victims, the master cutler John Blake, this communal attitude survives less through collaborative orality or anonymised in politicised, journalistic verse, and more through the individual poetic ego.

Ebenezer Elliott: Modernising Sheffield

At the time of Montgomery's composition, a new poetic commentator had emerged on Sheffield's scene, whose fame in the nineteenth century was comparable to his own. Ebenezer Elliott's *Corn Law Rhymes*, following up his 1830 publication *The Ranter*, had appeared in 1831, and the ensuing controversy over Elliott's political commentary gained him readers across the country. Elliott and Montgomery shared a number of connections, but most notably, Elliott was rejected as a proprietor of the Literary and Philosophical Society, potentially due to his inflammatory political leanings, in 1839. Montgomery would have had three stints as president of the Society by this point, to take up his fourth and final presidency in 1841. After a reconsideration motivated by pushback from its membership which saw him elected unanimously, Elliott would decline his appointment, asking that the proprietors '[pass] a pen through [his] name', and while occasionally commenting on each other's literary and political activity, this appears to have been the extent of the poets' proximity.[181]

---

[181] Ebenezer Elliott, quoted in William Smith Porter, *Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society; A Centenary Retrospect*, 1822-1922 (Sheffield: J.W. Northend, 1922), pp. 32-33.

Jayne Hildebrand points out that Elliott wrote at a time of heightened political dissent among the labouring classes, coinciding with the early stages of implementation for the First Reform Bill.[182] This would add to Elliott's popularity, as would his former employment as a Sheffield metalworker. Despite his reputation as a 'poet of the poor', Hildebrand also highlights a contradiction within Elliott's persona - he cannot truly be considered labouring-class, and was able to ingratiate himself among Sheffield's middling sorts as well as contriving a comfortable retirement for himself in his final years.[183] This, however, would not prevent reviewers from understanding him as representative of Britain's most provincial and deprived labourers, or assigning him a particular brand of working-class masculinity. Take Thomas Carlyle's comments on the *Corn Law Rhymes* in an 1832 issue of the *Edinburgh Review*:

> the speaker in question is not school-learned, or even furnished with pecuniary capital; is, indeed, a quite unmonied, russet-coated speaker; nothing or little other than a Sheffield worker in brass and iron, who describes himself as 'one of the lower, little removed from the lowest class.' Be of what class he may, the man is provided […] with a rational god-created soul; which too has fashioned itself into some clearness, some self-subsistence, and can actually see and know with its own organs; and in rugged substantial English, nay, with tones of poetic melody, utter forth what it has seen.[184]

Carlyle emphasises Elliott's perceived novelty; this 'voice coming from the deep Cyclopean forges' is associated, for him, with an element of authenticity, and speaks to something of a lived reality which has been hitherto unrepresented.[185] Elliott is a 'genuine', 'earnest, truth-speaking man', and Carlyle's focus on his masculinity is continuously aligned with labour: he can 'handle both pen and hammer like a man', and, 'by his skill in metallurgy', 'beat out a

---

[182] Jayne Hildebrand, 'The Ranter and the Lyric: Reform and Genre Heterogeneity in Ebenezer Elliott's "Corn Law Rhymes"', *Victorian Review,* 39: 1 (Spring 2013), 101-124 (p. 102).
[183] Ibid. p. 102.
[184] Thomas Carlyle, 'Corn-Law Rhymes', *Edinburgh Review*, July 1832, pp. 338-361 (p. 339).
[185] Ibid. p. 339-40.

toilsome but a manful living'.[186] This phenomenon is aided by the prevalence of 'Cobbett's Prose, and Burns's Poetry'; Carlyle regards Elliott as the product of a new culture of labouring literary masculinity.[187] In order to sanction otherwise radical social reforms, Easley suggests, an image of Elliott as an 'ideal working-class patriarch' and 'model of masculine self-improvement' was constructed, and this impression permeates a great deal of his critical reception.[188] The alignment of manual and literary work culminates in what Carlyle terms Elliott's 'Vulcanic dialect', a moniker specifically recalling metalwork, and thus redolent of Elliott's particular locale.[189] That metalwork is a direct influence on his own style of composition is an idea corroborated by Elliott's commentary: his language is 'fervent as a welding heat', and his thoughts 'rush burning from [his] mind, like white-hot bolts of steel'.[190] In his own words, Elliott conceives of poetic composition as a physical rather than spiritual undertaking, which might be applied to both the artificial and natural worlds.

Like that of Montgomery, the production and reception of Elliott's literary output transformed as he rose into public eminence. While originating, in Hildebrand's opinion, in a 'communitarian ballad tradition', following editions of *Corn Law Rhymes* present evidence of formal innovation by way of its extensive textual notes, blending 'literary and informational functions'.[191] The first incarnation of *Corn Law Rhymes* in 1830 took the form of a pamphlet, consisting mainly of Elliott's ballad composition *The Ranter*.[192] Subsequent editions, however, altered the generic qualities and layout of this text significantly. As Hildebrand outlines, the transition from pamphlet distribution into two more standardised editions, both published in

---

[186] Carlyle, 'Corn-Law Rhymes', p. 340; Ibid. p. 344.
[187] Ibid. p. 340.
[188] Easley, 'Ebenezer Elliott and the Reconstruction of Working-Class Masculinity', p. 304.
[189] Carlyle, 'Corn-Law Rhymes', p. 347.
[190] Ebenezer Elliott, 'Preface' to *Corn Law Rhymes*, 3rd edn. (London: B. Steill, 1831), p. vii.
[191] Hildebrand, 'The Ranter and the Lyric', p. 120; Ibid. p. 108.
[192] Ebenezer Elliott, *Corn Law Rhymes: the Ranter* (Sheffield: Platt and Todd, 1830).

1831, seems to have marked a greater level of public esteem for Elliott as a poet, a process

she interprets as causing Elliott's poetic voice to become more 'individualized'.[193] This is true

of its third edition in particular, which would see its contextualising notes, so prevalent in its

second edition and lending the text a heteroglossic function, relegated to a lengthy appendix.

While initially marketed for Sheffield's own artisanal classes, Hildebrand views this editorial

choice as leaving the poet's work 'open to appropriation'; Elliott's later publications seem to

have pivoted towards catering for the middle class on a *national* level.[194] With these

contradictions and confusions regarding Elliott's station, style, and audience considered, I will

approach his poetry regarding Sheffield's urban and industrial development. Observing the

ways Elliott crafts a unique image for both himself as a poet and Sheffield in the 1830s and

40s, I will illustrate how his work represents the culmination of the trajectory of authorial

individualisation and pursuit of broader national appeal that this chapter has so far traced.

Though 'Steam at Sheffield', first published in 1840's *Poetical Works*, is replete with

now-familiar references to the city's darkness and provinciality, Elliott provides an unusual

slant on these tropes by reframing these features as urban virtues rather than vices. The poem

forms an argument between the speaker and the fictionalised character of the elderly Andrew

Turner, who protests that Sheffield's labouring landscape is 'all unlovely, as an eyeless skull';

these arguments are countered by the speaker by stressing the city's utility, and the authentic

humanity of its inhabitants.[195] 'Turner' is a loaded choice of surname for this character,

evocative of pre-industrial manual work (Richard Steele would compare the labour of the

turner, intriguingly, to the work of poets, in a 1709 edition of the *Tatler*).[196] To Elliott's speaker,

---

[193] Hildebrand, 'The Ranter and the Lyric', p. 114; Ibid. p. 115.
[194] Ibid. pp. 114-115.
[195] Elliott, 'Steam at Sheffield', in *The Poetical Works*, ed. By Edwin Elliott, vol. 1, l. 7.
[196] Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, *The Tatler, by Isaac Bickerstaff Esq.*, 16 April 1709, p. 2.

Sheffield is representative of man's 'grand and fair' endeavours; central to his argument is the deconstruction of the boundary between nature and mankind.[197]

> Can'st thou love Nature, and not love the sound
>
> Of cheerful labour? He who loathes the crew
>
> To whose hard hands the toiling oar is bound,
>
> Is dark of spirit, bilious as his hue,
>
> And bread-tax-dyed in Tory lust's true blue.[198]

Instead of imagining human industry and nature as being at strife, Elliott's imaginary interlocutor frames the former as an extension of the latter, for '[man] and his are parts of Nature's plan'.[199] Instead, both nature and industry are pitted against the incumbent government and supporters of the Corn Laws - to not recognise their unity is rendered as inhumane and aligned explicitly with Elliott's political opponents. Even if 'blind old Andrew Turner' cannot *see* Sheffield's beauty, it is everywhere to be *heard* - constant sound is an accompaniment to the town's industrial and domestic systems.[200] The 'loud hammer [...] supplies / Food for the blacksmith's rosy children', transmuted into 'Sweet music' by way of this transaction.[201] Later, Elliott finds the sounds of 'hammer, roll, and wheel' become 'mingled' into one; their sensory impression is not discordant but harmonious.[202] This contributes to the visual beauty of the labourer who 'welds the hissing steel', possessing 'the light of thoughts divine'.[203]

---

[197] Elliott, 'Steam at Sheffield', l. 25.
[198] Ibid. l. 26-30.
[199] Ibid. l. 34.
[200] Ibid. l. 63.
[201] Ibid. l. 54-6.
[202] Ibid. l. 110-111.
[203] Ibid. l. 60-62.

In Elliott's picture of Sheffield at work one might observe the unity of aesthetic, moral and intellectual virtue. This peaceful and harmonious system, however, may still evince sublime sensation:

> Oh, there is glorious harmony in this
> Tempestuous music of the giant, Steam,
> Commingling growl, and roar, and stamp, and hiss,
> With flame and darkness! Like a Cyclop's dream,
> It stuns our wondering souls, that start and scream
> With joy and terror;[204]

Refiguring the same 'Vulcanic' language observable in *Sheffield Park*, Elliott alternately posits the carnage of steam and smelting as thrilling and even pleasurable. Impressive, though safely contained within the unreal 'dream' of its beholder, steam power is not merely a frightening novelty, nor a harmless quotidian feature; it is a godlike power that might yet be harnessed, and one which Elliott's verse exults in. This is further evidenced by the presence of James Watt within the poem, featuring as a quasi-Promethean figure:

> Watt! and his million-feeding enginery!
> Steam-miracles of demi-deity!
> Thou can'st not see, unnumber'd chimneys o'er,
> From chimneys tall the smoky cloud aspire;
> But thou can'st hear the unwearied crash and roar
> Of iron powers, that, urged by restless fire,
> Toil ceaseless, day and night, yet never tire,
> Or say to greedy man, "Thou dost amiss."[205]

---

[204] Elliott, 'Steam at Sheffield', l. 74-79.
[205] Ibid. l. 64-73.

Here, Watt is a provider for mankind; the steam engine is the deliverance of the poor, and the sound of machinery is the testament to its tireless power. The poet's subject is so novel it requires the use of kennings ('steam-miracles', 'demi-deity'), starkly and self-consciously conjoining elements of speech for a new and unprecedented purpose. Elliott is also eager to stress that Watt is 'a poor man's boy', 'self-taught' and 'honest', and indicative of a particular class mobility in a new industrial meritocracy.[206] That the machine 'toils' is significant; this artificial creation has taken on the burden of human labour – and crucially, as outlined in this extract, it cannot protest against avarice or corruption, and so does not pose the social threat of an oppressed set of human labourers.

> Elliott views the steam engine as a force of enlightenment, a 'metal god' that

> shall chase
> The tyrant idols of remotest lands,
> Preach science to the desert, and efface
> The barren curse from every pathless place
> Where virtues have not yet atoned for crimes.[207]

Sheffield is figured as the epicentre of the modernising world; the machinery at work here will overcome superstition and solve the social ills of starvation and crime. It is necessary to inspect the optimistic sentiment here closely; what appears at first as a mission of social amelioration conceals suggestions, too, of westernisation and Christianisation. Watt's engine is placed at counterpoint with the 'tyrant's power', a purely exploitative force whose deeds are 'writ in blood, and read on graves'.[208] This archaic form of power is doomed to 'yield' to

---

[206] Elliott, 'Steam at Sheffield', l. 114; Ibid. l. 185.
[207] Ibid. l. 84-88.
[208] Ibid. l. 166; Ibid. l. 169.

the engine's sway, not only due to the latter's regenerative capability, but due to its stronger efficacy and reach, and its apparent lack of subjective bias.[209] 'Both Indies lift their hands' to the engine's might, and as a 'Child of pale thought', a 'dread masterpiece of mind', it is without 'thought or passion', and read by Elliott as beyond human self-interest or corruption.[210] Like Holland before him, demonstrating Sheffield's international reverberations and associations, Elliott envisages Sheffield as an imperial metropolis, with far-flung subjects held under its cultural and technological sway.

While largely 'beneficent', however, Elliott's observation of man-made improvement may also, 'Like heaven's red bolt, [lighten] fatally'.[211] Elliott's depiction of the steam train, a 'hell of wheels', forces his speaker to reconsider his utopian appraisal of steam power.[212] Not only is this innovation dangerous, but it has a drastically transformative effect on its immediate locale:

> Is this the spot where stoop'd the ash-crown'd hill
> To meet the vale, when bee-loved banks, o'ergrown
> With broom and woodbine, heard the cushat lone
> Coo for her absent love?---Oh, ne'er again
> Will Andrew pluck the freckled foxglove here!
> How like a monster, with a league-long mane,
> Or Titan's rocket, in its high career,
> Towers the dense smoke! The falcon, wheeling near,
> Turns, and the angry crow seeks purer skies.[213]

---

[209] Elliott, 'Steam at Sheffield', l. 173.
[210] Ibid. l. 174-179.
[211] Ibid. l. 90-91.
[212] Ibid. l. 93.
[213] Ibid. l. 100-108,

The change in the landscape owing to the railway is so complete that it prompts the speaker to outright question his surroundings; this is marked by a move back into the language of the mankind/nature dichotomy. Moving briefly into an elegiac pastoral mode, vastly contrasting the imagery of the rest of the narrative, the speaker conveys a sense of extreme and recent change. This pastoral setting existed in Andrew Turner's lifetime, but now is irrevocably lost. Elliott's poignant expression is perhaps sharpened by his reference to the 'cushat', using here a Scots dialect term for the wood-pigeon, evocative of a dwindling regional lexicon of the natural world, and suggestive of an foreign, archaic other for the metropolitan reader. Both aberrant and 'like a prophet [telling] of horrors yet to come', the very powers that launch industrial Sheffield into modernity are a dismal sign of the times.[214] It is also worth mentioning that Watt's engine is not the only invention this poem celebrates – the 'Whimsy', or the Newcomen engine, also makes an appearance.[215] This precursor to Watt's engine, invented in 1712, had already been used in Sheffield's collieries for years before the introduction of Watt's improved design. Neither, however, is unique or native to Sheffield; both exemplify the way Elliott deftly appropriates a national technological legacy and applies it to matters of local relevance.

Already, Elliott's poetry is fiercely ambivalent about the developments it narrates. This same sentiment may be further traced in his 'Verses on the Opening of the Sheffield and Rotherham Railway', relating to an event taking place in 1838. Continuing the thematic strand from 'Steam at Sheffield', the city's new connectivity is initially fêted as a 'triumph for mankind - / Another victory of mind / O'er man's worst enemies'.[216] To the speaker, it is comparable

---

[214] Elliott, 'Steam at Sheffield', l. l. 139-40.
[215] Ibid. l. 149.
[216] Elliott, 'Verses on the Opening of the Sheffield and Rotherham Railway', in the *Poetical Works*, pp. 146-150 (l. 5-7).

with the discovery of fire, and prompts Elliott to imagine a prehistoric Hallamshire before human innovation:

> Fire-kindling Man! How weak wast thou
> Ere thou had'st conquered fire!
> How like a worm, on Canklow's brow,
> Thou shrank'st from winter's ire![217]

Zeroing in on primitive man's weakness, and by implication suggesting a new strength to come, Elliott demonstrates the objective advantages of power over the natural environment. This image of primeval man is projected onto the very landscape the railway traverses; Canklow, then the site of woodlands, an estate and a mill, becomes the site of man's ancient, pre-technological state, and due to its location, would be visible from point of view of the train's passengers. Elliott writes at what is, to him, a world-altering moment. The modernisation in question, however, retains many of the negative connotations expressed in 'Steam at Sheffield'. Consider the passage below, describing the engine's approach:

> They come! The shrieking steam ascends
> Slow moves the banner'd train;
> They rush! The towering vapour bends –
> The kindled wave again
> Screams over thousands, thronging all
> To witness now the funeral
> Of law-created pain.[218]

---

[217] Elliott, 'Verses', l. 36-39.
[218] Ibid. l. 8-14.

Again, it is primarily through sound that Elliott conveys his impression. The steam 'shrieks'; the train 'screams' over the buzz of the crowd. There is, however, a disconnect between the actual denotation of this passage and the emotional impact it conveys. Surely 'the funeral / Of law-created pain' must be a positive occasion in which something undeniably negative is done away with. However, on an emotive level, both 'funeral' and 'pain' are negative concepts; in reality, reading over this set of images does not cause them to cancel one another out, and the emotional impression remains overwhelmingly sombre. Repeatedly, Elliott can only summon the image of a net loss, even when describing what are ostensibly positive social transformations; this development will 'dig Abbadon's grave' and be 'The many-nation'd funeral / Of law-created woe'.[219] Rather than framing the transaction as any kind of gain or celebration, Elliott remains confined to the language of loss.

Furthermore, there remains some doubt as to the humanitarian benefit of these public works. Technical advancement is undertaken 'in vain', Elliott's speaker continues, 'if millions toil half-fed, / And Crompton's children, begging bread, / Wealth-hated, curse their sire'.[220] Essentially, Elliott sees the mission of modernisation as lacking, if it continues to forgo the social change necessary to sustain the wellbeing of the population in an industrialising world. The reference to Crompton alludes to Samuel Crompton, inventor of the spinning mule, though also invokes the Lancashire township in which the introduction of power looms had seem Luddite uprisings just over ten years prior to Elliott's composition. Reconciling his observation of encroaching development with his overarching political motive, Elliott cannot help but find modernisation wanting, essentially recalling the socially motivated messaging of his poetic predecessors in Sheffield. Despite this, Elliot's frame of reference remains drastically

---

[219] Elliott, 'Verses', l. 83; Ibid. l. 90-91.
[220] Ibid. l. 57-63.

enlarged compared to that of Mather's world of local happenstance; the regional becomes

the global, as a new infrastructure '[conquers] time and space; / [Bids] East and West shake

hands'.[221] This expansive sense of regionality, appealing to matters of national concern, is

suggestive of Elliott's broadening readership and an increasing desire to appeal to readers

both home and away. In doing so, Elliott completes the process of Sheffield's move away from

self-contained, tightly-knit, communitarian ballad tradition. Even though his work is still highly

evocative of a social world dominated by class division and labour, his own social mobility as

an author, and the clear-cut emergence of his singular poetical ego through the formal

development and critical reception of his works, decisively transforms the relationship

between poetry and community at play in the town.

---

[221] Elliott, 'Verses', l. 22-23.

Chapter Four, 'Scorn not the loom': Examining 'Unpoetical' Manchester

In April 1821, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* featured a contentious article entitled

'Manchester Poetry'. Anonymously composed, and ostensibly reviewing D. W. Paynter's *The*

Muse in Idleness, the piece's title is misleading; rather than introducing a set of

contemporary Mancunian poets, it instead bemoans the apparent lack of poetic talent to be

found in this 'very commercial town':

> There is something in the name itself which puts to flight all poetical associations.
> Only couple […] in your mind the ideas of Manchester and Wordsworth, and see
> if, by any mental process, you can reduce them into any sort of union. The genius
> of that great man would have been absolutely clouded for ever by one week's
> residence in the fogs of Manchester![1]

As is made apparent here, Manchester's very environment is blamed for its dearth of

poetical production, as opposed to any financial or social disadvantages on the part of its

inhabitants. Even someone who has the means to pursue a poetic career may end up

creatively 'clouded', paralleling visual obfuscation with the impairment of poetic insight. This

is a place of both actual and 'intellectual darkness', conceived by the author as the symbolic

antithesis of 'Enlightened' Edinburgh.[2] It is even placed below Liverpool in the hierarchy of

culture; the author surmises that 'such a man as Roscoe' could never flourish in

Manchester's environs.[3] Its author was James Crossley, a high Tory commentator whose

irreverence at the fate of the Peterloo protestors was, according to Stephen Collins,

'offensive even to conservative readers'.[4] Crossley was resident in Manchester after

relocating from his native Halifax, and his interest in Classical literature had been primarily

---

[1] James Crossley (anonymised), 'Manchester Poetry', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 1 April 1821, pp. 64- 74 (p. 65); Ibid. p. 64.
[2] Ibid. p. 64.
[3] Ibid. p. 66.
[4] Stephen Collins, *James Crossley: A Manchester Man of Letters* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 2012) p. 33.

inspired by his visit to Chetham's Library in his youth; at this point, he was not making this

criticism as a physical outsider. Collins goes on to note Crossley's 'distaste for industrialism'

and, indeed, Manchester's industry is held as a key incriminating factor here, as if industrial

production were at odds with poetry on a fundamental level.[5] As evidence for the literary

deficiency he perceives in Manchester's population, Crossley claims that, while apt subject

matter for poetic meditation exists, along with the resources necessary for generating

intellectual activity, these have been misused or completely disregarded by its townspeople.

