

Herbal Medicine in Nineteenth Century England: the
Career of John Skelton

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Abstract

This thesis offers an account of the career of John Skelton (1805-1880) who has been discussed by historians as a Chartist and as a Thomsonian herbal practitioner.

Skelton was a member of the London Working Men's Association and a signatory of the *People's Charter*. This thesis demonstrates that he was an active Socialist in the early 1840s, and a labour leader and consistent proponent of "moral force" Chartism throughout the 1840s. He retained a commitment to free thought throughout his life as "there is no mental vigour without exchange of thought." This account shows that he was a secularist in the 1840s, but later became a Christian without losing his commitment to democratic values.

In 1848, Skelton became a herbalist and analysis of his recommendations for the treatment of respiratory disease in the *Family Medical Adviser* (1852) shows that his practice relied on Thomsonian principles, but differed in that he gave prominence to his conception of inflammation. Analysis of the medicinal plants recommended throughout his career found that he drew substantially on earlier British texts, and that he was a consistent advocate of the use of indigenous herbs alongside North American and tropical herbs. He retained a firm belief in the power of nature, which was expressed in *A Plea for the Botanic Practice of Medicine* (1853). This may have reflected his rural roots, but is also discussed here in the light of the influence of Socialism on his later thinking.

This thesis demonstrates his personal commitment to education in that he qualified as a medical practitioner in 1863, and published a textbook *Science and Practice of Herbal Medicine* (1870) for use by students of herbal medicine. Equally, he was a firm proponent of self-reliance in healthcare and of the use of herbal medicine in working-class communities.

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Abbreviations

<i>Botanic Record</i>	<i>Skelton's Botanic Record and Family Herbal</i>
<i>Coffin's Journal</i>	<i>Coffin's Botanical Journal and Medical Reformer</i>
CSU	Complete Suffrage Union
<i>Eclectic Journal</i>	<i>The Eclectic Journal and Medical Free Press</i>
LWMA	London Working Men's Association
NAUT	National Association of United Trades
NCA	National Charter Association
<i>Northern Star</i>	<i>Northern Star, and National Trades' Journal</i>

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Helen Lowe (1944-2011),

Radical *extraordinaire*

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Author's declaration

No part of this material has been presented before, either for examination for another award or in a published work.

Herbal medicines have been used throughout history by healthcare practitioners and in domestic self-care, but herbalists became an identifiable group of practitioners in England in the mid-nineteenth century with the introduction from America of Thomsonian herbal practice. This combined both domestic and professional practice, under the slogan “Every Man His own Doctor.”¹ This attracted the opprobrium of the “regular” doctors whose campaign for statutory regulation led to the Medical Act 1858.² Herbalists established the National Medical Reform League in 1853 and then the National Institute of Medical Herbalists in 1864, which remains in existence today as a voluntary professional association.³ There is little historiography of the practice of herbal medicine in England and *Green Pharmacy*, published in 1981, remains the main reference source.⁴ In contrast, there has been considerable academic investigation of the Thomsonian, Eclectic and Physiomedical schools of practice in nineteenth-century America.⁵

Thomsonian practice was introduced into England by Albert Coffin (1798-1866) who settled here in 1839. It has been argued that Thomsonian methods remain in use within current practice.⁶ That essay suggested that John Skelton (1805-1880), who began

¹ “Medical Reform; or, Every Man His own Doctor,” Ursula Miley and John Pickstone, “Medical Botany around 1850,” in *Studies in the History of Alternative Medicine*, ed. Roger Cooter (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), 143.

² Michael J. Roberts, “The Politics of Professionalization: MPs, Medical Men, and the 1858 Medical Act,” *Medical History* 53 (2009): 41-42.

³ John Skelton, *Dr. Skelton's Botanic Record and Family Herbal* (hereafter *Botanic Record*), no. 21 (January 1854): 323; National Institute of Medical Herbalists, <http://www.nimh.org.uk> [accessed July 5, 2013].

⁴ Barbara Griggs, *Green Pharmacy: A History of Herbal Medicine* (London: Jill Norman & Hobhouse, 1981); Simon Y. Mills, *Out of the Earth: The Essential Book of Herbal Medicine* (Arkana, 1991), 639; Euan MacLennan and Barbara A. Pendry, “The Evolution of Herbal Medicine as an Unorthodox Branch of British Medicine: The Role of English Legislation from Antiquity to 1914,” *Journal of Herbal Medicine* 1, no. 1 (2011).

⁵ Alex Berman and Michael A. Flannery, *America's Botanico-Medical Movements : Vox Populi* (New York: Pharmaceutical Products Press, 2001); Alex Berman, “The Thomsonian Movement and its Relation to American Pharmacy and Medicine,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 25 (1951); “Wooster Beach and the Early Eclectics,” *Medical Bulletin (Ann Arbor, Mich.)* 24, no. 7 (1958); John S. Haller, *The People's Doctors: Samuel Thomson and the American Botanical Movement, 1790-1860* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000); *Medical Protestants: The Eclectics in American Medicine, 1825-1939* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994).

⁶ Alison Denham, “Origins and Proponents of the Revival of Herbal Medicine in 19th Century Britain,” in *The Western Herbal Tradition: 2000 Years of Medicinal Plant Knowledge*, Graeme Toby, Alison Denham, and Margaret Whitelegg (Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 2011), 29-35; John V. Pickstone, “Coffin, Albert Isaiah (1790/91–1866),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, (Oxford: OUP, 2012), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/39449> [accessed July 8, 2013].

herbal practice in 1848 initially as the assistant of Coffin, was a central figure in the development of the practice of herbal medicine in England. Skelton was an active Chartist throughout the 1840s, and this dissertation will provide a fuller account of his biography and his beliefs alongside a detailed analysis of the recommendations for herbal treatment made in his publications. Both Skelton and Coffin can be described as Thomsonians, but analysis of Skelton's recommendations will allow an exploration of what this meant in practice. By examining the publications of Skelton and his milieu, this dissertation will contribute to the historiography of the professional practice of herbal medicine. In summary, three questions will be considered:

1. To what extent can one make connections between his political beliefs and his herbal practice?
2. What can the writings of Skelton tell us about the philosophy and practice of herbal medicine in the mid-nineteenth century?
3. What do the sources used by Skelton reveal about possible influences on his ideas and writing?

This dissertation combines discussion of his clinical recommendations for treatment with a consideration of the context within which he was writing. The intention is to enable herbal practitioners to understand more about the sources of knowledge within the profession, and to enable historians to understand more about the place of herbal medicine in the healthcare milieu of the mid-nineteenth century. An attempt solely to recreate his clinical thinking would have been a partial picture because, as I will argue, his recommendations reflected his beliefs which were firmly based on an ethos of personal and political self-reliance. Although Skelton himself qualified as a registered medical practitioner in 1863, he remained loyal to herbalists who practiced "amongst the working classes of the manufacturing districts."⁷

American practice: Thomsonianism and Eclecticism

Skelton first met Coffin in 1840 at a London lecture, but it was not until 1848 that he began working as Coffin's assistant. He practiced independently from 1850, describing himself as a Thomsonian, yet by the late 1850s, described himself as an Eclectic

⁷ Skelton, *Family Medical Adviser*, 11th ed. (Plymouth, 1978), vi. The terms herbalism and herbalist will be used henceforth as general terms which make no distinction between the ethos of practice of different practitioners.

practitioner. In order to understand the milieu from which Skelton emerged, it is necessary to explain the role of Coffin, and the terms Thomsonian and Eclectic. Both terms appeared first in American herbalism and are explored here as they are used later in the dissertation with reference to British herbalism.

Thomsonianism was established by Samuel Thomson (1769-1843) who began practising as a herbalist in 1805 in New Hampshire. His system of practice was designed for domestic use and was first explained in a pamphlet⁸ which he expanded into the *New Guide to Health*, first published in 1822.⁹ His system sought to “raise the inward heat,” “overpower the cold” and promote free perspiration.¹⁰ He advocated the domestic use of steam baths alongside a small range of herbs, in particular *Capsicum annuum* Cayenne, and these methods will be explained further in chapter 3.¹¹ Amongst the agents appointed by Thomson to promote his system, was Coffin who was listed in Mississippi in 1834.¹² Coffin travelled down the Mississippi with one of Thomson’s chief agents, Jarvis Pike, so was actively involved in the promulgation of Thomsonianism.¹³ Coffin settled in Britain in 1839, first lecturing and practicing in London, then in Manchester before returning to London.¹⁴ Although Coffin did not admit that he had been a Thomsonian agent, there were remarkable similarities between the two systems.¹⁵ In 1845, Coffin published the *Botanic Guide to Health*,¹⁶ where, like Thomson, he advocated only a small selection of herbs

⁸ For a thorough account which sets Thomson in his medical context, see William G. Rothstein, *American Physicians in the Nineteenth Century: From Sects to Science* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 125-50.

⁹ Samuel Thomson, *A narrative of the life and medical discoveries of Samuel Thomson: ...containing an account of his system of practice, and the manner of curing disease with vegetable medicine, upon a plan entirely new:* (Boston: Printed for the author by E.G. House, 1822). There were numerous editions of the *New Guide to Health* (authorised and unauthorised) and editions can be compared using the U.S. Library of Medicine Digital Collections, <http://collections.nlm.nih.gov/muradora/> [accessed June 4, 2013]. Editions of the same year can differ. See J.Worth Estes, "Samuel Thomson Rewrites Hippocrates" (paper presented at the Medicine and Healing: Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife, 14-15 July 1990), 113; Haller, *The People's Doctors*, 21, 298n60; Denham, "Origins and Proponents," 29.

¹⁰ "Appendix 1: Patents granted to Thomson in 1813 and 1823," Berman and Flannery, *America's Botanico-Medical Movements*, 183-87.

¹¹ Haller, *The People's Doctors*, 15-24, 255-59.

¹² "Agents: Mississippi, Dr A.I. Coffin, Natchez," *Thomsonian Recorder*, January 4, 1834, 416.

¹³ Haller *The People's Doctors*, 75-75, 239-40; Berman, "Thomsonian Movement," 417.

¹⁴ *Coffin's Botanical Journal and Medical Reformer* 1, no. 9 (September 1847): 69.

¹⁵ Griggs, *Green Pharmacy*, 202.

¹⁶ Albert I. Coffin, *A Botanic Guide to Health, and the Natural Pathology of Disease* (Leeds: Samuel Moxon, 1845).

arguing that “all diseases originate in one common cause, namely, the absence of that equilibrium of heat which should circulate through the entire [of the] system.”¹⁷ Usage of steam baths and of American herbs relied on the traditional knowledge of the Native Americans, a debt which Thomson failed to admit, whereas Coffin acknowledged this debt, stating that “from the Indians I learned many of the heaven- bequeathed virtues peculiar to plants” and ascribing his recovery from a serious respiratory disease to his treatment by a woman of the Seneca tribe.¹⁸

At the same time as Thomsonianism was spreading across America, there was another movement to reform medicine, now referred to as Eclecticism. This was not centred on domestic usage of herbs, but sought to change the practice of medical practitioners.¹⁹ The respective founders had opposing views on education, and this formed a fundamental difference between the two systems. Thomson was a self-educated man who held firmly to the principle that people should learn the principles of self-care for themselves.²⁰ In contrast, the founder of Eclecticism, Wooster Beach (1794-1868), was strongly committed to education and established the Reformed Medical Academy of New York in 1829.²¹ The Eclectics continued to be successful in maintaining medical schools including the Eclectic Medical Institute, founded in 1845 in Cincinnati, Ohio.²² These schools had less academic or social status than the major conventional medical schools, and William Rothstein concluded that Eclectics were generally lower in social status than conventional doctors, and more likely to practice in small towns mainly in the Midwest.²³ Apart from the commitment to medical education, the definition of an Eclectic practitioner remains problematic. Alex Berman and John Haller suggested that the main characteristics of Eclecticism were the substitution of herbs for minerals, the avoidance of

¹⁷ Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, 76.

¹⁸ Virgil Vogel, *American Indian Medicine*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), 267-400; Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, iv, 26. For further discussion of the herbs used by Thomson and Coffin, see chapter 4.

¹⁹ The distinctions between qualified and unqualified practitioners, in particular in rural areas of North America, were not clearcut. In the mid-nineteenth century, medical education consisted of apprenticeship alongside short courses of attendance. Berman and Flannery, *America's Botanico-Medical Movements*, 27-30; Berman, “Thomsonian movement,” 407-408.

²⁰ Berman, “Thomsonian Movement,” 424, 426; Rothstein, *American Physicians*, 143, 151.

²¹ Wooster Beach, *The American Practice Condensed. Or the Family Physician*, 10th ed. (New York: James M'Alister, 1850), xii; Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 75.

²² Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 75-84.

²³ Rothstein, *American Physicians*, 217-39.

bloodletting and opposition to surgery unless absolutely necessary.²⁴ This was in contrast to the widespread use of bloodletting and mercurial salivation by conventional medical practitioners.²⁵ Haller argued that Eclecticism was fundamentally associated with free thought,²⁶ and, in 1852, the influential Eclectic author, John King, argued that the American medical profession was “trammelled by the influence of authority” and defined Eclectic practitioners by their opposition to sectarianism of any form, by “adherence to the dictates of Clinical experience” and by the usage of indigenous American plants.²⁷ Later textbooks gave prominence to the observations of individual practitioners, and perhaps their practice continued to hark back to the days of medical apprenticeship when there was less conformity in education and practice.²⁸

Eclectic practitioners did live up to their espoused aim of exploring the full potential of the broad range of medicinal plants used in practice. Beach trained in medicine in New York but initially worked with a German practitioner, Jacob Tidd, who had inherited the practice of Dr George Viesselius of New Jersey who was amongst the many American medical practitioners who advocated the use of indigenous medicinal plants.²⁹ There had been botanical expeditions and publications on the American flora but more pertinent here were the personal experiences of settlers who had been treated by Native Americans or learned the use of American herbs directly from Native Americans.³⁰

Both Thomsonians and Eclectics were opposed to conventional medical practice and termed themselves Medical Reformers. In 1833, in his introduction to *The American Practice of Medicine*, Beach referred to Medical Reform not Eclecticism.³¹ Use of this term had disadvantages as it could refer to any proposed change in medicine, and did not identify any one group of herbal or medical practitioners. Beach was keen to distinguish

²⁴ Berman and Flannery, *America's Botanico-Medical Movements*, 10; Haller *Medical Protestants*, 66-68, surgery 73. This distinguished Eclectics from other medical practitioners, but not from herbalists.

²⁵ Rothstein, *American Physicians*, 45-52.

²⁶ Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 85-93.

²⁷ John King, *The American Eclectic Dispensatory*, 3rd ed. (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys, 1856), iii-v.

²⁸ Finley Ellingwood, *American Materia Medica, Therapeutics and Pharmacognosy* (Sandy, OR: Eclectic Medical Publications, 1983). Reprint, first published 1919.

²⁹ Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 68-69; Berman, “Wooster Beach,” 277.

³⁰ Vogel, *American Indian Medicine*, 36-147.

³¹ Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 69-70; Wooster Beach, *American Practice of Medicine*, vol. 1 (New York: Betts and Anstice, 1833), 5-10.

Eclecticism from Thomsonianism as he was highly critical of Thomsonianism. However, Berman suggested there was overlap between Thomsonians and Eclectics in the 1820s and 1830s, and therefore described as Neo-Thomsonians, the many practitioners who retained a Thomsonian ethos of practice but used many more herbs.³² The distinctions may have become even less clear after the move towards establishing Thomsonian medical education. This led to a fundamental split between Thomson and his supporters, when the Independent Thomsonian Botanic Society was established in 1838.³³ Indeed, there were continuing overlaps in terminology such as the journal entitled *The Eclectic, and Medical Botanist* published in Ohio in 1833 by a former agent of Thomson.³⁴ In another example of overlap, the Thomsonians who identified their practice as “Physio-medical” in 1852 met at the conference of the Reformed Medical Association.³⁵ This group of Neo-Thomsonians was successful in establishing medical education, and the term Physio-medical was revived and widely used by herbal practitioners in the late nineteenth and the twentieth century in Britain. However, earlier in the nineteenth century in Britain, herbalists referred to themselves as medical botanists or medical reformers.³⁶

For Thomsonians in America or Britain, medical reform included an allegiance to domestic self-care. Haller argued that the line between domestic and professional care was never determined clearly.³⁷ However, a recent discussion by Toby Appel of Thomsonian practice and medical regulation in Connecticut found no split between advocates of domestic self-reliance, and supporters of medical education for herbalists. He suggested that, while Thomsonian practice was unusually well-organised in Connecticut, it was likely that Thomsonian herbalists were generally greater advocates of education and professionalisation than has been suggested in accounts which have focussed on the anti-intellectual aspects of Thomsonianism.³⁸

³² Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, viii-x; Berman, “Neo-Thomsonianism,” 146-50.

³³ Haller, *People’s Doctors*, 163-169.

³⁴ Berman and Flannery, *America’s Botanico-Medical Movements*, 48.

³⁵ Berman, “Neo-Thomsonianism,” 135-36; John S. Haller, *Kindly Medicine: Physio-Medicalism in America, 1836-1911* (Kent, OH, Kent State University Press, 1997), 113-16. This movement is mentioned only in passing here as Skelton did not use the term at any time.

³⁶ In this dissertation, medical botanist is used to refer to herbalists in the 1840s and 1850s as that is the term by which they often described themselves. Herbalist is also used as a general term.

³⁷ Haller, *People’s Doctors*, 187-212.

³⁸ Toby A. Appel, “The Thomsonian Movement, the Regular Profession, and the State in Antebellum Connecticut: A Case Study of the Repeal of Early Medical Licensing Laws.” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 65, no. 2 (2010): doi:10.1093/jhmas/jrp035

Returning to the British context, we find that Coffin's treatment methods were similar to those of Thomson as they relied on steam baths and similar herbs including *Capsicum annuum* Cayenne, and indeed so were his business methods. In Britain, he gave lectures, and set up local groups of the Friendly Botanic Society of Great Britain. Membership was granted along with purchase of the *Botanic Guide to Health*.³⁹ Like Thomson, Coffin insisted that his agents only purchase supplies from his warehouse.⁴⁰ Although Coffin admitted that "the principles contained in this Work are in many respects similar to those introduced into the United States by Samuel Thomson," he failed to admit how very similar they were.⁴¹ He came in for criticism from the Liverpool branch of the British Friendly Medico-Botanic Society, who recognized that Coffin's system was not as unique as he claimed.⁴² They could have discovered this by reading imported American texts or consulting *Medical Reform*, published in 1847 by John Stevens who explicitly set out the Thomsonian system.⁴³ Coffin countered this argument thus: "had we followed the opinions . . . of the immortal Thomson . . . in applying the remedial agents, we should also have missed the way for his knowledge (though in our opinion greater than any man we ever know) was confined to the country in which he lived."⁴⁴

Although Coffin claimed to be the progenitor of American principles in England, his was not the only influence at work. George and John Stevens of Bristol, claimed that they had introduced the "American Botanic Practice of Medicine" in 1840.⁴⁵ Skelton provided the example of Robert Hall (1791-1853) of the Medical Botanic Stores, Bury, Lancashire. Hall was familiar with herbs as his father was a herbalist with a family connection with Mrs Pilling, an American who brought a stock of Thomsonian medicines to England in 1840. Hall ordered more herbs from Dr John Comfort, along with a copy of *Thomsonian*

³⁹ "Certificate," Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, n.p.

⁴⁰ Thomson engaged in frequent lawsuits with agents and with other suppliers of herbal medicine. Haller, *People's Doctors*, 119-23.

⁴¹ "Address," Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, n.p.

⁴² *Coffin's Journal*, no.19 (July 1848): 153. The name of the society had changed slightly between 1845 and 1848.

⁴³ John Stevens, *Medical Reform, or Physiology and Botanic Practice, for the People* (Birmingham: John Turner, 1847), 28-96, 304-13. All subsequent references are to this edition. Another edition with a different Preface was also published in 1847. John Stevens, *Medical Reform, or Physiology and Botanic Practice, for the People* (London: Whittaker & Co, 1847), iii-v.

⁴⁴ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 19 (July 1848): 155.

⁴⁵ P.S. Brown, "Herbalists and Medical Botanists in Mid-19th-Century Britain with Special Reference to Bristol," *Medical History* 26, no. 4 (1982): 408. It has not been definitely ascertained that this is the same John Stevens.

Practice, and became an agent for Coffin after he lectured in Bury in 1847.⁴⁶ There were also proprietary products derived from American practice such as “Florida” medicine marketed by Dr Peter McDouall (1814-1853), who was a prominent Chartist lecturer.⁴⁷

Furthermore, Beach himself visited Britain in 1849, and in 1855.⁴⁸ Writing in 1852, Skelton referred to the “reform or eclectic system of medicine introduced and established by Dr Beach” and stated that Beach had visited Britain within the previous year hoping to establish himself in London.⁴⁹ Skelton described visiting Beach, alluding to his “great natural goodness” but “we hold some peculiar views upon the subject which prevent an affinity of thought and action” and Skelton also differed on the use of “minerals, poisons, spirits or alcohol.”⁵⁰

This brief outline of Thomsonian and Eclectic practice has made some connection between American and British herbal practice, and provided the background to some of the themes which will be developed later in the dissertation. The following section returns to Britain, and considers the milieu in which Skelton practiced.

Skelton’s medical world

In 1852, Skelton published the *Family Medical Adviser*, so that readers might “become partakers in the free gifts of nature . . . to cure disease, either in ourselves or children, irrespective of legal restraint, inasmuch as the laws of nature ever take precedence over the laws of man.”⁵¹ Throughout his life he remained an advocate of domestic self-care using herbal medicines, and to understand his place in the medical world, it is necessary to consider the wider historical literature on early to mid-nineteenth century medicine. The

⁴⁶ *Botanic Record*, no. 16 (August 1853): 250. For John Comfort, see chapter 3.

⁴⁷ Owen Ashton and Pickering, Paul, “‘The People’s Advocate’: Peter Murray McDouall,” In *Friends of the People, Uneasy Radicals in the Age of the Chartists* (London: The Merlin Press, 2002), 13-14. Charles Whitlaw (1771-1850) travelled across America on botanical expeditions, and introduced the use of steam baths to London, but his main publication of 1829 did not discuss American plants as it was a translation into English of Linnaeus. Charles Whitlaw, *New Medical Discoveries, with a defence of the Linnaean doctrine . . .* (London: printed for the author, 1829).

⁴⁸ Wooster Beach, *The British and American Reformed Practice of Medicine*. (Birmingham: Thomas Simmons, 1859).

⁴⁹ *Botanic Record*, no 2 (June 1852): 25; Beach was given as the editor of a journal, *Medical Reformer and Botanic Physician*, London, 1852, which is in the catalogue of the British Library but has been lost.

⁵⁰ *Botanic Record*, no. 1, (May 1852): 5; no 2 (June 1852): 25.

⁵¹ John Skelton, *Family Medical Adviser*, 1st ed. (Leeds: Moxon and Walker, 1852), 12.

older literature was interested in the growth of the medical profession which increasingly marginalised herbal practitioners as an “irregular” activity. Roy Porter located Skelton in the “Victorian fringe,” the “medical equivalent of Chartism.”⁵² However, there is an extensive literature qualifying this by emphasising medical pluralism, the role of the individual and the continuation of the concept of self-care within a “medical marketplace.” This literature builds on the work of Dorothy and Roy Porter who gave a vivid account of the choices available to the prospective patient in Britain in the previous two centuries.⁵³ This was a market in which competition was rife between practitioners of every persuasion,⁵⁴ but the term “medical marketplace” can equally “convey an image of the pluralistic diversity of medical provision.”⁵⁵

The empirical studies of P.S. Brown⁵⁶ and Hilary Marland⁵⁷ have revealed the diversity amongst herbal practitioners and their place in the wider medical world. Despite this literature, most work on herbal medicine in the mid-nineteenth century, carried out in the 1980s and 1990s, has centred on the place of herbal medicine in a democratic cum working-class epistemology. Thomsonianism’s democratic ethos was of particular interest, and the work of three historians, Logie Barrow, John Pickstone and John Harrison, is discussed in the following section “Democratic Epistemology?”⁵⁸

Returning to the Porters, their account was of the decisions made by patients in a milieu where professional medical advice was secondary to self-care.⁵⁹ They argued that eighteenth-century doctors were perceived by their clients as individuals rather than as

⁵² Roy Porter, *Health for Sale* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), 233.