Crossley singles out the 'far-famed massacre of Peterloo', still very much in living memory in

1821, which he mockingly suggests 'might have been compared to Marathon or

Thermopylae'; Crossley however argues that no representative of Manchester's population

has had 'time or courage' to comment productively on the matter in either poetry or prose.[6]

Crossley's dismissal of the very idea of 'Manchester Poetry', however, stands in

contradiction of the range of poetry that was produced in his own time and in successive

decades in the city. By evaluating the work of Samuel Bamford (1788-1872), as well as that

of his later contemporaries in the nineteenth century, I will explore how this group of writers

constructs a poetic language and identity to suit Manchester's particular social and physical

landscape. In Bamford's 1819 collection *The Weaver Boy*, Manchester is hardly antithetical

to poetic production, opening with a poem addressed to Manchester, figuring the city itself

as a 'gentle Muse', teaching a 'fond admirer how to sing'.[7] The singer is a 'weaver poor', a

hand-loom weaver much like Bamford himself. [8] This poetry was also not unknown on a

national scale; John Gardner has convincingly argued for the influence of poems from *The*

---

[5] Collins, *James Crossley*, p. 38.
[6] Crossley, 'Manchester Poetry', pp. 65-66.
[7] Samuel Bamford, 'Lines on Manchester' in *The Weaver Boy; or, Miscellaneous Poetry* (Manchester: Observer Office, 1819), p. 1 (l. 1); Ibid. l. 6.
[8] Ibid. l. 4.

Weaver Boy on John Keats, via their publication in *The Examiner* in 1819.[9] In Bamford's

verse, the specificity of time and place is palpable, and is used to bring radical discussions to

the fore in an incredibly direct manner. The first section of this chapter will consider Bamford

as a mouthpiece for Mancunian radicalism post-Peterloo, and prior to a downturn in radical

expression in the succeeding years. The second part will examine poetic responses to

unprecedented social change and urban growth in Manchester in the decades following

Peterloo, comprising of the work of Maria Jane Jewsbury, Elijah Ridings, and Charles Swain.

All three writers contend with the difficulties in expressing civic pride while admitting the

social problems arising in an increasingly densely populated environment. Finally, the third

section of this chapter looks at the 'Bards of Cottonopolis', a Mancunian literary collective

active from the late 1820s, in the light of a set of negative presumptions about Manchester's

literary significance. I will particularly focus on John Bolton Rogerson's *A Voice from the Town*

(1842) and its complex relationship with the city it describes.

While initially only comprising a relatively small industrial centre, James Watt's

introduction of the steam engine in 1776 permitted the expansion of factory districts in the

centre of Manchester, quadrupling, as Francois Vigier states, within twenty five years and

then doubling 'every twenty years'.[10] Despite the birth of this 'megalopolis', however,

Manchester's government failed to undergo any corollary systemic modernisation.[11]

Manchester was still, as Katrina Navickas indicates, a medieval 'manor' (unlike its close

neighbour Liverpool, whose steadier growth had permitted better management of its

---

[9] Gardner, *Poetry and Popular Protest*, p. 24.
[10] Vigier, *Change and Apathy*, p. 96.
[11] Alisdair Clayre, 'Introduction', in *Nature and Industrialization*, ed. by Alisdair Clayre (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. xix-xxvi (p. xxvi).

population) and did not see its first inroads into governmental reform until 1792.[12] As a result the city was poorly equipped to deal with such unprecedented change. This influx of new workers, a soaring birth rate, poor working conditions and inadequate pay swiftly led to a depreciation in the quality of life of Manchester's inhabitants and, subsequently, an advance in 'class-consciousness'.[13] By the early decades of the nineteenth century, confrontations such as Peterloo (which was hardly the only violent clash of its kind) had, as Navickas points out, drawn 'the whole country's attention to Manchester and the industrial north as a centre for extra-parliamentary political organisation'.[14] Since its conception as an industrial entity, then, Manchester is inescapably political, and stands out as a centre for alternative and frequently radical social collectives.

Manchester had also remained a hub for both religious dissent and its associated culture of scientific enquiry, due to the foundation of a Literary and Philosophical Society in 1781 by Thomas Percival (an alumnus of Warrington Academy). Further into the nineteenth century, the Unitarian teachings introduced in Warrington were carried forward to a new generation of Mancunian writers and philanthropists, informing the work of Society member William Gaskell and his wife, the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell. John Seed describes the two Unitarian congregations in Manchester - the middling-class Cross Street, and its more radical counterpart at Mosley Street – as factories of 'ideological production', with connections to many of the city's influential public bodies.[15] For example, the Literary and Philosophical Society, in its earlier days, met at Cross Street Chapel, and the *Manchester*

---

[12] Katrina Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place 1789-1848* (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2016) p. 38.

[13] Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), p. 238.

[14] Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, p. xiv.

[15] Seed, 'Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Culture', p. 2-4.

Guardian was likewise founded in 1821 by a predominantly Unitarian group of reformers.[16]

Moreover, Manchester's physical landscape was not without culturally important edifices,

including Chetham's Library, an educational resource intended for the universal betterment

of the people, and the Manchester Free Grammar School, a popular institution for sons of

the well-to-do from out of town. The city's Collegiate Church had also provided a platform

for Thomas Clarkson's anti-slavery sermonising in 1787. On this latter point, it is worth

highlighting that, with textile manufacture as its primary industry, Manchester's commerce

was still very much intertwined with the slave trade, and this involvement was countered by

a great deal of pushback against the trade in the city, with petitions for its abolition taking

place in both 1792 and 1806, the former being at that time the largest campaign of its kind

in British history.[17] That said, this sentiment did not form a particularly significant

undercurrent within the main body of poetry produced in Manchester during this period.

Spiritually, culturally, and intellectually, Manchester had a strong foundation on

which to operate; this, however, did not translate to poetic representation on a broad

national stage until the 1830s and 40s. It is possible that Unitarians, and their common

association in the public mind with worldliness and opulence, as documented by Helen

Plant, may have contributed towards the 'snobbishness' expressed towards Manchester's

attempts to contribute culturally to a wider national audience.[18] As this chapter argues,

negative conceptions about its particular brand of urban living, as well as a conflicted set of

representations put forward by those writers who did choose to approach it as a subject,

---

[16] Seed, 'Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Culture', p. 4-5.

[17] Colley, *Britons*, p. 353; see also Sami Pinarbasi, 'Manchester Antislavery, 1792-1807', *Slavery & Abolition*, 41: 2 (2020), 349-376.

[18] Seed, 'Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Culture', p. 9; Helen Plant, *Unitarianism, Philanthropy, and Feminism in York, 1782-1821: the career of Catharine Cappe* (York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 2003), p. 6.

meant that until Gaskell's own novelistic renderings of Manchester, the city could not be widely understood as literary, and was especially difficult to configure in verse form.

Bamford, Peterloo, and Early Radicalism

As John Gardner has already commendably proved, Samuel Bamford's own assertion that he had never written 'something in the metrical way, about the Manchester affair [i.e. Peterloo]' can be taken as outright false.[19] Though claiming to have made 'several attempts', apparently unsuccessful, at tackling the subject, his body of work includes a number of published poems directly concerning the events of the Massacre, as well as several which more broadly approach local happenstances in Manchester's radical history.[20] As Gardner points out, these poems may have been self-suppressed during Bamford's later life in an attempt to cover up his radical past, which will be discussed in more detail later. Active during an 'efflorescence of popular radicalism after 1815', Bamford writes from a marginalised position in a number of ways: both physically, writing from the outskirts of the city in Middleton, and also as a religious outsider, raised by a Methodist family. [21] However, Bamford's work retains a keen sense of local identity and belonging. For instance, take the 'Lancashire Hymn', a strangely prescient protest poem calling for immediate nationwide reform, which first appears in 1818:

> Have we not heard the infant's cry,
>
> And mark'd its mother's tear?

---

[19] Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 231, quoted in John Gardner, 'The Suppression of Samuel Bamford's Peterloo Poems', *Romanticism,* 13: 2 (January 2008), 145-155 (p. 145).

[20] Gardner, 'The Suppression of Samuel Bamford's Peterloo Poems, p. 231.

[21] Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place*, p. 234.

That look which told us mournfully

That woe and want were there, -

And shall they ever weep again?

And shall their pleadings be in vain?[22]

From the title alone, Bamford's verse is tied to matters of place and local identity, and his use of the inclusionary first-person plural 'we' gives us the binding sense of a crowd united in their purpose. Bamford's work can be situated within a growing interest in Lancashire poetry of the prior century, as evidenced in the revival of the work of Tim Bobbin, the alias of John Collier (d. 1786). Collier was a Lancashire satirist and caricaturist whose comic dialect poetry was published in a new edition of 1811 (featuring remarks on Collier's local importance, taken from Aikin's *Description of the Country from thirty to forty Miles round Manchester* originally written in 1795).[23] Such recollections of Lancashire's literary past, then, may have helped to furnish the popularity and relevance of Bamford's work.

Bamford's poem is, of course, a 'hymn'; it is to be sung by a collective. By drawing on a sense of shared identity and local history, Bamford's poem helps to develop a sense of collective affect. In this way it resembles a broadside ballad, which Alison Morgan suggests had been framed by alarmed loyalists as 'part of a movement against the state' by the 1790s, though was also 'a way of asserting an English cultural identity' in this period.[24] Other poems by Bamford are even more in line with this tradition and make use of existing melodies such as 'God save the King' to convey a subversive anti-loyalist message – for

---

[22] Samuel Bamford, 'The Lancashire Hymn', in *Hours in the Bowers, Poems, &c*. (Manchester: J.P. Jennings and H. Cowdroy, 1834), pp. 41-43 (l. 37-42).

[23] John Collier (as "Tim Bobbin"), *The Miscellaneous Works, containing his view of the Lancashire Dialect* (Salford: Cowdroy and Slack, 1811); see also the imitator of Collier's works, Robert Walker a.k.a "Tim Bobbin the Second", *Plebeian Politics; or the Principles and Practices of certain Mole-eyed Manicus, vulgarly called Warrites* (Salford: Cowdroy and Slack, 1801).

[24] Alison Morgan, *Ballads and Songs of Peterloo* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p. 29.

instance, 1820's 'God Save the Queen', sung in support of Queen Caroline.[25] As the 'Hymn'

proceeds, Bamford refuses to render any image of the supplicant, passive poor:

> And shall we tamely now forego
> The rights for which they bled,
> And crouch beneath a minion's blow,
> And basely bow the head?
> Ah no! it cannot, cannot be –
> Death for us, or liberty.[26]

Here we see again the recurrence of oppositional patriotism. The speaker bears a 'patriot's

ardent heart', speaks of the 'nation's ire', and prophesies 'another Runnymede', an allusion

to the signing of the Magna Carta.[27] Bamford's revolution is a very English one, ironically

seeking to detach itself from the still-living memory of the French Revolution while still using

the same volatile language, invoking the 'God of truth and liberty'.[28] The 'Hymn' is one of

Bamford's first published poems, appearing before his 1819 collection *The Weaver Boy* in an

1818 issue of the radical publication *The Black Dwarf,* which featured Bamford's verse on

multiple occasions. This, however, is only attributed to "S. B."; it was not until after

Bamford's involvement in the Peterloo Massacre, representing the Rochdale and Middleton

reformers the next year, that he was credited in full.[29] It is Bamford's response to politically

charged events that shapes his work's sense of locality, and his response to Peterloo in

particular seeks to forge both regional and class-based radical solidarity.

---

[25] Bamford, 'God Save the Queen' in *Miscellaneous Works*, pp. 37-39.
[26] Bamford, 'The Lancashire Hymn', l. 19-24.
[27] Ibid. l. 2; l. 29; l. 54.
[28] Ibid. l. 56.
[29] Samuel Bamford (as "S. B."), 'The Lancashire Hymn', *Black Dwarf,* 20 May 1818, p. 318.

Bamford's involvement in the Massacre was followed immediately by an upsurge in his notoriety. All of his verse in the *Black Dwarf* is fully credited after the summer of 1819, and an issue of 1820 includes a poem by "Elpou" dedicated to Bamford himself. Praising this 'intrepid bard', 'warm with love and liberty', it is among a number of articles that market Bamford as a radical figurehead.[30] A note on the 1821 publication of 'Ode to Death' and 'Ode to a Plotting Parson' remarks that Bamford's compositions are 'all occasional, and for the most part suggested by urgent political occasions'; it is Bamford's radical involvement and topicality that power his literary fame.[31] Additionally, it seems Bamford deliberately plays up to this inflammatory public image. An untitled poem in the front pages of *Miscellaneous Poetry* (1821) recounts Bamford's presence at the Massacre:

> I did escape upon that day
> When many of my friends were slain,
> And many sorely wounded lay,
> Gasping in their strong agony.[32]

These are not merely civilians; they are people with whom Bamford shares an identity. Bamford's use of personal pronouns ('my friends') stresses his closeness to the victims and their communal suffering. Considering the placement of these lines – used here as part of a preface to Bamford's collection – this poem is used by Bamford by way of an introduction to an audience that may not have heard of him before. This is what Bamford is using to advertise himself – a strong tie to the hardship and violence endured by Mancunian, labouring-class radicals.

---

[30] "Elpou", 'To Mr. S. Bamford, a Patriot and Prisoner in Lincoln Gaol', *Black Dwarf*, 24 May 1820, p. 723, (l. 5); Ibid. l. 6.

[31] 'Bamford's Poems', *Black Dwarf*, Nov 7 1821, pp. 670-672 (p. 672).

[32] Bamford, 'Lines', in *Miscellaneous Poetry*, p. 2 (l. 6-9).

Bamford makes no secret of his labouring origins; in fact, they are used as part of his commercial appeal. The preface continues to claim that

> the] author is unlettered. The arrows of Criticism, which, to Book Poets convey bitterness and dismay, fall pointless and powerless against SAMUEL BAMFORD.[33]

Not being 'in books', Bamford is figuratively brought out of the study and into the workhouse.[34] Far from being a weakness, Bamford's estrangement from the world of letters is painted as one of his strengths. He is held up as untainted by the pretensions of high society, 'unaffected and simple […] brave and honest'.[35] Interestingly, this preface not only contrasts Bamford with his peers in terms of his education and status, but also the content of his work, remarking that 'he has not ventured' to praise the beauty of nature in his verse.[36] The circumstances of Bamford's birth and standing are somewhat suggested to be responsible for the creation of a new, alternative type of poetry, with a non-standard subject matter. Instead, Bamford 'sings to the motion of his loom'; his poetry is not something he does in spite of his profession, but something in harmony with it. [37] Robert Poole clarifies that Bamford's weaving is not factory work, but part of a long regional tradition of handloom weaving. This age-old process allowed time for leisure and education, producing 'self-taught men of all sorts', but found itself under threat, as weaver's wages were suppressed by the ruthless efficiency of the encroaching powerloom industry.[38] It is essential that the social and cultural crisis undergone by working-class communities in urbanising Lancashire is not dismissed here; Bamford's poetic persona is also a preservation of a way of life. The figure of

---

[33] 'Preface' to *Miscellaneous Poetry*, p. i.
[34] Ibid. p. i.
[35] Ibid. p. ii.
[36] Ibid. p. i.
[37] Ibid. p. i.
[38] Robert Poole, *Peterloo: The English Uprising* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 41.

the handloom weaver sits at odds with the state, as the preface states that Bamford is 'a poor WEAVER […] but, at the same time, one whose heart beats high for his country'.[39] While Bamford is depicted as a working-class radical, it remains commercially important to curtail this portrait's more subversive qualities.

Additionally, Bamford's title, *The Weaver Boy*, is not simply a description of his profession, but a subversive declaration of an urban, working-class identity, and moreover, a derogatory term reclaimed by those it is used to disparage. An 1817 piece in W. M. Cobbett's *Register* claims that 'the appellation of "Weaver-Boys"' has been given to labouring-class radicals in the north by Manchester's own 'sons of Corruption', the bourgeois and governing class of the region.[40] Even in publications that sympathise with Bamford, there is residual snobbery about his class allegiances, behaviour, and his appearance. The *Monthly Magazine* praises Bamford's 'bold and manly love of liberty', but then finds that he has 'a naturally strong and poetical mind struggling against the disadvantages of station and education'.[41] Similarly, the *Observer*'s description of Bamford's 1819 arrest portrays ' a tall, stout man, about twenty-seven, dressed in a velveteen coat, and with a coloured cotton handkerchief, and has an appearance quite the reverse of that of a poetic genius.'[42] What a 'poetic genius' ought to resemble is here conspicuously omitted; the audience is to infer these qualities purely through a negation of Bamford's appearance and persona. Accounts of Bamford paint him as an audacious figure, at best lamenting the misfortune of his situation, and at worst suggesting total unsuitability to the typical role of the poet.

---

[39] 'Preface' to *Miscellaneous Poetry*, p. ii.
[40] W.M. (William) Cobbett, 'An Address to the "WEAVER-BOYS" of LANCASHIRE', *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register,* 25 Jan 1817, pp. 98-128, (pp. 98-99).
[41] 'NEW BOOKS PUBLISHED IN NOVEMBER, With an HISTORICAL and CRITICAL PROEMIUM', *Monthly Magazine or British Register,* Dec 1821, pp. 448-453 (p. 450).
[42] 'LATE PROCEEDINGS AT MANCHESTER,' *Observer,* 30 Aug 1819, p. 2.

Poems such as 'The Arrest', appearing in 1821, however, encourage a sense of

Bamford's political heterodoxy. Highly autobiographical, this work narrates the immediate

aftermath of Peterloo, and the events leading up to Bamford's incarceration. Depicting his

captors as 'butchers', Bamford makes his derision for law enforcers caustically clear:

> But in they came - a mighty rout
> Of thief-catchers and soldiers brave,
> (Our British red-coats ever ought
> A gallant character to have –
> You know they did the country save,
> And our religion, and our right;)
> The very dogs of war, who gave
> The troops of France so keen a bite,
> When they at Waterloo did fight.[43]

Bamford's verse here is flatly ironic. The soldiery is figured here to hold a debt of fear over

the commoners, having only triumphed through the threat of losing 'country', 'religion', and

'right'. These are not agents of protection, then, but tyranny. As the narration continues,

Bamford makes something of a show of the paraphernalia of his radical involvement. As the

officer searches his lodgings, Bamford offers us a register of his concealed, illicit belongings,

each a signifier of his subversive allegiances:

> Nor did he find my trusty sword,
> A friend had taken it away; […]
> My letters and my poetry,
> Which would have been a prize divine,
> No! there was not a single line,
> Nor did he even find at length

---

[43] Bamford, 'The Arrest', in *Miscellaneous Poetry*, pp. 76-80 (l. 25); Ibid. l. 37-45.

My golden letter'd banner gay,

Inscribed, "UNITY AND STRENGTH" –

(John Gartside bore it gallantly,

Throughout the fatal meeting day […]

O, again it shall proudly float,

When freedom sounds her clarion note.[44]

This is a message of reassurance and solidarity for Bamford's radical peers – and, simultaneously, a warning to those who would stand in their way. That Bamford has 'friends' who can help him conceal evidence suggests a wider network of radicals who can work to protect one another, and these individuals remain anonymous and ungendered even in Bamford's verse. This protection is therefore mutual. Furthermore, Bamford makes mention of several weapons, painting a very different portrait of Manchester's radical body than the helpless pacifists present at Peterloo. This is to be taken as a warning – the radicals are a threat, albeit an underground one. It may be that Bamford deliberately makes a performance of this threat (even if it is indeed empty) as part of a widespread culture of self-conscious public retaliation after the events of the Massacre. Mary Fairclough outlines that even the 'mythic threat' of planned simultaneous meetings demonstrative of public support for the victims and a nationwide potential for further politically motivated gatherings post-Peterloo was enough to provoke a crackdown on public organisation in the form of the Six Acts.[45] That Bamford's own poetry is included by him in this poem alongside the apparatus of violent rebellion is significant. Not only does it implicate him in radical activity, but it is counted among the instruments of dissent and one of the radicals' most powerful assets.

---

[44] Bamford, 'The Arrest', l. 90-107.

[45] Mary Fairclough, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 163.

Employing this dual functionality, the chronological scope of Bamford's radical imagination

nurses the wounds of its past defeat while holding its triumphant future prospects in sight.

'The Arrest' ironically discusses the concealment of radical activity, while itself

revealing a high degree of involvement with such activities. Rogers has suggested the

propensity for radical writings to be 'mocking' in nature, brazen and offensive in order to

render the 'superficial' nature of loyalism ridiculous by contrast; the irony present in

Bamford's poem renders the tone tongue-in-cheek, aligning it strongly with this tradition.[46]

As much is demonstrated by much of Bamford's work, and in an address to the reader in *The*

Weaver Boy, this perceived vulgarity is often tied in with his regionality and class.

Apologising somewhat for his 'rude and strong language', and clarifying that Bamford 'has

not acted on the advice of any one', he is depicted as 'one of old Burke's Pigs' – the latter a

reference to the 'swinish multitude' of Burke's *Reflections*.[47] Satirists of the late eighteenth

century such as Thomas Spence and Daniel Isaac Eaton had already attempted to reclaim

this insult, in publications such as *Politics for the People; or, a Salmagundy for Swine* and

Pig's Meat, or; Lessons for the Swinish Multitude (both published in 1793).[48] Both

publications play on the Circe/Comus myths of animal-human transfiguration, involving a

working-class audience in intellectual debate by providing essays and poems appealing to

radical sympathies. Bamford's voice fulfils a similar carnivalesque purpose, both crude and

theatrically Mancunian, parading his perceived vulgarity before the reader. Take 'The Fray of

---

[46] Rogers, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain*, p. 209.

[47] 'To the Reader', in *The Weaver Boy*, p. 2; Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. by F.G. Selby (London: Macmillan, 1890), p. 88.

[48] Thomas Spence, *Pig's Meat; or, Lessons for the Swinish Multitude* (London: printed for T. Spence at The Hive of Liberty, 1794); *Politics for the People; Or, a Salmagundy for Swine*, ed. by Daniel Isaac Eaton, 4th edn. (London: printed for D. I. Eaton, 1793).

Stockport', composed to commemorate an altercation between radicals and yeomanry in

the February of 1819, an immediate preface to the events of Peterloo:

> For sticks were up, and stones they flew,
>
> Their gentle bodies bruisin',
>
> An' in a hurry they withdrew
>
> Fro' such unmanner'd usin' […]
>
> Proudly let our banner wave,
>
> Wi' freedom's emblem o'er it,
>
> An' toasted be the Stockport lads,
>
> The lads who bravely bore it.[49]

Delivered through a phonetic Lancashire dialect, Bamford plays up both the coarseness of

his fellow protesters and his own regional identity. Bamford's language harks back to the

image of the aforementioned 'Pig': he is part of a 'Gruntin' herd', an inhuman

'rabblement'.[50] That these terms are placed in inverted commas suggests Bamford is

reclaiming terms of derogation from loyalists and similar detractors. Moreover, the

protesters carry a 'cap and flag' in imitation of the French Phrygian cap of the *sans-culottes*;

Bamford's rebels are knowingly 'Gallic' as noted by Rogers' accounts of coeval radical

satires.[51] In contrast to the 'unmanner'd' crowd, the 'gentle' yeomanry are characterised as

impotent 'Dandies', implying that the labouring radical is stronger, more natural, and more

masculine than his supposed superior.[52] The violence is referred to in a largely farcical

manner, with heads onomatopoeically 'a-crackin'' and utilising multisyllabic comic rhyme

('usin'', 'bruisin'').[53] This 'black comedy', as Gardner describes it, makes a startling pairing

---

[49] Bamford, 'The Fray of Stockport', in *Miscellaneous Poetry*, pp. 49-50 (l. 37-44).
[50] Ibid. l. 7; Ibid. l. 36.
[51] Ibid. l. 1; Rogers, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain*, p. 209.
[52] Bamford, 'The Fray of Stockport', l. 40; Ibid. l. 38; Ibid. l. 2.
[53] Ibid. l. 14; Ibid. l. 38; Ibid. l. 40.

between bloody violence and cartoonish slapstick.[54] Through his linguistic choices and use of

charged political symbolism, Bamford forges a revolutionary and loco-specific poetic voice

that draws on existing satirical tropes to create a defiant affront to loyalist tastes. Bamford's

use of dialect is not a mainstay of his work; his register is flexible, and 'The Fray' is among

only a few of his early-career poems using this stylistic device. Other dialect poems appear in

Hours in the Bowers (1834), including 'Tim Bobbin' Grave' and 'A Dialogue, Betwixt Peter

Spinthreed, a Cotton Manufacturer, and Zekil Lithewetur, a Hand Loom Weaver', which

posits the contradictory states of both trades under a changing government. Particularly in

the case of the former, this experimentation with dialect is utilised to establish a continuity –

and also, in this poem, a conversation – between present poetry of place and its roots in

regional dialect verse of the prior century.

Dialect, then, is one method Bamford uses to represent the people and culture of

Lancashire as a region. I would go on to posit, however, that several of Bamford's poems

channel not only a regional but an *urban* voice, indivisible from the city itself. While not

strictly locodescriptive in the sense of a descriptive poem, three of Bamford's poems

explicitly cite the Peterloo Massacre and the actors involved, touching on matters of place

and identity in a more oblique way: 'The Song of Slaughter', 'Ode to a Plotting Parson', and

'Touch Him!'. Using these, I will demonstrate how Bamford uses historical events to play on

collective memory and further a sense of urban community. Bamford's voice, situated

internally rather than externally to the action of the poem, is not 'metaphorically out of its

---

[54] Gardner, 'The Suppression of Samuel Bamford's Peterloo Poems', p.150.

place', to quote James Chandler respecting Shelley's Peterloo poetry; instead, I will display how Bamford's sense of place and event are tightly bound together.[55]

The majority of 'The Song of Slaughter' follows the format of Bamford's collective ballads in the vein of 'The Lancashire Hymn'. The immediacy of the opening stanza ('Look upon a mighty nation, / Rousing from its slavery') is however recontextualised by a gravely familiar scene:

> Can we e'er forget our brothers
> Cold and gory as they lay ;
> Can we e'er forgive the others,
> For their cruel treachery?[56]

The yeomanry are not clownish dandies, but shadowy bringers of death. Namechecking the 'sabres' wielded at the Massacre, this image is unmistakeably evocative of Peterloo, especially given its publication only two years later.[57] Furthermore, the scene is delivered through powerful radical rhetoric. Bamford's use of alternating grammatical repetition ('Can we e'er forget', 'Can we e'er forgive'), rhetorical questions, and the collective 'we' work together to call a whole community to mourn its losses and avenge its dead. Commanding its reader to move from past tense to present ('*see* the flood of slaughter', '*hear* the cries that rend the air') re-lives a moment immortalised by shared trauma in all its multi-sensory horror.[58] Though not widely read, as Gardner notes, being published in the 'virtually unknown' *Miscellaneous Poems*, Bamford's revolutionary aims are expansive, striving to

---

[55] James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 108.
[56] Bamford, 'The Song of Slaughter', in *Miscellaneous Poetry*, pp. 82-90 (l. 3-4); Ibid. l. 17-24.
[57] Ibid. l. 21.
[58] Ibid. l. 23-24.

represent a whole 'nation' rather than simply the inhabitants of Bamford's industrial

locale.[59] While his imagery remains evocative of his own experience and that of his local

audience, Bamford unabashedly transforms the communal terror of Peterloo into a

nationwide source of radical motivation.

'The Song of Slaughter' only briefly lingers on specific circumstances of the Massacre.

Bamford's 'Ode to a Plotting Parson', however, directly addresses one of the Massacre's

profiteers. Reverend Robert Hay was a magistrate who played a part in the injustice enacted

upon the protesters, and shortly afterwards received the parish of Rochdale and its lavish

income as a result. Initially employing an idyllic georgic register, Bamford takes the

priest/shepherd metaphor to its ghastly logical conclusion:

> The Lambs thou may'st *sell*, and the flock thou may'st *fleece*;
> The market is good, and the prices are high,
> And the Butchers are ready with money to buy.[60]

Bamford incorporates the language of this trade to a horrific effect, using the polysemy of

'fleece' to mean to harvest the wool, but also to scam or to take advantage; the religious

symbolism of the lamb as the holy innocent; and of course, the looming figure of the

'Butchers', which sits at an uneasy parallel with the image of the charging yeomanry. This

latter term even mirrors testimonies from witnesses brought forward after the Massacre,

such as the cotton spinner Jonah Andrew's claim that the yeomanry 'began to cut and hack

at people like butchers'.[61] Though Manchester's main trade was cotton by the time of

Peterloo, for the most of the eighteenth century up to this point the trade had been

---

[59] Gardner, *Poetry and Popular Protest,* p. 25; Bamford, 'The Song of Slaughter', l. 3-4.
[60] Bamford, 'Ode to a Plotting Parson', in *Miscellaneous Poems*, pp. 44-48 (l. 10-12).
[61] 'Coroner's Inquest upon John Lees', *Observer,* 3 Oct 1819, p. 3.

dominated by wool, as detailed by Vigier. [62] Considering this also in the light of Bamford's

poem, another element may be added to the ode's metaphorical language: the textile

commerce of Manchester's ruling classes is a trade in flesh and blood, requiring a human

sacrifice. If the reference to 'Parson H—' fails to clarify the connection, Bamford throws

down the veil in the second half of his verse:

> And MEAGHER shall ever be close by thy side,
> With a brave troop of Yeomanry ready to ride;
> For the steed shall be saddled, the sword shall be bare,
> And there shall be none the defenceless to spare.[63]

Even mentioning 'Saint Peter's field' outright, Bamford refuses to afford his subject the

luxury of anonymity.[64] 'Meagher' refers to one of four members of the yeomanry tried and

later acquitted for their role in the Massacre. Having employed a complex web of figurative

speech, Bamford's language abruptly becomes bluntly unmetaphorical. Bamford's dactylic

meter, paired with the sibilance of 'the *steed* shall be *sad*dled, the *sword* shall be *bare*',

comes into its stride and arrests the reader with the sense of immediate pursuit and danger.

While alluding to a past tragedy, Bamford plants in the reader's mind the fear that it can, and

will, happen again at any time – until the system that empowers and rewards those who

sanction violence against the people is dismantled.

1819's 'Touch Him!' takes a similar line of direct accusation. The poem follows an

incident wherein Bamford himself was among seventeen men guarding Henry 'Orator' Hunt,

ringleader of the Peterloo protestors from armed authorities in early 1819. While dictating

---

[62] Vigier, *Change and Apathy*, pp. 84-85.
[63] Bamford, 'Ode to a Plotting Parson', l. 1; Ibid. l. 25-28.
[64] Ibid. l. 29.

an event prior to Peterloo, the text's republication in 1821 recontextualises Hunt's social role as that of a local folk hero. As he describes Hunt's aggressors, one may observe the disparaging caricature of the dandy loyalist, applied as in 'The Fray of Stockport':

> Whiskers, and stays, and perriwigs,
>
> Had been pluck'd off by Burke's rude pigs,
>
> And trampled in the mire:
>
> False teeth and noses would have flown,
>
> Which the scabb'd rascals call their own [...][65]

Not only are the loyalist fighters feminised by their use of 'stays' and 'perriwigs', but they seem to be scarcely human. Their appendages are fake, and detachable; that they are 'scabb'd' implies they are riddled with venereal disease, with limbs 'like rotten sticks [...] snapp'd before the bumpkin's kicks', suggestive of fragility and impotence.[66] Literally pulled apart by Bamford's satire, these aggressors are made both repulsive and ridiculous. Whilst these figures risk 'neither life nor limb', Bamford's fellow protestors, once more invoking Burke's pigs, are placed in a position of strength and spirit, standing 'fast, so firm, amid the rout'.[67] In the midst of grief post-Peterloo, Bamford's poem reassures the radical reader of their steadfastness and sense of community. Reiterating that 'some other day [...] We'll pin 'em, ere they sneak away', this poem does not merely dwell on what has been lost, but urges the reader to take future action.[68]

Gardner describes these poems, written in and published in a period of heightened revolutionary tension between 1819 and 1821, as 'a call to arms', positing that Bamford's

---

[65] Bamford, 'Touch Him!', pp. 100-101 (l. 43-47).
[66] Ibid. l. 46-47.
[67] Ibid. l. 51; Ibid. l. 55.
[68] Ibid. l. 60-61.

commentary is potentially more revolutionary than accounts such as Shelley's 'Mask of

Anarchy':

> Shelley often names members of the government when he attacks the State. When these figures died or retreated into obscurity, the attack on the state became ineffectual and dated. Although he employs similar imagery to Shelley, Bamford sets his sights lower; he goes after the apparatus of the state, its willing executioners, the people who get their tunics soiled by the blood of their countrymen.[69]

Gardner's assessment correctly identifies complicit bodies in oppression such as Hay and the

yeomanry who fail to stand against politically motivated, state-sanctioned violence.

Bamford's line of thinking is in accordance with that of his fellow radical commentators, such

as Cobbett, who blames not the individual tyrant but a wider 'accursed system'.[70] While

Bamford's indictment of Hay and Meagher, for example, may fall victim to a similar form of

individual shaming, his targets are not heads of state but rather powerful, albeit hidden,

figures within an oppressive structure. Bamford's strain of labouring radicalism is realistic

about reform, recognising that it does not take the toppling of a single tyrant but the

combined action of every individual within a compromised society.

More to the point, Bamford's early poetry flies in the face of the assertion that

Manchester is apoetical, or that the makeup of its people or environment is anathema to

poetry. Specific in terms of place and event, brazenly vulgar, and making use of local dialect,

Bamford defies the assumption that Manchester's labouring populace is unequipped to

handle matters of regional importance such as Peterloo. As will be demonstrated, this would

heavily influence his later collaborators, but to close this section I will observe Bamford's

---

[69] Gardner, *Poetry and Popular Protest*, p. 3; Gardner, 'The Suppression of Samuel Bamford's Peterloo Poems', p. 153.
[70] William Cobbett, *Autobiography* (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 202.

treatment of one of Manchester's most famous symbolic emblems in the lyric poem 'The

Bee'. Bamford's poem was composed for a meeting of bee-keepers in 1815, with the poem

republished as 'The Bee Song' and 'The Bee' respectively in his collections of 1821 and 1834.

The worker bee would not be used as the official emblem of the city until the 1840s – but

this short lyric already begins to draw implicit comparisons between the north of England as

the site of alternative political organisation and the harmonious social structure exemplified

in his conceit of the bee-hive. Praising these 'noblest insects of industry', Bamford

understands the hive as an alternate hierarchy, which Britain should imitate:

> Ye sov'reigns of Europe! In congress that sit,
> This poor little insect might teach you some wit,
> Here, ruled without soldiers a nation you see;
> Oh learn then to govern as governs the bee![71]

Bamford's verse recalls Milton, who suggests that the 'Commonwealth' of bees is a

cooperative and non-violent one, where a ruler can be held accountable by their subjects.[72]

Dror Wahrman has already tackled the changing role of the bee as political allegory over the

course of the eighteenth century, taking on aspects of contemporary gender constructions

and the more 'naturalized' elements of social class by the 1800s.[73] To cite a more

contemporary example in 1790, James Anderson had also adopted the bee as the symbolic

representative for the 'operative part of the community', for whom his regional periodical

---

[71] Bamford, 'The Bee' in *Hours in the Bowers,* l. 3; Ibid. l. 13-16.
[72] John Milton, *A defence of the people of England in answer to Salmasius's defence of the King,* (London: S. I, 1695), p. 119.
[73] Dror Wahrman, 'On Queen Bees and Being Queens: A Late-Eighteenth-Century "Cultural Revolution"?,' in *The Age of Cultural Revolutions, Britain and France, 1750-1820,* ed. by Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 251-280 (p. 278).

was intended.[74] While this metaphor speaks to the 'ever active' worker of Manchester's manufacturing system, the poem also describes the poet's quest for recognition and futurity.[75] As Andrew Cooper and Jane Wright have written extensively, the metaphorical 'poet-bee' can be traced back to Virgil's fourth *Georgic*, and has been used since to describe a quest for 'self-sufficiency' in an age of waning opportunities for patronage.[76] As processes of 'toil and craft', threatened by exponential social change in a rapidly modernising era, urban manufacture and poetic composition are tied together by a multivalent symbolic choice, especially poignant given Bamford's own threatened weaving practice.[77] Bamford's apparently simplistic poem, then, makes a case for reform, develops a shorthand for local identity, and links his endangered labouring poetic persona to a Classically-sanctioned tradition all at once.

Growth and Industry: Manchester, 1820-1840

In the years following Peterloo and the successive growth of Bamford's literary fame, Manchester's environs would see urban expansion on a remarkable scale. Before the literature of the ensuing decades can be introduced, it must be stated that the industrial landscape these writers sought to transcribe had already undergone massive transformation since Bamford's early days. As well as doubling its population over a twenty-year period, maps of the city centre would visually reflect this upsurge. James Pigot's map of Manchester

---

[74] James Anderson, *Prospectus of a new intended periodical work, to be called The Bee, or Universal Literary Intelligencer* (Edinburgh: Mundell and Son, 1790), p. 2.

[75] Bamford, 'The Bee', l. 5.

[76] Cooper, 'The Apian Way: Virgil's Bees and Keats' Honeyed Verse', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 3: 2 'Romans and Romantics' (Summer 1991), 160-181 (p. 171); Ibid. p. 161; Jane Wright, 'Browning's Honeycomb', *Essays in Criticism,* 63: 3 (2013), 275-297.

[77] Cooper, 'The Apian Way', p. 160.

and Salford in 1821 sees Deansgate, Chorlton Row, and Ancoats form the outskirts of the

city's medieval centre.[78] By 1848, however, Isaac Slater's *New Plan of Manchester and*

Salford represents growth in the new districts of Hulme, Ardwick, Cheetham, Newton, and

Broughton, even extending as far south as Stretford.[79] Similarly, the social landscape,

especially in terms of radicalism, would differ from its earlier proliferation in the first years of

the century. While he continued to publish poetry, Bamford retracted his more radical views

and 'purged' the more extreme elements of his verse during the Chartist movement of the

1830s and 40s, his Peterloo-related poems republished without their insistence on the

necessity of violence.[80] Bamford would even pursue work as special constable, combatting

local radical activity during periods of Chartist agitation in his local Middleton. Though 1832

would see the Reform Act finally bring Manchester's political representation up to date, the

struggle for male suffrage and against the Corn Laws would continue in successive years. The

following works, by authors stationed in Manchester during these transformative times,

form the foundations of a local literary collective – but also express deep anxiety about the

role of poetry in Manchester, urban poverty, and the struggle for political representation in

the North's urban centres.

While not writing from such a low station themselves, each of these authors touches

on a growing concern for Manchester's urban poor. In 1832, James Philips Kay's investigation

into labouring conditions in Manchester would become a key vehicle through which many

readers would gain an insight into the realities of the lives of workers in textile

manufactories. Kay found that labourers awoke 'at five o'clock in the morning', returning

---

[78] James Pigot, 'A Plan of Manchester and Salford, With the Recent Improvements', 1821, Engraving, Manchester University online resources.
[79] Isaac Slater, 'New Plan of Manchester and Salford with the vicinities taken from actual survey', 1848, Engraving, Manchester Public Libraries.
[80] Gardner, 'The Suppression of Samuel Bamford's Peterloo Poems', p. 145.

home only for immensely basic meals, an environment in which 'domestic comforts are unknown' and the subject's intellectual life is insupportable.[81] Manchester's central neighbourhoods are associated in Kay's text with physical ailment and both social and physical lowness. Drawn as 'a portion of low, swampy ground, liable to be frequently inundated', the environment is 'unhealthy', with the chimney tops 'little above the level of the road', and this portrait is also heavily informed by anti-Irish sentiment.[82] Any pre-existing idea of Manchester as unpoetical, normally associated with the commercial nature of its populace, was now becoming further sullied by a new image of Manchester as impoverished, uneducated, and culturally deprived. These same impressions of Manchester's poor may be perceived in the body of literature produced in the city in the years following Kay's publication. Kay would not be the originator of these concerns by any means, however, and indeed the urban poor occupy a significant position even in works predating his report.

Firstly, I would like to turn to the work of Maria Jane Jewsbury, arguably one of the most successful poets from this set of writers, despite her early death at the age of 33. Having commenced her literary career after relocating to Manchester from Measham, Derbyshire, Jewsbury went on to write for the *Manchester Gazette*, became a contributor to a number of literary annuals, as well as becoming a reviewer for the *Athenaeum* in 1830. Jewsbury fostered a friendship with William Wordsworth, initiated by her dedication of her *Phantasmagoria* to the senior poet in 1825. Though appreciative of the gesture, Wordsworth was not wholly impressed by her contributions. The poet found her prose vastly

---

[81] James Philips Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: James Ridgway, 1832), pp. 16-17; ibid. p. 19.
[82] Ibid. p. 29.

superior to her poetry: 'The Critical Essays, and those that turn upon manners and the surface of life' were to him a better demonstration of Jewsbury's talents, owing to their 'acute observation' and 'acquaintance with the human heart'.[83] Wordsworth, then, primarily rates Jewsbury's prose for its accuracy and realism. Indeed, Jewsbury's prose is marked by a biting satire with a particular propensity for sending up a then-oversaturated literary market. *Phantasmagoria* would form a hybrid collection of miscellaneous writings, alternating between verse and prose, displaying a vast range of genre experimentation on Jewsbury's part. Among these are a handful of essays for which the city is an important symbolic aspect – namely, 'Town and Country' and 'Human Sorrow and Human Sympathy'.

'Town and Country' mimics a classical dialogue, compounding contemporary arguments about the potential for poetry to thrive in an urban environment. Jewsbury's mouthpieces for this debate comprise of a poetess, speaking for the country, and a poet, for the town. It may be tempting to assume that Jewsbury necessarily takes the side of the poetess, given the gendering of the speakers, but as the dialogue unfolds, it tends to confound the poetess' arguments with evidence in favour of the poet. The piece's epigram, taken from Eliakim Littell's *Museum of Foreign Literature, Science and Art* (1823), reminds the reader that 'most of our poets have owed their birth to cities' despite their pastoral leanings in verse; indeed, Jewsbury's poet too contends that Byron's rhapsodies on natural solitude in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* are 'composed I doubt not, either at, or after a very brilliant and crowded assembly'.[84] A note on the text, too, remarks that Sheffield poet James Montgomery's *World Before the Flood* was similarly put together 'in a small room, with a

---

[83] William Wordsworth, letter to Maria Jane Jewsbury, 4 May 1825, in *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*: *The Later Years* vol. 1, (4 vols), ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), pp. 199-200.