⁵³ Dorothy Porter and Roy Porter, *Patient's Progress: Doctors and Doctoring in Eighteenth-Century England* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989).

⁵⁴ Porter, *Health for Sale*, 21-59.

⁵⁵ Mark Jenner, Patrick Wallis, *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies, C.1450-C.1850* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 4.

⁵⁶ Brown, "Herbalists and Medical Botanists."

⁵⁷ Hilary Marland, *Medicine and Society in Wakefield and Huddersfield, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

⁵⁸ Logie Barrow, "Why were most Medical Heretics at their most Confident around the 1840s? (the Other Side of Mid-Victorian Medicine)," in *British Medicine in an Age of Reform*, ed. Roger French and Andrew Weir (London: Routledge, 1991), 165-184; John V. Pickstone, Medical Botany: Self-help Medicine in Victorian England. *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society* 119 (1976-1977), 85-95; John F.C. Harrison, "Early Victorian Radicals and the Medical Fringe," in *Medical Fringe and Medical Orthodoxy 1750-1850*, ed. William.F. Bynum and Roy Porter (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 198-215.

⁵⁹ Porter and Porter, *Patient's Progress*, 33-69.

representatives of the medical profession, and therefore asking for a second medical opinion in person or by letter was not uncommon. Their account relied on evidence such as diaries and so reflected the financial choices of the middling classes and “the Quality.” However, use of more than one source of advice was also described by Steven King, who used unpublished sources to suggest that self-care was the norm in all parts of society in rural Lancashire. He found reliance on domestic recipes, made using herbs or minerals, and on patent remedies which were available by post or from local shops or markets.⁶⁰ A similar picture was painted for self-care in America by Lamar Murphy, who argued that self-care arose from a desire for self-reliance rather than just to avoid expense.⁶¹

Self-reliance depended not only on practical experience and oral knowledge, but also on literacy and purchase of one of the numerous domestic health guides published on both sides of the Atlantic during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁶² Murphy has shown that the eighteenth-century American reader was able to obtain a startling variety of guides and noted an early American text entitled *Every Man his Own Doctor*, published in 1734.⁶³ Indeed, Michael Flannery argued that the spread of Thomsonianism in America could have been a catalyst for literacy, in that there were twenty-one editions of the *New Guide to Health* between 1822 and 1851. Locating Thomson in the Jacksonian “veneration of the “common man . . . free from the corrupting influences of elitist institutions, the leitmotif of an era,” Flannery pointed out the contradiction between that rhetoric of self-help and the concurrent spread of Thomsonianism through the printed word.⁶⁴ Skelton maintained the same forceful rhetoric, describing Thomson as “the simple American ploughman.”⁶⁵

The study of professionalisation led medical historiography on the early nineteenth century to consider the corresponding change in role for both patient and practitioner, and

⁶⁰ Steven King, *A Fylde Country Practice: Medicine and Society in Lancashire, C.1760-1840* (Lancaster: Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster, 2001), 42-58.

⁶¹ Lamar Riley Murphy, *Enter the Physician: The Transformation of Domestic Medicine, 1760-1860* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 9-15. On a practical note, in America and in rural Britain, even if there was a local doctor, fevers needed urgent attention and the doctor might take many hours to arrive.

⁶² Murphy, *Enter the Physician*, 6-9, 15-25, 109-15, on the influence of the Edinburgh Medical School 22-23.

⁶³ The author was John Tennent, see Murphy, *Enter the Physician*, 72, 254n5.

⁶⁴ Michael A. Flannery, "The Early Botanical Medical Movement as a Reflection of Life, Liberty, and Literacy in Jacksonian America," *Journal of the Medical Library Association* 90, no. 4 (2002), 449-50.

⁶⁵ John Skelton, *Plea for Botanic Medicine* (London: J. Watson, 1853), 189.

the reduced importance of domestic self-care. Murphy used a substantial range of nineteenth-century sources to argue that there was a change of tone in domestic health guides, and that writers of all persuasions insisted that the practitioner should direct medical treatment, and the lay person should fulfil a supportive role by taking responsibility for their own healthy lifestyle.⁶⁶ This proposition was part of the wider argument that, over the course of the nineteenth century, medical authority gained power at the expense of the medical market place.⁶⁷ Much of this argument concerns the changes in the mutual relationship between doctors and their patients as diagnosis came to rely increasingly on advances in the study of pathology. For example, Mary Fissell examined the records of Bristol Infirmary, and proposed that medicine moved from a reliance on a mutual narrative shared by patient and doctor to an increasing medicalisation of care.⁶⁸ However, how much this process had progressed by the mid-century is debatable, more especially as, in his recent study of British colonial medicine, Mark Harrison has argued that medical practice was much more diverse than had been suggested by earlier authors.⁶⁹

The relevant part of Fissell's argument here is her suggestion that there was a gradual loss of patient narrative, whereas one could argue that medical botanists remained in the "cosmology of bedside medicine" as conceptualized by Nicholas Jewson. He described "bedside medicine" as meaning that "disease was characterized in terms of its external and subjective manifestations," and "morbid forces were located within the context of the whole body system." He described cosmologies as "constellations of meaning, generated within the structure of relationships," and this model is relevant to herbal practice which remains today centred around the personal relationship between practitioner and

⁶⁶ Murphy, *Enter the Physician*, 227-28.

⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (London: Routledge, 2003); William F. Bynum, *Science and the Practice of Medicine in the 19th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁶⁸ Mary E. Fissell, *Patients, Power and the Poor in 18th Century Bristol* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); "The Disappearance of the Patient's Narrative and the Invention of Hospital Medicine," in *British Medicine in an Age of Reform* ed. Roger French and Andrew Wear (London: Routledge, 1991), 92-109.

⁶⁹ Harrison, Mark. *Medicine in an Age of Commerce and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 1-3, 11-12.

patient.⁷⁰ Jewson's work relied on that of other historians of the time including Michel Foucault and remains helpful in that it located medical knowledge within a social context.⁷¹

This dissertation is attempting some first steps in describing the development of herbal medicine in the mid-nineteenth century, which will allow for more understanding of the place of herbalism in the medical milieu. For example, Roger Cooter raised the question of the "ways of understanding and perceiving reality that were displaced by the 'medical gaze' " and raised some thoughtful questions regarding the philosophies underpinning "orthodox" and "heterodox" therapeutic approaches. He suggested that "heterodoxies" might retain a non-dualist view which relied neither on mechanism nor on the vitalist philosophers in the eighteenth century.⁷²

Taking Jewson's point that medical thought arises within a social structure, then before investigating the philosophy of herbal medicine and its medical context, much more work is needed on the demography of herbal practice, as there is little historical evaluation of the place of medical botanists in the medical market place. The twenty-four branches of the British Friendly Medico-Botanic Society listed in *Coffin's Botanical Journal and Medical Reformer* (hereafter *Coffin's Journal*) in 1848 were mainly in Lancashire, and all north of Derby.⁷³ A useful empirical study by Brown of healthcare practitioners in Bristol found 31 herbalists who identified themselves as herbalists, medical botanists, Thomsonian practitioners and American herb doctors.⁷⁴ Brown made the crucial point that within the broad category of "herbalist," there was wide variation in social class, ethos and size of practice, adding that much of this information would not be revealed in published sources. Brown noted that many lived in the poorest parts of the city, and that of the twelve people identified in the 1841-1861 censuses, only three appeared in trade directories. Two families of practitioners and two husband and wife partnerships were identified. This formed part of a wider study of healthcare practitioners, and was the first local study to

⁷⁰ Nicholas. D. Jewson, "The Disappearance of the Sick-Man from Medical Cosmology, 1770-1870," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 38, no. 3 (2009), 622-25. The paper was first published in 1976.

⁷¹ David Armstrong, "Commentary: Indeterminate Sick-Men—a Commentary on Jewson's 'Disappearance of the Sick-Man from Medical Cosmology'," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 38, no. 3 (2009): 642-45.

⁷² Roger Cooter, "Alternative Medicine, Alternative Cosmology," in *Studies in the History of Alternative Medicine*, ed. Roger Cooter (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), 62, 72.

⁷³ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 21 (September 1848): 177. Also see Miley, "Herbalism and Herbal Medicine," 42.

⁷⁴ Brown, "Herbalists and Medical Botanists," 405-408, 414-16, 419-20. Census data, newspapers and trade directories were consulted.

begin to throw light on nineteenth-century herbal practice. Marland carried out a study of healthcare practitioners in Wakefield and Huddersfield. Coffin had visited Huddersfield in 1845, and in the trade directory of 1853 there was one medical botanist. By 1861 there were four medical botanists and a herbalist, by 1866 there were two herbalists, and five again in 1870. By way of comparison, in 1861 in Huddersfield, there were twenty-three qualified medical practitioners and eighteen chemists. In 1868, one of these chemists was an “appointed agent” of Skelton and sold “all Dr Skelton’s preparations, and also every variety of Herbs used in Medical Botany,” and the herbalist Richard Bean held consultations there every Wednesday.⁷⁵

Brown and Marland recorded people who identified themselves as healthcare practitioners, but this was only a partial picture as lay practitioners, women in particular, might not declare their occupation in the census. Marland identified practitioners such as bonesetters, midwives, dentists and leech women, and identified two women in Huddersfield. The first was an expert in the application of leeches, and the second was called in for “any bad cases of fever, or lunacy, of exceptional emergency” and would act as “nurse, friend and physician all in one.” Furthermore, Marland set her account within a context of “self-diagnosis and dosing” noting that family recipes were published locally, and that chemists advertised their willingness to make up family recipes.⁷⁶ This scenario has been explored by Anne Secord, who undertook a careful study of botanical societies in the Northwest in the early nineteenth century. Her findings suggested that, in any locality, someone would own a copy of *Culpeper’s Herbal* or Wesley’s *Primitive Physic*. She gave an evocative description of the garden of a Lancashire herbalist in 1817, “the whole of the ceiling is hung with cords stretched horizontally, ...covered with herbs either drying or dried...whilst numerous large bags of paper, containing other herbs, are suspended from every available hook or nail . . . [and] a garden with the beds neatly laid out . . . every inch of ground being matted with herbs and plants.”⁷⁷ Such an image may well be applicable to the house and garden of Skelton’s grandmother who, as we will see later, was a lay practitioner.

⁷⁵ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, 214-28, 235. Richard Bean was Skelton’s son-in-law. He practiced in Leeds, and had worked with Skelton for many years.

⁷⁶ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, 214-22.

⁷⁷ Anne Secord, “Science in the Pub: Artisan Botanists in Early Nineteenth-Century Lancashire,” *History of Science* 32, no. 97 (1994), 276n42, 287n120.

The previous section briefly discussed the general healthcare context, but this section moves on to consider herbal medicine in terms of its relationship with conventional medicine. It has been argued that herbal medicine in the mid-nineteenth century was part of an alternative or “fringe” movement which was hostile to conventional medicine, and had a wholly different ethos. Porter suggested that “in profound contrast to the tenor of earlier practice, which had clung to the regulars’ coat-tails . . . these movements chose to secede wholly from official medicine.”⁷⁸ Although Porter himself asked whether “there truly were profound distinctions between the ‘typical’ itinerant, and the ‘typical’ regular practitioner” and recommended that historians “may find it profitable to study the careers of quacks and regulars in tandem,”⁷⁹ most academic discussion of Victorian herbal practice has been located within the categories of “regular” and “irregular.”

Barrow discussed medical botany as part of his argument that true democracy depends on a democratic epistemology, that is knowledge “open to the open-minded, irrespective of class or education.” He looked back admiringly at the mid-nineteenth century as a time “when orthodoxy was still in the throes of being born,” and there was active “medical opposition” including hydropathy, homeopathy, mesmerism, phreno-mesmerism and spiritual healing.⁸⁰ This paper was based on his earlier investigation of spiritualism in the context of “plebeian” knowledge, where he used Skelton as an exemplar of a “plebeian” practitioner,⁸¹ and repeated Skelton’s claim that all “medical botanists . . . belong to the working order.”⁸² An argument which Barrow used to support this view was that of Daniel Wallace who claimed that moving away from the principles of self-care in the 1840s contributed to the demise of Thomsonianism as a grass roots movement in America.⁸³ Barrow left many unanswered questions, but he made a definite association between personal responsibility and self-reliance in health care and the development of knowledge in a working-class setting.

⁷⁸ Porter, *Health for Sale*, 222-236, quotation 232.

⁷⁹ Porter, *Health for Sale*, 238.

⁸⁰ Barrow, “Medical Heretics,” 169. orthodoxy 173.

⁸¹ Logie Barrow, *Independent Spirits: Spiritualism and English Plebeians 1850-1910* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 161-73, 183-91. He referred to Skelton somewhat misleadingly as “an avowed Eclectic.”

⁸² Barrow *Independent Spirits*, 165.

⁸³ Daniel J. Wallace, “Thomsonians: The People’s Doctors,” *Clio Medica* 14, no. 3-4 (1980).

Pickstone centred his view of medical botany around the “mentality of dissent” in the sense of religious nonconformity. He claimed that “most of his [Coffin’s] following . . . were probably Methodists,”⁸⁴ and drew an analogy between medical and religious dissent, concluding that “much of the social and ideological base for this dissent in medicine was provided by organised nonconformity.”⁸⁵ In a chapter that Pickstone co-authored with Ursula Miley, the authors gave an overview of nineteenth-century medical botany, arguing that “Teetotalism and Methodism were strongly linked; medical botany . . . depended heavily on this twin base.” They supported this claim with individual examples, the most significant being that Coffin was himself a firm advocate of temperance.⁸⁶ However, no primary evidence was provided for the significance of Methodism. In his lecture, conference paper, and chapter co-authored with Miley, Pickstone relied on a quotation from the *Carlisle Patriot* which stated that “The chief feature of Coffinism is the almost total monopoly of it by religious dissenters of the most zealous castes.” This claim was actually taken from a confrontational newspaper report of court proceedings where a herbalist was tried for manslaughter. The report sought to discredit “rash” medical botanists claiming that they were mostly “Ranters, Primitive Methodists.”⁸⁷ While Pickstone may be partly correct in his view, he made broad assertions as to the beliefs of the supporters of medical botany.

The work of Harrison on Owenism could lead to the opposite conclusion - that medical botanists could equally have been non-believers, held Anglican beliefs or, recalling Barrow, been spiritualists. Harrison allowed for a more complex relationship between the “medical fringe” and wider society, and described “radical reformers” as adopting widely different intellectual positions. He noted over ninety people who were Owenites and Chartists and were or became spiritualists, mesmerists, phrenologists, herbalists, vegetarians and homeopaths. He asked “Did they contribute to or reflect the post-1848 stabilisation of Victorian England?” and noted the common themes of democratic

⁸⁴ John V. Pickstone, “Medical Botany: Self-help Medicine in Victorian England,” *Memoirs of the Literary and Philosophical Society* 119 (1976-1977), 91.

⁸⁵ John V. Pickstone, “The Church and Healing: Establishment and Dissent in Nineteenth-Century Medicine: An Exploration of some Correspondence and Connections between Religious and Medical Belief-Systems in Early Industrial England ” in *Twentieth Summer Meeting and Twenty-first Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society*, ed. W.J. Shiels (London: Blackwell, 1982), 188.

⁸⁶ Miley and Pickstone, “Medical Botany around 1850,” on teetotalism 144, on Coffin 149.

⁸⁷ Pickstone, “Medical Botany,” 91; “The Church and Healing,” 181; Miley and Pickstone, “Medical Botany around 1850,” 148; “Acquittal of John Wood,” article from the *Carlisle Patriot*, reprinted in *Coffin’s Journal* 1, no. 33 (August 1849): 277.

doctrines and anti-professionalism.⁸⁸ Harrison used *Dr. Skelton's Botanic Record and Family Herbal* (hereafter *Botanic Record*) to draw comparisons between the activities of medical botanists and Chartists. He drew attention to the Owenite sense of a natural order in society, and illustrated this with a quotation from Skelton: "for that only which agrees with the natural order of things can be found in practice to agree with the wants of man."⁸⁹ Although Harrison drew parallels with religious dissent, his more nuanced account noted that "the ways of thinking of ordinary people are as complicated and difficult to unravel as those of the more educated classes."⁹⁰ Harrison raised three problems in this history "from the corners and crevices": how to explain the finding that two sets of beliefs were held simultaneously; the danger of generalizing from individual cases, and the importance of differences in geographical area, social class and ideological commitment.⁹¹

Barrow, Pickstone and Harrison all highlighted the opposition between the emerging medical profession and medical botanists. Skelton's *Botanic Record* and *Coffin's Journal* contained reports of local societies of herbalists and their opposition to medical regulation.⁹² Their claim that coroners' inquests were used by the medical profession to attack herbal practice would merit a separate study. However, medical botanists were not the only people called to appear in court or at coroner's inquests. Michael Brown noted ten inquests between 1834 and 1850 where it was claimed that the consumption of Morison's pills was associated with a death. Brown's account suggested that the three ensuing verdicts of manslaughter were victories for "'orthodox' medical authority" in that medical testimony swayed the verdict.⁹³ Morison's pills were a proprietary product, but the rationale for their sale provided by James Morison (1770-1840) and his Hygeist supporters was more complex, emphasizing the importance of the free circulation of blood to natural vitality.⁹⁴ In addition, both groups placed themselves within the "march of

⁸⁸ Harrison, "Early Victorian Radicals," 198.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 203.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 206.

⁹¹ *Ibid*, 211-22.

⁹² Some 35 inquests involving herbalists were identified in botanic journals between 1847 and 1855, see Miley and Pickstone, "Medical Botany around 1850," 147-48; Brown, "Herbalists and Medical Botanists," 412-414; Griggs, *Green Pharmacy*, 204-205, 209-10.

⁹³ Michael Brown, "Medicine, Quackery and the Free Market: The "War" Against Morison's Pills and the Construction of the Medical Profession, C. 1830-C. 1850," in *Medicine and the Market in England and Its Colonies, C.1450-C.1850*, ed. Mark S.R. Jenner and Patrick Wallis (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 246, 248.

⁹⁴ James Morison, *The Practical Proofs of the Soundness of the Hygeian System of Physiology: Giving Incontrovertible Testimony to the Afflicted, of the Inestimable Value of Morison's Vegetable Universal Medicines* 3rd ed. (New York: for H. Shephard Moat, 1832), 37-45.

intellect,” and criticised doctors for their conservatism in clinical practice.⁹⁵ Both groups opposed the political pressure for the establishment of a statutory medical register. This campaign was led by Thomas Wakley (1795-1862), editor of the *Lancet*, and Radical MP for Finsbury from 1835-1852.⁹⁶ There was however a conflict between Wakley’s radical political views and his desire to establish the boundaries of medical practice, such that Wakley was seen not as a “beacon of healthful reform”, but as “another species of medical monopolism” by herbalists.⁹⁷

Michael Brown noted the sense in which a profession or group which has a “collective identity,” “connected by common ideals, knowledges and practices” must therefore have boundaries.⁹⁸ For a slightly later period, Mark Weatherall demonstrated the conflict through which “the boundaries of legitimate practice were drawn” using a case study of a homeopath, Dr William Bayes, who applied to be physician at Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge in 1861. The reaction from the *British Medical Journal* was to use a quotation from a governor of the hospital to ask “Is there no means of preventing this kind of attack on the noble science of medicine.”⁹⁹ The term boundaries is helpful, as the sense of a hardening of boundaries in Weatherall’s discussion avoids setting up the schism between “fringe” and orthodox” which tends to conflate questions of professionalisation with questions of clinical practice. There has also been a tendency to look retrospectively at the mid-nineteenth century in the light of the later changes in status of the medical profession. As discussed earlier, “defining the boundaries of ‘legitimate’ knowledge” has mainly been considered as regards the relative importance of clinical “bedside” knowledge and “scientific” medical knowledge based on anatomy and physiological investigation.¹⁰⁰ The argument that the emerging medical profession demanded increased conformity in therapeutics was ably made by John Warner.¹⁰¹ However, his research was carried out in

⁹⁵ Brown, "Medicine, Quackery and the Free Market," 240-44.

⁹⁶ William F. Bynum, 'Wakley, Thomas (1795–1862)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28425> [accessed 18 Dec 2013].

⁹⁷ Ian A. Burney, "Medicine in the Age of Reform," in *Rethinking the Age of Reform: Britain 1780-1850*, ed. Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 175-81.

⁹⁸ Brown, "Medicine, Quackery and the Free Market," 239-40.

⁹⁹ Mark W. Weatherall, "Making Medicine Scientific: Empiricism, Rationality, and Quackery in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Social History of Medicine* 9, no. 2 (1996): 177, 188.

¹⁰⁰ Burney, "Medicine in the Age of Reform," 163-75, quotation 164.

¹⁰¹ John Harley Warner, *The Therapeutic Perspective: Medical Practice, Knowledge, and Identity in America, 1820-1885* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

America, and extended until much later in the nineteenth century. Equally, accounts such as that of Christopher Lawrence of the relationship between clinical practice and science also take a longer view, thus reflecting later changes in the Victorian period.¹⁰²

The rest of this dissertation will seek to avoid making any judgement on the relative value of different medical systems, and rely on the concept of medical pluralism which avoids distinctions between different forms of healthcare. This approach build on a more recent study in which James Bradley has argued for a “symmetrical treatment of competing nineteenth-century medical systems,” and used his study of hydropathy to show that orthodoxy “was itself evolving, mutating and ever so slightly amorphous.”¹⁰³ Bradley and Marguerite Dupree made a detailed study of practitioners of hydropathy in the period 1840-1858 where they countered the argument that there was a strict delineation between the “orthodox or [the] heterodox camp.”¹⁰⁴ They argued that many and various rationales for treatment were proposed in this period both amongst the medical mainstream, and amongst hydropaths who were medically qualified,¹⁰⁵ and caution against the risk of assuming conformity amongst medical practitioners.¹⁰⁶

The sense of boundaries equally helps to retain the fluidity of thought which it could be argued was characteristic of the mid-nineteenth century. Michael Brown argued that the move towards regulation of the medical profession raised complex political issues in that it threatened the liberal values of individual responsibility for personal choice.¹⁰⁷ As he pointed out, the hot topic of debate in the 1840s was the campaign for repeal of the Corn Laws and free trade. Paul Pickering and Alex Tyrrel’s account of the campaign to repeal the Corn Laws gave a vivid account of people involved, and their many and varied beliefs

¹⁰² Christopher Lawrence, *Medicine in the Making of Modern Britain, 1700-1920* (London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁰³ James Bradley, “Medicine on the Margins? Hydropathy and Orthodoxy in Britain, 1840-1860,” in Waltraud Ernst, *Plural Medicine, Tradition and Modernity, 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2002), 20-21.

¹⁰⁴ James Bradley and Marguerite Dupree, “A Shadow of Orthodoxy? An Epistemology of British Hydropathy, 1840-1858,” *Medical History* 47, no. 2 (2003): 174.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 178-81.

¹⁰⁶ James Bradley and Marguarite Dupree, “Opportunity on the Edge of Orthodoxy: Medically Qualified Hydropathists in the Era of Reform, 1840-60,” *Social History of Medicine* 14, no. 3 (2001): 419-20.

¹⁰⁷ Michael Brown, *Performing Medicine: Medical Culture and Identity in Provincial England, c. 1760-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 212-16.

and activities.¹⁰⁸ Their account of the involvement of women supports the argument made by Kathryn Gleadle that women played an active role at the interface between domestic, social and political life. Gleadle took five areas of mid-century healthcare: vegetarianism, hydropathy, homeopathy, hygiene and medical botany and argued that women were active in all these areas. The slogan could have been “Every woman her own physician” which somewhat prefigures the twentieth century feminist slogan “The personal is political” and equally recalls the accounts of domestic herbal medicine given by Secord and Murphy.¹⁰⁹

Returning to the discussion of Skelton by Barrow, Pickstone and Barrow, their perception of medical botany as a “democratic epistemology” can be argued to reflect the spirit of the times. P.S. Brown gave a somewhat different account which explored the “characteristic set of beliefs and practices” which separated herbalists and the emerging medical profession. This account was more neutral yet made the important point that the medical ideas and the social boundaries could not be separated.¹¹⁰ This dissertation will build upon the work of these historians by a closer examination of Skelton’s life and work. This will take up the challenge set by Harrison, to provide some of the detailed evidence needed to contribute to a greater understanding of the relationship between conventional and radical medical epistemology in the nineteenth-century. While the focus of these historians on class and on nonconformism may not be supported by a more detailed investigation of Skelton’s career, but he did explicitly associate herbal medicine with a modern, democratic society as “there is no mental vigour without exchange of thought.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Paul Pickering and Alex Tyrrell, *The People's Bread: A History of the Anti-Corn Law League* (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), 88-138.