[84] Jewsbury, epigram to 'Town and Country', in *Phantasmagoria,* vol. 2 (2 vols),pp. 115-130 (p. 115); Ibid. p. 125.

brick wall six feet high, directly opposite his window'.[85] While these two environments are markedly different (Byron's being sociable, versus Montgomery's cloistered writing experience), the text goes on to contend that an urban upbringing is a boon for a poet of nature. Due to poetry's 'antithetical' quality, a rare exposure to nature is a 'greater delight', and may be written about more powerfully.[86] In counter, the poetess argues that poetry is in danger of becoming a 'trade' in the city, 'occupied with the jealousy, rivalry, and favouritism of [...] literary circles and leading periodicals', moving into the realms of commerce and fashion and out of its supposed transcendental state.[87] While the urban poet is at risk of folly and dissipation, however, their existence is at least sociable and in flux; the country poet runs the equal risk of becoming 'stagnant'.[88] Even as the dialogue ends on a decisively triumphant note for the urban poet, claiming both Shakespeare and Milton for his tribe, 'Town and Country' rarely challenges the idea that a 'feeling of the beauties of nature' ought to be the distinguishing capacity of a poet, or their primary subject matter.[89] As much is reflected in the meditative and sentimental poetic pieces offered by Jewsbury herself. The poet does touch briefly on a suggestion of urban transcendence, in a statement reminiscent of the pleasures of the urban crowd in Charles Lamb's 'The Londoner':

> if a man with his eyes and his heart open to observe every thing, spend but one hour in a crowded street, he will gather more valuable hints for future reflection, will come away with more knowledge of the heart, more sympathy with human frailty, than if he had spent a year in dignified solitude! [90]

---

[85] Jewsbury, note to 'Town and Country', p. 126.
[86] Jewsbury, 'Town and Country', pp. 119-120.
[87] Ibid. p. 124.
[88] Ibid. p. 125.
[89] Ibid. p. 128; Ibid. p. 116.
[90] Ibid. p. 128.

An urban poet, ranked among the exemplary 'elder poets', '[does not] stand aloof from the multitude'; and a similar meditation leads the narration of another essay of Jewsbury's, entitled 'Human Sorrow and Human Sympathy'.[91] Here, Jewsbury narrates an urban encounter that verges on the sublime. Like Roscoe's *Mount Pleasant* before it, as discussed in Chapter Two, Jewsbury's narrative retreats to a promontory to render the urban landscape in a literary setting, but rather than offering clarity, the impression from this vantage point is overwhelming:

> I stood one summer's evening on a point which commanded a near and yet striking view of one of our largest and most populous towns. Far away to the right and to the left, yet concentrated at my feet, were its huge masses of building, which the eye strove in vain to number, - its churches, manufactories, and public institutions, the mansions of the rich, and the low, dark, miserable dwellings of the poor; - whilst the wild hum of its multitudes hurrying to and fro, - the trampling through the streets, and the mingled cries of pleasure and of strife, - rose from beneath and smote upon the heart.[92]

The amount of suffering conveyed by this site 'sickens' the narrator, the emotional impact carrying with it a physical reaction.[93] Given the date of *Phantasmagoria*'s compilation and publication, as well as the conspicuous mention of 'manufactories', 'public institutions', as well as the 'dwellings of the poor', it is hard to imagine Jewsbury relates an experience of any city other than Manchester, as by this time poverty and its relief were becoming synonymous with the industrial town. However, Jewsbury never explicitly names the city she describes. Urban exposure is here an emotional and moral duty; to 'look upon the crowded haunts of men, and muse upon human sorrow', considering the multiplicity of experience the city embodies, is a soul-expanding practice.[94] The city is so crowded with the 'works of

---

[91] Jewsbury, 'Town and Country', p. 128.
[92] Jewsbury, 'Human Sorrow and Human Sympathy' in *Phantasmagoria* vol. 1 (2 vols), pp. 11-20 (p. 13).
[93] Ibid. p. 14.
[94] Ibid. p. 13.

man' that the speaker's only connection to God is when looking up at the sky; however, she concludes that 'one may gain more real instruction, while looking upon the haunts of man for one quarter of an hour, than in ten years' solitary musing'.[95] No matter how harrowing the concentrated sufferings of so many human beings might be to perceive, Jewsbury finds that urban experience enhances emotional and spiritual faculties, rather than finding them dulled by the inhospitable environment.

Jewsbury, then, is capable of writing powerfully in prose to combat negative presumptions about the effect of urban living upon both the poet's emotional wellbeing and their ability to produce literature. When read in context as a Mancunian poet, her critique is the more controversial, considering its contemporary representation as unpoetical, or even harmful to the poetical faculties. This urban imagery is, however, almost entirely absent from her poetry. Perhaps, as Wordsworth suggests, she does not have the talent to tackle such a divisive subject; or, as her prose implies, the city is unfit for poetry. Just as her poetess remarks that 'nature has her prose side' in the cramped gardens of the metropolis, Jewsbury operates upon the presumption that the urban is suited for prose, and the rural for verse.[96] Moreover, her attempts to discover social connections outside of Manchester – with the Lake Poets, Felicia Hemans, the Roscoe family, and Barbara Hoole, among others – may betray a desire to "escape" Manchester's environs, and a self-consciousness around being considered a "Mancunian poet".

The same cannot be said of Elijah Ridings, a poet who moved in the same circles as Bamford in earlier life. Ridings was, like Bamford, present at Peterloo - according to his

---

[95] Jewsbury, 'Human Sorrow and Human Sympathy', p. 14.
[96] Jewsbury, 'Town and Country', p. 117.

obituary in the *Manchester Weekly Times* in 1872, he was chosen as the representative for

the Newton Heath and Miles Platting reformers, despite being only seventeen - but, unlike

Bamford, seems to have written little directly concerning this experience.[97] Additionally, he

worked as a weaver in his youth, and had connections to Unitarian congregations in nearby

Failsworth.[98] There are allusions to past radical involvement in his *Poetical Works* of 1840,

mainly comprised of poems dated to the early 1830s: 'The Wish', for instance, assures the

'friends of [his] youth' of his faith in 'ever-glorious liberty'.[99] Expressing Republican

sentiment, wishing that 'crowns' were 'from tyrants torn', and also voicing his opposition to

the 'cursed bread-tax', Ridings' poetical persona seems largely in step with contemporary

radical movements.[100] This is, however, tempered in the later stanzas, evidencing a similar

retraction of radical views to that seen in Bamford's later career:

> The Chartists would subvert the State,
> The tories would insult the Queen;
> But I the gradual change must wait,
> Which in the future I have seen:[101]

Detaching himself carefully from Chartism – much as Bamford would come to do,

characterising Chartists as overly violent in their methods - Ridings purges the possibility of

sudden upheaval from his statement of intent. Likewise, after having disavowed the

monarchy earlier on, Ridings defends the Queen from her detractors. The opposition

towards gender-neutral, nonspecific 'tyrants' versus the defence of a definitive, gendered

Queen suggests a nebulous attitude towards the actual realisation of Republican ideology,

---

[97] 'Elijah Ridings', *Manchester Weekly Times and Examiner,* 26 Oct 1872, p. 6.
[98] Ibid. p. 6.
[99] Ridings, 'The Wish', in *The Poetical Works*, p. 22 (l. 1-4). This poem is undated in Ridings' volume.
[100] Ibid. l. 9; Ibid. l. 12.
[101] Ibid. l. 17-20.

carrying something of the chivalric reverence for female royals articulated by the likes of Burke and, more recently, the widespread labouring-class support for Queen Caroline only a decade prior. Even as it states Ridings' continued loyalty to the radical cause, 'The Wish' disowns any real suggestion of decisive political change.

Despite this cleansing of his own poetic persona, Ridings' work does contain efforts to revise Manchester's image as a place not only of learning, but of continued radical opposition. 'Lines occasioned by the death of Rowland Detrosier' elegises a radical orator and tutor, patronised by the Mancunian reformer John Shuttleworth. Detrosier had connections to numerous local dissenting congregations, as well as several Mechanics' Institutes in and out of Manchester. An anonymised extract from the *Examiner* in 1832 following his speech to the National Political Union characterises Detrosier as a powerful speaker, as from 'the old days of Greece'; his lecture on temperance as part of the revolutionary cause resembles 'a new and wonderful religion', and moves 'stern workmen' to tears.[102] Detrosier's stance against alcoholism, directed at the labouring class, is intriguing– as will be demonstrated, Manchester's urban poor and their relationship with such intoxicants would come under great scrutiny in the following years. But Detrosier's appeal to the common man is emphasised; unlike career politicians who ride the coat-tails of radical movements, Detrosier is a 'child of the people', 'one of themselves', and therefore more effective at arousing their political consciousness.[103] The article, however, expresses concern at the lack of newspaper coverage received by Detrosier's speeches. This "burking" (i.e. 'the action of stifling or quietly suppressing', a figurative smothering in the style of William Burke), to use the author's phrase, of Detrosier's message is speculated to be due to

---

[102] "Junius Redivivus", 'The Fourth Estate and Rowland Detrosier', *Examiner*, 9 Sept 1832, pp. 580-581 (p. 581).
[103] Ibid. p. 581.

his humble origins, and can only be counteracted by individuals who go out of their way to give him publicity.[104] Detrosier died of a petty illness in 1834, while residing in London, and his body was later donated for scientific research. Reflecting on the aftermath of Detrosier's death, Ridings figures his subject as a quasi-Promethean conductor of knowledge to mankind, his mission only continued in death:

> Spirit of Death! ah! why hast thou bereft
> The world of him, who taught what science held
> Within her bourneless circle, strove with heart
> And hand, and dedicated all his powers
> To Man's improvement![105]

There is evidence for Detrosier's friendship with Ridings – the former apparently recommended Ridings to assist in the petition for political representatives for Manchester in 1831, prior to the Reform Act.[106] But their actual intimacy aside, this 'Child of Mancunium' is both of personal and local importance to the speaker, and that Ridings chooses to align Detrosier's locality with his intellectual mission is significant.[107] It is also worth stating that Detrosier is characterised here as anti-materialist; '[disallowing] the claims / Of sordid priests whose God is Mammon foul', and unveiling instead the 'pure / Inestimable treasures of a world of thought', Ridings' exemplary Mancunian defies categorisation as a worldly, apoetical businessman.[108] Ridings' elegy concludes by promising Detrosier eternal life in the longevity of his teachings:

---

[104] Ibid. p. 581; 'burke, v.'. OED Online. March 2023. Oxford University Press, accessed April 25, 2023.

[105] Ridings, 'Lines occasioned by the death of Rowland Detrosier', in *The Poetical Works,* pp. 77-79 (l. 6-10).

[106] 'Elijah Ridings', *Manchester Weekly Times and Examiner*, p. 6.

[107] Ridings, 'Lines occasioned by the death of Rowland Detrosier', l. 25.

[108] Ibid. l. 20-21; Ibid. l. 36-37.

> DETROSIER shall remain a household name;
>
> Fathers and mothers to their children shall
>
> Point to his history, and bid them follow
>
> In his sure footsteps to the exalted temples
>
> Of truth, and science, --- liberty and fame![109]

In Ridings' reformed future when familial order is restored and learning is open to all, Detrosier features as a founding figure. Moving from the material into the ethereal, it seems Ridings' intent is to reinvent Manchester's cultural presence as one of intellectual eminence rather than as an industrial hub. But to posit Detrosier as individualised and heroic in his mission concedes that he exists in defiance of a commercial majority, and indeed, that the commercial and intellectual worlds are by necessity irreconcilable.

This binary view of culture/intellect versus commerce/industry may be common fare, even in poems like Ridings' which attempt to ameliorate Manchester's more unsavoury associations. It is not, however, unanimously held, and there do exist writers who seek to challenge this notion. While Charles Swain's four-part poem *The Mind* does not strictly concern Manchester nor mention it by name, the poem's wider allegorical language holds many resonances with contemporary debates regarding the city's reputation and its supposed lack of poetic potential. Born in Manchester in 1801, Swain worked as a clerk for a dye-works belonging in part to a family member before, like many of his contemporaries, entering the book trade. His work won him a friendship with Robert Southey, and by the 1820s, Swain's work had been published in various journals. First published in 1832, the

---

[109] Ridings, 'Lines occasioned by the death of Rowland Detrosier', l. 45-49.

third sequence of lyrics in *The Mind* broaches the possibility of commerce as a poetical

subject:

> Shall Indolence enchant the poet's lyre,
>
> Yet Industry awake no kindred song?
>
> Spirit of Commerce, hear! – thy son inspire!
>
> Show him where masts, like forests, throng;
>
> Thy sails each breeze of heaven impels along,
>
> An universal presence o'er the tide!
>
> Tell him where'er mankind hath heard thy tongue,
>
> Intelligence hath march'd with rapid stride, -
>
> And mental freedom sprung rejoicing by thy side![110]

Swain argues that industry is not antithetical to poetry, but rather has gone neglected;

indeed, much of this section can be seen as an attempt to invent a poetic register suitable

for the description of industrial and commercial processes. While not strictly a descriptive

poem, *The Mind* occasionally slips into rapturous praise of 'railways, - wharfs, - canals, -

whence fortune flows', lionising a decidedly industrial (and Mancunian) landscape.[111] The

inclusion of canals here also brings the aforementioned 'masts' and 'sails' under the fold of

Manchester's surroundings in its earlier days of industrialisation, harking back to Barbauld's

landscape poetry considered in Chapter One. Swain urges England not to 'scorn the Loom',

on the grounds that 'Heroes' from the city's associated industrial workforce have 'led [its]

armies to the plain'; the anonymised mass of Manchester's workforce are held up as

exemplary patriots. [112] Early in this section, Swain establishes the connection between

---

[110] Swain, 'The Mind' in *The Mind, and Other Poems*, pp. 9-127 (part three, lyric xxv, l. 1-9).
[111] Ibid. lyric xxxiv, l. 7.
[112] Ibid. lyric xxxv, l. 1-2.

commerce and intellectualism – as well as 'mental freedom', suggesting an environment where free inquiry is encouraged, and access to education is not limited.

Swain additionally mentions that England's scientists have '[crowned] the Sovereignty of Commerce' and are to be credited as the source of 'the wealth of nations'.[113] It seems that Swain's understanding of the place of science in civilisation is drawn in opposition to that of Ridings, where intellectualism and science are divorced from the commercial world. As his lyric proceeds, however, Swain further clarifies this connection, stating that 'In Science as in Literature – the same / Creative spirit elevates the tone'; both are inspired by 'Imagination's power', and the processes of invention and poetic composition are directly comparable.[114] Given the earlier alliance between science and commerce, and this subsequent comparison of science to poetry, it can be inferred that Swain perceives all of these exploits to spring from the same inspirational source, thus confounding the false binary of poetry versus commerce altogether.

Furthermore, the scientific minds cited by Swain – specifically Dalton and Watt – have ties to Manchester and its cultural edifices. Watt's son served as the secretary for the Manchester Lit and Phil between 1789-1791, a position that would also be held by John Dalton from 1800-1809. Dalton likewise presented papers to the Society after his stint as a tutor at Manchester's own dissenting Academy. The scientist is attributed godlike power in Swain's verse, bestowing 'the rude / Inanimate materials of the earth, / With motion – order – power', as well as 'worth' and replacing 'dearth' with 'riches'.[115] The purpose of science, then, is directly aligned with the practice of commerce and the amassment of personal or

---

[113] Swain, 'The Mind', part three, lyric xi, l. 8; Ibid, l. 1.
[114] Ibid. lyric xxxviii, l. 1-2; Ibid. l. 4,
[115] Ibid. lyric xxxvii, l. 1-7.

national wealth. One passage in particular is reminiscent of Barbauld's 'Invitation', with the scientist permitted to transform the natural world into a landscape of utility, prosperity, and aesthetic pleasure:

> The boundless air obeys thee! – thou canst change
> The barren dales of earth, to valleys fair! –
> Touch the black waste, and leave a garden there!
> From stagnant marshes drain the vernal rill ; -
> Give to confusion, beauty! – and repair
> The scathe of years with grace-directed skill; -[116]

Taking on a georgic aspect reminiscent of some of the earliest literature of the industrialising landscape as documented in Chapter One, Swain's poem goes some distance towards creating a continuum of transpennine descriptive poetry. The mention of the reformed 'waste', transformed into a garden, is highly redolent of a passage from Barbauld's 'Eighteen Hundred and Eleven', wherein she praises William Roscoe's improvement of the 'black and barren moor' of Manchester's surrounding moss lands.[117] Despite his enthusiasm for the aligned functions of poetry, commerce and science, however, it is interesting that Swain only invokes scientific and business-like representatives of Manchester's intellectual life, and can solely offer up himself as an example of a truly Mancunian poet. All this considered, his efforts to render industry as a poetical subject combat assertions of the kind made by Crossley in *Blackwood's*, and even cemented by his own local contemporaries. The matter of Manchester's cultural and intellectual standing appears to have been a matter close to

---

[116] Swain, 'The Mind', part three, lyric xxviii, l. 3-8.
[117] Anna Laetitia Barbauld, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (London: J. Johnson and Co, 1812), l. 149.

Swain's heart, as he became the honorary professor of poetry at the Manchester Royal Institution, whose offices would later house Manchester Art Gallery.

Swain's allegorical marriage between industry and literature is apt as, coeval to his work, the first signifiers of a local literary collective were beginning to emerge in the city. A number of short-lived periodicals, the output of a Mancunian literary coterie, signify the possibility of Manchester's literary enrichment, but at the same time evidence a mixed opinion of the limits of its cultural and intellectual improvement. *The Phoenix; or, Manchester Literary Journal* arrived for a limited run of issues in 1828, to be followed by *The Falcon; or, Journal of Literature*, which shared a similarly short lifespan, in 1831. The content of these periodicals – short prose pieces, local notices, and advertisements interspersed with poetry – is similar, and while the notes at the end of each issue suggest readers submitted their own poetry for consideration largely under an alias, some pieces can be traced back to writers in the Manchester collective, as will be detailed later in this chapter. These similarities – including the same price and place of distribution – point towards multiple attempts by the same editors to create a literary journal aimed at Manchester's reading public. At threepence, the equivalent of which would be roughly 80 pence today, these publications were not expensive. For comparison, the *Manchester Guardian*, founded in the wake of Peterloo by the cotton merchant John Edward Taylor, would debut at seven pence, only to be reduced to two pence in 1855 after the abolishment of the Stamp Duty tax. The most evident change made for *The Falcon*, however, is the removal of any explicit reference to Manchester in its title. This lends itself to some conclusions regarding the publishers' attitude towards their home city, but even more revealing is the address to the reader made by way of a manifesto in its first issue. Declaring 'Periodical Publications' to be the primary factor in the recent expansion of the literate population, the *Falcon* regards

itself as part of this educational movement.[118] The 'thirst for knowledge and enquiry pervades all ranks and classes', it proclaims, and, at a glance, the address outlines the periodical's hopes to enlighten those who have been so far deprived of literary enrichment:

> there are a vast majority of the public to whom the stores of literature and information are still sealed volumes. This is not owing to their indifference or disinclination for such sources of instruction and entertainment, but to the voluminous character or costliness of the works to which they desire to have access. Want of leisure, alone, deters thousands, to whom reading is one of the greatest luxuries of existence, from the gratification of their wishes.[119]

Arguing against the presumed lack of public interest, the intended audience of the *Falcon* is ostensibly universal. Reading on, however, the address claims that it will 'not interfere with the pursuits of business' and may 'render a leisure hour agreeable' – assuming that the reader actually has a leisure hour in which reading may be possible.[120] This publication is not for Manchester's industrial workforce, but for the exact class of businessmen and clerks who have also produced it. This class likewise suffers the stigma associated with industrialism and commerce, viewed as a detriment to cultural production and consumption – but unlike the class of manual labourers, has time and resources enough to produce their own space for literary discourse. Furthermore, the *Falcon* is strictly apolitical: adhering to 'the more quiet and peaceful walks of science and literature', it intends to 'examine and judge for ourselves, coolly, fairly, and dispassionately'.[121] This last descriptor is revealing; there is a note of disdain for radical activity and its perceived emotional excesses.

To touch on some extracts from *The Phoenix*, it is interesting to hold some of its prose material in contrast with the blurb from the *Falcon*, particularly regarding the question

---

[118] 'Address' in *The Falcon; or, Journal of Literature*, 5 Nov 1831, pp. 1-2 (p. 1).
[119] Ibid. p. 1.
[120] Ibid. p. 1.
[121] Ibid. p. 1.

of literacy and education availing the general public. An anonymous piece entitled

'Cheetham College', referring to the home of Humphrey Chetham's public library (est. 1653),

takes a far more misanthropic view of the place of learning within the city:

> If there be a place in this vast mart of Commerce sacred to Study it is the Reading Room in the Cheetham Library; for there may the lover of literature pursue his studies unmolested by any thing connected with business. I have very frequently regretted that this place should be entirely neglected, except by a few choice spirits, who value solitude and literature, more than all the money-hunting avocations of their fellow-townsmen.[122]

Complaining that 'the youth of this populous town [...] exhibit such an utter dislike for

literature, as seldom, or never, to set foot within these walls', the commentator frames

Chetham's as a woefully underused educational resource, exemplifying the characteristic

cultural backwardness of 'Manchesterians' at large.[123] Note that 'business' is a direct

impediment to one's ability to study. While amply suited for a 'greater attendance', the

sketch the commentator draws depicts only 'two solitary individuals [...] poring over a huge

folio, the dusty appearance of which indicates that it has not been removed from the shelf

for time out of mind'.[124] The institution is beneficent in purpose; providing for 'orphans' and

'destitute' children, it also maintains a tradition of introducing rural families from the

outskirts of the city to the Library's collection of 'curiousities', conducted via a guided tour.[125]

This tour does not quite seem to extend to the actual literary collections possessed by the

Library, and the visitors are largely represented as simple and easily impressed. But despite

his disappointment at the lack of interest among his townspeople, the author finds this

practice distasteful:

---

[122] I. L., 'Cheetham College', in *The Phoenix; or, Manchester Literary Journal*, 19 July 1828, pp. 36-38 (p. 36).
[123] Ibid. p. 36.
[124] Ibid. p. 37.
[125] Ibid. p. 37-38.

> [the introduction of country people] is censured by all the students who resort here, as it annoys them in their studies; for my own part, I think it is high time it were abolished. If the curiosities must be shown, let them be removed to some other room in the building, for the situation in which they are now placed is very inappropriate.[126]

This extract encapsulates the debate around cultural enrichment in Manchester quite succinctly; while lamenting the general lack of interest in scholarly matters among the city's industrious ranks, the speaker – with an irony that is perhaps intentional, and indeed is more overt in other similar tracts in the *Phoenix* and *Falcon* – expresses hyperbolic disgust at the idea of rural labourers being inducted into the Library's inner sanctum. While the socially ameliorative mission of these periodicals suggests the inclusion of all potential readers, both its essays and its preliminary address effectively shut off learning from the sectors of society who arguably might benefit from it most.

That said, the author ironically touches on a real sense of the Library's obsolescence. Richard Altick details how antiquated collections such as Chetham's, while celebrated in literature as markers of Britain's intellectual fortitude, were only truly open to a very small percentage of the reading public, and, furthermore, were poorly maintained both in terms of their collections and the actual buildings in which they were housed. The 1849 Public Libraries Committee in particular targeted Chetham's for regeneration, finding that as its managers 'did not regard the library as a facility for "the poor", they never considered buying books useful to that class'.[127] This had proceeded, too, in spite of the Library's original pledge to be amenable to people of all orders. This article is expressive of an anxiety about the quality of Chetham's public function that would come to a head in the following

---

[126] I. L., 'Cheetham College', p. 38.

[127] Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957) pp. 214-5.

decades. It is also worth noting the strong proximity of Chetham's, the Grammar School, and the Sun Inn (this latter being directly opposite the two former), a meeting-place of the so-called Cottonopolis poets. The Collegiate Church, incidentally where Bamford was married, and which appears recurrently in these texts, would also be within very short walking distance of this area. This intersection forms the heart of Manchester's intellectual life, and notably, is an immensely concentrated space, arguably over-represented in the literature of this period. Even as Manchester's bounds expand, only a very small portion of its landscape actually surfaces in local literature; but as Jewsbury's essays betray, Manchester's sheer size, and the extent of the human suffering it represented, was becoming too pronounced to ignore.

The "Bards of Cottonopolis" and *A Voice from the Town*

By the late 1830s, a more concentrated idea of a Manchester collective was beginning to become discernible. It is through the literature marketed towards an external audience, however, that this sense of local character is the most striking. One of the most useful texts for this purpose is the 1838 collection entitled *Manchester Poetry*, edited by James Wheeler. Wheeler's introductory essay communicates to its (non-Mancunian) audience the set of expectations they may have regarding the "Bards of Cottonopolis", a group which had at turns included Bamford, Ridings, and Jewsbury (the latter had since died of cholera in India in 1833) but had amassed a much larger membership in recent years. Introducing the 'productions of townsmen, and those townsmen "poets"', Wheeler clearly expects a degree of derision for his volume:

> "Manchester Poetry!" exclaim doubtless the majority of those who may chance to bestow a passing glance upon the book [...] and, as if satisfied in their own minds that this same town cannot produce any good thing save only such as emanates from the spindle or power-loom, they indulge, it may be, in a slight laugh at the presumption of the editor [...][128]

Manchester's reputation as a 'great manufacturing depot' is not disregarded by Wheeler; in fact, he in part considers the 'curiosity' of the people at large about Manchester's industrial landscape as something of an asset.[129] That Wheeler assumes his audience's snobbery will be aimed at the actual manual factory workers of Manchester is unusual, however – particularly, as previously mentioned, because the writers in his volume are primarily of bureaucratic professions or small business holders. Much unlike their predecessor in Bamford, these writers are for the most part not bred from manual work – despite claims in their writing that might lead a reader to assume otherwise. Next, Wheeler seeks to understand the reason for Manchester's lack of literary fame: attributing it to a set of 'scientific and literary men [...] content to hide their light under a bushel', he is largely of the opinion that the talent available in Manchester simply has not been shared with the world, possibly due to the risk of 'venal criticism' upon their exposure.[130] He also suggests that Manchester's 'pilgrims of trade' are already invested in 'rearing stately mansions, and surrounding themselves with costly works of art, paintings, sculptures, and *bijouterie'* or else 'working themselves slowly into the dignity of local potentates, and surmounting the arduous summits of parochial oratory'.[131] It is difficult to ignore the inference that this class is preoccupied with material aggregation and political strategizing, effectively negating their

---

[128]James Wheeler, 'Introductory Essay', in *Manchester Poetry: with an Introductory Essay,* ed. by James Wheeler (London: Charles Tilt, 1838), p. v; ibid. p. v-vi.

[129] Ibid. p. vi.

[130] Ibid. p. vi.

[131] Ibid. pp. viii-ix.

poetic capability. But there is also a suggestion of the provincial businessman as a patron of art that is already valuable rather than seeking out unknown artists or creating material themselves. Wheeler briefly entertains the idea that 'the impression which smoke and machinery may be supposed to have upon the brain' may have incapacitated the 'high mental qualities' of Manchester's populace – though he also curtails this proposition by bringing to mind the 'various associations for the encouragement of philosophy, literature, and the arts' which evidence the existence of an intellectual culture in the city.[132]

Though the remainder of Wheeler's introduction serves to 'place the town fairly in the world's eye', there are still moments of hesitancy in his statement.[133] Offering his 'humble book' to his audience, Wheeler puts his work at their mercy; this is not a demand for attention, but a plea.[134] Moreover, Wheeler's selection of poets can also be seen to put his argument at a disadvantage. By prioritising John Byrom, a genteel poet (and former Library Keeper at Chetham's) born a century prior to Manchester's moment of industrialisation, over any living poet in the volume, it is arguable Wheeler is attempting to claim a wealth of existing literary history for the city. This choice, however, promotes an Augustan poetic ideal which reflects nothing of the coeval realities of the city he claims to represent. Even though he recognises Byrom's distance from the present moment, observing that 'In Byrom's days [...] tolerable verse [was] considered tolerable poetry', his portraits of the more contemporary authors also do them some disservice.[135] His depiction of Bamford is particularly telling; drawing him as having played a 'conspicuous part' in the town's past tumult, 'boldly avowing opinions honestly formed if not wisely founded', 'well-meant',

---

[132] Wheeler, 'Introductory Essay', pp. ix-xi.
[133] Ibid. p. xii.
[134] Ibid. p. xii.
[135] Ibid. p. xiii.

though 'lowly-minded', the apparent intent is to dismiss Bamford's radical past as an uncouth but essentially harmless mistake.[136] Unlike the majority of 'that day's reformers', Bamford is without 'the mercenary and self-elevating aims' which would render him unredeemable; but Wheeler states that neither he nor his audience 'have any concern with the politics of poets' and does not engage further with the subject.[137] Bamford's work that finds inclusion in this volume occasionally touches on matters of social concern such as poverty and charity, and the 'Ode to Death' has brief and somewhat vague engagements with 'visions […] of Liberty'.[138] Nothing, however, in Wheeler's collection, matches Bamford's earlier work in terms of inflammatory or controversial material.

Despite Wheeler's ambivalence, it is clear that, to some extent, contributors to this collection are seeking to write against the idea that Manchester is intellectually stunted. The 'Ode to the Manchester Free Grammar School' by Henry Wheeler (whose relation to James Wheeler is unclear) mimics the framing of Gray's 'Eton College', viewing a nostalgic place of education from afar, distanced both physically and temporally:

> FULL from the verge of fam'd Mill Brow,
> Proud Grammar School I view thee now;
> I view each old unfading token-
> Thy crackling walls, thy windows broken;
> As thus I silent gaze,
> On the past scenes of other days![139]

---

[136] Wheeler, 'Introductory Essay', pp. xv-xvi.
[137] Ibid. p. xvi.
[138] Samuel Bamford, 'Ode to Death', in *Manchester Poetry*, ed. by James Wheeler, p. 158 (l. 20).
[139] Henry Wheeler, 'Ode to the Manchester Free Grammar School' in *Manchester Poetry*, pp. 189-192 (l. 1-6).

Though the location of 'Mill Brow' is uncertain (a map of 1894 suggests it is potentially in

now-suburban Worsley), a common theme of the urban prospect poem establishes itself

here in Wheeler's piece – the speaker is removed from the site in question to a rural outskirt

at the incipit of the poem.[140] While initially lingering on his childhood hardships – 'doom'd to

feel the ache full long / Of Doctor's whip and Usher's thong' – the speaker departs from his

initial desire to see the school in 'smoking ruins', and into a renewed reverence.[141] With

'redoubled joy', the speaker hails the School as 'the fairest gem of History's page', and

wishes it longevity beyond 'the humbler works of man'.[142] It appears that the emotional

modulation here simply replicates a move from adolescence to maturity, effectively

dramatizing the speaker's realisation of his place within a historically significant institution

rather than focusing on his individual suffering. But the detail drawn in mentioning the

school's 'cracking walls' and '[broken] windows' is suggestive of the speaker's own childhood

fantasy of the School in ruins; what seemed fanciful in the past is now a present possibility.

On a number of levels, the speaker's concern is well-founded; the School's trustees,

prevented by the original deed laid out in the fourteenth century, felt pressed to move from

the site near Chetham's Library due to its 'bad surroundings' in 1808.[143] Some years later,

Engels would find the neighbouring population full of 'Irish blood', housed in an 'undisguised

working men's quarter', with the Irk, 'full of debris and refuse', circling around the School.[144]

The School's surroundings were perceived as evidencing the tells of social and

environmental degradation, and additionally, its syllabus had altered – in the 1830s, it had

---

[140] Ordnance Survey, *Lancashire Sheet CIII.NE*, six inches to one statute mile, National Library of Scotland, 1894, accessed 3 March 2023.

[141] Henry Wheeler, 'Ode to the Manchester Free Grammar School', l. 22-30.

[142] Ibid. l. 31; ibid. l. 72; ibid l. 68.

[143] J. A. Graham and B. A. Phythian, *The Manchester Grammar School, 1515-1965* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965) p. 31.

[144] Friedrich Engels, quoted in *The Manchester Grammar School*, p. 32.

established a new commercial school, which had been vastly prioritised over its original

classics department. Thomas De Quincey, upon his flight from the Grammar School in 1801,

seems to pre-empt this change in his letter to his mother explaining his decision:

> I am living in a town where the sole and universal object of pursuit is precisely that which I hold most in abhorrence. In this place trade is the religion, and money is the god. Every object I see reminds me of those occupations which run counter to the bent of my nature, every sentiment I hear sounds a discord to my own. I cannot stir out of doors but I am nosed by a factory, a cotton-bag, a cotton-dealer, or something else allied to that most detestable commerce. Such an object dissipates the whole train of romantic visions I had conjured up [...][145]

In Wheeler's depiction, while unmarked by time in the speaker's own words, the building

itself tells another story, and if considered a stand-in for the system of intellectual

enrichment for Manchester as a whole, his new affection for the School becomes all the

more poignant. But De Quincey's complaint, when read in parallel, reveals an actual opinion

of Manchester's educational faculties in the modernising city, usurped by the unpoetical

sentiments and environmental disturbances of mass industry, undistorted by any mitigating

nostalgia. Even as it seeks to give the institution eternal life, Wheeler's poem betrays an

anxiety about the sustainability of Manchester's public edifices, and a desire to see them

protected from perceived commercial corruption.

One of the most significant contributors to this group, whose work requires

particular scrutiny, was John Bolton Rogerson, the co-editor of *The Phoenix* and *Falcon* as

well as a contributor and the editor of the *Oddfellows' Magazine* (1841-48). As stated, the

majority of the poetical pieces in the *Falcon* and *Phoenix* are not strictly related to

Manchester or urban life, and while a great deal are of dubious provenance, a number of the

---

[145] Thomas De Quincey, quoted in Daniel Sanjiv Roberts, *Revisionary Gleam: De Quincey, Coleridge, and the High Romantic Argumen*t (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 119-120.

poems can be traced back to Rogerson. His 1842 publication, *A Voice from the Town,*

features the titular three-part poem, impressionistic in form and consisting of various

reflections upon life in Manchester – which is never mentioned by name in the text. The

poem's title is unusual, and suggests some distance between poet and reader, possibly in

anticipation of a non-local audience. Rogerson's preface to his poetic meditation is also

strangely apologetic; owning its total lack of plot, Rogerson admits he may have 'left

untouched many subjects perhaps more deserving of notice' in his choice of content.[146]

While this statement bespeaks a level of self-consciousness about the suitability of urban

life, and specifically Mancunian urban life, to be translated into verse, it may conversely

suggest that other elements of life in Manchester are in some way more fitting. However,

Rogerson's statement does not make this distinction clear. By way of introduction, the poet

aligns himself with an oppressed set of labourers:

> My lot has been to suffer and to do,
> To rack my spirit for the means to live,
> To bear the frowns of iron-hearted men,
> And congregate with those who lov'd me not,
> With those who sympathis'd with wealth alone,
> Shunning communion with a coinless man.[147]

The empathetic connection *A Voice from the Town* seeks to form is with a person who is, in

some sense, a labourer; the lexis of exertion ('suffer', 'rack', 'bear') is consistently present

here, albeit ambiguous as to whether it is physical or mental. That said, the reality of

Rogerson's numerous professions (primarily mercantile or clerical), and the notable absence

---

[146] Rogerson, 'Preface', in *A Voice from the Town & Other Poems* , p. v.
[147] Rogerson, 'A Voice from the Town', in *A Voice from the Town & Other Poems*, pp. 9-77 (part one, l. 3-8).

of literal manual work in his narrative, leads a reader to note that the work performed is actually associated with intellectual work. Much like the introductory material taken from the *Falcon*, the speaker positions himself as a worker, but still one a cut above actual factory labourers. This is also a gesture which helps to ingratiate him with a similar order of reader, themselves engaged in comparable clerical work. How this fictional persona has found himself among moneyed individuals is questionable; there is an element of social climbing at play, rendering the speaker both inside and outside a social circle. Note, however, the Rogerson still differentiates himself from 'iron-hearted men' whose care is only for material wealth; the speaker, then, does not comply with the stereotypical image of the commercially-minded Mancunian businessman, and it is arguable that this differentiation forms the basis for his potential as a poetical character.

Rogerson's character does, however, have a social circle that both validates his creative output and shares some commonalities of labour and class. These 'strong intellectual links' permit literary discussion, concerning the 'poets who have made the world bow down', and 'seek / to elevate [their] minds' through doing so.[148] On a more emotive level, these peers additionally regard him as a 'friend', and are considered 'kindred minds'.[149] The main body of the first part of Rogerson's poem operates as a register of the Cottonopolis poets, including John Critchley Prince ('A man who God had destin'd for high state'), and the West Indian-Mancunian writer Robert Rose ('A flower of darker hue, [who] wears / The Indian tinge upon his manly brow').[150] Two of the more intriguing portraits featured here are those of Bamford and Ridings; Bamford is a 'veteran grey', long confined in 'gloomy prison-

---

148 Rogerson, 'A Voice from the Town', part one, l. 89; Ibid. l. 170; Ibid. l. 178-9.
149 Ibid. l. 88-89.
150 Ibid. l. 193; ibid. l. 194-5.

walls', and 'Suffering for Freedom's cause'.[151] Unlike Wheeler's rather backhanded portrait of

1838, Rogerson is wholly complimentary, and follows suit with Richardson's figuration of

Bamford as both radical martyr and poetic exemplar. Ridings' depiction by Rogerson,

however, is far more chequered in comparison:

> He was not form'd in a poetic mould,
> If poet's form etherial should be;
> But still his mind is of no common cast,
> And he hath gain'd a name amongst his race.[152]

It is hard to discern whether Rogerson's comments are designed to be disparaging, and

whether this is a cutting or playful gesture - but there is something to be gleaned in terms of

commentary on Mancunian poets in general here. 'Etherial' may be taken to denote

slightness of form, however, and Rogerson's aim seems primarily to make a playful jab at

Ridings' figure. Though not 'form'd in a poetic mould', Ridings' intellectual capacity is still

notable and he has made a name for himself. Rogerson's suggestion may be that, despite a

difficult or unconventional beginning to his career (and certainly not exempt from personal

ridicule on the basis of his appearance), Ridings has the capability and notability to rank as a

poet. Moreover, the positioning of Ridings as a tangible or "real" poet as opposed to the

'etherial' form of the conventional poet, without physicality or personhood, quietly

legitimises Ridings as a poet bound to actual lived experience. That Ridings has found favour

'amongst his race', however, might be a mark against him, if his 'race' is considered simply to

be Mancunian people, or even just the small literary collective of which he is a number.

Rogerson's closing remark here may imply that, despite any potential he may hold, Ridings'

---

[151] Rogerson, 'A Voice from the Town', part one, l. 207-211.
[152] Ibid. l. 283-6.

fame is limited only to those with whom he has immediate commonalities of station and situation. Other poets, such as John Critchley Prince, 'destin'd for high state', receive a more 'etherial' portrait, which weakens the argument that Rogerson takes issue with the traditional conception of the poet.[153] Either way, Rogerson has reason to be complimentary; it is likely these fellow poets would form at least part of his audience and read one another's works, as *A Voice from the Town* is dedicated to Bamford, and Elijah Ridings' list of subscribers in 1840 also features Bamford and Rogerson.

As the narrative proceeds in the second part, however, Rogerson's meditations on the Mancunian experience become far more negative in outlook. An extensive section of *A Voice from the Town* offers a grim vision of vice and poverty in the gin parlour. While gin is often associated with the Gin Craze of the eighteenth century, a similar social phenomenon had ensued in 1825, after a parliamentary act reduced duties on spirits by 40% in an effort to curb illegal trading and tax evasion.[154] Gin in particular, Nicholas Mason illustrates, was a matter of concern for both public health and national identity: beer-drinking, regarded as 'the lesser of two alcoholic evils', was generally perceived to be more nutritious and a central facet of Englishness.[155] This would then lead to the Beer Act of 1830, which aimed to increase the distribution of beer from domestic 'beer-shops', a move supported across the board to wean the population off the more pernicious dram of gin.[156] This would, however, backfire; for the remainder of the century, it would become commonplace to blame the Beer Act for inciting a destructive new trend for public alcohol consumption in the working classes, and even, paradoxically, for an increased consumption of gin. In a series of

---

[153] Rogerson, 'A Voice from the Town', part one, l. 193.
[154] Nicholas Mason, '"The Sovereign People are in a Beastly State": The Beer Act of 1830 and Victorian Discourse on Working-Class Drunkenness', *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 29:1 (March 2001), 109-127 (p. 111).
[155] Ibid. p. 112.
[156] Ibid. p. 112.

testimonies against the Beer Act in 1834, many regarded the Act as responsible for creating

'gin palaces', traditional public houses forced to rebrand in the face of competition from

popular new beer-shops.[157] It is this new institution, with its hallmarks of aesthetic excess

and universal patronage, that Rogerson's verse works to criticise.

In Rogerson's gin palace, natural order becomes inverted, particularly in the context

of the traditional family; the evils of alcoholism are apparently indiscriminate towards age or

gender, and the 'mother with her shrivell'd babe' is found 'pouring the poison into its crying

mouth'.[158] Given the existing conception of gin as an antidote to hunger, it is likely this

character is attempting to induce the child to sleep; but in a harrowing mockery of the act of

breastfeeding, the anti-mother destroys rather than nourishes her child. This sense of

entropic disorder continues into a nightmare vision, apparently inspired by the scenes from

the gin shop. In this following segment, the speaker sees 'a dark and living flood' of people

driven to drink, combining 'Beauty and ugliness, youth and age'.[159] Comprising a 'scene

unpaintable by pen', Rogerson's distorted and chaotic representation of drunken carnage

confounds the senses.[160] 'Laughter' is 'with a shriek […] strangely blent', succeeding to 'loud

unmeaning shouts, half rage, half joy'; the sonic landscape is a 'wordless mass', and the

personhood of each figure involved is lost, the whole falling in 'black unsightly heaps'.[161]

Familial structure is further derailed: the 'son [upraises] his hand against his sire, / And

[strikes] the giver of his life to earth'.[162] This bears similarities with contemporary

descriptions of the gin palace, particularly the observations made by Peter Gaskell in 1833:

---

[157] Mason, '"The Sovereign People are in a Beastly State"', p. 117.
[158] Rogerson, 'A Voice from the Town', part two, l. 105-6.
[159] Ibid. l. 130-1.
[160] Ibid. l. 163.
[161] Ibid. l. 164-5; Ibid. l. 190; Ibid. l. 195.
[162] Ibid. l. 177-180.

finding all ranks 'jumbled together in a heterogeneous mass of evil, to the ruin of every thing

chaste and delicate in woman, and the utter annihilation of all honourable or honest feeling

in man'.[163] Social categories are eluded, and gendered virtues are debauched; the same

image of the infant fed with gin appears here too, emblematic of Gaskell's fears of the

traditional family jeopardised by industrial restructuring.[164]

While the professions of these individuals are not specifically mentioned, Rogerson's

imagery reflects common critiques of urban degradation made by observers of the time, and

particularly those applied to the living conditions of Manchester's manual labourers.