¹⁰⁹ Kathryn Gleadle, “The Age of Physiological Reformers’: Rethinking Gender and Domesticity in the Age of Reform,” in *Rethinking the Age of Reform*, edited by Arthur Burns and Joanna Innes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Secord, “Science in the Pub”; Murphy, *Enter the Physician*.

¹¹⁰ P.S. Brown, “Social Context and Medical Theory in the Demarcation of Nineteenth-century Boundaries,” in *Medical Fringe and Medical Orthodoxy 1750-1850*, ed. William F. Bynum and Roy Porter (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 219-23, 228-30.

¹¹¹ Skelton, *Plea*, 19.

Chapter 2 begins with a chronological account of Skelton's life, which adds substantially to earlier publications in that Barbara Griggs incorrectly described Skelton as having been a herbalist throughout his life.¹¹² The link between Skelton, the herbalist and Skelton, the Chartist was explored by Miley and this dissertation was planned to expand on her findings.¹¹³

Skelton was born in Devon and apprenticed as a shoemaker. He was active in radical circles in London as a Chartist, labour leader and Socialist from the 1830s until 1848. He has appeared in the secondary literature on Chartism mainly in intriguing mentions and footnotes, but was included by Iorwerth Prothero among the "ten leading London Chartists in the 1840's."¹¹⁴ Skelton became a herbalist in 1848, initially as an employee of Coffin. He established his home and practice in Leeds in 1852, where he wrote the main publications discussed in this dissertation. In 1858 he returned to London and qualified as a medical practitioner in 1863. He practiced in several places during the 1860s, identifying himself as a medical botanist and as an Eclectic practitioner, but returned to Plymouth by 1870 where he lived until his death in 1880. There was a transformation in his life in that in 1848 he adopted the title doctor without any qualifications, yet later undertook the training necessary to become registered.

The main focus of chapter 3 is Skelton's first publication, the *Family Medical Adviser* (hereafter the *Adviser*).¹¹⁵ This chapter reviews the treatments advocated and aspects of their rationale, in particular Skelton's emphasis on inflammation and on the circulatory system. His entries on three conditions: whooping-cough, pleurisy and asthma are reviewed. To explore his thinking and give some insight into the milieu in which he practiced, other contemporary or earlier publications are discussed. This allows for some comparison of his therapeutics and prescribing with other Thomsonian and Eclectic

¹¹² Griggs, *Green Pharmacy*, 213.

¹¹³ Ursula Miley, "Herbalism and Herbal Medicine in the 19th and Early Twentieth Centuries: With Particular Reference to North West England" (MSc. diss., University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, 1988), 8-10. The dissertation was supervised by John Pickstone.

¹¹⁴ Iorwerth. J. Prothero, "London Chartism and the Trades," *The Economic History Review* 24, no. 2 (1971), 202, 213; *Radical Artisans in England and France, 1830-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1986), 181, 186, 279, 332; David Goodway, *London Chartism, 1838-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 39.

¹¹⁵ John Skelton, *Family Medical Adviser*, 1st ed. (Leeds: Moxon and Walker, 1852).

practitioners. The tenor of the book was Thomsonian, but equally showed the influence of eighteenth-century sources.

The focus of chapter 4 is on the medicinal plants recommended by Skelton in the *Adviser*, the *Botanic Record* and in *The Science and Practice of Herbal Medicine*, published in 1870.¹¹⁶ To discuss his practice and the changes in his prescribing between 1852 and 1870, the herbs are listed in three categories: Eurasian, North American and Tropical. Skelton was a strong advocate of the use of indigenous herbs, and there is some further exploration of the European herbal texts which he used. In his later work, he advocated Eclectic concentrated preparations and these are discussed here.

Chapter 5 focuses on Skelton's political, religious and philosophical beliefs, including his advocacy of self-reliance in healthcare in the *Plea for Botanic Medicine* published in 1853.¹¹⁷ This chapter returns to the cultural setting in which Skelton developed his thinking. He mixed with prominent radicals, and had the opportunity to attend an array of meetings and lectures in London in the 1840s, and the chapter introduces some of the people he mixed with. My argument is that his participation in this cultural milieu gave him the confidence to develop some of these ideas through his involvement in herbal medicine. He lectured regularly, covering political, religious and herbal themes. Four themes were chosen from the *Adviser*: the idea that "knowledge is power;" followed by a brief discussion of his Socialist commitment to "universal happiness" and thus his use of the term working-class; his conception of Nature's laws was a consistent theme in his writings, and this leads, finally, to a discussion of his religious views. Chapter 6 will conclude by summarising the findings of the dissertation, which will lead us back to two memorial stones erected in the villages of his childhood which remind us of his rural roots.

¹¹⁶ John Skelton, *The Science and Practice of Medicine* (London: John Skelton, 1870).

¹¹⁷ Skelton, *Plea*.

Chapter 2: Biography

The aim of this chronological account of Skelton's life is for the reader to meet the person before meeting the themes which arise in his writings. In discussing narrative in history, Hayden White argued that in historical discourse "the production of meaning in this case can be regarded as a performance, because any set of real events can be emplotted in a number of ways, can bear the weight of being told as a number of different kinds of stories."¹ This dissertation covers a period which has been "emplotted" in many ways in that it was an era of rapid social change. Skelton's main publications were written in 1852-1855 in Leeds, and we must remember that many of the technical advances of the Victorian age were only just getting underway at this pivotal period of his life.

The chapter moves on to an account of Chartist activities of the 1840s, followed by an overview of his career as a medical botanist after 1848. We saw in chapter 1 that her reading of Skelton's publications led Griggs to surmise that Skelton had always been a herbalist, but that Miley, building on the work of Pickstone, showed that he had been an active Chartist.² Her evidence for the connection was a letter written in 1867 by Skelton to the prominent Chartist, Ernest Jones (1819-1869), saying "you will recognize in the name of John Skelton one of your early political colleagues . . . and it is pleasing to fight the battle of life side by side with men who rise from the ranks or whose manly souls ever remind them of their humanity."³ Jones was now a solicitor, and had been retained to defend a herbalist charged with manslaughter, and they were to meet in Manchester so that Skelton could advise Jones on the strengths and weaknesses of the prosecution arguments.⁴ I have been able to confirm this connection using the census records which each agree on age, and place of birth, as shown below in Table 1: Census records, 1841-1871.

¹ Hayden White, *The Content of Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 42.

² Griggs, *Green Pharmacy*, 213; Miley, "Herbalism and Herbal Medicine," 56-58.

³ Miley, "Herbalism and Herbal Medicine," 87-88; Columbia University Library, Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman Papers, "Letter from John Skelton to Ernest Jones, 1867."

⁴ Miles Taylor. *Ernest Jones, Chartism, and the Romance of Politics, 1819-1869* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 195-97, 219. According to Taylor, Jones gave up legal practice in late 1866, but this letter was dated 1867. Jones had been retained by Dr Stowell of Brighton, Honorary Secretary of the "Medical Reformers of England" *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 8 (August 1868): 107.

Table 1: Census records, 1841-1871⁵

Date	Name	Age, date of birth	Parish; Address	Occupation	Place of birth
1841	John Skelton	35, 1806	St Martin-in-the-fields, Middlesex;	Shoe maker	Not given
	Elizah	25?			Torquay
	John	11	Bedford Bury (no house numbers)		Bridgewater, Somerset
	Mary	13			
1851	John Skelton	45, 1806	St Peters, Blackburn;	Herb doctor	
	Elizah	40		wife	Torquay
	John	21	8 Heaton Street	Herb doctor	
1861	John Skilton	55, 1806	St Giles, Middlesex;	MD Massachusetts	Holbarton
	Eliza	49			
	Caroline Samuels	26	105 Great Russell Street	servant	Cambridgeshire
1871	John Shelton	65', 1806	St Andrews, Plymouth	MD Surgeon	Holberton
	Eliza	59			Torquay
	Mary A Niskells ?	22	74 Cobourg Street		

1805-1830s: early years

John Skelton was born in Holbeton, Devon on 23 November 1805 and baptised in the parish church on 15 December.⁶ Holbeton is a small village in South Hams near the river Erme. His parents were Phillip and Agnes Skelton.⁷ Philip Skelton (1783-1858) was born locally in the village of Kingston. Skelton recounted the “delightful labour” of collecting herbs for his grandmother with his grandfather, Will Edwards, gardener to the Bullets of

⁵ *Census Returns of England and Wales 1841*, Kew: The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office, 1841), piece 740, fol. 9, p. 9, line 19; *Census Returns 1851*, piece 2258, fol. 247, p. 20, GSU roll 87281; *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1851*. Kew: The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office, 1851). *Census Returns 1861*, piece 172, fol. 17, p. 20, GSU roll 542585; *Census Returns 1871*, piece 2116, fol. 37, p. 21, GSU roll 831794. (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2010). <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> [accessed November 17, 2012]. The spellings are as given in the census returns.

⁶ Devon Record Office, Holbeton Parish Register of Christenings, Microfiche 633/3,4.

⁷ They married on 29 April 1803. Devon Record Office, Holbeton Parish Register of Marriages, Microfiche 633/6. The register was signed by Philip Skilton (note spelling) and a mark was made by Agnes (maiden name Edwards).

Flete who were local landowners.⁸ On a memorial stone erected by Skelton in 1855 in the graveyard of All Saints, Holbeton, his maternal grandmother, Mary Edwards, was described as “for many years ... the skilful doctress and midwife of the village.”⁹

The family moved to Plymouth before he was ten, and Philip Skelton was later listed in the 1841 census as a timber dealer in Row Street, Plymouth.¹⁰ Skelton gave a vivid account of a childhood incident when he was “waiting outside a shoemaker’s shop” in Basket Street, Plymouth. A man who had moved from Scotland was telling the shopkeeper that he couldn’t find any *Parietaria judaica* Pellitory which he had been in the habit of drinking to relieve urinary problems. Skelton knew the herb as he had collected it for his grandmother, and scurried off to some orchard walls, “at the bottom of Burying place lane, or as it is now called Westwell street.” The old man was delighted and gave the boy sixpence.¹¹

Unfortunately, Skelton gave no clues about his education, and there was no school in Holbeton before 1835.¹² However, he could have attended the Plymouth Public Free School or one of the small local privately run schools.¹³ He must have been apprenticed as a shoemaker, but again there are no hints. However, by the age of 20 he had moved to Bristol where he married and moved into the “little house ... furnished by his parents” in Broadmead.¹⁴ Here we find his only mention of shoemaking where he recalled being given credit for some leather as the shopkeeper said “that man will do well in life, because

⁸ Skelton, *Plea*, 50-51. The Flete estate was owned by the Bulteel family from 1756 and, when it was sold in 1864, comprised 2602 acres and 14 farms, see Arnold Sayers, *A History of Holbeton, South Devon* (Holbeton: A. Sayers, 1997).

⁹ See Appendix 3: Photograph of Memorial Stone, All Saints, Holbeton, Devon. Will Edwards died in 1822, aged 72. Mary Edwards died in 1821, aged 71.

¹⁰ *Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841* (Kew: The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Public Record Office, 1851), piece 1878, fol. 546, p. 20, GSU 221065. (Provo, UT: Ancestry.com Operations, 2010). <http://www.ancestry.co.uk> [accessed November 17, 2012].

¹¹ Skelton, *Plea*, 51-54. He added that the incident could be corroborated by John Brownson, shoemaker, now of Tavistock.

¹² Sayers, *History of Holbeton*.

¹³ This nondenominational school opened in 1812 and was on Cobourg Street, close to Basket Street, see Charles W. Bracken, *A History of the Plymouth Public School* (Plymouth: Underhill, 1927), n.p.

¹⁴ John Skelton, *The Epitome of the Botanic Practice of Medicine* (Leeds: Samuel Moxon, 1855), 15. Skelton stated that his wife was aged 17, so three years younger. A report of a speech by Skelton suggested that his first wife had died of cholera in the early 1830s, so it may be that Eliza Skelton, who was five years younger, was his second wife but this has not yet been definitely ascertained.

whenever I rise, I hear his hammer going.” The couple did not stay long in Bristol as their daughter Mary was born about three years later in 1828 in Bridgewater, Somerset, and their son, John, was born in 1830, again in Bridgewater.¹⁵

1830s-1848: London

So far, no further details have emerged concerning his early life, and all that is known is that he had moved to London before 1837. He began to move in radical circles, and joined the London Working Men’s Association (LWMA) in 1837. His application described him as a ladies’ shoemaker of 59 Marylebone Lane.¹⁶ He lived in London until 1848 and, throughout the 1840s, combined activities in trades’ societies, Chartism and Socialism. These are discussed in detail in the next section, but here the main point to note is that his material circumstances improved over the years. In 1841, Skelton and his family lived at Bedford Bury, St Martin’s Lane. These buildings were in multiple occupation, and his immediate neighbours were shoemakers.¹⁷ By 1845, he had been able to move to 24 Cecil Court, St Martins Lane East, where he was registered to vote in 1847 in the Westminster Parliamentary elections.¹⁸ Speaking at a Chartist rally at Whitsuntide 1847, he observed that,

Although he had read history, and perhaps possessed quite as much intelligence then as now, yet he had no vote, but somehow or other he had scraped a little money together, he took a house, opened a little shop, and got some lodgers to help him pay the rent, and he was deemed "respectable," and possessed the franchise.¹⁹

Although he travelled north after 1845 to lecture for the National Association of United Trades, he appears to have continued in his trade as a shoemaker as he still

¹⁵ See Table 1: Census records, 1841-1871.

¹⁶ British Library, Minutes of the LWMA, Add. 37773, September 26, 1837. This street leads from Manchester Square, north of Oxford Street.

¹⁷ See Table 1: Census records. The steward of the Duke of Bedford's London estates described Bedfordbury in 1887: “instead of a single house being put upon a single plot ... a man would put two or three or four on it, may be half-a-dozen houses, or cottages, or anything he pleased upon it, Bedfordbury gradually became one of the worst dens in London.” “The Bedford Estate outside the Parish of St. Paul,” *Survey of London: Covent Garden* vol. 36, ed. F.H.W. Sheppard, 1970, 266-270. British History Online. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=46131> [accessed: 15 February 2012].

¹⁸ This address was given on a notice for a Democratic Banquet held to celebrate the anniversary of the French Revolution on September 22 1845. Skelton was listed as expected to attend and as one of the people from whom tickets could be obtained. *Northern Star*, September 13, 1845.

¹⁹ *Northern Star*, May 29, 1847.

attended trades' meetings.²⁰ Skelton was last reported speaking at such a meeting in London in late April 1848, but by June 1848 was out of town when his daughter Mary married Richard Bean at St Clements Dane, Strand.²¹ There had been a change in his circumstances, as this is when he started the next phase of his life - as a medical botanist.

1848-1851: Manchester

The May 1848 edition of *Coffin's Journal* announced that:

Dr Skelton is now lecturing on Monday evenings at Blackburn, and may be consulted on Monday afternoons after 3 o'clock at Mr Pickles, draper, Church St, Blackburn. On Tuesday evenings he lectures at Heywood, and may be consulted the day after at Mr S. Hall's botanic stores, Bridge St. At Bradford he may be consulted on Thursdays, and on Friday mornings at Mr Isaac Revells, Bridge St.²²

This shows that Skelton was immediately travelling between three towns both lecturing and taking responsibility for the care of patients. The lectures will have supported the local activities of Coffin's agents. Over the next two years, he continued to travel widely to lecture, but was probably based at Coffin's clinic at 50 Faulkner Street, Manchester.²³ In May 1849, in a letter from Paris, Coffin announced that he had taken Dr Thomas Harle into partnership and that "Our little journal will be conducted as before, under his direction, aided by our able assistant Dr Skelton."²⁴

The last mention of Skelton in *Coffin's Journal* was in April 1850, the end of his two year contract.²⁵ According to his account in the *Botanic Record*, he then travelled to Edinburgh intending to establish a practice there, but instead went to Swansea at the request of Coffin. This was unsuccessful, and "by the help of our friends" he moved to

²⁰ *Northern Star*, October 18, 1845.

²¹ 11 June 1848, Marriage of Mary Skelton and Richard James Bean of 3 Craven Buildings, Drury Lane, witnessed by Eliza Skelton. Westminster City Archives, St Clement Danes, Parish Register of Marriages, vol. 43, 219, no. 438, microfiche.

²² *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 17 (May 1848): 149.

²³ See Appendix 1: Lectures given by John Skelton, 1840-1867. Skelton listed lectures in Rotherham, Sheffield Blackburn, Bacup, Ramsbottom, Oldham, Wakefield, Barnsley, Stockport, Birmingham, Manchester, Derby, Nottingham and Leicester, *Botanic Record*, no. 1 (May 1852): 4.

²⁴ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 29 (May 1848): 237. Coffin travelled to France on account of his poor health which was mentioned on a number of occasions. For example he sat down "much exhausted and coughing" after speaking at a presentation in Oldham, *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 25 (January 1849): 205.

²⁵ *Coffin's Journal*, 2, no. 51 (April 1850): 91.

Blackburn “to take a position free and unshackled, the better as we thought, to ensure the progress of the cause.”²⁶ Skelton stayed in Blackburn for about a year. Where he was practicing is unknown, but he had brought his son John into the business as both were described as “herb doctor” in the census of 1851.²⁷

1851-1858: Leeds

Skelton probably moved to Leeds in the summer of 1851 and in early 1852 his new home was 11 East Parade, Leeds.²⁸ The occupations of his neighbours show this was a prosperous street.²⁹ The terrace formed part of the Park Estate, built in the 1770s on the western side of the town centre.³⁰ Although, by the 1850s, some households were beginning to move to the northern suburbs of Leeds where the air was cleaner, David Ward has shown that the Park Estate area was still affluent in the mid-nineteenth century.³¹ Across the road was the Infirmary, completed in 1771³² and No. 1 East Parade had been the Medical School since 1834.³³ His neighbours included John Heaton, physician to the Infirmary and Dispensary and their surgeon, Claudius Wheelhouse.³⁴ Skelton must have made a conscious choice to position himself in this way, possibly

²⁶ *Botanic Record*, no. 2 (June 1852): 22.

²⁷ See Table 1: Census Records. At the end of March 1851, Skelton lived at 8 Heaton Street, Blackburn, Lancashire.

²⁸ Skelton, *Adviser*, 6.

²⁹ The 24 addresses in East Parade included the Medical School, Vapour baths and Hospital for Women and Children, then one physician, two surgeons, two dentists, two merchants, two drapers, one painter, gilder, architect, accountant, barrister and clergyman. Opposite was East Parade Congregational Chapel, an imposing Neo-Classical building opened in 1841. William White. *Directory and Gazetteer of Leeds, Bradford etc* (Sheffield: Robert Leader, 1853; repr., Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles, 1969), 143, 187-88.

³⁰ Derek Linstum, *West Yorkshire: Architects and Architecture* (London: Lund Humphries, 1978), 101-102; Maurice Beresford, “The Face of Leeds,” in *A History of Modern Leeds*, ed. Derek Fraser (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), 77-79.

³¹ David Ward, “Environs and Neighbors in the Two Nations: Residential Differentiation in Mid-19th-Century Leeds,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 6, no. 2 (1980): 140-41.

³² Stephen T. Anning, *The General Infirmary at Leeds* vol. 1, 1767-1868 (Edinburgh: E.& S.Livingstone, 1963), 18.

³³ Stephen T. Anning, *The History of Medicine in Leeds* (Leeds: Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, 1978), 25.

³⁴ T. Wemyss Reid, Henry Adlard, R.W. Innes Smith, *A Memoir of John Deakin Heaton, M.D. of Leeds* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1883); Stephen T. Anning, “The Leeds Public Dispensary, *Thoresby Society Miscellany* 16, no. 2 (1975): 130-63; “Claudius Galen Wheelhouse, F.R.C.S.,” *British Medical Journal* I, no. 2520 (April 17, 1909): 983-86. Wheelhouse and his father, who was also a surgeon, lived at Number 16.

emulating Coffin's choice of respectable addresses in Manchester and London.³⁵ With the lease came the entitlement to vote and in 1854, Skelton was listed on the Register of voters, and voted for two Liberals in 1857.³⁶

Leeds was a busy industrial, commercial and market town, and East Parade was in the town centre - a few minutes walk from the railway stations, the post office and banks, the Mechanics Institute and libraries.³⁷ Skelton will have had Chartist contacts in Leeds, and could well have been a friend of another Chartist and Socialist, Joshua Hobson who took an active role in local politics.³⁸ However, the over-riding reason for settling in Leeds could have been that Skelton enrolled his son at Leeds Medical School in 1851. This was to be only for a short time as in 1852, Skelton recounted how his son had passed his term examinations but was removed because of his family connections.³⁹ Fortunately, John Skelton FRCS (1830-1883) qualified as a surgeon at Middlesex Hospital in 1855,⁴⁰ and by 1856 was listed as practicing at 11 East Parade.⁴¹

³⁵ Coffin's house in Manchester, 50 Faulkner Street was near the Infirmary, see Miley, "Herbs and Herbalism," 34; His house in London, 24 Montague Place; was in Bloomsbury, near Gower Street.

³⁶ Mill Hill Ward, No.3188, qualification, house. William Gray, *Register of persons entitled to vote in the election of Members to serve in Parliament*. (Leeds: Anthony Pickard, 1854); Elections to the municipal corporation: No. 819 John Arthur Ikin, Town Clerk *The Burgess Roll of the Borough of Leeds* (Leeds: Anthony Pickard, 1854); The poll book for 28 March 1857 showed Skelton voted for Matthew Talbot Baines, Liberal (elected) and John Remington Mills, Liberal (not elected). *Poll book of the Leeds Borough Election, March 28 1857, for Members of Parliament*. (Leeds: C. Kemplay, Intelligencer-Office, 1857), 60.

³⁷ David Joy, *South and West Yorkshire* vol. 8 of *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain*. (Newton Abbot, Devon: David & Charles, 1978), 40-47. For railway stations, see R.W. Unwin, "Leeds becomes a Transport Centre," in *History of Modern Leeds*, ed. Derek Fraser, 132-34; Cultural facilities were expanding in the 1850s: in 1851 there were 35 booksellers, and 11 libraries, and in 1857 there were respectively 54 and 26, see R.J. Morris. "Middle-class culture, 1700-1914," in *History of Modern Leeds*, ed. Derek Fraser, 200-22; In 1857, John Skelton (father or son) was a member of the Leeds Circulating Library (500 subs at 25/- annually) see Thoresby Society, Annual Statement of the Committee of Leeds Circulating Library, 1857-58 (Leeds: C. Kemplay, Intelligencer Office, 1858); The Leeds Mechanic Institute, founded in 1824, was just round the corner, see J. F. C. Harrison, *Learning and Living, 1790-1960: A Study in the History of the English Adult Education Movement* (London: Routledge, 2007), 58-59; The new Town Hall, opened in 1858, was at the top of the road, see Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1970), 139-83.

³⁸ Joshua Hobson had been involved in factory reform, and then both Chartism and Socialism from 1837, see J.F.C. Harrison, "Chartism in Leeds," in *Chartist Studies*, ed. Asa Briggs (London: MacMillan & Co, 1959). For two years, Hobson published both the *Northern Star* and the *New Moral World*, see S. Cordery, "Hobson, Joshua and the Business of Radicalism," *Biography - an Interdisciplinary Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (1988), 110, 115-16; Edward Royle, "Chartists and Owenites - Many Parts but One Body," *Labour History Review* 65, no. 1 (2001), 12. For his involvement in local government on a Chartist platform, also see Derek Fraser, "Politics and society in the Nineteenth Century," in *History of Modern Leeds*, ed. Derek Fraser, 281-87.

³⁹ *Botanic Record*, no. 2 (June 1852): 17.