Returning to Kay, who blames overworking as well as 'the imperfect state of the streets' for

'demoralization' in the habits of Manchester's urban poor, one observes again the lack of

'distinction of age or sex' in this perceived degradation, resembling the description of

Rogerson's 'living flood'.[165] To compare with Gaskell again, whose representation forms part

of a critique of steam power and child labour in the factory system, there is a general

association of the gin palace, and its specific form of misery alcoholism (i.e. alcoholism

prompted by dire urban living and working conditions), with the manufacturing class. This

drinking culture is a way of coping with 'harassed sensations' impacted by Manchester's

factory conditions, with its reformulation of domestic structures essentially leaving the

worker spiritually broken and vulnerable to moral corruption [166] Interestingly, Gunther

Hischfelder has gone some way to disprove the popular thesis of misery alcoholism among

factory workers in Manchester, finding that public alcohol consumption among the working

---

[163] Peter Gaskell, *The Manufacturing Population of England* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1833), p. 118.
[164] Ibid. p. 100.
[165] Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes*, p. 24; Ibid. p. 28.
[166] Gaskell, *The Manufacturing Population of England*, p. 116.

class remained a status symbol that most cotton spinners could not regularly afford.[167] Far

more susceptible to these habits are marginally more affluent professions such as artisans or

policemen.[168] Though the clientele of Rogerson's gin palace are not distinct in their station,

its intertextuality with other tracts regarding poverty and degradation in the area, and its

refusal to refute common ideas about the sectors of society which had fallen prey to these

drinking habits, allow it to reinforce extant impressions about the nature of alcoholism in the

industrial city.

Moving on from the gin palace, *A Voice from the Town'*s impression of Manchester

itself is sombre and dystopian, with the 'dreary prison-van', 'homeless [wretches]', and

avaricious 'sons of commerce' littering the streets.[169] Rogerson also summons the image of

the 'smoke', which 'beats downward from the chimney tops'.[170] Rather than contributing to

a general upward momentum which has been observed in many other representations of

the Romantic city (e.g. the 'rising prospects' of Roscoe's *Mount Pleasant*), Rogerson's image

instead conveys a sense of a downwardly oppressive and even regressive environment.[171]

This is further emphasised in the conclusion to the second part:

> I pine and sicken 'mid these throng'd abodes,
>
> My nerves are shatter'd with the ceaseless hum
>
> Of tongues that ever speak of care and toil;
>
> The hurrying sound of many trampling feet,
>
> And all the noises of the busy streets,

---

[167] Gunther Hirschfelder, 'The Myth of 'Misery Alcoholism' in Early Industrial England: The Example of Manchester', *Drink in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Susanne Schmid and Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014), pp. 91-101 (p. 95).

[168] Ibid. pp. 95-96.

[169] Rogerson, 'A Voice from the Town', part two, l. 228; Ibid. l. 222; Ibid. l. 224.

[170] Ibid. l. 221.

[171] Roscoe, 'Mount Pleasant', l. 9.

Lie on my soul with an oppressive weight.[172]

The speaker is himself emotionally and spiritually damaged by the everyday sensory experience of life in the town. The mention of disembodied 'tongues' and 'feet', here used less for synecdoche than for the dehumanisation and de-individualisation of his townsmen, replicates a social experience that is crowded, but not friendly. There is no time for rest, and all visual and auditory signifiers the speaker encounters are reminders of the omnipresence of constant labour. It is also unclear as to whether the speaker is *literally* sickened; referring again back to Kay's commentary, where the populace is 'crowded into one dense mass' in 'pestilential streets [...] loaded with smoke' and other particles such as 'dust or filaments of cotton', the association between Manchester's industrial processes, physical ailment, and compacted urban living was already strong.[173] Rogerson's overall portrait of Manchester's industrial present is uncompromising, tying together a number of presiding negative presumptions about urban living and doing little to dispel them; the ubiquity of labour does not prompt a reflection on how it has negatively impacted the populace, but rather incites misanthropy in the speaker. The remainder of this section sees the speaker move outwards into Manchester's surrounding countryside, a movement necessitated by the destructive effect the city has on his mental, emotional, and creative faculties.

Despite this extensive diversion, the remainder of *A Voice from the Town* further complicates Rogerson's impression of intellectualism and progress in the city. Chetham's Library features in its third section as an 'antiquated building [...] wash'd by the Irk's dark stream', as well as a 'refuge for the child of poverty', presumably in reference to Humphrey

---

[172] Rogerson, 'A Voice from the Town', part two, l. 310-315.
[173] Kay, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes,* p. 18.

Chetham's educational provisions made in his later life for several disadvantaged boys living

in Manchester's immediate surroundings.[174] Rogerson clearly rates the Library as a

humanitarian source of learning in which 'all may freely share', and enters the second person

in order to place the reader in the shoes of the rural visitor rather than the worldly scholar:

> The boy who leads you on will then describe,
> In style burlesque, but with a face most grave,
> A motley group of strange and wondrous things,
> Which oft have caus'd in rustic mind amaze.[175]

The aim of Rogerson's delivery, however, is less to educate than to estrange. By presenting

this ceremony more as a theatrical show than a scholarly lecture, as well as not disclosing

what these 'strange and wondrous things' actually are, Rogerson is rendered complicit in the

obfuscation of knowledge. Similarly, that these artefacts 'amaze', connoting disbelief or even

confusion, suggests this is rather an intellectual step backwards rather than signifying

progression or understanding, further widening the gap between the legitimised scholar and

the rustic outsider. Other positive presences in Manchester's topography also include the

Collegiate Church: 'yon dark and ancient edifice', 'Lifting to Heaven its time-worn gothic

tower'.[176] As mentioned, the Library dates back to the seventeenth century, first established

as a collegiate foundation in 1421. The Church remains one of the few existing buildings in

Manchester with medieval origins, having first been erected in the 1200s within the complex

of Manchester's original baronial hall. It seems that, in Rogerson's opinion, the public

---

[174] Rogerson, 'A Voice from the Town', part three, l. 67-8; Ibid. l. 76; Alan G. Grosby, 'Chetham, Humphrey (bap. 1580, d. 1653), financier and philanthropist.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 3 Jan 2008; Accessed 1 Aug 2023..
[175] Rogerson, 'A Voice from the Town', part three, l. 96; Ibid. l. 88-91.
[176] Ibid. l. 104-6.

buildings most worthy of veneration are those from the city's antiquity, and indeed those with little or no connection to its industrial present.

I will conclude this section by covering another contribution by the "Cottonopolis" collective – an 1842 anthology entitled *The Festive Wreath*, edited by Rogerson. Presenting themselves as 'Lancastria's votaries of the Nine' (i.e. the Muses) for their 'symposia divine', even the title invokes the woven 'poetic wreath' of Hellenic derivation.[177] The collection is replete not only with poems appealing for the recognition and continuation of Manchester's literary scene (for instance, Alexander Wilson's 'The Poets' Corner', John Critchley Prince's 'The Poets' Welcome', and Elijah Ridings' 'Stanzas') but also a number of dedications to Samuel Bamford. Take this extract from George Richardson's 'A Poetical Replication':

> With his blunt honest manner and truth,
> With the strength, with the fire, and the fervour of youth,
> Whose open sincerity all must regard –
> The manly, the steadfast, stanch MIDDLETON BARD [...]
> A patriot feeling, calm, steady, and free,
> A friend to Reform – but discreet in his plan,
> To save by true reason the life-blood of man,
> Labour'd with zeal against tyranny's hand,
> And suffer'd in guarding the rights of the land.[178]

At this point in his career, Bamford had established a degree of fame as a pseudo-martyr with a group of poets from a younger generation. While he does not contribute to this volume, his image lingers in the verse of a number of collaborators. A note on Richardson's

---

[177] Elijah Ridings, 'Stanzas', in *The Festive Wreath,* pp. 30-32 (l. 41-42); John Bolton Rogerson, 'Preface' in *The Festive Wreath,* p. iii.

[178] George Richardson, 'A Poetical Replication', in *The Festive Wreath*, pp. 12-16 (l. 26-37).

text claims that Bamford 'has suffered more imprisonment in the cause of Reform than perhaps any man of the present day', figuring him as the heroic survivor of a tyrannical dark age.[179] Mentioned alongside Byron, Burns and Milton, the purpose of this laudatory portrait is to permit Bamford literary immortality, in the hope that 'his *flame* will shed lustre on ages unborn' like the canonical figureheads with which he shares a dedication.[180] Whereas Crossley had been dismissive of the idea that 'commercial book-keepers, printers' devils and attorneys' clerks' had a role to play in the production of poetry, the poets in this collection, including a book binder (Will Dickinson), a bookseller (Rogerson), and a trader in rare books (Ridings), display how intellectual and commercial interests would intertwine in ways that would go on only to further the longevity of Manchester as a site for poetic production.[181]

Charles Kenworthy, in his poem dedicated to the Manchester Athenaeum, published in 1847, would depict a Mancunian institution abounding in contributions to local cultural and scientific life. The Athenaeum society, founded in 1835 and having gained its own premises in what is now Manchester Art Gallery in 1837, had been successful and influential, inspiring the foundation of a similar society in Sheffield. Its aim was to continue the culture of free inquiry and knowledge diffusion already propounded by the city's Literary and Philosophical Society. But even while Kenworthy is eager to praise its cultural advances, and the wealth of its princely merchants, his poem ends by pointing out a key deficiency.[182] The society cannot produce a 'living bard', at least not one 'worth our praise'.[183] Though levelled at the Athenaeum, Kenworthy's statement, particularly with the indefinite nature of the

---

[179] Editorial note in *The Festive Wreath*, ed. by John Bolton Rogerson, p. 13.
[180] Alexander Wilson, 'The Poets' Corner', in *The Festive Wreath*, pp. 37-42 (l. 10-11); Ibid. l. 16.
[181] Crossley, 'Manchester Poetry', p. 67; Richardson, 'A Poetical Replication', l. 38-39.
[182] Charles Kenworthy, 'The Manchester Athenaeum', in *Original Poems on Miscellaneous Subjects* (Manchester: Cave and Sever, 1847), pp. 33-35 (l. 39).
[183] Ibid. l. 44-45.

pronoun 'thou', uses the Society as a shorthand to critique the city at large. Even into the mid-nineteenth century, and despite a number of significant literary movements originating in the town, these critiques of Manchester's poetic incapability still linger. Kenworthy's poem works as an ironic appraisal of Manchester's superficial commercial success, coupled with a concomitant artistic failure.

The irony of Kenworthy's statement, however, is that he stands among numerous critically successful poets in Manchester. Only three years later, John Evans would count Kenworthy among his register of *Lancashire Authors and Orators*, alongside Samuel Bamford, Charles Swain, John Bolton Rogerson, and even James Crossley, himself now fully absorbed into the city's literary circles.[184] As Collins indicates, at the point of Evans' publication, the man who had criticised the city so bitterly was now president of the Chetham's Society and had a high level of involvement in virtually all literary activity in Manchester.[185] Evans stresses that all are living writers; the collection is a statement of the region's poetic present, rather than a reconstruction of a pre-industrial poetic past. Though Maria Jane Jewsbury is not included on this basis, her surviving sister, Geraldine, finds recognition in Evans' volume for her career as a novelist.[186] Despite a perceived failure to respond to matters of local importance, a supposed preoccupation with commerce, and an unprecedented set of problems linked to its rapid urbanisation, Manchester would sustain a prolific set of writers in what might now be referred to as its Romantic age, and by the time of Evans' publication, would even start to be considered a truly poetical town.

---

[184] John Evans, *Lancashire Authors and Orators* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1850), pp. 148-153; Ibid. pp. 17-22; Ibid. pp. 228-232; Ibid. pp. 260-267, Ibid. pp. 240-246; Ibid. pp. 67-72.
[185] Stephen Collins, 'Crossley, James (1800–1883), writer and book collector.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 24 Sept 2004, Accessed 26 April 2023
[186] Evans, *Lancashire Authors and Orators*, pp. 140-144.

Conclusion

The world's first passenger railway would see its inaugural voyage take place between Liverpool and Manchester on the 15th of September, 1830, and despite its success in demonstrating the potential for rail travel in years to come, the journey would have tragic consequences. William Huskisson, formerly MP for Liverpool, was one of the train's passengers – as well as one of its victims. While attempting to enter the carriage of his fellow passenger and then Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington, Huskisson fell into the path of George Stephenson's *Rocket* and suffered injuries that would prove fatal. Huskisson's death did not prevent the rapid expansion of passenger railways across Britain, nor across the world. Across the Pennines, however, the Sheffield poet Ebenezer Elliott felt this loss profoundly. In a poem simply entitled 'Elegy', Elliott mourns Huskisson as a friend of the people, cut down during Britain's time of need:

> A shadow bids improvement stand,
> While faster flow a nation's tears.
> O dead man! With thy pallid hand,
> Thou rollest back the tide of years![1]

Apostrophically summoning Huskisson, employing the *ubi sunt* motif to seek out a lost 'hope and liberty', the author figures him as embodying a liberal wing of the incumbent government, whose humanitarian work has been left 'undone'.[2] As well as having represented Liverpool since his election in 1823, Huskisson was also, according to Christopher Rowe, 'in the vanguard of industrial and technological change': he was an advocate for the needs of England's industrial cities and his support for their political representation would help shape the Reform

---

[1] Elliott, 'Elegy' in *The Poetical Works*, ed. By Edwin Elliott, vol. 1, p. 385 (l. 21-24).
[2] Ibid. l. 8; Ibid. l. 3.

Bill of 1832, which would pass after his death.[3] Huskisson's passing is not merely tragic but ironic; his efforts to create a more united, more connected, and more equal country, Elliot imagines, have caused his demise. There is a paradox implicit in Elliott's polysemic use of the verb 'stand'; this could either see 'Improvement' beckoned forth (i.e. standing eminent) or, alternatively, come to a standstill, outrun by a nation's fast-flowing 'tears'. At once ushering in change and seeing it stop short, Huskisson's death, as Elliott states, symbolises a regression in the nation's march to modernity, and has consequences for an imagined community across the region and the country at large.

This sense of regression even at the advent of oncoming modernity is one that permeates many of the poems this thesis has documented. Multiple writers in the transpennine region serve to question the pillars of society itself: commerce, technology, and infrastructural development are all probed and considered suspect, despite their general alignment with progress and modernity. Though regional differences inflect its depiction, a more generalised anxiety about the present moment and its continuity with former patterns of progress seems to penetrate this body of literature in a particularly marked fashion. Nestled within the socio-political instability of their time, wherein such vast conceptualisations as the state, the social contract, and the progression of history itself are under ideological threat, virtually all of these writers view their particular time and place as a crisis point. The poet frequently stands either at a place of irreconcilable and irreversible loss, or, conversely, at a watershed moment where recurrent evils of the past might be retired or reformed.

---

[3] Christopher Rowe, 'William Huskisson and the Rhetoric of Free Trade; in *Economic Affairs,* 38: 2. (June 2018), 207-223 (p. 208).

This fascination and fear connected with the moment of modernity renders Elliott's choice of subject matter the more intriguing. If, as Wolfgang Schivelbusch suggests, the introduction of rail transport amounted to the 'Annihilation of space and time' in the mind of the contemporary traveller, the figure of the train as the object of Huskisson's death represents not only the loss of an individual but evokes a discontinuity with existing conceptions of time and place.[4] As has already been demonstrated in Chapter Three, Elliott's oeuvre consistently maintains a focus on the transformative and destructive power of the steam engine, and this poem contributes to a general feeling of the shifting of the parameters of human experience.[5] He is, like his fellow poets in the transpennine area, auspiciously positioned to narrate industrialisation, in a locale where its onset is rapid and far-reaching. To Elliott and his local contemporaries, the speed and breadth of industrial change can only be rendered as either miraculous or monstrous in nature. Their poetry is therefore valuable to several current critical threads in the field of Romanticism; their contributions to labouring-class literature, and both to ecocritical and postcolonial schools of thought, cannot be overstated.

While this study has exemplified the artistic and critical worth of these works, their potent impact upon successive generations of writers and theorists must also be noted. Samuel Bamford's poetry, as well as that of Elliott, is quoted extensively in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton*, and Diane Duffy and Anthony Burton suggest that it was Gaskell's social connections made via the Unitarian Cross Street and Mosley Street congregations that would

---

[4] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), p. 33.
[5] For instance, Elliott, 'Steam at Sheffield' and 'Verses on the Opening of the Sheffield and Rotherham Railway', in *The Poetical Works*,.

inform her depiction of Manchester's urban poor.[6] Jon Mee has demonstrated the profound

influence of John Aikin's *Description* to be felt in Marx's *Capital*.[7] There is even evidence to

suggest a transpennine influence upon more well-known Romantic figures; Montgomery's

'classic Sheffield' appears in Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and there exist stark

similarities between the imagery used in Shelley's 'Mask of Anarchy' and that of Roscoe's

'Song on the Liverpool Election', composed some seven years earlier.[8] As has already been

covered, poets such as Joseph Mather found new audiences in the nineteenth century, with

his work in particular being published for the first time in 1811, and then again in 1862; clearly,

something of his depiction of Sheffield's eighteenth-century labouring sociability and

radicalism had registered interest with a mid-Victorian readership. Furthermore, this

influence is evident not only in the writing of their literary successors, but in the actual

infrastructure of the cities in which these writers lived and worked. William Roscoe is

commemorated by a street in central Liverpool, and a park near modern-day Mount Pleasant

in his name. Jessica Moody has pointed to his historic significance as a cult figure in Liverpool,

emblematic of the anti-slavery movement in the mid nineteenth-century, even when

abolitionists such as himself were outliers in the city during his lifetime.[9] The Royal Institution,

founded by Roscoe and his associates in 1814, would become the foundation for future efforts

for adult education in Liverpool, and is cited by Donald A. McNaughton as the direct

---

[6] Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell, *Mary Barton; A Tale of Manchester Life*, (2 vols) 3rd edn (London: Chapman & Hall, 1849), vol. 1, p. 171; Ibid. p. 39; Anthony Burton, and Diane Duffy, 'Elizabeth Gaskell and the Industrial Poor: How Did She Know About Them?', *The Gaskell Journal,* 34: 1 (2020), 1-24 (p. 2); Ibid. p. 5.

[7] Jon Mee, '"All that the most romantic imagination could have previously conceived": Writing an Industrial Revolution, 1795 to 1835', *Studies in Romanticism,* 61: 2 (Summer 2022), 229-254 (p. 240).

[8] George Gordon, Lord Byron, *English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers; a Satire*, 3rd. edn (London: James Cawthorn, 1810), l. 418; Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'The Mask of Anarchy', in *The Major Works*, ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 400-411 (l. 368-372); William Roscoe, 'Song on the Liverpool Election in 1812', in *The Poetical Works* (London: Ward and Lock, 1857), pp. 90-91 (l. 15-16).

[9] Moody, *The Persistence of Memory,* p. 130.

progenitor of the college which would become what is today the University of Liverpool.[10]

James Montgomery perhaps appropriately lends his name to a Sheffield theatre, and Samuel

Bamford is honoured by a plaque in his native Middleton. Bamford has also more recently

made an appearance in Mike Leigh's 2018 feature *Peterloo*, as portrayed by Neil Bell.[11] This

thesis seeks to partake in both a critical and popular upsurge in interest in Britain's regional

history and literature, and to represent these figures not as marginal but as central to Britain's

Romantic legacy.

Why, in this case, has the study of such poetry not continued in the same fashion as

that of more canonical Romantic figures? Indeed, poets such as Montgomery were more

widely read in their own time than John Keats or Percy Shelley. It is possible that such poetry

does not easily fit the "Romantic" category, as it is often fixated on an ephemeral, man-made

environment, preoccupied with commercial or industrial processes, rather than a supposedly

timeless pastoral landscape; it may be that this poetry does not possess the broad applicability

of some of its more famous counterparts. Furthermore, such ephemerality and specificity of

place suggests that readers may feel alienated without strict context to illustrate the

significance of what it conveys. In many cases, these poems defy the idea of the Romantic

"lone poet", themselves often crafted by way of collaboration, in an extremely public sphere,

or explicitly citing various institutions or collectives rather than focusing on the singular

individual. Although, as Kevin Gilmartin's reading of Coleridge's 'This Lime-Tree Bower My

Prison' concludes, even the most apparently self-absorbed of Romantic verses is powerfully

imbued with 'attendant relationships', inherently carrying out a social function in itself,

---

[10] Donald A. McNaughton, 'Roscoe, William (1753-1830), historian and patron of the arts.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 22 Sept 2004, accessed 15 July 2023.
[11] *Peterloo*, dir. by Mike Leigh (eOne Entertainment, 2018).

Gilmartin's argument exists in spite of the weight of 'individual and introspective associations' that the Romantic canon has historically carried.[12] Given the number of canonically significant Romantic texts concerning London, one cannot blame a general snobbery about the city itself for this oversight; it is rather the ways these poems might complicate the conception of the (specifically capital) city as an alienating and macabre experience for a singular Wordsworthian observer that may warrant their exclusion from the existing canon. To suggest the city might be an energising experience, a humanitarian experience, that industry and commerce might be an apt subject for poetry, that urban sociability is extensive and productive, or even that cities beyond London are worthy of poetic representation, presents more of a problem for these texts than their urban setting alone.

In some cases, there may be a problem of periodisation; later figures in particular, including Elliott, Bamford, and Montgomery, tend to straddle the Georgian and Victorian eras uncomfortably, contributing to their marginalisation by creating debate as to which historical moment they might more effectively narrate. On the other hand, these poets inhabited specific and sometimes unique social roles which may not be in line with the regular impression of a "Romantic" poet. Roscoe is not merely a poet but a land developer, abolitionist, politician, lawyer, and historian; Montgomery is not merely a poet but also a journalist, hymnodist, and philanthropist. Poetry is not their sole profession, and this is an issue that further impacts labouring-class writers, whose literary careers are always coloured by, if not actually in direct conflict with, their role as manual labourers. Writers in these categories complicate the idea of the poet as miraculously outside of the systems of labour, romantically impoverished though imbued with a wealth of poetic talent. To contextualise and

---

[12] Kevin Gilmartin, 'Introduction: Locating Romantic-Period Sociability', in *Sociable Places: Locating Culture in Romantic-Period Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp, 1-30 (p. 11); Ibid. p. 3.

fully understand these transpennine poets, we must understand them as affected by, and directly involved in, the clerical, commercial, and manual work that would transform the face of the modern economic system at the turn of the century.

Beyond these general observations, the pattern of poetic efflorescence is clearly not the same across the board, and Manchester's example is particularly striking as an outlier. The reasons for Manchester's apparent failure to create a civic poetic figure in the vein of Roscoe or Montgomery are multifarious, but the answer may lie in its mould-breaking pattern of growth. Roscoe and Montgomery are contemporaries, as well as friends; they belong to the same (primarily dissenting) social group of the late eighteenth century, and reach the end of their lives by the first half of the nineteenth century. Both Liverpool and Sheffield see significant growth over the course of the eighteenth century. Manchester, however, sees population skyrocket towards the end of the century; prior to this, any regional poets of the eighteenth century, including John Collier (a.k.a. Tim Bobbin) are considered as decentralised "Lancashire Poets" than Mancunian ones, a demarcation reinforced by their use of local dialect. Roscoe and Montgomery are therefore present for their city's moment of eminence, and are able to enjoy a brief moment of eighteenth-century optimism regarding the urban project. By the time anyone so significant as Bamford appears on the Manchester scene, however, this optimism has faltered, and hope in the humanitarian and intellectual ends of urbanism has flatlined. By the time of Bamford's writing, the city is overall less "poetical" as a subject, and this sentiment only intensifies for his local successors, for whom urban abjection is all too apparent. Manchester comes to prominence at a time when the role of the urban poet is less to lionise and celebrate the city, and more to criticise its vice and inhumanity.

Although the study of this set of urban centres in particular has yielded a fruitful assortment of fresh poetic perspectives, there is little to preclude a similar study from being carried out in other such cities. If the trend of the Literary and Philosophical Society is a strong indicator of poetic innovation, then such cities as Leeds and Newcastle, being vital contributors to this particular form of sociability, stand out as clear candidates for further investigation. Glasgow, possessing similar industrial and colonial connections to the case studies covered here, also presents itself as a potential hub for the formation of new labouring identities and voices, and Mark Towsey has pointed out the existence of similar associational patterns (particularly in the form of the local subscription library) which may also be suggestive of similar creative and intellectual hubs at work.[13] Smaller towns, too, may also benefit from inclusion within studies of the literary worlds of the transpennine area; the presence of the productive printing-house of William Sheardown in Doncaster, for instance, or the literary patronage of labouring writers such as Charlotte Richardson by dissenting groups in York, point towards a larger web of transpennine connections beyond those connected merely to its industrial centres.[14] Clearly, a more expansive study is yet required to illustrate the place of literature fully within this complex social and intellectual world.

This is all to say nothing of the limitations afforded by problems of accessibility. Indeed, the picture drawn by this thesis of the poetic networks of the Romantic north is necessarily incomplete. The presence of poets such as Mather, whose main form of dissemination was oral performance prior to his nineteenth-century publications, complicates such a study

---

[13] Mark Towsey, ''All Partners may be Enlightened and Improved by Reading Them': The Distribution of Enlightenment Books in Scottish Subscription Library Catalogues, 1750–c.1820', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 28: 1 (2008), 20-43 (p. 23).

[14] Charlotte Richardson*, Poems, on Different Occasions*, ed. by Catharine Cappe, 2nd edn. (York: T. Wilson and R. Spence, 1806); see also her following collection of 1809. Intriguing works printed by Sheardown include *Poems, Moral and Entertaining; by a Lady* (Doncaster: W. Sheardown, 1808), featuring a poem dedicated to the itinerant scientific lecturer Henry Moyes.

drastically. Such poets rely on the transcription of their work, and its successful publication, in order for any remnant of their verse to be available for critical study today, even if the editorial process inevitably alters the text by some degree. The erasure of oral poetry disproportionately impacts the unlettered or semi-literate labouring poet, contributing once more to a middling or upper-class bias in Romantic studies. Even for more successful writers, however, archival material is still only fragmentary, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has at times required this study to rely largely on what limited material is available digitally. Furthermore, unpublished manuscripts and ephemera in unrecorded circulation again may complicate our idea of the extent of literary production and dissemination in this period. Ultimately, the availability of these texts relies on a) immediate interest in successive decades, prompting published collections, new editions, literary biographies, and memorials; and b) ongoing attempts to categorise and digitise existing archival material, so that these often-forgotten writers might receive concentrated and well-informed critical scrutiny.

To conclude, the aim of this study has been to reveal the intimate and significant connections between writing of the urban environment in the transpennine region and the key movements which constituted the body of British Romanticism. In doing this, I have sought to challenge the metropolitan model of urban Romantic literature, and to demonstrate the wide range of poetic responses derived from the intellectual and aesthetic alternativity provided by these regional centres. These works evidence that the north of England, complete with all of its commercial and industrial associations, was not 'a dreary region of Poetic production'; rather that these conditions created a unique crucible for the formation of new

poetic registers.[15] To quote the Mancunian poet James Watson, replying to a detractor of regional writers in 1820:

> Forbid it Heav'n – that Albion's air
> Breath'd by a Campbell and a Scott, -
> That Byron – Rodgers – Crabbe, and Clare,
> Are destin'd thus to be forgot.

> That e'en Montgomery's matchless fire,
> Should make no blaze upon the hills
> In this "dark region" – where the lyre
> Such pleasing melody distils.[16]

---

[15] James Watson, 'A Reply to "Trim", On his observation in last Saturday's Gazette', in *The Spirit of the Doctor; comprising Many Interesting Poems* (Manchester: George Cave, 1820), pp. 63-64 (p. 63).
[16] Ibid. l. 21-28.

Bibliography (Works Cited)

<u>Primary Sources</u>

Anonymous [John Fitchett?], *Bewsey, A Poem* (Warrington: W. Eyres, 1796).

Anon. *Poems, Moral and Entertaining; by a Lady* (Doncaster: W. Sheardown, 1808).

Anon. 'Commercial History of Liverpool (Part 1)', *Tradesman: or, Commercial Magazine*, Jan 1811, pp. 37-42.

Anon. 'Coroner's Inquest upon John Lees', *Observer,* 3 Oct 1819, p. 3.

Anon. 'Elijah Ridings', *Manchester Weekly Times and Examiner,* 26 Oct 1872, p. 6.

Anon. 'LATE PROCEEDINGS AT MANCHESTER.' *Observer*, 30 Aug 1819, p. 2.

Anon. 'A Memoir of Mr. Montgomery; with a Portrait of that distinguished Poet', *Lady's Magazine; or, Mirror of the Belles-Lettres, Fashions, Fine Arts, Music, Drama, etc,* 30 Nov 1827, pp. 614-615.

Anon. 'NEW BOOKS PUBLISHED IN NOVEMBER, With an HISTORICAL and CRITICAL PROEMIUM'. *Monthly Magazine or British Register*, Dec 1821, pp. 448-453.

Anon. 'Obituary – William Roscoe, Esq.', *Gentleman's Magazine,* Aug 1831, pp. 179-181.

"A Country Gentleman", 'The Consequences of a Scientific Education to the Working Classes of this Country pointed out, and the Theories of Mr Brougham on that Subject Confuted, in a Letter to the Marquis of Lansdown.' *Edinburgh Review*, 1 Dec 1826, pp. 189- 199.

Addison, Joseph, and Steele, Richard, *The Spectator*, vol. 1, Nos. 1-125, ed. by Donald F. Bond, (5 vols.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

——, *The Tatler, by Isaac Bickerstaff Esq*., 16 April 1709.

Aikin, John, *A Description of the Country from thirty to forty Miles round Manchester* (London: John Stocksdale, 1795).

——, 'The Enquirer, No. XVI.' *Monthly Magazine, or, British Register,* Jan 1799, pp. 9-14.

Aikin, John and Anna Laetitia, *Miscellaneous Pieces, in Prose* (London: J. Johnson, 1773).

Anderson, Edward, *The Sailor; a Poem* (Newcastle: M. Angus and Son, c. 1800).

Anderson, James, *Prospectus of a new intended periodical work, to be called The Bee, or Universal Literary Intelligencer* (Edinburgh: Mundell and Son, 1790).

Bamford, Samuel, *Hours in the Bowers, Poems, &c* (Manchester: J.P. Jennings and H. Cowdroy, 1834).

——, *Miscellaneous Poetry* (London: Britannia Press, 1821).

——, *Passages in the Life of a Radical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

——, *The Weaver Boy; or, Miscellaneous Poetry* (Manchester: Observer Office, 1819).

Barbauld, Anna Laetitia, *Eighteen Hundred and Eleven* (London: J. Johnson & Co, 1812).*Poems* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792).

——, *Poems* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1792).

——, *The Works, with a Memoir*, vol. 1, ed. by Lucy Aikin (2 vols) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

Booth, Abraham, *Commerce in the Human Species, and the Enslaving of Innocent Persons, inimical to the laws of Moses and the Gospel of Christ* (London: L. Wayland, 1792).

Bowyer, Robert (ed.), *Poems on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* (London: T. Bensley, 1809).

Brazendale, David, and Towsey, Mark (ed.), *The First Minute Book of the Liverpool Athenaeum, 1797-1809* (Liverpool: Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 2020).

Browne, Thomas, *Poems on Several Occasions* (Liverpool: Merritt and Wright, and Hull: Thomas Browne, 1800).

Bugg, John (ed.), *The Joseph Johnson Letterbook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Byron, George Gordon Byron, Baron*, English Bards, and Scotch Reviewers; a Satire*, 3rd edn (London: James Cawthorn, 1810).

Carlyle, Thomas, 'Corn-Law Rhymes', *Edinburgh Review*, July 1832, pp. 338-361.

Cobbett, W. M., 'An Address to the "WEAVER-BOYS" of LANCASHIRE', *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, 25 Jan 1817, pp. 98-128.

Cobbett, W. M., *Autobiography*, ed. by William Reitzel (London: Faber and Faber, 1933).

Collier, John (as "Tim Bobbin"), *The Miscellaneous Works, containing his view of the Lancashire Dialect* (Salford: Cowdroy and Slack, 1811).

Crome, John, *The poetical works of the late Joseph Mather* (2 vols.) (Sheffield: J. Crome, 1811).

Crossley, James [anon.], 'Manchester Poetry', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 1 April 1821, pp. 64-75.

De Selincourt, Ernest (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*: *The Later Years* vol.1, (4 vols) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939).

Dyer, John, *Poems* (London: J. Dodsley, 1770).

Eaton, Daniel Isaac (ed.), *Politics for the People; Or, a Salmagundy for Swine*, 4th edn (London: printed for D. I. Eaton, 1793).

Elliott, Ebenezer, *Corn Law Rhymes: the Ranter* (Sheffield: Platt and Todd, 1830).

——, *Corn Law Rhymes*, 3rd edn (London: B. Steill, 1831).

——, *The Poetical Works*, ed. By Edwin Elliott, 2 vols (London: Henry S, King and Co., 1876).

Ellis, Samuel, *Life, Times, and Character of James Montgomery* (London: Jackson, Walford and Hodder, and Sheffield: Leader and Sons, 1864).

"Elpou", 'To Mr. S. Bamford, a Patriot and Prisoner in Lincoln Gaol', *Black Dwarf*, 24 May 1820, p. 723.

Evans, John, *Lancashire Authors and Orators* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1850).

Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society , *First Annual Report* (Sheffield: James Montgomery, 1824).

Gales, Joseph (ed.), *Sheffield Register, 1787-1794* (online resource), British Newspaper Archive. https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/titles/sheffield-register.

Gaskell, Elizabeth Cleghorn*, Mary Barton; A Tale of Manchester Life, (2 vols)* 3rd edn. (Chapman & Hall, 1849).

Gaskell, Peter, *The Manufacturing Population of England: its Moral, Social, and Physical Conditions, and the Changes which have arisen from the use of Steam Machinery, with an Examination of Infant Labour* (London: Baldwin and Craddock, 1833).

Harpley, T., *Dramas and Poems* (Liverpool: H. Hodgson, 1790).

Harris, Raymund, *Scriptural Researches on the Licitness of the Slave Trade* (London: J. Stockdale, 1788).

Higgins, G., *Letter, addressed the Gentlemen of the County of York, who think a change in the state of the Representation of the House of Commons Necessary* (Manchester, J. Molineux and Co., 1817).

Holland, John, *Sheffield Park: A Descriptive Poem* (Sheffield: Pawson and Brailsford, 1859).

Holland, John and Everett, James, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of James Montgomery*, 7 vols. (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1854-5).

Hoole, Barbara [Barbara Wreaks, afterwards Mrs. Hofland], *Characteristics of the Leading Inhabitants of Sheffield, at the close of the Eighteenth Century: a paper; read, before the members of the Sheffield Literary & Philosophical Society, 5th March, 1889* ed. by William Smith (Sheffield: Leader and Sons, 1889).

——, *La Fête de la Rose; or, The Dramatic Flowers,* 2nd edn (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1809).

——, *Poems* (Sheffield: J. Montgomery, 1805).

Hunter, Joseph, *Hallamshire; The History and Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York* (London: Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor and Jones, 1819).

Hutton, Mary, *Sheffield Manor, and other poems* (Sheffield: J. Blackwell, Iris Office, 1831).

Hutton, William, *An History of Birmingham to the End of the Year 1780* (Birmingham: Pearson and Rollason, 1781).

Jago, Richard, *Edge-Hill or, The Rural Prospect Delineated and Moralized* (London: J. Dodsley, 1767).

Jewsbury, Maria Jane, *Phantasmagoria; or, Sketches of Life and Literature*, 2 vols. (London: Hurst, Robinson and Co., 1825).

Johnson, Samuel, *London: A Poem, in Imitation of the Third Satire of Juvenal,* 5th edn (London: E. Cave, 1750).

Kay, James Philips, *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (London: James Ridgway, 1832).

Le Breton, Philip Hemery (ed.) *Memoirs, Miscellanies and Letters of the Late Lucy Aikin* (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts and Green, 1864).

Leader, Robert., *Reminiscences of Old Sheffield: Its Streets and Its People* (Sheffield: Leader and Sons, Independent Office, 1876).

Mather, Joseph, *The Songs: to which are Added a Memoir of Mather, and Miscellaneous Songs relating to Sheffield*, ed. By John Wilson (Sheffield: Pawson and Brailsford, 1862).

Literary and Philosophical Society of Manchester, *Memoirs,* vol. 3 (Warrington: W. Eyres, 1790).

——, -*Memoirs,* vol. 4, part 1 (Warrington: C. Wheeler, 1793).

John Milton, *A defence of the people of England in answer to Salmasius's defence of the King* (London: S. I, 1695).

Montgomery, James, *Lectures on Poetry and General Literature, delivered to the royal institution in 1830 and 1831* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longman, 1833).

——, as "J. M.", *Prison Amusements, and Other Trifles: Principally written during Nine Months of Confinement in the Castle of York, by Paul Positive* (London: Joseph Johnson, 1797).

——, *Poetical Works, complete in one volume* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1850).

——, *The Poetical Works, collected by himself*, vol. 2 (London: Longman, Orme, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1850).

——, *A Poet's Portfolio; or minor poems: in three books* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green and Longman, 1835).

——, *The Wanderer of Switzerland, and other poems*, 7th edn (Edinburgh: James Ballantyne and Co., 1815).

Oastler, Richard, *Slavery in Yorkshire – Monstrous Barbarity !!!* (Bradford: J. Atkinson, 1835).

Oxford English Dictionary Online (Oxford University Press, 2023) https://www.oed.com/.

Ordnance Survey*, Lancashire Sheet CIII.NE*, six inches to one statute mile, National Library of Scotland, 1894, accessed 16 March, 2023, https://maps.nls.uk/view/101103740.

Pearson, Susanna (a.k.a Sarah Pearson), *Poems, dedicated, by permission, to The Right Honourable the Countess Fitzwilliam* (Sheffield: J. Gales, 1790).

Percival, Thomas, *An Appendix to the Inquiry concerning the Principles of Taxation* (Warrington: Eyres, for T. Caddell, 1790).

Peterloo, dir. by Mike Leigh (eOne Entertainment, 2018).

Pope, Alexander, *Windsor-Forest. To the Right Honourable George Lord Lansdown* (London: Bernard Lintott, 1713).

Redivivus, Junius, 'The Fourth Estate and Rowland Detrosier', *Examiner*, 9 Sept 1832, pp. 580-581.

Richardson, Charlotte, *Poems, on Different Occasions*, ed. by Catharine Cappe, 2nd edn (York: T. Wilson and R. Spence, 1806).

Ridings, Elijah, *The Poetical Works* (Manchester: J, Wortham, 1840).

Roberts, Mary (as "A Young Lady"), *The Royal Exile; or, Poetical Epistles of Mary, Queen of Scots, During her Captivity in England: with Other Original Poems*, 2 vols., ed. by Samuel Roberts (Sheffield: J. Montgomery and London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1822).

Rogerson, John Bolton, *A Voice from the Town & Other Poems* (Manchester: Bradshaw and Blacklock, 1842).

Rogerson, John Bolton (ed.), *The Festive Wreath: a Collection of Original Contributions read at a Literary Meeting, held in Manchester, March 24th, 1842, at The Sun Inn, Long Millgate* (Manchester: Bradshaw and Blacklock, 1842).

Roscoe, Mary Anne (ed.), *Poems for Youth, by a Family Circle* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, and Liverpool: Robinson and Sons, 1820).

Roscoe Jevons, Mary Anne, *The Sacred Offering; a Poetical Journal* (London: Hamilton, Adams and Co, and Liverpool: D. Marples and Co., 1833).

Roscoe, William, *A general view of the African slave-trade, demonstrating its injustice and impolicy: with hints towards a bill for its abolition* (London: R. Faulder, 1788).

——, *The Life of Lorenzo De'Medici, called The Magnificent*, 4 vols. (Basel: J. J. Tourneisen, 1799).

——, *The Life of Lorenzo De'Medici, called The Magnificent*, seventh edn (London: D. Bogue, 1846).

——, *Mount Pleasant: a descriptive poem. To which is added, an ode* (Warrington and London: W. Eyres for J. Johnson, and Liverpool: S. Crane, 1777).

——, *On the Origins and Vicissitudes of Literature, Science and Art and their Influence on the Present State of Society; A Discourse, delivered on the opening of the Liverpool Royal Institution, 25th November, 1817* (Liverpool: Harris and Co., 1817).

——, *The Poetical Works* (London: Ward and Lock, 1857).

——, *The Wrongs of Africa, a poem,* 2 parts (London: R. Faulder, 1787 and 1788).

Rushton, Edward, *Poems* (London: T. Ostell, 1806).

——, *The Collected Writings*, ed. by Paul Baines (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

Samuelson, James (ed.) 'The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Liverpool Literary and Philosophical Society', *The Popular Science Review*, 1: 1. (Jan 1862), 367-368.

Scott, Walter, *The Abbot*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh and London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Browne, 1820).

Sharp, Granville, *The Law of Retribution; or, a Serious Warning to Great Britain and her Colonies, founded on unquestionable Examples of God's Temporal Vengeance against Tyrants, Slave-holders, and Oppressors* (London: W. Richardson, 1776).

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, *The Major Works*, ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Smollett, Tobias, *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves* (London: J. Wallis, 1809).

Spence, Thomas, *Pig's Meat; or, Lessons for the Swinish Multitude* (London: printed for T. Spence at The Hive of Liberty, 1794).

Sutcliff, Ann, *Poems* (Sheffield: Iris Office, 1800).

Swain, Charles*, The Mind, and Other Poems* (London: Tilt and Bogue, 1841).

Taylor*, Benjamin, *A Lecture on the Atmosphere of London; as read before a public society, June 14th, MDCCLXXXVIII* (London: J. Johnson and C. Stalker, 1789).

Trotter, Thomas, M. D., *Sea Weeds: Poems, written on various occasions, chiefly during a naval life* (Newcastle: Edward Walker, 1829).