⁴⁰ Of the 2452 men who qualified as Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons between 1843 and 1889, two were the sons of herbalists, see M. Jeanne Peterson, *The Medical Profession in Mid-*

Skelton remained in Leeds until 1858, and, during this period published three books: five editions of the *Family Medical Adviser*, the *Epitome of the Botanic Practice of Medicine* and the *Plea for Botanic Medicine* (hereafter the *Plea*). The first of these was a book of around 260 pages, organized by diseases, and designed for domestic self-treatment. The *Epitome* (122 pages) summarized the *Adviser* and is not discussed in this dissertation.⁴² The *Plea* (181 pages) was a more polemical book which gave a history of medicine including Skelton's perception of the Nature's laws, an outline of Thomsonianism and a critique of other therapies such as homeopathy. Skelton's *Botanic Record* was a sixteen-page monthly journal, published between 1852 and 1855, which included editorials, articles on medicinal plants and healthcare, letters and Skelton's business notices.⁴³ In 1853, Skelton published a pamphlet on cholera, reprinted in 1866, but this is not discussed here as it would have been impossible to do justice to the topic.⁴⁴

Skelton described himself as "lecturer on and professor of the vegetable practice of medicine" and was styled "botanical doctor" in *White's Directory* of 1853.⁴⁵ By then, Skelton was running a wholesale company from 11 East Parade, selling herbs including herbs imported from America. The advertisements in the *Botanic Record* show that he also imported books.⁴⁶ Skelton also had connections with American practice. In November 1853, he styled himself "John Skelton M.D., member of the Syracuse Eclectic Institution, Corresponding Member of the new Medical College, Mass., U.S."⁴⁷ He used the same designation in 1857, in *White's Directory* where he was listed as John Skelton, MD (US), herbalist at 11 East Parade.⁴⁸ This was given in the 1861 census as MD Massachusetts

Victorian London (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 291-294; The other one may have been the son of George Stevens of Bristol, see Brown, "Herbalists and Medical Botanists," 419.

⁴¹ John Skelton junior, surgeon. *Gillbanks' Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory and Gazetteer*. (Leeds: Samuel Moxon, 1856), 110.

⁴² See Bibliography for full list of editions of Skelton, *Family Medical Adviser*; Skelton, *Epitome*.

⁴³ Skelton, *Plea*; Skelton, *Botanic Record*.

⁴⁴ Skelton, John. *An Examination of the Pathology of Cholera, Revelations of Past and Present Modes of Treatment, Thermobotanic Method of Cure* (London: J. Watson, 1853); *Cholera: Its Past and Present Treatment, and Natural Method of Cure* (London. 1866).

⁴⁵ Skelton, *Adviser*, Title page; White, *Directory and Gazetteer*, 143.

⁴⁶ See Appendix 5: Scan of *Botanic Record*, no. 28 (August 1854) and no.29 (September 1854). Skelton, *Botanic Record*, no. 28 (August 1854): 418. No specific suppliers have been identified.

⁴⁷ *Botanic Record*, no. 19 (November 1853): 304.

⁴⁸ William White, *Directory and Topography of the Borough of Leeds* (Sheffield: Robert Leader, 1857), 205, 265.

so must have been obtained from the Worcester Medical Institution, Massachusetts. The date was 1853, according to the *Medical Register* of 1864.⁴⁹ This Eclectic college was established in 1846, and licensed to confer degrees in 1851. The principal was Dr Calvin Newton (1800-1853), who was described by Frederick Waite as a former Thomsonian and the best educated Eclectic of the time.⁵⁰ Skelton made no reference to travelling to America and I have not been able to ascertain whether there was any study by correspondence, but George Holyoake's comment of 1853 may be relevant: "if we did not believe, or even know, that Mr Skelton has better qualifications than the public approbation, we should not notice this book."⁵¹

1858 onwards: London, Plymouth

During 1858, Skelton moved back to London, to another smart address: 105 Great Russell Street where, in October 1858, the Eclectic Medical Institute provided "vapour, galvanic and electro-chemical baths" under the supervision of John Skelton FRCS.⁵² This house was at the southern edge of the Bloomsbury Estate, and was Skelton's home address in the 1861 census.⁵³ It seems likely that Skelton and his son were working together, and both retained the practice in Leeds.⁵⁴

Skelton was again embarking on a new endeavour as in 1864, he was listed on the *Medical Register* as John Skelton senior Lic. Soc. Apoth. Lond. 1863 of 105 Great Russell Street.⁵⁵ The Licence of the Society of Apothecaries, required candidates to undertake a 5-year apprenticeship which included practical experience and courses of lectures.

⁴⁹ See, Table 1: Census Records, and note 55 below.

⁵⁰ Frederick C. Waite, "The First Sectarian Medical School in New England, at Worcester (1846-1849), and its Relation to Thomsonianism," *New England Journal of Medicine* 207, no. 22 (1932), 986-987; Berman and Flannery, *America's Botanico-Medical Movements*, 106-108; Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 146-148; *Kindly Medicine*, 51-60.

⁵¹ *Reasoner*, no. 19 (May 11, 1853): 294.

⁵² Advertisement, *Leader*, no. 449, October 30, 1858, 1175. This house remains unmodernised, see Appendix 4: Photograph of 105 Great Russell Street. London, WC1.

⁵³ See Table 1: Census Records.

⁵⁴ John Skelton junior MRCS 1855, 105 Great Russell St. London WC & 11 East Parade, Leeds.1859, see General Council of Medical Education and Registration of the United Kingdom, *London and Provincial Medical Directory and General Medical Register 1859* (London: John Churchill & Son, 1859), 451.

⁵⁵ 1863 Oct 5 SKELTON John, sen. 105 Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury, London WC Lic. Soc. Apoth. Lond. 1863, MD US 1853, see General Council of Medical Education and Registration of the United Kingdom, *London and Provincial Medical Directory and General Medical Register 1864* (London: John Churchill & Son, 1864), 175.

Skelton completed the written and oral examinations in October 1863. He attended two courses of Clinical Medical Practice at St Bartholomew's Hospital, Smithfield and thirteen lecture courses.⁵⁶ In 1864 he gained further qualifications at St Bartholomew's.⁵⁷ Skelton referred to working as a dresser at St Bartholomew's hospital for 3-4 years. In a letter, he recalled "the persecution I have had to endure to obtain my position,"⁵⁸ but he also had fond memories: "We well recollect the advice of the venerable Lawrence, whose experience as a surgeon in St Bartholomew's, London, was greater by far than that of any living man, telling his students . . ." ⁵⁹ These lines are quoted from Skelton's last book, *The Science and Practice of Medicine*, published in 1870.⁶⁰ This was a textbook of 768 pages, and the herbs recommended are discussed further in chapter 4. The recommendations for treatment are not discussed in this dissertation, and neither is Skelton's manual on midwifery, published in 1865, which covered the practical management of labour.⁶¹

Obtaining a medical degree in the 1860s did not lead to an assured income. There were an increasing number of public salaried positions, but these were unlikely to have been open to Skelton in that he continued to practice as an Eclectic.⁶² In her account of the development of the medical profession, Marland found that the number of such posts in Huddersfield doubled between 1851 and 1871 from seventeen to thirty-eight, and that holding such posts enhanced the opportunities of doctors to build their private practice. Appointment would normally be made by established medical professionals, and notably,

⁵⁶ Lecture courses: Chemistry, Anatomy (2), Dissection (2), Materia Medica and Therapeutics, Botany, Practical Chemistry, Physiology, Principles and Practice of Medicine, Midwifery and Diseases of Children, Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Morbid Anatomy, Clinical Lectures. He first sat the examinations in December 1862 and was rejected. He was apprenticed to Mr William Edwards of Holbeton (qualified before 1815). Guildhall Library. Society of Apothecaries, Court of Examiners Entry Books of Qualifications of Candidates, vol. 20, 1860-1863, microfiche; Penelope Hunting, *A History of the Society of Apothecaries* (London: Society of Apothecaries, 1998), 198-200, 206-207. The lectures need not all have been taken at one medical school.

⁵⁷ No records exist in the archives of St Bartholomews Hospital of the course of instruction he would have undertaken for this qualification which was given in the *Medical Register* as L.R.C.P. 1864 Edin.; L.F.P.S. Glasg. and L.M. 1864 (*St. Barthol.*), see General Council of Medical Education and Registration of the United Kingdom, *London and Provincial Medical Directory and General Medical Register 1872* (London: John Churchill & Son, 1872), 159.

⁵⁸ Columbia University Library, "Letter from Skelton to Jones, 1867."

⁵⁹ Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 242, 644.

⁶⁰ According to the Preface, unbound copies were rebound and reissued by the National Association of Medical Herbalists as a student textbook in 1904. This is the version used in this dissertation.

⁶¹ Skelton, *Midwifery: Its Complications, Diseases, etc.* (London: Job Caudwell, 1865).

⁶² Peterson, *Medical Profession*, 90-135; Irvine Loudon, *Medical Care and the General Practitioner, 1750-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 202-207.

in 1852, the Bye-laws of the Medico-Ethical Society of Huddersfield ensured conformity to orthodox medical practice, ruling that “no member shall practice, professed or exclusively, homeopathy, hydropathy, or mesmerism.”⁶³ However, Skelton could build on his national reputation as a herbalist, which may be why he practiced in several towns during the 1860s. He retained a connection with Leeds through his son-in-law Richard Bean who practiced there as a medical botanist.⁶⁴ In the early 1860s, Richard Bean took premises at 177 Briggate, the main Leeds shopping thoroughfare, later moving to 148 Briggate.⁶⁵ In 1869, this address was referred to as “Dr Skelton’s.”⁶⁶ This mention suggests that Skelton may have owned businesses at more than one address, as in 1864, Skelton was also listed in the Plymouth Directory.⁶⁷ In 1867, Skelton referred to his residence in Manchester and his “settled family residence” in Liverpool,⁶⁸ yet by 1869, he had moved to Birmingham.⁶⁹ This period is unclear but he appears to have finally returned to Plymouth in 1870.⁷⁰ By 1878, his address was Grenville House, 6 Albany Place, Plymouth.⁷¹

Skelton collapsed and died suddenly on 31 January 1880, while paying his bill at the newsagent. According to his son, he had been suffering from heart disease for about three years, and for someone so committed to the printed word, it seems a fitting end. According to the report of his death, he “became more widely known through a laudable desire in his earlier days to spread the knowledge of the laws of health, and of elementary

⁶³ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, 274-78, 310-11.

⁶⁴ Skelton, *Family Medical Adviser*, 6th ed. (London: Job Caudwell, 1861). co-published with R. Bean, Eclectic and Botanic Druggist, 11 East Parade Leeds, and 105 Great Russell Street, London.

⁶⁵ A notice of a lecture stated that Skelton could be consulted at 177 Briggate, Leeds, see *Leeds Mercury*, October 6, 1864. His private residence was given as 16 Grove Terrace, Leeds, but this could have been the home of Richard and Mary Bean; Skelton, *Family Medical Adviser* 8th ed., 1866, Title page, co-published with R. Bean, 148 Briggate, Leeds.

⁶⁶ *Eclectic Journal and Medical Free Press* 2, no. 16 (April 1869): 240. (Hereafter *Eclectic Journal*).

⁶⁷ Skelton was listed in the Plymouth directory 1864-65, but not the preceding directory in 1862 or the next edition in 1867. Margery Payne, e-mail message to author, 30 May 2013. In 1865, his address in Plymouth was given as 5 Union Terrace, on the title page of Skelton, *Midwifery*.

⁶⁸ 17 Sidney Street, Oxford Road, Manchester and 30 Stafford Street, Liverpool see Columbia University Library, “Letter from Skelton to Jones, 1867.”

⁶⁹ Letter to the editor, from 7 Summer Hill, Parade, Birmingham. *Eclectic Journal* 2, no 16 (April 1869): 245.

⁷⁰ In 1870, his address was given as 4 Cobourg Place, Plymouth, see *Science and Practice*. Title page; See Table 1 Census records, where his address in 1871 was 74 Cobourg Street, Plymouth.

⁷¹ Skelton, *Adviser*, 11th ed., 1878.

medicine among the people” and his “work throughout his life – whether as a medical lecturer, surgeon, or physician – has been principally among “the people.”⁷²

Radical artisan: 1837-1848

To reconstruct his intellectual context and draw out central themes in his thought, Skelton has first to be placed in his social and political historical setting. This section uses the minutes of organisations, contemporary publications, and secondary sources. Autobiographies and biographies are given particular attention as an attempt is made throughout to give a sense of the humanity of the people involved, to recognize the “real men and women who have been shrunk by historians into bloodless units of a generalization.”⁷³

Skelton can be described as a radical, taking radical reform to encompass campaigning for parliamentary reform alongside popular agitation on economic, religious and social issues.⁷⁴ Radical is a broad term, but suits Skelton, and his milieu, in that he had varied interests and lectured on many subjects throughout his life.⁷⁵ I will return to his views on topics including education, class, religion and nature in chapter 5.

Skelton made his first appearance in the written record of working-class politics in 1837, when he joined the London Working Men’s Association (LWMA) which was a

⁷² “Sudden death of Dr Skelton, of Plymouth,” *Western Weekly News*, February 7, 1880. Probate was decided 22 July 1880 with a personal estate of under £300. The sole executor was John Skelton FRCS, 36 Gower Street, Middlesex. National Archives of the United Kingdom, England and Wales National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858-1956, Plymouth 5b, 233.

⁷³ G. Kitson Clark, “The Making of Victorian England,” (New York: Atheneum; (1967), 13. Quoted in Lee E. Grugel, *George Jacob Holyoake: A Study in the Evolution of a Victorian Radical* (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1976), ix; William James Linton, *James Watson: A Memoir of the Days of the Fight for a Free Press in England and of the Agitation for the People's Charter* (Manchester: Abel Heywood and Son, 1880); A. G. Barker, *Henry Hetherington, 1792-1849* (1938); William Lovett, *Life and Struggles of William Lovett* (London: McGibbon & Kee, 1967); David Vincent, *Testaments of Radicalism: Memoirs of Working Class Politicians 1790-1885* (London: Europa Publications, 1977); Regenia Gagnier, “Social Atoms: Working-Class Autobiography, Subjectivity, and Gender,” *Victorian Studies* 30, no. 3 (1987); Cordery, “Hobson, Joshua and the Business of Radicalism,” 108-109.

⁷⁴ Margot Finn gave an account of the sources of radicalism as firmly placed within English religious dissent from the seventeenth century, and within a nascent English sense of nationhood, see Margot C. Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 34-35.

⁷⁵ See Appendix 1: Lectures.

Chartist organization.⁷⁶ Some leaders of the LWMA had been active in radical circles for years. This included membership of Owenist groups and, before discussing the activities of the LWMA, these must be set in the wider context of Owenism.⁷⁷ At the time, they described themselves as Socialists, so, following the recommendation of Gregory Claeys, I will do the same.⁷⁸ “Mr Skelton” appeared in the list of lecturers appointed in early 1840 by the main Socialist organization, the London District Board of the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists.⁷⁹ This was likely to have been John Skelton as, in early 1841, he was identified in a report of a meeting at the Social Institution, John Street, which was the main Socialist meeting place in London. Skelton moved the first motion “expressive of the disapprobation of that meeting against Mr Hetherington’s imprisonment” and “to take into consideration - “that undefined thing, blasphemy”, for which he is imprisoned.”⁸⁰

This connection with Socialism tells us that Skelton will have come into contact with an assortment of radical ideas. Socialism has been described as a “cluster of social ideas drawn from several sources united within an overall intellectual boundary” which centred around the ideal of community.⁸¹ This extended from cooperative initiatives in production and selling to dancing and rational dinners on December 25th – activities which always incorporated rational debate. While the beliefs of individuals cannot be inferred from public statements, Socialist intentions were expressed as follows in 1840: “We advocate CHARITY without limit to every individual of the human race . . . most full and complete RELIGIOUS AND CIVIL LIBERTY . . . and EQUALITY of EDUCATION and CONDITION.” They believed that communitarian upbringing under “rational external circumstances” would change human behaviour so that “human rewards and punishments” would be

⁷⁶ British Library, Minutes of the LWMA, Add 37773 Minutes 9 June 1836-3 April 1839. The subsequent three minutes books listed as LWMA minutes Add. 37774 1841-1844, Add. 27775 1844-1847, Add. 37776 1843-1847 are National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People.

⁷⁷ Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularist Movement, 1791-1866* (Manchester University of Manchester Press, 1974), 45-47.

⁷⁸ Gregory Claeys, *Citizens and Saints: Politics and Anti-Politics in Early British Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 209. The movement was established by Robert Owen (1771-1858). Use of the term Owenite avoids any confusion with later usage of the term socialism, but implies more loyalty to the principles of the founder than may actually have been the case.

⁷⁹ *New Moral World* 1, no. 66 (January 25, 1840): 1056.

⁸⁰ *Northern Star*, February 27, 1841. Branch A1 of the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists was in John Street, off Tottenham Court Road. There is no report of the meeting in the *New Moral World*.

⁸¹ J. F. C. Harrison, *Robert Owen and the Owenites in Britain and America: The Quest for the New Moral World* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 4, 63-87.

rendered “not only useless, but highly injurious.” One can see that such beliefs, alongside their advocacy of “a rational law of DIVORCE” were in opposition to those of many of their contemporaries.⁸²

The main charge against Socialism was infidelity, and Skelton certainly moved in secular circles.⁸³ In 1843, he gave a lecture entitled “Was Jesus Christ a real or fictitious person?” In his discussion of sources, he argued that no contemporaneous classical author referred to Christ, and asserted that “until the curse of bibliodicta, inspired deeds, and god-influences was removed, small hope could be entertained for the future of the human race.”⁸⁴ In August 1843, Skelton spoke alongside George Jacob Holyoake (1817-1906), Ruffy Ridley, and M.Q. Ryall at a meeting of the Anti-Persecution Society,⁸⁵ and in August 1845, he was auditor of the society’s accounts.⁸⁶ This society was formed in July 1842 “to assert and maintain the right of free discussion, and to protect and defend the victims of intolerance,”⁸⁷ and Barbara Taylor located it in within widespread infidelity in working-class districts of London.⁸⁸ The focus of Taylor’s book was the involvement of women in Socialism, and indeed, we find that Eliza Skelton was President of the Ladies’ Class of the Rational Society, which held a lecture on the injustice of prosecutions for blasphemy, and collected funds for the Anti-Persecution Society.⁸⁹

⁸² Declaration made at the congress in May 1840, appended to the Petition concerning the imprisonment of Henry Hetherington. *New Moral World* 2, no. 12 (March 20, 1841): 184.

⁸³ For infidelity, and the development of secularism, see Royle, *Victorian Infidels*.

⁸⁴ Bishopsgate Institute, *Theological Association, a course of lectures*. April 25th 1843 Printed Materials, 1830s-1840s (Holyoake/3/1/43); *Oracle of Reason* no. 73 (May 6, 1843): 164-65. For a further discussion of this lecture and his religious beliefs, see chapter 5.

⁸⁵ *Northern Star*, September 2, 1843. Holyoake and Ryall were on the council of the society, and Ridley was a leading London Chartist. Holyoake was a prominent secularist who had been imprisoned for blasphemy in 1841, see Royle, *Victorian Infidels*, 78-81; “George Jacob Holyoake,” *Journal of Liberal History*, no. 67 (2010): 35-37; “Holyoake, George Jacob (1817–1906),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2005). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33964> [accessed July 8, 2013].

⁸⁶ *Circular of the Anti-Persecution Union* no. 4, 1845 (bound with the *Movement*); For the Anti-Persecution Union, see Royle, *Victorian Infidels*, 74-101.

⁸⁷ The Secretary was James Watson, and a major endeavour was to collect funds to defend people prosecuted and imprisoned on a charge of blasphemy (denying the existence or providence of God). *Oracle of Reason*, no. 30 (July 17, 1842): 1.

⁸⁸ Barbara Taylor, *Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Virago, 1983), 136-51.

⁸⁹ Report of meeting of Branch A1, established 4th February 1844, *New Moral World*, March 16, 1844, In Edmund Frow and Ruth Frow, *Political Women 1800-1850* (London: Zwan, 1989), 110-12.

Edward Royle has argued that there was no firm dividing line between Socialists and Chartists, but that Chartists argued that political change had to occur before social change would be possible, and thus the campaign for universal franchise must take precedence.⁹⁰ However, Socialists were opposed to physical violence and to aggressive behaviour, believing that social and political change would occur spontaneously through discussion and negotiation. This was exemplified in “moral force” Chartism, and reveals the long shadow of William Godwin (1756-1836) whose overarching argument was that “the universal exercise of private judgement is a doctrine so unspeakably beautiful, that a true politician will certainly resolve to interfere with it as sparingly and in as few instances as possible.”⁹¹ The following account of Skelton’s Chartist activities during the 1840s supports the argument made by Royle that Socialism was more influential in Chartism than previously recognized. The “moral force” views that Skelton expressed in Chartist public meetings demonstrated loyalty to Socialist points of view.⁹² Royle argued that no clear distinction could be drawn between Socialist and Chartist activity, and supported his contention by charting the lengthy friendship between Holyoake, the secularist Socialist, and George Julian Harney (1817-1897), the militant Chartist. The section below “Chartist social life” again suggests that individuals did not follow the party line when working together politically or meeting socially.⁹³

London Working Men’s Association

Returning to Chartist organizations, Skelton applied by letter asking to be proposed as a member of the LWMA, and was elected in October 1837.⁹⁴ The LWMA had been

⁹⁰ Royle, “Chartists and Owenites;” *Victorian Infidels*.

⁹¹ Godwin was widely read by radicals, see chapter 5. His propositions appear to have prefigured Robert Owen’s views in that he argued that education is central to promoting moral values in society, and that punishment is counterproductive. William Godwin, “An Enquiry concerning Political Justice, and Its Influence on General Virtue and Happiness,” in *Romanticism and Revolution: A Reader*, ed. Jon Mee and David Fallon (Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing, 2011): 161.

⁹² Royle, “Chartists and Owenites,” 6-8.

⁹³ Royle, “Chartists and Owenites,” 2-6, 8-9.

⁹⁴ New members were proposed and seconded by current members, and their names displayed so that any objection could be raised before a vote by all members. The records gave some names who were proposed but not elected, and members who were removed. Skelton was proposed by Mr Vincent and seconded by Mr White. His letter was received on 26 September 1837. His election was ordered to stand over on 3 October and 10 October (when 7 members were elected), and he was finally elected on 17 October (when 4 were elected and 3 ordered to stand over). British Library, Minutes of the LWMA, Add.37773, May 31, 1837; September, 26, 1837; October 3, 10, 17, 1837.

founded in June 1836 “for benefitting Politically, Socially and Morally the Useful Classes” and was composed of invited “persons of good moral character among the industrious classes.”⁹⁵ The *People’s Charter* of 1838 was the work of the LWMA and, although Chartism became associated with calls to “physical force” both at the time and later, the LWMA remained proponents of negotiation. This was and is described as “moral force” Chartism, and Skelton remained an advocate of moral force throughout his involvement with Chartism. Colin Skelly has recently argued that Chartist historiography which saw “class at the centre of mainstream Chartism still hinders our understanding” by downplaying the contribution of moral force Chartists.⁹⁶ Interestingly, the moral force approach was expressed rather clearly in the following quotation from the Socialist journal, the *New Moral World*: “The Socialist relies on reason, intelligence and moral power, as the means of establishing his plans. The Radical looks to the concentration of the physical strength of the people, as a means of overawing the privileged classes and carrying his views.”⁹⁷

Skelton immediately took an active role in the LWMA. Less than a month after joining, he seconded a motion that Mr Wakley be requested to present the petition on universal suffrage to the Houses of Commons.⁹⁸ Within six months, he was elected to the Committee and was thus a signatory to the *People’s Charter* of April 1838.⁹⁹ In his analysis of London Chartism, David Goodway listed Skelton amongst a group of seven “working-class radicals” who “had clearly joined the LWMA in the late 1830s for want of any better organization and did not favour either its social exclusiveness or the inclination

⁹⁵ The minute-book was kept for three years from June 1836 until April 1839, and listed 291 members. Of these, 254 belonged to a trade, see Iorwerth Prothero, “Chartism in London,” *Past & Present*, no. 44 (1969), 103-104. The annual subscription of 12 shillings would also have ensured that it remained a selective organization.

⁹⁶ Colin Skelly. “The Origins, Nature and Development of Moral Force Chartism, 1836-1850,” (PhD diss., University of York, 2005), 29. Skelly used the minutes of organizations, journals, newspapers and correspondence to argue that the influence of the LWMA and its former members has been underestimated.

⁹⁷ *New Moral World*, June 24, 1837, cited by Royle, “Chartist and Owenites,” 6.

⁹⁸ The motion was proposed by Mr Hartwell. British Library, Minutes of the LWMA, Add. 37773, November 28, 1837. Skelton was listed by Lovett amongst the forty-two people “who took, more or less, an active part” in the LWMA, see Lovett, *Life and Struggles*, 77.

⁹⁹ Skelton was elected to the Committee on 28 March 1838, British Library, Minutes of the LWMA, Add. 37773, March 28, 1837. The six points of the People’s Charter were: the right of voting for members of Parliament by every male of twenty-one years of age, and of sound mind; annual elections; vote by ballot; no property qualification for Members of Parliament; payment of Members; and a division of the Kingdom into electoral districts; giving a number of representatives according to the number of electors. See Working Men’s Association, *The People’s Charter: Being the Outline of an Act to Provide for the Just Representation of the People of Great Britain in the Commons House of Parliament . . .* (London: H. Hetherington, 1838).

which some of its principal members had to succumb to elements of bourgeois ideology.”¹⁰⁰ Whether the “social exclusiveness” was unattractive to Skelton cannot be judged, but I would suggest that his biography shows that an opposing argument is equally plausible. The social and communication skills learned through his contact with both working-class and middle-class radicals must have sown the seeds for his later achievements as a herbal practitioner. For example, he learned to speak at meetings and to chair meetings, which are skills gained through observation and through experience. The minutes of the LWMA did not list the attendees at meetings, and there have been competing versions of the influence of the middle-class members, in particular Francis Place (1771-1854).¹⁰¹ However, Skelton must have associated to some extent with the middle-class honorary members.¹⁰² He could also have had personal contact with Members of Parliament as, from the start, the LWMA worked alongside the small parliamentary group of Radical MPs.¹⁰³

Skelton could have made friendships through the LWMA weekly discussion meetings and social events, and through use of the library. Skelton may well have got on well with the Secretary of the LWMA, William Lovett (1800-1877) who had come up from Cornwall as a young man, and was active in Socialist circles by the end of the 1820s as a member

¹⁰⁰ David Goodway, *London Chartism, 1838-1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 39.

¹⁰¹ Place was originally a member of the radical London Corresponding Society, but henceforth determinedly pursued political change through negotiation. See, Dudley Miles, *Francis Place 1771-1854: The Life of a Remarkable Radical* (Brighton: Harvester, 1988); Place left copious papers, see D. J. Rowe, *London Radicalism, 1830-1843: A Selection from the Papers of Francis Place* (London: London Record Society, 1970). It has been argued that use of his papers has led to an overemphasis of his interpretation of the radical activities of his time, but the papers allow the reader to appreciate the range of views being discussed, see W. E. S. Thomas, "Francis Place and Working Class History," *The Historical Journal* 5, no. 1 (1962). Place had worked with both Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and James Mill (1773-1836), see George J. Holyoake, *Sixty Years of an Agitator's Life*, vol. 1 (London: Fisher Unwin, 1892), 213-21.

¹⁰² D. J. Rowe, "The London Working Men's Association and The "People's Charter"," *Past & Present*, no. 36 (1967): 73, 81-85; Goodway, *London Chartism*, 21-23. The contradictory accounts of the establishment of the LWMA do agree that the initiative was taken by Dr J. Roberts Black, who was introduced by Francis Place to William Lovett in early 1835. See, David Large, "William Lovett," in *Pressure from Without in Early Victorian England*, ed. Patricia Hollis (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), 105-30.

¹⁰³ Joseph Hamburger, *Intellectuals in Politics: J.S.Mill and the Philosophical Radicals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 252-53; The LWMA held a meeting with Radical MPs to discuss the six points of the Charter and the MPs listed as attending were Joseph Hume, D. O'Connell, Benjamin Hawes, Charles Hindley, Dr Bowering, Colonel Thompson, W. Sharman Crawford, J.T. Leader. British Library, Minutes of the LWMA, Add. 37773, 31 May 31, 1837; See Michael J. Turner, "Thomas Perronet Thompson, "Sensible Chartism" and the Chimera of Radical Unity." *Albion* 33, no. 1 (2001): 57.

of the First London Co-operative Trading Association.¹⁰⁴ The LWMA disbanded in 1840, but in July 1842, Skelton joined the next organization established by Lovett. This was the newly formed London branch of the National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People which had a library and reading room from the outset.¹⁰⁵ These contacts would have encompassed people of varying political beliefs: in her analysis of the “physical force” London Democratic Association, Jennifer Bennett found that many Chartists belonged to more than one organisation.¹⁰⁶ She found many members from the skilled trades with interests such as temperance, and her lively account of their activities supports the views of Patrick Joyce who sought a broad meaning for individual and social identity. He questioned whether it can be inferred that use of language which identifies interests as those of the working-class actually means that the utterance contains a commitment to “class consciousness.”¹⁰⁷ More recently, the interpretation of radical sources has been discussed by Rob Breton in his analysis of language in the *Poor Man’s Guardian*, an unstamped newspaper published during the 1830s by another Socialist and Member of the LWMA, Henry Hetherington (1792-1849). Breton argued that multiple meanings were expressed, and therefore that “we should hesitate before speaking of competing narratives,” arguing that categories such as class or nation arise predominantly from the historian’s methodology whereas that the real

¹⁰⁴ Lovett was a committed radical and a serious man who despised violence and turned to education in later years. The minutes of the LWMA show that he had beautiful handwriting. David Goodway, “Lovett, William (1800–1877),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2005). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17068> [accessed July 8, 2013].

¹⁰⁵ For a discussion of the journals and books, see chapter 5. Lovett and colleagues, including Watson and Hetherington, had begun meeting in October 1841, and obtained the lease of the National Hall 242a High Holborn in mid 1842. See, David Stack, “William Lovett and the National Association of the Political and Social Improvement of the People,” *Historical Journal* 42, no. 4 (1999), 1027-1029; British Library, Minutes, Add. 37774, November 2, 1841. The rules on admission were less strict and also included women. Skelton was proposed on 26 July 1842 by William Lovett and James Hoppy. Skelton was nominated to the committee 10 January 1843 but declined to serve the next term. He was not listed by Lovett amongst the seventy-four people “who took, more or less, an active part” in the National Association, see Lovett, *Life and Struggles*, 214.

¹⁰⁶ An example was Charles Neesom, a former member of the National Union of the Working Classes, who was a member of the London Democratic Association, and then joined the LWMA, see Jennifer Bennett, “The London Democratic Association 1837-1841: A Study in London Radicalism,” in *The Chartist Experience*, ed. James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (London: Macmillan Press, 1982). From 1846 Neesom was secretary of the London branch of the National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People, see, British Library, Minutes, Add. 37774-6. Neesom was an advocate of temperance, and later of vegetarianism, see Chase, *Chartism: A New History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 170-71, 184-91.

¹⁰⁷ Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

events were more complex.¹⁰⁸ The point to note therefore is that, through membership of the LWMA and attendance at Chartist meetings, Skelton was involved in a complex political and cultural milieu.

Chartist activity

Skelton was active in Chartist circles throughout the 1840s, and lectured at Chartist meetings.¹⁰⁹ After the first Chartist petition, there was a public falling-out between Lovett and Feargus O'Connor (1794-1855), leader of the National Charter Association (NCA), who was determined to take centre-stage in the Chartist movement.¹¹⁰ The NCA became the main organization and presented the second petition to Parliament in support of the *People's Charter* in May 1842.¹¹¹ Eventually there was an irrevocable split between some moral force Chartists and O'Connor. Historians have had contradictory views on the role of O'Connor, but Skelly clearly showed that O'Connor "made an ambiguous rhetorical association" between the political moderation of the LWMA and "middle-class" self-interest.¹¹² However, the views of leaders are not the views of the members, and along with other moderate Chartists, Skelton joined the NCA. Not that his views appear to have changed - in April 1843, he moved a resolution at the Metropolis Delegate Meeting,

that we the delegates of the metropolis now assembled do declare it as our opinion that as unity of purpose is the one thing called for by the advanced position of society, it is requisite that the right of freedom of opinion be acknowledged by all who are engaged in the task of promoting the happiness and advancing the great cause of political and social equality to the world.¹¹³

Amongst the more prominent members of LWMA who never joined the NCA but continued to work for Chartist goals, were Lovett and Henry Vincent (1813-1878). In 1842, they worked alongside the Complete Suffrage Union (CSU), a predominantly middle-class

¹⁰⁸ Rob Breton, "Violence and the Radical Imagination" *Victorian Periodicals Review* 44, no. 1, (2011):24-41.

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix 1: Lectures. Reports were sought in the *Northern Star*, newspaper of the National Charter Association (NCA), founded in the summer of 1840, but not in other Chartist newspapers.

¹¹⁰ Chase, *Chartism*, 168-70, 183-84; Lovett, *Life and Struggles*, 207-208.

¹¹¹ Chase, *Chartism*, 204-207.

¹¹² Skelly, "Origins, Nature and Development of Moral Force Chartism," 26.

¹¹³ *Northern Star*, April 22, 1843. The reason for this motion is not given, but it is quoted in full to give a flavour of his language. "The motion, after considerable discussion, was agreed to with one dissentient, on the ground of its being uncalled for."

organization led by Joseph Sturge (1793-1859).¹¹⁴ A meeting was called in April 1842 by the CSU to debate potential cooperation with Chartists. The 101 attendees debated and agreed the six points of the Charter in principle, but there was fundamental disagreement over use of the term Chartist.¹¹⁵ Skelton did not attend this meeting, but was one of four representatives from Westminster who attended the follow-up meeting in December 1842 which rejected a Bill of Rights incorporating the six points, and determined to debate the original text of the *People's Charter*.¹¹⁶ The ensuing divisions between the NCA and the CSU remained as we see from a noisy public meeting rather over a year later in January 1844 where Skelton took a prominent albeit spontaneous role. The "tea party and soiree" had been called as a Metropolitan demonstration in favour of the principle of complete suffrage. Of the 27 named guests, four were MPs and 8 were Reverends. Dr Bowring MP proposed an amendment to the Queen's speech, which would "enquire into the grievance of the people." O'Connor rose to argue that the name Chartist could be used by anyone as "moral force was so well understood that no Reformer ever thought of physical force." He was followed by Thomas Slingsby Duncombe MP (1796-1861) saying that "if he were a Chartist why should he be ashamed of the name!" Sturge argued that the aims were important not the name. According to newspaper reports, general uproar ensued and

a working man named Skelton attempted to get a hearing, encouraged by other Chartists, and opposed by other parties. Skelton (as he was called) obtained a hearing, and said he would ask Mr Spencer whether, if the name of the Bible of England were to-morrow to be changed into that of the Koran, would he consent to give the name up? - (loud cheers from the Chartists). Spencer said the question was unfair, in the mouth of a friend of civil and religious liberty. It was like suggesting to Methodists, Baptists, and others - you agree in the main, why not be called by the same name? - (laughter). He would ask Mr Duncombe if he knew of any better movement than that now proposed. Duncombe then took a show of hands and found the majority in the meeting for the name Chartist.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Alexander Wilson, "The Suffrage Movement," in *Pressure from without in Early Victorian England*, ed. Patricia Hollis (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), 84-91; Harold U. Faulkner, *Chartism and the Churches: A Study in Democracy* (London: F. Cass, 1970), 115-22. Joseph Sturge was the founder of the Birmingham Political Union, and a prominent Quaker and campaigner against slavery, see Alex Tyrrell, "Sturge, Joseph (1793-1859)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2009). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26746> [accessed July 8, 2013]; Albert Nicholson, "Vincent, Henry (1813-1878)" rev. Eileen Groth Lyon in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, (Oxford: OUP, 2005). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28309> [accessed July 8, 2013].

¹¹⁵ Chase, *Chartism*, 193-99.

¹¹⁶ The votes were published as 193 for the amendment (including Skelton), 94 for the original motion, 73 absent and 14 neutral, "Report of the Proceedings of the Conference of Delegates of the Middle and Working Classes, held at Birmingham," *Northern Star*, January 14, 1843; Wilson, "Suffrage Movement," 88-91; Chase, *Chartism*, 227-29.

¹¹⁷ *Northern Star* February 3, 1844. Duncombe was Radical MP for Finsbury, 1834-1861, see Matthew Lee, "Duncombe, Thomas Slingsby (1796-1861)," *Oxford Dictionary of National*

Skelton promoted another important aspect of Chartism: the Chartist Land plan, and in April 1843 “in a long and eloquent address, advocated the necessity and practicability of taking immediate steps to gain possession of the land.”¹¹⁸ O’Connor was the initiative behind this campaign, claiming that

Land is the only raw material to which individual labour can be successfully applied. That the single husbandman stands in no danger from competition, combination, or centralization. That come what will, be his produce cheap or dear, he cannot starve, nor will he depend for existence, comfort, or labour on the whim or the caprice of another.¹¹⁹

In the light of rural poverty this was a remarkable statement, but the Land plan became O’Connor’s main preoccupation, and it was taken up with great enthusiasm by the members of the NCA. Agrarianism was not new in radical circles, but the Land plan was organized around single families in contrast to Socialist land communities which were based on cooperative endeavour.¹²⁰ Skelton again spoke publicly in support of the Land plan in Chorleywood in 1846,¹²¹ and indeed, it was at a large gathering at the Land Plan community, O’Connorville, that Skelton shared the same platform as O’Connor on Whit Monday 1847.¹²² He was called to speak in support of Charles Cochrane, Parliamentary candidate for Westminster at the General Election of 1847.¹²³ The NCA had set up a campaign organization, chaired by Duncombe, to give support to candidates who favoured universal suffrage. The campaign also encouraged any eligible Chartists to register as voters. Skelton had managed to do this, and indeed, it had been mooted that he might stand as a candidate in that election himself.¹²⁴ Skelton declared that:

Biography, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2005). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8239> [accessed July 8, 2013]; Reverend Thomas Spencer of Bath was an exceptional Member of the Church of England, as he was a firm supporter of representative government and on the Council of the CSU, see Faulkner, *Chartism and the Churches: A Study in Democracy* (London: F. Cass, 1970), 113-14, 212.

¹¹⁸ “Metropolitan Delegates Association,” *Northern Star*, April 22, 1843. Skelton seconded the motion calling for a London-wide meeting to consider the “plan of Organisation.”

¹¹⁹ “To the Producers of Wealth and all those who Live by Industry on the Land,” *Northern Star*, April 22, 1843. For the Land plan, see Chase, *Chartism*, 166-68, 247-54, 256-61. 277-79.

¹²⁰ Chase, *Chartism*, 249-51.

¹²¹ *Northern Star*, July 18, 1846.

¹²² *Northern Star*, June 22, 1847.

¹²³ Cochrane was not elected. For the Chartist campaign at the General Election of 30 July 1847, see Chase, *Chartism*, 279-86.

¹²⁴ The people of Banbury were going to request John Skelton to offer himself for their borough, see *Northern Star*, December 19, 1846.

unless they got possession of property, they never would possess those rights to which they were justly entitled. The House of Commons had had petitions presented to it signed by millions of persons, but the house needed not the petitions, because they only represented men and not property. (Hear, hear.), and that “He was right glad to see Mr Cochrane had left the sickly sentimentality in which men of his class generally indulged, and had dared to come here, despite the censure of his own order. It spoke much for the Land Company, and much more for Mr Cochrane. (Great applause)”¹²⁵

With or without the Land plan, few Chartists were likely to become property owners but the speech shows that Skelton continued throughout to advocate non-violence. Moral force or physical force was at the top of the agenda in the weeks leading up to the presentation of the third Chartist Petition to Parliament in April 1848. However, Skelton did not waver. In January 1848, he seconded a motion in favour of male suffrage, arguing that “the reason the industrious wealth-producers now starved was that they were excluded from the franchise” and that “the present system was a system of fraud and rank delusion, and must be destroyed before they could found a just and good one. (Hear, hear.) But they must not expect those who grow fat by that system to work a change. No; for they required no change.” Ernest Jones, speaking next, criticised Skelton’s Socialist views saying, “Mr Skelton exhorts the people to become wealthy through cooperation.” But “nothing cooperating with nothing, produces nothing.”¹²⁶

Feelings were running very high with the approach of the Kennington Common demonstration of 10 April 1848. At a heated meeting of the Chartist Convention in late March 1848 at John Street, Skelton and Jones were in opposition. Skelton spoke first and

The tenor of this address was a strong denunciation of physical force, ridiculing the idea of the people being able to fight, and to contend with the government. Mr Skelton had proceeded to a considerable length, amid the loud disapprobation of the meeting, when he broke off from reading his address, . . . In riposte, Mr Ernest Jones on rising was greeted with protracted cheering . . . Mr Skelton has told us that the power of mind is to subvert despotism . . . The people are marching on the high-road to progression, but across the way class rule has built a cold stony wall of monopolies . . . Let them look at it and say in their minds: 'you naughty wall, you ought to be lying low, you oughtn't to be there—why don't you tumble down?'¹²⁷

¹²⁵ *Northern Star*, May 29, 1847

¹²⁶ “Meeting at the Royal British Institution, Cowper Street, Finsbury, 11 January 1848,” *Northern Star*, January 15, 1848.

¹²⁷ *Northern Star*, April 1, 1848.

Jones advised “a physical organisation - because I know what the people are determined to do, should moral means fail,”¹²⁸ but Skelton’s views were unchanged. The very next day after the Kennington demonstration, he proposed a motion:

that this meeting highly approve of the policy of the Convention in preserving the peace and preventing a collision with the constituted authorities, and thereby preventing an enormous expenditure of blood the shedding of which would have answered no good end but would have made widows sigh and orphans mourn the loss of husband and father. Moral force was more powerful than physical force. It was true government and all our institutions were based on physical force, and why? because the minority made laws for the majority.¹²⁹

Here we see Skelton taking an adamantly moral force view, even as so many were disappointed by the events at Kennington.

Skelton appeared in the *Northern Star* in the last week of April 1848, at a meeting of the Metropolis trades which debated a wide-ranging report calling on the government to take action to provide employment. Skelton seconded an amendment which was accepted to add the six points of the Charter, and Repeal of the Union as “it was their duty to sympathise with their brethren in Ireland; and not allow them to be thrust out of existence either by starvation or by the law. (Cheers).”¹³⁰ On this topic, Skelton and Jones agreed as they had in 1847 when Jones “pointed to the Land, the Charter and Repeal, as the trinity of remedies for the monster abuses under which lie people of the United Kingdom.”¹³¹ Skelton had seconded Jones’ motion, “to censure the government for attempting to coerce the Irish nation, instead of finding reproductive employment for persons on their own genial soil”¹³² and, as we will see later in this chapter, Ireland was the inspiration for a poem composed by Skelton.

¹²⁸ For a discussion of this meeting and the Kennington Common Demonstration, see Chase, *Chartism*, 298-303.

¹²⁹ “Meeting at Literary and Scientific Institute, John Street,” *Northern Star*, April 15, 1848.

¹³⁰ *Northern Star*, April 29, 1848.

¹³¹ “South London Chartist Hall, 7 December 1847,” *Northern Star*, December 11, 1847. For Ireland, see, Chase, *Chartism*, 292-94.

¹³² *Northern Star*, December 11, 1847. This refers to the Coercion Bill, part of a series of security measures in Ireland.

For Skelton, employment meant both earning one's living and partaking usefully in society. He was apprenticed as a shoemaker around 1820, and by 1842 was a "West End Ladies' Man." According to the *Northern Star*, this trade society was "the most aristocratic in the kingdom."¹³³ Shoemakers formed a diverse trade group which was prominent in Chartist activities,¹³⁴ but it is through his trades' society activities that Skelton again appeared in the *Northern Star*.¹³⁵

In April 1842, a meeting of journeymen and masters was called to protest against the proposed halving of duty on foreign boots and shoes. Skelton, described as "a working man and a Chartist," in a "very eloquent address,"

called upon the gentlemen he saw around him to cease looking upon the interests of those gilded butterflies, who basked in the sunshine of the court, and fattened upon its corruption. If they looked to them in their present hour of tribulation, they would be bitterly deceived. He called upon them to look to the working men, and treat them as rational beings (Great cheering.) The day was gone by when they were called a drunken set of men. He could tell them that the men could now calculate and look to their interest as well as Sir Robert Peel. (Cheers).¹³⁶

Skelton complained about the import duty on silk and satin, raw materials in his own work making ladies' footwear. Ladies' shoes from France had become increasingly fashionable in England after 1826, and the shoemakers were right to be concerned for their livelihoods. Peel won the day, and import taxes were halved in 1842, such that imports of shoes increased exponentially over the next decade.¹³⁷

¹³³ *Northern Star*, October 15, 1842.

¹³⁴ Thompson, *The Chartists*, 179-187; E. J. Hobsbawm and Joan Wallach Scott, "Political Shoemakers," *Past & Present*, no. 89 (1980); Goodway, *London Chartism*, 159-169; The Chairman of a trades meeting in 1842 estimated that "in London and its suburbs there were from 26,000 to 30,000 persons engaged in the boot and shoe trade". *Northern Star* 2 April 1842, 7; John Belchem, "Chartism and the Trades, 1848-1850," *The English Historical Review* 98, no. 388 (1983).

¹³⁵ Trade societies which set and maintained wages and conditions of work were well-established in London, see Nicholas Mansfield, "John Brown a Shoemaker in Place's London," *History Workshop Journal* 8, no. 1 (1979). For an account of trade societies, see Iorwerth Prothero, "London Chartism and the Trades," 202-217; For an account of the relationship between trades' activism and Chartism, see Malcolm Chase, *Early Trade Unionism: Fraternity, Skill, and the Politics of Labour* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 2000), 173-201.

¹³⁶ *Northern Star*, April 2, 1842.

¹³⁷ G. Riello, "La-Chaussure-a-La-Mode: Product Innovation and Marketing Strategies in Parisian and London Boot and Shoemaking in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Textile History* 34, no. 2 (2003).

In the 1840s, long-established trade societies were attempting to unite as national societies, but sometimes struggled to find common ground. In the case of shoemakers, there was division between men's men and women's men. In September 1844 the Philanthropic Society of Boot and Shoe Makers (men's men) proposed a new national union to which Skelton's society, the London West End women's men, had affiliated.¹³⁸ In 1845, Skelton spoke a meeting of the societies, and "never in his life did he experience more pleasure in addressing a meeting" as he supported the motion which was passed to form a national union.¹³⁹ Skelton "then entered into an elaborate dissertation on strikes, shewing their fallacious tendency generally, and that they could not be relied on as a remedy." He argued that the weakness of trades' societies was such that strikes were ineffective. His proposal to ban strikes for a year was not debated, but the rules did include another of his proposals that at "meetings for the conduct of trade business . . . no drink be allowed during the hours of business."¹⁴⁰

In March 1845, Skelton and Mr Christopher represented 400 West-end Ladies' Shoemakers at the National Conference of Trades, chaired by Duncombe.¹⁴¹ The Conference proposed a national umbrella organization for all trades, funded by subscriptions from affiliated trade societies. Skelton declared his branch opposed to strikes, in favour of restricting the hours of labour, and of withdrawing the "surplus of labour from the market, and employing the same beneficially for their own advantage. (Cheers.)" This was in line with both Socialism and the policy of the organization which was established: the National Association of United Trades (NAUT) which sent out national negotiators so that strikes were only sanctioned where "all attempts at mediation upon terms honorable to both parties had failed."¹⁴² Skelton later seconded a motion proposing that trades "establish manufactories and stores to supply themselves with

¹³⁸ The City and West End men's men societies had united but did not affiliate to the proposed national union as they sought a national union only of men's men. See *Northern Star*, September 21, 1844.

¹³⁹ Meeting, of the Cordwainers' Mutual Assistance Association (national society) and Philanthropic Society of Shoemakers (Men's men), Sunday 30 March 1845, *Northern Star* April 5, 1845. The meeting discussed the prevailing unemployment and thus the undercutting of prices by manufacturers in Northampton whose non-apprenticed employees did not belong to any society.

¹⁴⁰ "Annual Conference of the Boot and Shoemakers," *Northern Star*, April 12, 1845.

¹⁴¹ *Northern Star* March 29, 1845. See Chase, *Chartism*, 243-47.