Turner, William, 'Mrs Barbauld', *Newcastle Magazine*, April 1825, pp. 183-186.

Walker, John, *A descriptive poem, on the town and trade of Liverpool* (Liverpool: H. Hodgson, 1789).

Walker, Robert (as "Tim Bobbin the Second"), *Plebeian Politics; or the Principles and Practices of certain Mole-eyed Manicus, vulgarly called Warrites* (Salford: Cowdroy and Slack, 1801).

Wallace, James, *A general and descriptive history of the ancient and present state, of the town of Liverpool* (Liverpool: R. Philips, 1795).

Ward, Thomas Asline*, Peeps into the Past*, ed. by Alexander B. Bell, annotated by Robert Eadon Leader (London: W. C. Leng and Co Ltd., 1909).

Watkins, John, *Life, Poetry, and Letters of Ebenezer Elliott, the Corn-Law Rhymer; with an Abstract of his Politics* (London: John Mortimer, 1850).

Watson, James, *The Spirit of the Doctor; comprising Many Interesting Poems* (Manchester: George Cave, 1820).

Watts, Alexander Alaric (ed.) *The Literary Souvenir* (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1830).

Wesley, John, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (London: R. Hawes, 1774).

Wheeler, James (ed.), *Manchester Poetry: with an Introductory Essay* (London: Charles Tilt, 1838).

Wooler, T. J. (ed.), *The Black Dwarf, 1817-1824* (online resource), British Periodicals II, ProQuest, https://www.proquest.com/publication/1588?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&parentSessionId=MXKu0kk7aHZwldgzfyVZWfzokJPGZ8ldWkCfAS9c78E%3D&accountid=15181.

Wordsworth, William, *Poems* (London: Edward Moxon, 1847).

——, *The Complete Poetical Works* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1932).

Manuscript and Archival Resources

Derbyshire Record Office, Pares Family of Leicester and Hopwell Hall – 1306-1901*,* D5336.

The John Rylands Library, Aikin's letters to James Montgomery, MAM.PLP 1.26.1-10.

——, The Bow in the Cloud, GB 133 English MSS 414-415.

Liverpool Record Office, Roscoe Letters and Papers, 920 ROS.

The National Archives of the UK, Miscellaneous Papers on Sedition Cases – Printed Pamphlets or Tracts, TS 24.

Private Collection, Pear, Edmund, Untitled commonplace book. Unpublished manuscript c. 1832-1834.

Sheffield City Archives, Correspondence of James Montgomery 1808-1809, SLPS/36.

——, Jackson Collection – Miscellaneous Printed Items, JC/29.

——, Sheffield Lit and Phil – Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 36.

——, Sheffield Lit and Phil – Montgomery's Correspondents, SLPS. 222.

Sheffield Local Studies Library, Iris 1794-1839 (Microform), 072.27.

University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives, Rathbone Family Papers, GB 141 RP.

Secondary Sources

Altick, Richard D., *The English Common Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

Andrews, Kerri, '"Hunger is not a postponable want": Hannah More's charity reconsidered'. In *Hannah More in Context*, ed. by Kerri Andrews and Sue Edney (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), pp. 84-99.

Ashworth, William J., *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production and Consumption in England 1640-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Barker, Hannah, ''Smoke Cities': northern industrial towns in late Georgian England', *Urban History*, 31: 2 (2004), 175-190.

Barker-Benfield, G. J., *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Sensibility in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992).

Barrell, John, and Guest, Harriet, 'The uses of contradiction: Pope's 'Epistle to Bathurst''. In *Poetry, Language & Politics*, ed. by John Barrell (New York: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 79-99

Beck, Rudolf, 'From Industrial Georgic to Industrial Sublime: English Poetry and the Early Stages of the Industrial Revolution', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 27: 1 (2004), 17-36.

Behrendt, Stephen C. 'Barbara Hofland and Romantic-Era Provincial Poetry by Women', *Women's Writing*, 20: 4 (2013), 421-440.

Berg, Maxine, *The Age of Manufactures: Industry, Innovation, and Work in Britain, 1700-1820* (Oxford: B. Blackwell in association with Fontana, 1985).

Bewell, Alan, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

Boulukos, George E. 'Olaudah Equiano and the Eighteenth-Century Debate on Africa', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 40: 2 (Winter 2007), 241-255.

Bradshaw, Penny, 'Gendering the enlightenment: conflicting images of progress in the poetry of Anna Lætitia Barbauld', *Women's Writing*, 5: 3 (Oct 1998), 353-371.

Braithwaite, Helen, *Romanticism, Publishing, and Dissent: Joseph Johnson and the Cause of Liberty* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003).

Brown, Christopher Leslie, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

Bourke, Richard, *Empire and Revolution: The Political Life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

Burke, Tim, '"Humanity is now the pop'lar cry": Laboring-Class Writers and the Liverpool Slave Trade, 1787-1789', *The Eighteenth Century*, 42: 3, "Eighteenth-Century Laboring-Class Poets" (Autumn 2001), 245-263.

Burton, Anthony, and Duffy, Diane, 'Elizabeth Gaskell and the Industrial Poor: How Did She Know About Them?', *The Gaskell Journal*, 34: 1 (2020), 1-24.

Chandler, James, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

Chandler, James and Gilmartin, Kevin ed. *Romantic Metropolis: The Urban Scene of British Culture, 1780-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Claeys, Gregory, 'Virtuous Commerce and Free Theology: Political Economy and the Dissenting Academies 1750-1800', *History of Political Thought*, 20: 1. 'Scholastics Enlightenments and Philosophic Radicals: Essays in honour of J. H. Burns' (Spring 1999), 141-172.

Clark, Peter, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800: The Origins of an Associational World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Clark, Timothy, *Ecocriticism on the Edge: The Anthropocene as a Threshold Concept* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

Clayre, Alisdair (ed.), *Nature and Industrialization*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

Clifford, Helen, 'Concepts of Invention, Identity, and Imitation in the London and Provincial Metal-Working Trades, 1750-1800', *Journal of Design History*, 12: 3. "Eighteenth-Century Markets and Manufactures in England and France" (1999), 241-255.

Colley, Linda, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Yale University Press, 2009).

Collins, Stephen, 'Crossley, James (1800–1883), writer and book collector.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. 23 Sept 2004. Accessed 26 April 2023. https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-6808.

——, *James Crossley: A Manchester Man of Letters* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 2012).

Cooper, Andrew, 'The Apian Way: Virgil's Bees and Keats' Honeyed Verse', *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, 33: 2 'Romans and Romantics' (Summer 1991), 160-181.

Cozens, Joseph, 'The Making of the Peterloo Martyrs, 1819 to the Present'. In *Secular Martyrdom in Britain and Ireland: From Peterloo to the Present,* ed. by Quentin Outram and Keith Laybourn, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018, pp. 31-58.

Dart, Gregory, *Metropolitan Art and Literature, 1810-1840: Cockney Adventures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

Davies, Jeremy, 'Introduction: Romantic Studies and the "Shorter Industrial Revolution"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 61.2 (Summer 2022), pp. 187-202.

——, 'Romantic "Ghost Acres" and Environmental Modernity', *Studies in Romanticism*, 61.2 (Summer 2022), pp. 203-227.

Dellarosa, Franca, *Talking Revolution: Edward Rushton's Rebellious Poetics, 1782-1814* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014).

Drescher, Seymour, 'The Shocking Birth of British Abolitionism*', Slavery & Abolition*, 33: 4, (December 2012), 571-593.

Easley, Alexis, 'Ebenezer Elliott and the Reconstruction of Working-Class Masculinity', *Victorian Poetry*, 39: 2. (Summer 2001), 303-318.

Elliott, Paul, 'The Origins of the "Creative Class": Provincial Urban Society, Scientific Culture and Socio-Political Marginality in Britain in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Social History*, 28: 3 (Oct 2003), 361-387.

Ellis, Markman, *The Politics of Sensibility: Race, Gender and Commerce in the Sentimental Novel* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1996).

Fairclough, Mary, *The Romantic Crowd: Sympathy, Controversy and Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Fairer, David, *English Poetry of the Eighteenth Century, 1700-1789* (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 2003).

Finch, Jason, 'Modern Urban Theory and the Study of Literature'. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Literature and the City*, ed. by Jeremy Tambling (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 27-44.

Fine, David, *Sheffield: History & Guide* (Stroud: Tempus, 2003).

Fraser, Derek*, Municipal Reform and the Industrial City* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982).

Frey, Anne, 'Barbara Hofland's Profession: Questioning the Calling', *Wordsworth Circle,* 36: 3 (Summer, 2005), 110-112.

Fryckstedt, Monica Correa, 'The Hidden Rill: The Life and Career of Maria Jane Jewsbury, I', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, University of Manchester*, 66: 2 (1984) 177-203.

Fryer, Peter, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 2010).

Fulford, Tim, 'Prophecy and Imagination in the Romantic City', *Wordsworth Circle,* 41: 1 (Winter 2010) 52-60.

Gardner, John, *Poetry and Popular Protest: Peterloo, Cato Street and the Queen Caroline Controversy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

——, 'The Suppression of Samuel Bamford's Peterloo Poems', *Romanticism*, 13: 2 (January 2008), pp. 145-155.

Gerrard, Christine and Fairer, David (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, 3rd edn (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

Gilmartin, Kevin, 'Introduction: Locating Romantic-Period Sociability'. In *Sociable Places: Locating Culture in Romantic-Period Britain*, ed. by Kevin Gilmartin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), pp. 1-30.

Gilmour, Ian, *Riot, Risings and Revolution: Governance and Violence in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Pimlico, 1993).

Glen, Robert, 'Anderson, Edward (1763-1843).' https://www.myprimitivemethodists.org.uk/content/people-2/lay-people/surnames-beginning-with-a/edward_anderson_1763-1843 [Accessed 31 May 2023].

Graham, James Anson, and Phythian, Brian Arthur, *The Manchester Grammar School, 1515-1965* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1965).

Griffin, Emma, *A Short History of the Industrial Revolution* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Grosby, Alan G., 'Chetham, Humphrey (bap. 1580, d. 1653), financier and philanthropist.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 3 Jan 2008. Accessed 1 Aug 2023. https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5243?rskey=UEche7&result=1.

Guest, Harriet, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

Hay, Daisy, *Dinner with Joseph Johnson; Books & Friendship in a Revolutionary Age* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2022).

Hewitt, Martin and Poole, Robert (ed.) *The Diaries of Samuel Bamford* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2000).

Higgins, David, *Romantic Englishness: Local, National, and Global Selves, 1780–1850.* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

Hildebrand, Jayne, 'The Ranter and the Lyric: Reform and Genre Heterogeneity in Ebenezer Elliott's "Corn Law Rhymes"', V*ictorian Review*, 39: 1. (Spring 2013), 101-124.

Hirschfelder, Gunther, 'The Myth of 'Misery Alcoholism' in Early Industrial England: The Example of Manchester'. In *Drink in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. by Susanne Schmid and Barbara Schmidt-Haberkamp (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2014) pp. 91-101.

Hobday, Charles, 'Two Sansculotte Poets: John Freeth and Joseph Mather'. In *Writing and Radicalism*, ed. by John Lucas (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 61-83.

Hunter, Bill*, Forgotten Hero: The Life and Times of Edward Rushton* (Liverpool: Living History Library, 2002).

Inglis, Lucy, *Georgian London: Into the Streets*. (London: Penguin, 2014).

Inikori, Joseph E., *Africans and the Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Inkster, Ian, ''Under the eye of the public': Arthur Aikin (1773-1854), the Dissenting mind and the character of English industrialization'. In *Religious dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld circle, 1740-1860*, ed. by Felicity James and Ian Inkster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 126-155.

James, Felicity, 'Introduction'. In *Religious dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld circle, 1740-1860*, ed. by Felicity James and Ian Inkster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) pp. 1-27.

Janowitz, Anne, 'Amiable and radical sociability: Anna Barbauld's 'free familiar conversation''. In *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, ed. by Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 62-81.

——, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Kaul, Suvir, *Poems of Nation, Anthems of Empire: English Verse in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000).

Keegan, Bridget, 'Cobbling Verse: Shoemaker Poets of the Long Eighteenth Century', *The Eighteenth Century*, 42: 3. (Fall 2001), 195-217.

Kitson, Peter J. and Lee, Debbie (ed.) *Slavery, Abolition and Emancipation: Writings in the British Romantic Period*, vol. 2: 'The Abolition Debate', 9 vols. (Oxford: Taylor and Francis, 1999).

Klancher, Jon P., *Transfiguring the Arts and Sciences: Knowledge and Cultural Institutions in the Romantic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Krawczyk, Scott, 'Mediating Abolition: The Collaborative Consciousness of Liverpool's William Roscoe and James Currie', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34: 2 (2001), 209-226.

Langford, Paul, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Lehan, Richard, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (London: University of California Press, 1998).

McCarthy, William, 'How Dissent made Anna Letitia Barbauld, and what she made of Dissent'. In *Religious dissent and the Aikin-Barbauld circle, 1740-1860*, ed. by Felicity James and Ian Inkster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 52-69.

McNaughton, Donald A., 'Roscoe, William (1753-1830), historian and patron of the arts.' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep 2004. Accessed 15 July 2023. https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-24084.

Major, Emma, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation 1712-1812* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Makdisi, Saree, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: University Press, 1998).

Malm, Andreas, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016).

Mason, Nicholas, '"The Sovereign People are in a Beastly State": The Beer Act of 1830 and Victorian Discourse on Working-Class Drunkenness', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 29: 1 (March 2001), 109-127.

Mathison, Hamish and Smith, Adam James (ed.), *Poetry, Conspiracy and Radicalism in Sheffield* (Sheffield: Spirit Duplicator, 2016).

Mee, Jon, '"All that the most romantic imagination could have previously conceived": Writing an Industrial Revolution, 1795 to 1835', *Studies in Romanticism*, 61: 2 (Summer 2022), 229-254.

——, ''Mutual Intercourse' and 'Licentious Discussion' in *The Microcosm of London*', *The London Journal*, 37: 3 (2012), 196-214.

——, ''Some mode less revolting to their delicacy': Women's Institutional Space in the Transpennine Enlightenment, 1781-1822', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 42: 4 (2019), 541-556.

Mee, Jon, and Wilkes, Jennifer, 'Transpennine Enlightenment: The Literary and Philosophical Societies and Knowledge Networks in the North, 1781-1830', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 38: 4 (Dec 2015), 599-612.

Mercer, Malcolm, *Schooling the Poorer Child: Elementary Education in Sheffield 1560– 1902* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

Mokyr, Joel, *The Enlightened Economy: An Economic History of Britain 1700-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).

Moody, Jessica, *The Persistence of Memory: Remembering Slavery in Liverpool, 'Slaving Capital of the World'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

Morgan, Alison, *Ballads and Songs of Peterloo* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018).

Morris, Keith and Hearne, Ray, *Ebenezer Elliott: Corn Law Rhymer and Poet of the Poor* (Rotherham: Rotherwood, 2002).

Morris, R. J., 'Civil Society and the Nature of Urbanism: Britain, 1750-1850', *Urban History*, 25: 3 (Dec 1998), 289-301.

Muir, Ramsay, *A History of Liverpool* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1907).

Navickas, Katrina, *Loyalism and Radicalism in Lancashire, 1798-1815* (Oxford: University Press, 2009).

——, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place 1789-1848*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

Nersessian, Anahid, *The Calamity Form: on Poetry and Social Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

Odom, William, *Two Sheffield Poets: James Montgomery and Ebenezer Elliott* (Sheffield: W. C. Leng, 1929).

Pinarbasi, Sami, 'Manchester Antislavery, 1792-1807', *Slavery & Abolition*, 41: 2 (2020), 349-376.

Plant, Helen, *Unitarianism, Philanthropy, and Feminism in York, 1782-1821: the career of Catharine Cappe* (York: Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, 2003).

Poole, Robert*, Peterloo: The English Uprising* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Porter, Roy, 'Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England'. In *The Eighteenth-Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820*, ed. by Peter Borsay (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 243-267.

Porter, William Smith, *Sheffield Literary and Philosophical Society; A Centenary Retrospect, 1822-1922* (Sheffield: J.W. Northend, 1922).

Price, David, *Sheffield Troublemakers: Rebels and Radicals in Sheffield History* (Andover: Phillimore and Co., 2008).

Reno, Seth T., *Early Anthropocene Literature in Britain, 1750-1884* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020).

Renwick, Roger de V., *English Folk Poetry: Structure and Meaning* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1980).

Richardson, Alan, 'Darkness Visible: Race and Representation in Bristol Abolitionist Poetry, 1770-1810', *Wordsworth Circle*, 27: 2 (Spring 1996), 67-72.

Roberts, Daniel Sanjiv, *Revisionary Gleam: De Quincey, Coleridge, and the High Romantic Argument* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

Rogers, Nicholas, *Crowds, Culture, and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998).

Rowe, Christopher, 'William Huskisson and the Rhetoric of Free Trade', *Economic Affairs*, 38: 2. (June 2018), 207-223.

Rowe, Robert, *Adam Silver 1765-1795* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

'Royal Sheffield Infirmary: 150th Anniversary' *BMJ*, 2: 4526 (1947), 543-544.

Russell, Gillian and Tuite, Clara, 'Introducing Romantic Sociability'. In *Romantic Sociability: Social Networks and Literary Culture in Britain, 1770-1840*, ed. by Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-23.

Sachs, Jonathan, *The Poetics of Decline in British Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Schivelbusch, Wolfgang*, The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

Seed, John, 'Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Culture in Manchester, 1830-50', *Social History*, 7: 1 (Jan 1982), 1-25.

Smith, Paul, 'Joseph Mather: Filesmith and Ballad-monger', *Folklore,* 116: 3, "Essays in Lore and Language Presented to John Widdowson on the Occasion of his Retirement", (2005), 271-323.

Stanley, Laura, 'The Broomhall Riots of 1791.' https://www.ourbroomhall.org.uk/content/explore/topics/politics/the-broom-hall-riots. Accessed 30 July 2023.

Stelzig, Eugene, 'Wordsworth's Invigorating Hell: London in Book 7 of The Prelude (1805)'. In *Romanticism and the City*, ed. by Larry H. Peer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 181-195.

Stobart, Jon, 'Culture versus commerce: societies and spaces for elites in eighteenth-century Liverpool', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 28: 4 (2002), 471-485.

Sullivan, Brad, 'Cultivating a "Dissenting Frame of Mind": Radical Education, the Rhetoric of Inquiry, and Anna Barbauld's Poetry'. *Romanticism on the Net*, 45: 1 (2007); paras 1-48. https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/ron/2007-n45-ron1728/015817ar/ [Accessed 5 Jan 2020].

Sweet, Rosemary, *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Longman: Essex, 1999).

Tambling, Jeremy, 'Prologue: City-Theory and Writing, in Paris and Chicago: Space, Gender, Ethnicity'. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Literature and the City*, ed. by Jeremy Tambling, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 1-25.

Tan, Joan Qionglin and Jung, Sandro, 'Sarah Pearson (1767-1833): A Laboring-Class Sheffield Poet's Career and Work', *ANQ*, 32: 1. (2019), 18-27.

Tedeschi, Stephen, *Urbanization and English Romantic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

Thompson, E. P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Penguin, 1980).

Towsey, Mark, ''All Partners may be Enlightened and Improved by Reading Them': The Distribution of Enlightenment Books in Scottish Subscription Library Catalogues, 1750–c.1820', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies*, 28: 1 (2008), 20-43.

Twells, Alison, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850: The 'Heathen' at Home and Overseas* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Tylecote, Mabel, *The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire before 1851* (London: University of Manchester Press, 1957).

Uglow, Jenny, *The Lunar Men: The Friends who made the future, 1730-1810* (London: Faber and Faber, 2002).

Vigier, Francois, *Change and Apathy: Liverpool and Manchester during the Industrial Revolution* (London: M.I.T. Press, 1970).

Wahrman, Dror, 'On Queen Bees and Being Queens: A Late-Eighteenth-Century "Cultural Revolution"?'. In *The Age of Cultural Revolutions, Britain and France, 1750-1820*, ed. by Colin Jones and Dror Wahrman (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002) pp. 251-280.

Walvin, James, *The Zong: A Massacre, the Law and the End of Slavery* (London: Yale University Press, 2011).

Watts, Ruth, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998).

——, 'Some radical educational networks of the late eighteenth century and their influence', *Journal of the History of Education Society*, 27: 1 (1998), 1-14.

Whale, Jon, 'The Making of a City of Culture: William Roscoe's Liverpool', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 29: 2 (Spring 2005), 91-107.

Wigley, J. 'James Montgomery and the "Sheffield Iris", 1792-1825: a study in the weakness of provincial radicalism', *Transactions of the Hunter Archaeological Society*, 10: 4, 1971-1977 (1977), 173-181.

Williams, Eric, *Capitalism & Slavery* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1961).

Wilson, Arline, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

Wood, Marcus, 'Radical Publishing'. In *The Book in Britain*, *vol. 5: 1695-1830*, ed. by Michael F. Suarez and Michael L. Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 834-848.

Wright, Jane, 'Browning's Honeycomb', *Essays in Criticism*, 63: 3 (2013) 275-297.

PhD Theses

Daly, Michael James, 'From Sheffield to Raleigh: a Radical Publishing Network in the Age of Revolution', (doctoral thesis, Sheffield Hallam University, 2011).