¹⁴² Bishopsgate Institute, *Monthly Report of the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Industry* 1, no. 1, December 1847; Prothero, "London Chartism and the Trades," 217-19; Chase, *Early Trade Unionism*, 207-15; The leaders of the NAUT included Socialists, see Claeys, *Citizens and Saints*, 264, 266.

provisions, the profits arising therefrom to be devoted to the purchase of land on which to employ surplus labour.”¹⁴³ Skelton was one of nine people elected to the provisional committee of the NAUT, so his name can be added to the number of their leaders who have been identified as Socialists or former Socialists. Skelton’s opposition to strikes and his promotion of cooperative enterprise show the unmistakable hallmarks of Socialism.¹⁴⁴ In this period, strikes were costly to trade societies, often ineffective, resulted in violent incidents and arrests and led to further hardship and sometimes eviction for the families of strikers.¹⁴⁵ Representatives of the NAUT were successful in mediating between employers and employees and negotiating mutual concessions.¹⁴⁶

Skelton was appointed by the NAUT to “disseminate a knowledge of its principles,” and he left for a lecture tour of the North on 22 October 1845.¹⁴⁷ He supported the aims of the NAUT, and was already an experienced lecturer. Before leaving, his lecture was “listened to with breathless attention throughout.” He repeated the argument that “strikes on the system of individual trades had long been tried and found wanting” and further stated that the NAUT proposed inviting subscriptions to a joint stock company to provide employment, so that the working-class could “produce wealth for their own profit, without the intervention of an employer, . . . thus ultimately abolishing the middle class altogether.”¹⁴⁸ The first two parts of this argument could have been taken directly from the *New Moral World*.¹⁴⁹ “Abolishing the middle class” could mean an end to opposing interests through economic or political change or imply “class war.” His sentiment gives credence to the argument of Claeys, that any attempt to extricate Socialists from Chartists or vice versa is fraught with difficulty.¹⁵⁰ I have not found a report of his lecture tour, but

¹⁴³ *Northern Star*, April 5, 1845.

¹⁴⁴ For a comprehensive discussion of the economic theories of Socialism, see Gregory Claeys, *Machinery, Money and the Millenium: From Moral Economy to Socialism, 1815-60* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 55-56, 101, 136-42.

¹⁴⁵ Chase, *Early Trade Unionism*, 180-82.

¹⁴⁶ Bishopsgate Institute, Howell Collection, Monthly Report of the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Industry 1, no. 3, February 1848, 31; Skelton was not named in the report of activities 1845-1847, see Monthly Report of the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Industry 1, no. 1, December 1, 1847.

¹⁴⁷ *Northern Star*, October 18, 1845.

¹⁴⁸ *Northern Star*, October 25, 1845.

¹⁴⁹ “Wasted Money, and Fruitless Efforts by the Working Classes,” *New Moral World* 8, no. 2 (February 20, 1841): 114.

¹⁵⁰ Claeys, *Citizens and Saints*, 208-247. Skelton’s conception of class is discussed further in chapter 5.

Skelton remained active in the NAUT in that, at the annual meeting of the affiliated National Association for the Employment of Labour in 1847, Edmund Stallwood and Skelton were re-elected as auditors.¹⁵¹

The NAUT was chaired by Duncombe and it is intriguing to ask what influence he had on Skelton. Duncombe was an aristocrat, reputed to be the smartest dresser in the Houses of Parliament, but consistently loyal to Chartism and willing to support working people both in the House and through hands-on involvement in their organizations.¹⁵² It is impossible not to wonder whether being in the same room with people of other classes led to changes in attitude amongst leading Chartists.

Chartist social life

Iain McCalman's account of radical life in early nineteenth century London found a lively "irrational" culture.¹⁵³ Chartist meetings were often held in the rooms of public houses and will have continued in the bar. The *Northern Star* regularly advertised ticketed social events which incorporated teas and dinners with radical toasts. But here we turn to an incident in the autobiography of Thomas Cooper (1805-1892) which reveals a private side to radical life. Recalling meeting the Scottish poet, William Thom (1789-1848) at the Hampstead home of Garth Wilkinson (1812-1899),¹⁵⁴ Cooper reminisced over earlier meetings:

and then he sang so sweetly! We got up a weekly meeting, at one time, at the Crown Tavern, close to the church of St Dunstan's-in the-West, Fleet Street; and it was chiefly that we might enjoy the society of Willie Thom. Julian Harney, and John Skelton (now Dr. Skelton), and old Dr. McDonald, and James Devlin, who wrote "The Shoemaker," and Walter Cooper, and Thomas Shorter, and a few others were members of our weekly meeting. Willie Thom usually sang us his "Wandering Willie," or "My ain wee thing;" and sometimes I sang them my prison songs, "O choose thou the maid with the gentle blue eye," and "I would not be a crowned king."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵¹ *Northern Star*, August 21, 1847.

¹⁵² "Duncombe Testimonial," *Northern Star* March 29, 1845; Lee, "Duncombe"; Chase, *Chartism*, 178-9, 205-207; Chase, *Early Trade Unionism*, 210.

¹⁵³ Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld : Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). A criticism of autobiographies is that the authors reinvent themselves and paint over past extremist behavior. This could well have been the case in Skelton's writings.

¹⁵⁴ William Thom, "The Inverurie Poet," and weaver, later lived in London and Dundee. Cooper must have combined different reminiscences as this social event occurred in April 1848, but Thom died in February 1848.

¹⁵⁵ Thomas Cooper, *The Life of Thomas Cooper, Written by Himself*. 4th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1879), 311-15.

Prothero gave a more formal sense to these meetings, but hinted at the breadth of views voiced in one room.¹⁵⁶ Harney, editor of the *Northern Star* from late 1845, was characterised as a militant Chartist with internationalist connections.¹⁵⁷ Harney spoke alongside Skelton at a meeting organized in September 1845 by Cooper to support convicted Chartists,¹⁵⁸ and these poetry meetings again appear to belie the distinctions made in the historiography between “moral force” and “physical force.” James Devlin (?-1863) was a boot-closer, and poet.¹⁵⁹ Thomas Shorter (1823-1899) was a Socialist who became a Christian Socialist and spiritualist.¹⁶⁰ Walter Cooper (1814-?) was a tailor and Socialist, and later manager of the Working Tailors’ Association set up by the Christian Socialists in 1850.¹⁶¹

These were literary or poetry meetings, in that Thom, Cooper and Devlin had published poems.¹⁶² From 1844 Harney was responsible for the poetry column of the *Northern Star*, which had always published Chartist poems but Harney added his favourites, in particular the “Beauties of Byron.”¹⁶³ Skelton was to have two poems published in the *Northern Star* in April 1848. The “National Song for the People” used a common metaphor, “Chartism as dawn” in alluding to “The sun the eastern sky is

¹⁵⁶ Prothero, *Radical Artisans*, 246.

¹⁵⁷ A. R. Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge: A Portrait of George Julian Harney* (London: Heinemann, 1958).

¹⁵⁸ *Northern Star*, September 17, 1845; The Exiles’ Widows’ and Children’s Fund and the Veteran Patriots’ Fund, see Cooper, *Life*, 285. Cooper was imprisoned in 1843 and his co-defendants were William Ellis (1809-71) transported to Tasmania; and John “Daddy” Richardson.

¹⁵⁹ James D. Devlin, *The Shoemaker* (London: Charles Knight, 1840-41). Labouring-Class Writers Project, Nottingham Trent University http://human.ntu.ac.uk/research/labouringclasswriters/DBoW/Poets_A2Z [accessed June 16, 2013].

¹⁶⁰ Shorter was a watchcase finisher, poet, first Secretary of the London Working Men’s College, founded by the Christian socialists in 1854, and Co-editor of the *Spiritual Magazine* from 1860. See Harrison, *Owen and the Owenites*, 251; “Early Victorian Radicals,” 207.

¹⁶¹ Claey’s, *Citizens and Saints*, 277. I have been unable to definitely identify Dr MacDonald.

¹⁶² Cooper published “Purgatory of Suicides” in 1854, an epic in 10 books written in Spenserian stanza. See Mike Sanders, ““A Jackass Load of Poetry”: The Northern Star’s Poetry Column 1838-1852,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 39, no. 1 (2006), 54-58. Skelton was Treasurer of the “Purgatory of Suicides” Book Club, see *Northern Star*, August 1, 1846.

¹⁶³ Sanders, “Jackass Load of Poetry,” 54-58.

rounding.”¹⁶⁴ Given the recent events at Kennington, the tone of this poem was remarkable for its vigorous call to action:

A glorious spirit thus we show,
That tyrant souls can never know
Then up, up, up the hour is here;
Strike-strike for home and England dear.¹⁶⁵

The explanation for the tone must be the recent call from a correspondent for an English “Marseillaise!”¹⁶⁶ Skelton’s second poem was also a call to action such that Sanders described it as having an “insurrectionary message” whose metre gave it a sense of “driving urgency.”¹⁶⁷ The theme of “The Respond to Liberty” was the situation in Ireland, and the call was to “arise from your thralldom, both *Saxon* and *Celt*,” or “has the storm of vitality died in the vein?”¹⁶⁸ Skelton’s poetry was unremarkable in quality or sentiment, but here we see another side of his literary and textual production. The account of these poetry meetings also illuminates the interweaving radical social networks. They probably happened after Autumn 1845 when Harney moved back to London from Sheffield, and before Cooper was expelled from the NCA in August 1846.¹⁶⁹ Cooper’s public lectures against physical violence were one reason for his expulsion, alongside his opposition to the Land plan.¹⁷⁰

We meet the same people meeting to support international radical causes at public dinners. Discussing the poetry meetings, Prothero noted Skelton’s prominence in international associations alongside Cooper and Harney, but this turns out to have been more fun than Prothero’s note suggested. As editor of the *Northern Star*, Harney made it

¹⁶⁴ Michael Sanders, “Poetic Agency: Metonymy and Metaphor in Chartist Poetry 1838-1852,” *Victorian Poetry* 39, no. 2 (2001): 116.

¹⁶⁵ “National Song for the People,” London, April 27, *Northern Star*, April 29, 1848. It was set to “The Fishermen,” a rousing chorus from the opera, *Masaniello or La Muette de Portici*, by Daniel Auber, set appropriately amongst a popular uprising in seventeenth-century Naples.

¹⁶⁶ Sanders, “Jackass Load of Poetry,” 59; For a discussion of the meaning of this poem see, Michael Sanders, *The Poetry of Chartism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 185-86.

¹⁶⁷ *Northern Star*, April 22, 1848; Sanders, *Poetry of Chartism*, 176, 185.

¹⁶⁸ Skelton has spoken on this theme at around the same time at a meeting of the Metropolis Trades, *Northern Star*, April 29, 1848.

¹⁶⁹ Stephen Roberts, “The Later Radical Career of Thomas Cooper, c.1845-1855,” *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* 64, (1990): 64-65. Cooper was released from prison in Stafford, 4th May, 1845 and travelled immediately to London. He was away from London for three months in the summer of 1846, but appears to have remained in London giving lectures throughout 1847. Cooper, *Life*, 253, 286, 296-302.

¹⁷⁰ Cooper, *Life*, 277. Chase, *Chartism*, 275-77.

his mission to promote international news.¹⁷¹ He had become friends with Friedrich Engels since their first meeting in 1843, and made contact with exiles in London such as the Polish Democratic Society. In September 1845, Harney founded the Fraternal Democrats at a democratic banquet in commemoration of the establishment of the French Republic. Skelton was amongst the friends expected to attend.¹⁷² Cooper chaired this banquet, yet by July 1846 a letter published in the *Northern Star* from Engels and Karl Marx referred to "Thomas Cooper, the would-be respectable's calumnies."¹⁷³ Cooper retained his internationalist commitment but as a Council member of the People's International League.¹⁷⁴ Skelton stayed with the Fraternal Democrats and in 1847 tickets for the "Fraternity of Nations Public Supper in Commemoration of the Founding of the Fraternal Democrats" could be obtained from his address.¹⁷⁵ The Fraternal Democrats had overtly republican principles and condemned

all political hereditary inequalities and distinctions of 'caste;' consequently we regard kings, aristocracies, and classes monopolising political privileges in virtue of their possession of property, as usurpers and violators of the principle of human brotherhood. Government elected by, and responsible to, the entire people, is our political creed.¹⁷⁶

Their activities drew on the support of both British and European radicals living in London. According to Henry Weisser, the Fraternal Democrats have gained an aura of revolutionary fervour because of the contacts between Harney, Marx and Engels, but can equally be described as social gatherings of like-minded radicals.¹⁷⁷ One cannot help

¹⁷¹ Iorwerth Prothero, "Chartists and Political Refugees." In *Exiles from European Revolutions: Refugees in Mid-Victorian London*, ed. Sabine Freitag (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 219-24.

¹⁷² Tickets, 1/-, were available from, amongst others, Mr Skelton of 24 Cecil Court. *Northern Star*, Sept 13, 1845; Schoyen, *Chartist Challenge*, 129-41.

¹⁷³ Engels, F. Marx, K. Philip Gigot. Address of the German Democratic Communists of Brussels To Mr. Feargus O'Connor Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels 1846 Marxist Internet Archive Source: MECW 6, p. 59; 17 July 1846; First published: in *The Northern Star* No. 454, July 25, 1846 <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1846/07/17.htm> 27 February 2012

¹⁷⁴ Cooper, *Life*, 299; Henry Weisser, "Chartist Internationalism, 1845-1848," *Historical Journal* 14, no. 1 (1971): 62-63; The Council of this organization included Chartists and members of the CSU, and aimed to promote awareness of events in "Foreign countries" and "manifest an efficient Public Opinion in favour of the right of every People to Self-government." Gregory Claeys, *Chartist Movement in Britain, 1838-1850*, vol. 4 (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2001), 241.

¹⁷⁵ *Northern Star*, September 18, 1847.

¹⁷⁶ Claeys, "Principles and Rules of the Society of Fraternal Democrats," *Chartist Movement in Britain*, 284-85.

¹⁷⁷ Weisser, "Chartist Internationalism," 49-61.

imagining Skelton conversing with Marx and Engels when they attended a meeting of the Fraternal Democrats in December 1847.¹⁷⁸

This section on Chartism ends appropriately on a social note, as surely the personal skills gained in all aspects of his political activities set Skelton in good stead for the next stage of his life. Taken all together, this section shows that the shoemaker, born in rural Devon, had travelled a long way since he left Bridgewater in the 1830s. His life was about to change again when he left London for Manchester in April 1848 to become the assistant of Dr Albert Coffin, medical botanist. Skelton left London with what are now called transferable skills: literacy, writing and delivering lectures, negotiating skills and experience of chairing meetings. He had been lecturing regularly in London at local NCA meetings on Chartist topics such as the Land plan but extended his repertoire to topics such as "Priestcraft versus superstition" and "Progressive Civilization."¹⁷⁹ The Chartist branch meetings of the NCA provided the opportunity for "fledgling orators" to hone their skills, and venture forth on lecture tours to promote the cause further afield.¹⁸⁰ Skelton had wide interests and was a vivid lecturer, and perhaps believed his own words, "thus do we bandy words about as if the words had a magical power which would have the effect of drawing the multitudes into a bond, against which the shafts of Capital would fall harmless."¹⁸¹

Medical Botanist: 1848 onwards

In 1850, Skelton declared that he had attended Coffin's first lectures in London in 1840 and "it was here I became convinced of the truth of his principles which I have since endeavoured to advocate."¹⁸² Although there were other possible American influences, Skelton must have been mainly influenced by the work of Coffin as he was his assistant for two years. Between 1848 and 1850, Skelton worked in Manchester alongside Coffin's

¹⁷⁸ Weisser, "Chartist Internationalism," 60-61; *Northern Star* December 11, 1847; for internationalism see Chase, *Chartism*, 286-89.

¹⁷⁹ See Appendix 1: Lectures.

¹⁸⁰ Owen Ashton. "Orators and Oratory in the Chartist Movement, 1840-1848," In *The Chartist Legacy*, edited by Owen Ashton, Robert Fyson and Stephen Roberts (Rendelsham, Suffolk: Merlin Press, 1999), 55-67.

¹⁸¹ *Northern Star*, April 12, 1842.

¹⁸² *Coffin's Journal* 2, no. 44 (January 1850): 21. Coffin and Skelton may have met through Socialist circles. At a meeting in Hull in 1841, Coffin stated that he had been a Socialist lecturer, but now "firmly disbelieved the doctrines of Socialism *New Moral World* 14, no. 2 (April 3, 1841): 215.

partner, Dr Thomas Harle.¹⁸³ Harle had qualified 19 years earlier in York, and may have been an important influence through his medical knowledge, prescribing and textbooks, as Skelton recalled that he “went into the study most zealously for a time” after being appointed as Coffin’s assistant.¹⁸⁴

Part of Skelton’s duties was to lecture on Coffin’s system in Yorkshire and Lancashire and south to Leicester.¹⁸⁵ Public lectures appear to have been an important part of social life for all classes in the nineteenth century. These could be on religion, philosophy, natural history or cultural topics, but lecture tours were also organized by pressure groups for the anti-slavery campaign, the campaign to repeal the Corn Laws, and the temperance movement, and later in the opposition to the Crimean War and to Church involvement in municipally funded education.¹⁸⁶ Janette Martin analysed the Yorkshire lecture tours of a Chartist in the 1840s and a temperance campaigner in the 1860s, and argued that oratory played an important role in the formation of public opinion on local and national matters. Her vivid account found that these tours relied substantially on walking as well as the railway timetable.¹⁸⁷ Looking at his itineraries, Skelton often lectured in three towns in a week, and, as with other movements, the growth of medical botany relied on the new railway network.¹⁸⁸

Skelton maintained the forthright style of his earlier lecturing career: in the course of a public debate, he compared his opponent to “some animal of the serpent kind which he had read of in natural history as a boy, who when frightened turned its tail and stung itself to death.”¹⁸⁹ Possibly it was his style which led to his popularity as a speaker in the North. In January 1850, after lecturing and practicing in Bradford for the preceding 18 weeks, he

¹⁸³ According to a speech by Albert Coffin, Thomas Harle was born in York and qualified as a doctor there “19 years ago”, and had come to Coffin’s lectures to oppose him but had been won over and become his assistant. They became partners in early 1849. *Coffin’s Journal* 1, no. 9 (September 1847): 73; no. 29, May 5, 1849, 237; Harle was listed in the *Medical Directory* of 1849 as L.R.C.S. Eng., M.D. Rostock 1848, see Miley, “Herbs and Herbalism,” 25.

¹⁸⁴ *Botanic Record*, no. 1 (May 1852): 4.

¹⁸⁵ Appendix 1: Lectures.

¹⁸⁶ Janette Martin. “Popular political oratory and itinerant lecturing in Yorkshire and the North East in the age of Chartism, 1837-60” (PhD thesis, University of York, 2010), 20-29.

¹⁸⁷ Martin, “Popular political oratory,” 59-61, 255-59.

¹⁸⁸ Appendix 1: Lectures.

¹⁸⁹ “Mechanics Institute, Bacup,” *Coffin’s Journal* 1, no. 35 (September 1849): 303.

was presented with a gold watch, and a fulsome eulogy at a meeting of “upwards of 500, including some of the most respectable ladies of the town”:

You have opened our eyes, that we can now see our way and require no longer to be led blindly on through the obscure path which we have hitherto trod :- you have rent the veil which has hidden from our view the science of medicine, and the nature and treatment of disease; you have taught us that we have no need of the faculty to enter for us within the veil, but that it is free and open to all. May the light which you have thrown upon this subject still continue to pour forth its rays, until the full risen orb of truth shall dispel from its dark atmosphere every vestige of error, bigotry, and mysticism.¹⁹⁰

In reply, Skelton claimed that “truth is the shrine to which mankind should ever bow. And, oh! May we one and all feel its power, and labour to promote freedom of thought upon every subject” but made sure to praise his employer, Coffin: “It is to him and his efforts that I owe my present position...and may our great founder’s name be venerated by us all; and our children be taught to lisp it when their grandsires and sires shall sleep in the silent dust.”¹⁹¹

Miley suggested that part of Skelton’s enduring popularity in northern towns arose from his earlier career as a Chartist. In discussing a meeting of the Stalybridge Hygienic Health Education Society called to present a testimonial to Skelton in 1869, she pointed out that Stalybridge was an active centre of Chartism.¹⁹² She wondered whether Skelton’s name would remain familiar from his lecture tour in the late 1840s, but equally it could just be that his name was regularly seen in the *Northern Star*.¹⁹³ However, Skelton had a current connection in that the testimonial referred to the “valuable service rendered to Medical Botany ..., [and] numerous cures which he has effected in this town and neighbourhood during the last five years.”¹⁹⁴ The notice also referred to lectures, formation of societies and “the spirit of inquiry...awakened in the minds of the people.” Two hundred people “sat down to a good tea,” and gave Skelton “a perfect ovation, again and again repeated.” There was continuity from Chartist days in the eulogistic language of the testimonial which hoped that Skelton would continue to “labour on in the glorious work you

¹⁹⁰ “Report of meeting, January 1, address by George Slater, Manningham,” *Coffin’s Journal* 2, no. 44 (January 1850): 21.

¹⁹¹ “Report of meeting, January 1.” *Coffin’s Journal* 2, no. 44 (January 1850): 21.

¹⁹² Miley, *Herbalism and Herbal Medicine*, 23.

¹⁹³ The *Northern Star* was widely read, and gave lively accounts of meetings, both national and provincial. Skelton’s name could have been recognized by regular readers. Cris Yelland, “Speech and Writing in the *Northern Star*” *Labour History Review* 65, no. 1 (2000): 22-26.

¹⁹⁴ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 15 (March 1869): 230.

have taken up, to free mankind from a thralldom of slavery as intolerant and tyrannical as the world has ever beheld.”¹⁹⁵

There was a similar tone to the meetings in Bradford in 1850 and Stalybridge in 1869, even though, in the intervening years, Skelton he had spent several years training as a medical practitioner. Maybe the continuing factor was his commitment to the use of herbal medicines in the home. For example, during the 1860s, he acted as President of People's Medical College and School of Domestic Medicine, and in this capacity gave a spirited speech in 1862 at the Whittington Club, London. He cast himself as “a medical pariah, outlawed by the colleges, branded by the prejudices, spurned by the ignorant, and professionally enslaved, and that for no reason, but because we labor to redeem the people from medical bondage, and the profession from its degradation.” He claimed that “therapeutists from the people, for the people” must be educated as the government would not support medical education which included herbal medicine as “no government can do more than represent the condition of the times” and “darkness cannot reflect light; it is therefore foolish to look for it where it cannot be found.”¹⁹⁶ The sentiments were familiar territory for Skelton and so was the venue as the building which housed the Whittington Club had formerly been the Crown and Anchor public house. This large building off the Strand had been a meeting-place for radicals since the late eighteenth century, and Skelton would have been there many times – indeed, this was where he had leapt on the stage in 1844, at the meeting of the CSU.¹⁹⁷ By the 1860s, Skelton may have been a member of the Whittington Club which was designed to act as a social venue for men and women of moderate means, thus attracting radicals including Holyoake.¹⁹⁸

On the other hand, Skelton was also involved in the efforts to establish professional organization amongst herbal practitioners. He had an equivocal relationship with the National Medical Reform League, established in London in 1853,¹⁹⁹ perhaps because he was Treasurer of the Friendly United Medico-Botanic Sick and Burial Society, established

¹⁹⁵ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 16 (April 1869): 245-47.

¹⁹⁶ British Library, *The present and future of medicine; being the substance of an address, as delivered at the Whittington Club, Arundel Street, Strand 1 Oct 1862*. London: Job Caudwell.

¹⁹⁷ For the Crown and Anchor, see Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790-c.1845* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), 147-78.

¹⁹⁸ Christopher Kent, “The Whittington Club: A Bohemian Experiment in Middle-Class Social Reform,” *Victorian Studies* 18, no. 3 (1974): 31-55.

¹⁹⁹ *Botanic Record*, no. 21 (January 1854): 311-15; no. 23 (March 1854): 341-50; “Union of Action: how can it be obtained and what are its conditions?” *Botanic Record*, no. 24 (April 1854): 369-76.

in Leeds in February 1853.²⁰⁰ It is during the 1850s that we see a change in how he described himself. In 1853, he described his treatment methods as “thermo-botanic practice” but certainly from 1858, styled himself as a Medical Eclectic.²⁰¹

The different organizations must have continued as, when we pick up the trail again, there are still at least two organizations of herbalists. In 1868, John Skelton MRCS, 105 Great Russell, Street was given as contact for the Medical Reform Society of London, who were about to hold their second annual conference where they would discuss uniting with the Association of England’s Medical Reformers.²⁰² This second association appears to have been founded in 1863 as their fifth Annual Conference was held in 1868.²⁰³ At this conference, Dr Payne announced that the Eclectic Medical College of Pennsylvania would confer degrees by examination through their British board and confer honorary degrees.²⁰⁴ While the search for professional recognition is clear, how much difference there was in clinical practice is not so clear – indeed, the President’s speech, entitled “What is Eclecticism? This is the medicine of nature,” used the phrase originally coined by John Hill, which appeared on the title page of the *Adviser*.²⁰⁵ The two organizations did unite in Leeds in July 1869, under the title British Medical Reform Association.²⁰⁶ However, here we come full circle back to Thomsonianism, as the assembled company met to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Thomson. Skelton gave a long speech, in which he dismissed Beach’s criticism of Thomsonianism as sectarian, and returned to a theme from the *Plea*:

Nature . . . laughs at all attempts to disconnect the science from herself, and virtually says, ‘*I am supreme in all things,*’ and then, as if to show the fallacy of seeking to mystify that which is simple, she raises up some son of nature, untrammelled by conventional teaching, bids him stand before the word in his untutored character, and

²⁰⁰ *Botanic Record*, no. 11 (March 1853): 166-68, 170-75. The rules combined aspects of a professional organisation with those of a friendly society.

²⁰¹ *Botanic Record*, no. 19 (November 1853): 304; Appendix 1: Lectures, Spring 1858, “Medical Eclecticism.”

²⁰² *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 5 (May 1868): 72. Dr Skelton senior was President. This is possibly the same organisation as the Medical Reform League which was established at a meeting of the “London Medical Reformers,” see *Botanic Record*, no. 20 (December 1853): 311-12.

²⁰³ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 8 (August 1868): 106.

²⁰⁴ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 8 (August 1868): 106-107. For books and journals imported from the College, see no. 2 (February 1868): 26; For a notice of the Summer session 1868, see no. 4 (April 1868): 49; Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 148.

²⁰⁵ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 18 (June 1869): 267-72.

²⁰⁶ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 20 (August 1869): 299.

says to the antiquated learning of ages, 'BEHOLD HIM WHOM I HAVE CHOSEN TO HONOUR.'²⁰⁷

To conclude, this chapter has given an account of Skelton's life, and has added to the literature by including both his political activities and his subsequent herbal practice. He lived in a variety of cities and engaged with many different ideas both before and after becoming a medical botanist, but it is perhaps revealing that this account began in a rural village in Devon, and ended with a paeon to the untutored son of nature. Now that his context and his life have been outlined, the next two chapters will explore Skelton's use of herbal medicines in clinical care.

²⁰⁷ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 20 (August 1869): 301-307. See Figure 11: scan of Title page of *A Plea for the Botanic Practice of Medicine*. Skelton's perception of nature is discussed further in chapter 5.

Chapter 3: Treatment recommendations in the *Family Medical Adviser*

This chapter explores Skelton's recommendations for herbal treatments and their rationale. He left a significant corpus of writing, but the focus of this chapter is his first book, the *Family Medical Adviser* (hereafter *Adviser*) published in 1852.¹ I also refer to the *Plea* of 1853, his journal, the *Botanic Record* (1852-1855), and his textbook, the *Science and Practice of Medicine* (hereafter *Science and Practice*), published in 1870.²

Skelton's aim in writing the *Adviser* was to produce a clear practical handbook for the "class for whom I write" and so he was "compelled to limit the pages, in order to bring it within the reach of the working classes,"³ stating that "to assist in awakening men to a sense of the duties and obligations of life; we have endeavoured to convince them that a knowledge of disease, and its remedies, is a duty which cannot be overlooked without danger."⁴ The sentiment was reminiscent of William Buchan (1729-1805) who bemoaned the situation that, in contrast to other subjects, medicine was not studied by "men of sense and learning" but remained a closed art such that "implicit faith, everywhere else the object of ridicule, is still sacred here."⁵

The *Adviser* was organised into topics ranging from colic in babies to infectious diseases such as typhus fever. Skelton followed the pattern of most Thomsonian and conventional texts in presenting information on symptoms and treatment according to named diseases. For my analysis, each of the hundred topics was entered into an Access database which recorded the treatment recommendations and prescriptions. The purpose of my account is to explore his thinking, identify any named sources, and look for possible influences on his writing.

¹ Skelton, *Family Medical Adviser*. This dissertation reviews the 1st ed. (1852), 2nd ed. (1852), 5th ed. (1857), 6th ed. (1861), 8th ed. (1866), 11th ed. (1878) and 12th ed. (1884). The 12th ed. was posthumous and identical to the 11th ed.

² Skelton, *Plea; Botanic Record; Science and Practice*.

³ Skelton, *Adviser*.139.

⁴ Skelton, *Adviser*, 6.

⁵ William Buchan, *Domestic Medicine: Or, a Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines.*, 3rd ed. (London, W. Strahan, 1774), xvii; Christopher Lawrence suggested that Buchan's interest in popularizing medical knowledge was aroused by another graduate of the Edinburgh medical school, John Gregory (1724-1773). See Christopher J. Lawrence, "William Buchan: Medicine Laid Open," *Medical History* 19, no. 1 (1975), 23-25; See Murphy, *Enter the Physician*, 6-9, 15-25, 22-23 on the influence of Edinburgh 109-15.

The first section draws on Part 1 of the *Adviser*, “The Conditions of Health” and reviews his advice on exercise, relating this to earlier texts, in particular that of Buchan.⁶ The second section draws on Part 3, “Of Acute Diseases – Colds, Cough, Inflammations and Fevers,” and considers the phrase “equalize the circulation.” I suggest a connection with Buchan’s concern with obstructed perspiration, and then use American and British sources to relate Skelton’s explanation of inflammation to his consistent usage of Thomsonian remedies such as Composition powder. For the third section, three conditions were selected to illustrate and explain his methods, and make comparisons with other texts. Whooping-cough, pleurisy and asthma are considered as these conditions remain of clinical interest today. This third section draws on Part 2, “Diseases of Childhood,” Part 3, and Part 4, “Of General Disease, Incident to Adults of both Sexes.”⁷ Alongside the recommendations for treatment of specific diseases in the *Adviser* are two lists of Formulae ie Compound preparations.⁸ Of these, only just under half (14) were referred to in the main body of the text. However, some Formulae were significant in Skelton’s recommendations as they were referred to regularly.

A last point to make here is that, in common with other herbalists, Skelton used several herbs when composing a prescription. He rarely used one herb for one disease and, of the 68 prescriptions in the *Adviser*, 85% (58) included four or more herbs. The maximum was seven herbs (14 prescriptions). Furthermore, the text was updated regularly between 1852 and 1878, and Skelton continually re-evaluated prescriptions and made changes in all seven editions reviewed.⁹ Of the 68 prescriptions, over 50 were changed at least once, and many were changed more frequently. Of the 84 changes to herbs within prescriptions, over half (48) were found in the 5th edition.

⁶ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*.

⁷ Part 5 of the *Adviser*, “Diseases Peculiar to Females” is not discussed in this dissertation.

⁸ 16 formulae and 4 external preparations, see Skelton, *Adviser*, 133-139; 18 formulae and 12 external preparations see Skelton, *Adviser*, Part 6, “Directions for use,” 240-248. The layout and content of the two lists vary between editions. For three Formulae, no list of ingredients was given: Anti-cholera powder, Anti-venereal powder and Curative powder which could be obtained only via agents or wholesale. The changes in these Formulae are not analysed here.

⁹ Analysis of the 68 prescriptions produced 1372 entries for individual components of these prescriptions. . In the five subsequent editions studied, there were changes in 25% of the entries, a total of 343 entries. There were 179 subsequent changes to these 343 entries. Many were minor changes of dosage and reductions in the number of herbs in a prescription.

Before moving on to a discussion of the text, this section considers the sources which Skelton may have used. The *Adviser* was written for a lay audience and sparsely referenced, but he referred to some authors and these are discussed first. Secondly, there are Thomsonian authors who he did not cite but who are possible sources. Lastly, some conventional medical texts are included in this discussion to help to situate Skelton's writings within his therapeutic milieu.

Skelton quoted from six authors, of whom four were Thomsonians. He referred to the Thomsonian course of treatment in discussing vapour baths and quoted from Thomson's theory of fevers.¹⁰ Skelton praised Coffin for introducing the Thomsonian theory of fever and "American vegetable practice, or medical botany" into Britain, and made five references to Coffin's *Botanic Guide to Health*.¹¹ Skelton referred to two other American Thomsonian practitioners: Dr John W. Comfort¹² and Morris Mattson (1809-1885).¹³ Skelton did not just use Thomsonian sources, as he ascribed two Formulae to the Eclectic, Wooster Beach.¹⁴ He owned the recent edition of Beach's three volume *American Practice of Medicine*, the condensed version and Beach's *New Guide to Health*.¹⁵

¹⁰ Skelton, *Adviser*, 50, 121; The edition of Thomson's *New Guide to Health* used by Skelton cannot be identified as the passage on fevers is the same in the 2nd edition of 1825 and the British edition of 1849. Samuel Thomson, *A Narrative of the Life ...* 2nd ed. (Boston: Printed for the author by E.G. House, 1825); *New Guide to Health; or Botanic Physician* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1849), 10-15.

¹¹ Skelton, *Adviser*, on fevers 125, on medical botany 153, commending Coffin's cholera powder 152, teething as a "natural operation" 52, noting him when discussing smallpox 62 and on the dose of Cayenne 103, and the dose of Lobelia 87; Albert I. Coffin, *A Botanic Guide to Health, and the Natural Pathology of Disease*. (Leeds: Samuel Moxon, 1845); *A Botanic Guide to Health, and the Natural Pathology of Disease*, 15th ed. (Manchester: British Medico-Botanic Press, 1850). Skelton may have used the 1845 edition, or the 1850 edition, edited by Thomas Harle. The 1850 edition was little changed in subsequent editions, and the 36th ed. was also consulted.

¹² Skelton, *Adviser*, on *Myrica cerifera* Bayberry 147; John W. Comfort, *The Practice of Medicine on Thomsonian Principles, . . .*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: A. Comfort, 1850); This could be the edition used by Skelton as the Preface (n.p.) stated that a biographical sketch has been added, and Skelton referred to "a biographical sketch," see, *Plea*, 152. Comfort was a qualified medical practitioner who studied at the Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, in 1832-33. See Haller, *People's Doctors*, 124.

¹³ Skelton, *Adviser*, on the dose of Cayenne 103; Morris Mattson, *The American Vegetable Practice,* (Boston: D.L. Hale, 1841). Mattson had worked directly with Thomson, see, Haller, *People's Doctors*, 73-79.

¹⁴ Skelton, *Adviser*, on Common Emetic powder and Vegetable syrup 247; Wooster Beach, *The New Guide to Health* (London, 1852).

¹⁵ *Botanic Record* no. 1 (May 1852): 5; Wooster Beach, *The American Practice of Medicine, . . .* (New York: The Author, 1850) This was first published in 1833, and I have not seen this edition;

Skelton owned and used British medical books, including some herbals which will be considered later in chapter 4. There was one quotation in the *Adviser* from a British medical book, the 1820 edition of the medical dictionary of Robert Hooper (1773-1835), on the dangers associated with enteritis.¹⁶ Skelton again referred to Hooper when quoting from Coffin on the dose of *Lobelia inflata*, “take enough ...and never mind Hooper.”¹⁷ Charles Bell (1774-1842) was referred to on the importance of blood supply to the tissues.¹⁸

Further possible sources for Skelton were other Thomsonian books as he identified himself as a Thomsonian practitioner. This second group must include *Medical Reform, or Physiology and Botanic Practice, for the People* published in 1847 by John Stevens.¹⁹ The author had worked with Coffin in Leeds, but died prematurely. Skelton described him as having been “an active, talented, zealous, energetic young man.”²⁰ In order to recognize how distinctive or not Skelton’s work was, I also compared his text with six American Thomsonian texts by A. Biggs, J.E. Carter, Eleazer House, John Kost, Isaac & T. Sperry, and A.N. Worthy.²¹ Writing in 1850, Harle quoted from Kost, Sperry & Sperry and Worthy so must have owned copies.²² These were not the only possible texts: from December 1853, Skelton advertised thirteen American and English Thomsonian and Eclectic books

New Guide to Health, 1852; The American Practice Condensed. Or the Family Physician, 10th ed. (New York: James M'Alister, 1850). The 10th ed. was published in 1847, and entered according to Act of Congress in 1842. This one volume work was 911 pages long but still ran to 56 editions, see Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 72-74.

¹⁶ Skelton, *Adviser*, 101; Robert Hooper, *Lexicon Medicum, or, Medical Dictionary:* 4th ed. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, 1820), 325.

¹⁷ Skelton, *Adviser*, 87; Coffin devoted much energy to criticism of medical authors, in particular Hooper’s medical dictionary, see Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, 36th ed., 35-40, 46-65.

¹⁸ Skelton, *Adviser*. 93. The text by Bell could not be identified, but this could have been an indirect quotation, possibly via Andrew Combe, see note 70 below.

¹⁹ Stevens, *Medical Reform*.

²⁰ *Botanic Record*, no.1 (May 1852); 3.

²¹ A. Biggs, *The Botanico Medical Reference Book* (Memphis, Tennessee: Wells & Carr, Printers, 1847) See Haller, *People’s Doctors*, 157; J.E. Carter, *The Botanic Physician* (Madisonville, Tennessee: B. Parker & Co., 1837); Eleazer. G. House, *The Botanic Family Friend* (Boston, Massachusetts: printed for the author, 1844). House was the main agent of Thomson, 1821-1833, see Haller, *People’s Doctors*, 46, 59; John Kost, *The Practice of Medicine* (Mount Vernon, Ohio: E.J. Ellis, 1847); Isaac.J Sperry and T.S. Sperry, *Family Medical Adviser* (Hartford, Connecticut: J. Gaylord Wells, 1847). The Sperrys were Independent Thomsonians in 1838, see Appel, “Thomsonian Movement,” 6-8; Haller, *People’s Doctors*, 121, 168; A.N. Worthy, *A Treatise on the Botanic Theory and Practice of Medicine* (Forsyth, Georgia: C.R. Hanleiter, 1842). For other American texts, see Murphy, *Enter the Physician*, 93-100.

²² “*Lobelia inflata*,” *Coffin’s Journal* 2, no. 51 (April 1850): 87-89.

for sale in the *Botanic Record*.²³ Lastly, although unavailable to him before publication of the *Adviser*, two British Thomsonian books published in 1852 were examined for comparison. Of these, John Hollins referred to five American texts, "Beach, Comfort, Mattson, Curtis, Worthy and others" so must have had these texts to hand.²⁴ The second, the *Working-Man's Family Botanic Guide*, was published in Sheffield by two medical botanists who were early agents for Coffin.²⁵

Finally, two books were included in this analysis to represent contemporary texts on domestic medicine: an American text, *Domestic Medicine* by John Gunn,²⁶ and a British text, *Modern Domestic Medicine* by Thomas Graham.²⁷ However, Skelton also had older books to hand. In the *Plea*, he described his copy of the three volume *Medicinal Dictionary* published in 1743 by Robert James (1705-1776),²⁸ and then recalled "some years ago, when about to leave London, calling in one of those old book dealers, for the purpose of disposing of my library which consisted mostly of works of this extensive kind." He added that "old books: to me they have been the source of much enjoyment, improvement and profit."²⁹ Even if this discourse was fashioned to impress the reader, it is likely that Skelton read widely. As we will see later, amongst the eighteenth-century books that Skelton most probably owned was Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*.³⁰ Equally, he probably owned a copy

²³ *Botanic Record*, no. 20 (December 1853): 320.

²⁴ John Hollins, *The Reformed Botanic Practice;* (Birmingham: T. Simmons, 1852), x.

²⁵ William Fox and Joseph Nadin, *The Working-Man's Family Botanic Guide; or, Every Man His Own Doctor, . . .* (Sheffield: Dawsons, 1852); see Coffin's *Journal* no. 9, September 4, 1847, 66. The book drew on the text of Stevens, *Medical Reform*. The family business continued and the book was reprinted and revised into the twentieth century. William Fox. *The Working-Man's Model Family Botanic Guide* 24th ed. (Sheffield: William Fox and Sons, 1932).

²⁶ John Gunn, *Domestic Medicine*, 4th ed. (Springfield, OH: John M. Gallagher, 1835). The first edition was published in 1830 and it ran to 100 editions until 1870, see Murphy, *Enter the Physician*, 75, 79-80.

²⁷ Thomas J. Graham, *Modern Domestic Medicine* 6th ed. (London: Simpkin and Marshall, 1835).

²⁸ Robert James, *A Medical Dictionary, . . .* .London, 1743-45, Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale <http://find.galegroup.com> [accessed Jan 23, 2013] ; L Stine, "Dr. Robert James, 1705-1776," *Bulletin of the Medical Library Association* 29, no. 4 (1941); Robert James qualified in medicine in 1728, and his dictionary, although considered derivative was a comprehensive work, see T.A.B. Corley, "James, Robert (bap. 1703, d. 1776)," In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2005). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14618> [accessed July 8, 2013].

²⁹ Skelton, *Plea*, 72-73.

³⁰ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*. According to Christopher Lawrence, the text was little altered after the 3rd edition. Lawrence, "William Buchan: Medicine Laid Open," 22. First published in Edinburgh in 1769, there were 142 editions in English over the next 100 years. See Charles E. Rosenberg, "Medical Text and Social-Context Explaining William Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 57, no. 1 (1983), 22.

of *Primitive Physic* by John Wesley whose recommendations included food, herbs and mineral preparations, but this was excluded from this study as so many of the recommendations are not herbal.³¹

There are some contradictions inherent in the historical study of clinical practice as, whatever one's aspirations, it is impossible to clear the mind of more recent scientific knowledge. An endeavour was made to reduce this bias by a methodical analysis of excerpts from the selected texts. The excerpts were arranged in a table and I then looked for similarities of phrasing in the description of the disease, the rationale for treatment, the treatment proposed and the herbs recommended. Comparisons between medical texts present particular problems: there are only so many ways to describe symptoms, therefore paraphrasing and reworking of available textual knowledge can be expected. This method was based on the work of Charles Bazerman who distinguished between explicit reference to prior texts or debate, less explicit reference to generally circulated ideas or statements and implicitly recognizable forms of language, phrasing, patterns of expression and genre.³² According to Bazerman, "we create our texts out of the sea of former texts that surround us" and his guidance relied on the concept of intertextuality.³³ This concept was first proposed by Julia Kristeva who argued that "any text is the absorption and transformation of another."³⁴ Although there are varying definitions of this concept, all consider the text itself as central in the creation of meaning.³⁵ A recent study of medieval English herbals used intertextuality to make comparisons between aspects of the structure and content of nineteen texts, 1330-1550, and to identify the relationships between the texts.³⁶ To conclude this section, my intention is to cast some light on Skelton's writings not to determine linear influences from any one author to another.

³¹ Samuel J. Rogal, "Pills for the Poor: John Wesley's Primitive Physick," *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine* 51, no. 1 (1978).

³² Charles Bazerman, "Intertextuality : How Texts Rely on Other Texts," in *What Writing Does and How It Does It: An Introduction to Analysing Texts and Textual Practices*, ed. Charles Bazerman and Paul A. Prior (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), 86-93.

³³ Bazerman, "Intertextuality," 83.

³⁴ Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 66.

³⁵ Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003). To make full use of the concept of intertextuality, the intended reader should be considered, but this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

³⁶ Martti Mäkinen, "Between Herbals *et alia*: Intertextuality in Medieval English Herbals," (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2006).

Skelton's decision to start the *Adviser* with regimen (healthy lifestyle in modern parlance) placed him within a long tradition of such advice. His headings: hunger, thirst, air, cleanliness, exercise and the sexual instinct, recall the Galenic non-naturals: described by Hooper in 1820 as "under this term, antient physicians comprehend air, meat and drink, sleep and watching, motion and rest, the retentions and excretions, and the affections of the mind."³⁷ Ginnie Smith suggested that there was explicit use of the non-naturals in the eighteenth-century but placed this within an "oral/literate culture stretching over 300 years." She identified sixty-two titles published in Britain between 1770 and 1820 which discussed regimen, and argued that these diverse texts reached a wide audience and were not just the province of the leisured classes.³⁸ A widely read source of advice on regimen was Wesley who was a firm advocate of simple food, exercise and temperance.³⁹ Skelton could have read any of the texts reviewed by Smith, but there are echoes of Buchan who was a strong advocate of the prevention of disease by attention to regimen. Buchan discussed food and drink (aliment), air, exercise, sleep, clothing, intemperance, the passions and the common evacuations with an emphasis on perspiration.⁴⁰ Buchan railed against inactivity: "there are many people who have not exercise enough to keep their humours from stagnation, who yet dare not venture to make a visit to their next neighbours, but in a coach or sedan, lest they should be looked down upon."⁴¹ Skelton described exercise "for body and mind" as an "essential requisite for the security and perpetuation of healthy life."⁴² He recommended that

every day at the conclusion of your work, you should seek the green fields, for the purpose of discharging the impure matter which has been engendered during your work; for this purpose climb up a hill, jump, sing, shout, run or do anything that will promote a quickened circulation of the blood.⁴³

³⁷ Hooper, *Medical Dictionary*.

³⁸ Ginnie Smith, "Prescribing the Rules of Health: Self-Help and Advice in the Late Eighteenth Century," in *Patients and Practitioners*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 254.

³⁹ John Wesley, *Primitive Physic; or, an Easy and Natural Method of Curing Most Diseases* 32nd ed. (London: John Mason, 1828), xiv-xviii.

⁴⁰ Lawrence, "William Buchan," 25.

⁴¹ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 88.

⁴² Skelton, *Adviser*, 21.

⁴³ Skelton, *Adviser*, 19.

Skelton and Buchan were conveying a similar message, of which the most distinctive proponent was George Cheyne (1671-1743). Buchan referred to Cheyne who “in his excellent treatise on health, says, that the weak and valetudinary ought to make exercise a part of their religion.” While it would be foolhardy to claim that Skelton had read Cheyne, he could certainly have read excerpts or a reprint.⁴⁴

Skelton stood out from most Thomsonian authors by placing his section on regimen at the beginning of the *Adviser*. Thomsonian books generally considered exercise only where relevant to a specific disease. Another exception was Carter, who included recommendations derived from the non-naturals, claiming that “the sluggard does not so much live, as *rust* away existence” whereas “exercise tends to give firmness and vigor to the body; ... a healthfull determination of the fluids to the surface, cleansing from all morbid impurities. ..., vivacity to the spirits, cheerfulness to the mind, and elasticity to the whole system.”⁴⁵

In contrast to the Thomsonians, the Eclectic Beach devoted five pages to the value of exercise, repeating Buchan’s assertion that “those whom poverty obliges to labour for daily bread, are not only the most healthy, but generally the most happy, part of mankind.”⁴⁶ Both conventional texts on domestic medicine included a section on regimen. Gunn argued that “temperance, exercise and rest, are the sure guarantees of sound health and vigor, if you have naturally a good constitution, and almost the only sure means of amending and preserving a weak and deficient constitution,” and declared that the French, in his experience, were seldom gloomy because they combined temperance in diet with open air exercise.⁴⁷ Graham argued that exercise had an “uncommon power, both in preserving health, and assisting in the cure of disease” and recommended gymnastics, walking, riding, and friction.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Cheyne’s Chapter headings “Air, Meat and Drink, Sleeping and Watching, Exercise and Quiet, Evacuations and Obstructions and Miscellaneous observations,” George Cheyne, *An Essay of Health and Long Life*, 6th ed. (London: George Strahan, 1725). n.p.; Sections reprinted in Frederic R. Lees ed., *Standard Temperance Library* (London: W. Brittain, 1843), 7-14; See Anita Guerrini, *Obesity and Depression in the Enlightenment* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000), 118-19.

⁴⁵ Carter, *Botanic Physician*, 73-75.

⁴⁶ Beach, *American Practice*, 37-41, quotation 37; Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 87.

⁴⁷ Gunn, *Domestic Medicine*, 149-56.

⁴⁸ Graham, *Modern Domestic Medicine*, 179-81, quotation 179.

To conclude this discussion of exercise, let us consider Skelton's brief mention of exercise in *Science and Practice* in 1870:

John Wesley's rule in such cases was very good. To the bed-lyer he says, begin by rising a little earlier to-morrow morning, supplementing the same with a few yards extra walk. ' ' ' My own plan is to take exercise on foot daily, particularly in the morning before breakfast. . . . Habit, it is said, is second nature, and I am sure is true, for were I to neglect the daily routine, I should fancy myself ill.⁴⁹

Skelton concluded by saying that "Walking is so much more beneficial than riding, whatever position we may occupy in life, and where health is the object sought it should always be preferred." Earlier in his life, he may well have walked long distances as a travelling lecturer, and when he first left Plymouth as a shoemaker. We saw earlier that Skelton composed poetry, and he must surely have read works by Romantic poets who delighted in walking in the open countryside.⁵⁰

By advising walking "whatever position we may occupy in life," Skelton set himself apart from authors who advocated riding. Buchan wrote that "SUCH as can, ought to spend two or three hours a-day on horseback; those who cannot ride, should employ the same time in walking."⁵¹ Biggs claimed that "horseback riding is particularly beneficial, and was thought by Sydenham to be the most effective earthly remedy for consumption."⁵² Coffin reiterated the standard advice for persons of leisure that "he who does not spend several hours every day in some active exercise, as walking, riding on horseback, or in some amusement which calls nearly all the muscles into play, must inevitably . . . become sooner or later the subject of disease."⁵³ In contrast, Skelton considered his readership who generally would not have owned a horse or had spare leisure time. Coffin could have been styling himself as the "gentleman-leader" and purposefully distancing himself from his readers when he reflected on the pleasures of horse-riding in the "early morning dew."⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 753-54. This publication had no section entitled "Conditions of Health"; Maybe many years earlier, Skelton spent 2d on a copy of John Wesley, *The Duty and Advantage of Early Rising: A Sermon* (London: H. Hetherington, 1824) (not seen).

⁵⁰ "William Wordsworth: Pedestrian Poet," Robin Jarvis, *Romantic Writing and Pedestrian Travel* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 89-125.

⁵¹ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 92.

⁵² Biggs, *Botanico Medical Reference*, 288.

⁵³ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 1 (January 1847): 5.

⁵⁴ *Coffin's Journal* 2, no. 44 (January 1850): 19.

To conclude, Skelton gave prominence to rules of health, and advocated exercise by which “the supply of pure air to the lungs”, would lead to the “discharging of impure matter” through enhanced circulation of blood.⁵⁵ The value of exercise in promoting the circulation, was important in Thomsonian thinking as the circulation of blood was considered to be paramount.

Inflammation

This section draws on Part 3, “Of Acute Diseases – Colds, Cough, Inflammations and Fevers.” Thomsonians consistently advocated the use of herbs to warm the patient as part of the management of fevers. However, although heavily influenced by Thomsonianism, Skelton gave more emphasis to the concept of inflammation, and regularly used the phrase “equalize the circulation.” His perception of the relationship between inflammation, circulatory flow and obstructed perspiration was fundamental to his view of disease causation, and this requires some explanation before considering his treatments.

In the early 1800s, while it was understood that fever and inflammation were related there were many views as to the pathological processes in each. The four cardinal signs of inflammation are redness, swelling, heat and pain which constitute a local physiological response to tissue injury.⁵⁶ Fever occurs as a response to inflammation and is an abnormal condition of the body, characterized by undue rise in temperature, quickening of the pulse and disturbance of various body functions. The degree of fever and the intensity of symptoms vary between individuals suffering from the same disease. Diseases are now usually categorised by the organ or tissue which is the site of inflammation but before fever was identified as a general response to local inflammation, diseases were categorised as types of fever. Over a long period from the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century, the association of disease with pathological changes in certain organs led to fundamental changes in scientific thought.⁵⁷ This was an ongoing process throughout the period under consideration here, and to specify the influences on Skelton would be impossible, but his account of fever and inflammation probably relied on eighteenth century sources.

⁵⁵ Skelton, *Adviser*, 18.

⁵⁶ Thomas H. McConnell, *The Nature of Disease* (Baltimore, MD: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2007), 34-47.

⁵⁷ Foucault argued that this utterly new perception of the body arose from the combination of physiological experimentation and use of autopsies in French hospitals, see Foucault, *Birth of the Clinic*. More recently it has been argued that these changes depended on much wider input from medical practitioners throughout the world, see Harrison, *Medicine in an Age of Commerce*, 1-3.

Skelton followed Thomson in declaring that fever was one process and thus required one form of treatment. He used quotations from Thomson: “all disease originates in one cause” as “the cold causes obstruction, and fever arises in consequence to throw it off” so “if heat gains the victory, cold will be disinherited.” The aim of treatment was therefore to “support the fever and it will return inside; the cold, which is the cause of disease, will be driven out, and health will be restored.”⁵⁸ This view of fever was held by all Thomsonians. For example, Stevens quoted Thomson’s propositions: “25. Fever does not constitute a disease, but is always evidence of an offending cause in the system, and which nature is struggling to remove” and “22. Whatever will cleanse the stomach, restore the natural heat and produce the perspiration, will . . . remove every derangement which occurs in the system.”⁵⁹ A natural perspiration was therefore a sign that treatment was proceeding well and this was the case for the Beach as well:

Evacuations from the skin . . . remove congestions by a determination of blood to the extreme vessels ; and, in a word, lay the axe, as it were, at the root of the disease.

.

The object then should be to immediately restore perspiration, and continue it throughout the course of the fever; not violent sweating, but a moderate perspiration, or a gentle moisture of the skin . . . if it can be promoted, and kept up, we predict a favourable issue. Indeed on this depends the basis of our prognosis.⁶⁰

In answer to criticisms that this was a simplistic view, Benjamin Colby explained the Thomsonian doctrine of the unity of disease, stating that disease processes varied between organs, but that the treatment for all disease was “by general stimulants and relaxants, [to] arouse the different organs to action to throw off the morbid accumulations, and thereby relieve nature by removing the obstructions to her free operations.”⁶¹

At the centre of Skelton’s medical thinking was this need to remove obstruction: “we have already said that a cold improperly treated or neglected necessarily leads to inflammation . . . Inflammation is nothing more than *nature* making an effort to get rid of an incumbrance by the creation of artificial means, and why? Because the natural means are obstructed, what a beautiful provision is this, how true to all natural law!”⁶² Skelton

⁵⁸ Skelton, *Adviser*, 122; Thomson, *New Guide to Health*, 1849, 10-12.

⁵⁹ Stevens, *Medical Reform*, 76. Other Thomsonian authors gave similar accounts of the importance of equalising the circulation.

⁶⁰ Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 220.

⁶¹ Benjamin Colby, *A Guide to Health, Being an Exposition of the Principles of the Thomsonian System of Practice*. (Nashua, NH: Charles T. Gill, 1844). Chapter III, n.p.; Murphy, *Enter the Physician*, 94, 262n76.

⁶² Skelton, *Adviser*, 88; see chapter 5 for a discussion of his concept of nature.

developed his argument gradually in the *Adviser*. "disease cannot exist as long as the blood is in a pure state, ...every organ, bone, nerve, and muscle, from the visible to the imperceptible, with every sensation connected with existence, and every thought from "the poet's eye in a fine phrenzy rolling" . . . all depend for existence upon the blood.⁶³ Pure blood was necessary because: "the theory upon which the botanic system rests is this, - Heat is the principle of life, and that heat can only be sustained by a pure and healthy circulation; . . . to restore the body to health, it is first necessary to restore or equalize the circulation, upon which the health depends."⁶⁴

Cold was described as leading to obstructed perspiration:

Cold is the first stage of fever or inflammation occasioned by closing the pores of the skin, which are the natural outlets for the exhausted matter, serum, or sweat, brought to the surface of the body, and discharged through the million little outlets or pores prepared by nature for that purpose. This matter is the refuse of the blood, and can no more be suffered to remain without it doing an injury, than can the food of the stomach and bowels after the nutrition has all been extracted. We all know the dangers of confined or obstructed bowels, and yet we over look the danger of obstructed perspiration.⁶⁵

Therefore the aim was to equalize circulation, as "wherever there is healthy circulation there can be no disease, and he who can restore the loss will certainly restore the patient, by removing the inflammation"⁶⁶ and "the great law in relation to all acute disease is the restoration of balance in the circulation of blood, keep the determining powers to the surface, by promoting perspiration."⁶⁷ Obstructed perspiration caused by cold was a concept with an ancient pedigree, reinvigorated by Santorio Santorio in 1614.⁶⁸ This perception of disease process aligned with another ancient concept whereby Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689), for example, argued that fever was the effort of nature to resolve disease by the removal of morbid matter.⁶⁹ The source of these ideas for Skelton could

⁶³ Skelton, *Adviser*, 15-16; the quotation is from William Shakespeare, "Midsummer Night's Dream."

⁶⁴ Skelton, *Adviser*, 59.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 82.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 91.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 120-21.

⁶⁸ E. T. Renbourn, "The Natural History of Insensible Perspiration: a Forgotten Doctrine of Health and Disease," *Medical History* 4, no.2 (1960).

⁶⁹ Dale. C. Smith, "Medical Science, Medical Practice, and the Emerging Concept of Typhus in Mid-Eighteenth-Century Britain," *Medical History Supplement*, no. 1 (1981), 130.

well have been Andrew Combe who restated them in the context of current medical thinking.⁷⁰

To summarise, Skelton associated inflammation with obstruction to blood flow, and related this to obstructed perspiration. He used the term differently from most Thomsonians which suggests that his sources were not purely Thomsonian. There are parallels with Carter who stated that “obstruction of the vessels in any part, whilst the living power of the system remains apparently in full vigor, produces local inflammation.”⁷¹ Thomsonians usually referred to obstruction in a more general sense. For example, Sperry & Sperry devoted five pages to “Heat and Cold the principle of life” and their fourth proposition was “that there is a unity of disease, and that unity is OBSTRUCTION: i.e., when the exciting cause has deranged or obstructed the functions, (whether vital, natural or animal,) of any or all of the organs.”⁷²

Skelton’s differentiation between fever and inflammation was ambiguous, and his placing of diseases in either category inconsistent. He must have used sources which emphasized cold and obstructed perspiration, of which one could have been Carter who gave a detailed account of the importance of perspiration.⁷³ Similarly, Beach, echoing Buchan, must have been an influence. Beach claimed that “no doubt more complaints arise from retained perspirable matter than any other cause”⁷⁴ and this could be precipitated by sudden transitions from hot to cold, drinking very cold water when hot, wearing too few clothes in the cool of the evening, sitting in a draught, having to continue to wear wet clothes or wet shoes and sleeping in damp beds.⁷⁵ Such lists were given by other authors who may all have derived them from the identical advice in Buchan who, for example, described croup as “brought on by cold or obstructed perspiration, . . . Damp houses, wet feet and clothes, and sudden changes in the weather are some of the most

⁷⁰ Andrew Combe. *The Principles of Physiology*. 11th ed. (Edinburgh: MacLachlan, Stewart, 1842), 48-54. Andrew Combe (1797-1847) qualified in medicine at Edinburgh, and shared the principles of his brother, George Combe, see chapter 5. L.S. Jacyna, “Combe, Andrew (1797–1847),” In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2005). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6017> [accessed July 8, 2013].

⁷¹ .Carter, *Botanic Physician*, 495.

⁷² Sperry and Sperry, *Family Medical Adviser*, 9-13, 7.

⁷³ Carter, *Botanic Physician*, 60-62. Although no identical phrases were identified, echoes of this text were apparent in Skelton’s writings.

⁷⁴ Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 53.

⁷⁵ Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 47-50.

prevalent causes.”⁷⁶ In addition, according to Buchan, “cleanliness . . . promotes the perspiration, and by that means, frees the body from superfluous humours, which, if retained, could not fail to occasion disease.”⁷⁷

Skelton maintained his concept of inflammation throughout his life and, in 1870, argued that

inflammation may be defined as obstruction in the circulation of the blood to any particular organ or part of the body” and therefore symptoms arise from the “physiological effort of the body to rid itself of an encumbrance. Nature has provided outlets for carrying away the effete or obstructed matter and these cannot be ‘obstructed’ without danger, nor could the body right itself at all but for this provision.”⁷⁸

The concept of obstructed perspiration had remained in use, and Skelton cited a publication of 1869 which described the dry, hot skin in fever as resulting from “the pores of the skin being stopped, and the perspiring tubes . . . choked with matters that are pressed in vain for escape.”⁷⁹ By the nineteenth century, quantitative estimates had been introduced: “the quantity of watery matter thrown off in the shape of insensible perspiration, amounts to thirty-three ounces in the twenty-four hours. If not expelled it would enter into the circulation, producing various forms of febrile disease.”⁸⁰ The extra detail has added nothing to the text of Buchan above.

Earlier it was noted that Skelton appeared to rely on older sources in his explanation of fever and inflammation. Conventional medical texts of the early and mid-nineteenth century more commonly associated fever with the control of heart rate by the nervous system. This was the view held by the influential William Cullen (1710-1790), professor of medicine at Edinburgh.⁸¹ For example, Graham described inflammation as the state of a part which is painful, hotter, redder and somewhat more turgid than natural, but fever was described as a peculiar “affection of the nervous system” which continues and then brings

⁷⁶ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 607.

⁷⁷ “Cleanliness,” Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 107-113, Quotation 16.

⁷⁸ Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 276-80.

⁷⁹ Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 507. Jarrold & Sons. *Elementary Introduction to Physiological Science*, (London: Jarrold & Sons, 1869), 92-93.

⁸⁰ Metropolitan Working Classes' Association for Improving the Public Health, *Bathing and Personal Cleanliness*, (London: John Churchill, 1843), 6.

⁸¹ William F. Bynum. “Cullen and the Study of Fevers in Britain, 1760-1820,” *Medical History Supplement*, no. 1 (1981); “Cullen, William (1710–1790),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2005). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6874> [accessed July 8, 2013].

“the vascular system into a morbid state” which progresses to inflammation.⁸² Skelton made no mention of nervous control in fever whereas Comfort attempted to reconcile different medical ideas by arguing that “the means recommended by Dr Thomson for “raising the heat of the system” and for “keeping the inward above the outward heat” are the same that are required to sustain the generation of the nervous power necessary to maintain a proper balance in the circulation of the blood.”⁸³

Although a direct connection cannot be made, it could be argued that Skelton’s views ultimately derived from the ideas of Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738) who associated inflammation with stagnation in the flow of blood through the small blood vessels which led to congestion and obstruction to flow.⁸⁴ Boerhaave was professor at Leiden medical school, and his methods formed the basis for the curriculum at the Edinburgh medical school. The connection could have been via Buchan who studied at Edinburgh under John Rutherford (1695-1779), described as “diligent follower” of Boerhaave. However, Buchan did not explore his concept of inflammation in *Domestic Medicine*.⁸⁵ The connection could have been through the writings of one of the 290 American doctors who Jane Rendall identified as having trained at Edinburgh between 1769 and 1794.⁸⁶ Interestingly, Mattson criticized Thomson for “ignorantly promulgating the errors of a bygone age” in following Boerhaave’s views on “inward and outward heat.”⁸⁷ Mattson was the source of Skelton’s quotation from Boerhaave on the symptoms of fever, but Skelton

⁸² Graham, *Modern Domestic Medicine*, 401.

⁸³ Comfort, *Practice of Medicine*, 372.

⁸⁴ This had some basis in the iatro-mechanical perception of function deriving from the flow of fluids through solid tubes, although his thought was substantially more complex than this statement suggests. See Rina Knoeff, *Herman Boerhaave (1668-1738): Calvinist Chemist and Physician* (Amsterdam: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, 2002), 168-193; Smith, "Medical Science," 125; Lester S. King, *The Philosophy of Medicine: The Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 121-24.

⁸⁵ Andrew Cunningham, "Medicine to Calm the Mind: Boerhaave's Medical System, and why it was Adopted in Edinburgh.," in *The Medical Enlightenment of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Cunningham and Roger French (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Lawrence, "William Buchan." Lawrence showed that the first five Edinburgh professors studied at Leiden under Boerhaave and the course was fundamentally similar to that at Leiden. John Rutherford was Professor of Physic from 1726-1766. See Christopher J. Lawrence, "Early Edinburgh Medicine: Theory and Practice," in *The Early Years of the Edinburgh Medical School*, ed. R.W.G. Anderson and A.D.C. Simpson (Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Museum, 1976), 81.

⁸⁶ Jane Rendall, "The Influence of the Edinburgh Medical School on America in the Eighteenth Century," in *The Early Years of the Edinburgh Medical School*, ed. R.W.G. Anderson and A.D.C. Simpson (Edinburgh: Royal Scottish Museum, 1976), 100.

⁸⁷ Mattson, *American Vegetable Practice*. viii.

ignored the criticism.⁸⁸ This is not to say that Skelton always neglected more recent texts. Elsewhere, he referred to current medical literature, a case in point being his discussion of the recently published lectures by Frederick Skey on the relative benefits of depleting and tonic medicine.⁸⁹ These lectures were of interest to Skelton because Skey was questioning the depletory methods of conventional medicine, as described below in Buchan's recommendations for bleeding in the treatment of pleurisy.

To conclude, in this section I have attempted to explain Skelton's rationale for practice. This has been a first step towards understanding more about the potential influences on his thinking, and it seems likely that there is another source which I have yet to identify. Recalling Skelton's purchase of old books, it could have been a British medical author of the eighteenth century such as those discussed by Deborah Madden in her discussion of Wesley's views on fever in *Primitive Physic*.⁹⁰ This would require substantial further investigation, as the recent wide-ranging discussion by Mark Harrison of tropical medicine in the British colonies has revealed the diversity of views as to the nature of fever in the long eighteenth century.⁹¹ However, the practical point here is that promoting circulatory flow was central to Thomsonian practice. This was not unique to Thomsonians, as equally, Beach considered proper perspiration to indicate a good prognosis. Although Skelton assigned more importance to inflammation than to fever, he associated inflammation with obstructed perspiration, so herbs to stimulate the circulation were still fundamental to his practice.

⁸⁸ Skelton, *Adviser*, 127; Mattson, *American Vegetable Practice*, 331. The reference given is to John Eberle, vol. 1 of *A Treatise on the Practice of Medicine*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Grigg & Elliot, 1838), 15.

⁸⁹ *Botanic Record*, no. 21 (January 1854): 332. Skelton extracted from the review in the *Medical Times*. Even before he studied at St Bartholemew's, Skelton discoursed on the works of Sir Frederick Skey (1798-1872), Lecturer in Anatomy at St Bartholemew's, 1843-1865. Skey's lectures of 1853 questioned the value of depletion, see *Botanic Record*, no 36 (April 1855): 561-66, no. 38 (June 1855): 595. See "Obituary: Frederick Carpenter Skey" *British Medical Journal* 2, no. 610 (1872): 282-83.

⁹⁰ Deborah Madden, *A Cheap, Safe and Natural Medicine: Religion, Medicine and Culture in John Wesley's Primitive Physic* (New York: Rodopi, 2007), 225-30.

⁹¹ Harrison, *Medicine in an Age of Commerce*, on Cullen 85-86. Harrison suggested that medical practitioners in the early nineteenth century could simultaneously hold any of a variety of viewpoints on any matter such as bleeding.

Stimulation of circulatory flow called for *Capsicum annuum* Cayenne, identified as Thomson's "No 2. to cleanse the stomach, overpower the cold, promote a free perspiration."⁹² Cayenne was an ingredient of Composition powder which was the most commonly used Compound preparation in the *Adviser*.

Figure 1: Thomson's Composition Powder⁹³

Herb, powdered	Amount (g)	Editions
<i>Myrica cerifera</i> Bayberry	1200g (16 parts)	unchanged
<i>Zingiber officinale</i> Ginger	600g (8 parts)	200g from 2 nd ed., 600g from 5 th ed.
<i>Capsicum annuum</i> Cayenne	75g (1 part)	unchanged
<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> Cloves	75g (1 part)	50g from 8 th ed.
<i>Cinnamomum</i> sp. Cinnamon		200g added from 8 th ed.
Directions: Mix powders well and sieve.		
Dosage: 1 teaspoonful (3.5 mL) in a teacup of hot water, well sweetened with sugar. Mix, allow the powder to settle and then drink the liquid. To produce perspiration, remove colds, inflammation: 2 large teaspoonfuls in a full pint (600 mL), sweeten well, take in bed. As a family beverage, ½ teaspoonful in 570 mL boiling water and 300 mL boiling milk, sweeten well, let powder settle, pour gently into teacup.		

Looking at the medicinal plants listed above, *Myrica cerifera* Bayberry is North American, but the other herbs are all tropical. Interestingly, although it was in such regular usage, the formula for Composition powder varied between different editions of Thomson's *New Guide to Health*. Skelton stated that Comfort gave the formula above as Thomson's original formula.⁹⁴ This was the formula given in the 1835 edition of the *New*

⁹² Stevens, *Medical Reform*, 311-13.

⁹³ Skelton, *Adviser*, 241. The formula is as given in the first edition, with any changes in later editions noted in the right hand column, see bibliography for publication details of later editions. The imperial units have been expressed in metric units and rounded down for clarity, see Toby, Denham and Whitelegg, *Western Herbal Tradition*, 42-45. Composition powder was recommended over 30 times in the *Adviser*.

⁹⁴ Skelton, *Adviser*, 241-42; Skelton gave more than one formulation of Composition powder.

Guide to Health,⁹⁵ but other combinations of herbs were also given by Thomson. Skelton's second Formula, with both Cloves and Cinnamon, included a second North American plant, *Pinus canadensis* syn. *Tsuga canadensis*, inner bark of Hemlock.⁹⁶ This was similar to the combination given in the 1832 edition of the *New Guide to Health*, where Thomson replaced Ginger with inner bark of Hemlock, and this combination was also given in the English edition of 1849.⁹⁷ Stevens, writing in 1847, gave both Formulae, asserting that the better of the two was the one with just four ingredients, Bayberry, Ginger, Cayenne and Cloves.⁹⁸ However, in spite of the differences between authors and editions, two tropical plants, Cayenne and Ginger, were always important in Thomsonian treatment and will be discussed further in chapter 4.

This section began with a consideration of inflammation and the use of hot herbs to stimulate the circulation as these methods underpinned all Skelton's recommendations. Now we can move on to consider the treatment rationale for three types of respiratory disease: whooping-cough, pleurisy and asthma.

Whooping-cough

The focus of this section is Part 2, "Diseases of Childhood," and whooping cough provides a typical example of the format of Skelton's recommendations. A childhood disease was chosen because Skelton himself stressed the need to take personal responsibility for domestic self-care, and followed the lead of Buchan and earlier authors who encouraged the treatment of children. Skelton argued that "in treating of the diseases of infancy, there is need of much care and perspicuity; in fact the great care of all writers should be to make the subject clear; this we have endeavoured to do."⁹⁹

Skelton's description is immediately recognizable: "a contagious disease, generally confined to childhood," the initial dry cough accompanied by difficulty of breathing, thirst, fever, then "paroxysms or fits of whooping [which] last about five minutes, more or less,

⁹⁵ Samuel Thomson, *New Guide to Health; or Botanic Family Physician* (Boston: J.Q. Adams, 1835), 84.

⁹⁶ Skelton, *Adviser*, 135.

⁹⁷ Thomson, *New Guide to Health; or Botanic Physician* (Boston, MA. Howe, 1832), 58; *New Guide to Health*, 1849, 53.

⁹⁸ Stevens, *Medical Reform*, 96, 339.

⁹⁹ Skelton, *Adviser*, 79; Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 592-618. For a review of texts on childcare published in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, see Murphy, *Enter the Physician*, 39-52.

...generally very distressing” and “often continue for a long time, despite the most active exertions.”¹⁰⁰ His description was possibly paraphrased from Comfort. Skelton began “this is a contagious disease, generally confined to childhood” and Comfort began “this disease is contagious, and occurs but once in the same individual. It is almost exclusively confined to children.” Skelton noted that “the tongue is generally shrunk up and darker than when in health” and Comfort noted that “the tongue is mostly contracted and pointed, and of a darker colour than natural.”¹⁰¹ However, this is not to suggest that Skelton relied on any one source. Indeed throughout the texts which were analysed, both similar and identical phrases were noted. For example, Graham, Beach, and Worthy all used the phrase “tedious but seldom fatal” to describe whooping-cough.¹⁰² The description of the cough and the recommendations on diet were the same in Beach and Stevens, but on further investigation, both derived from Buchan.¹⁰³ Skelton’s description of the symptoms was the shortest of all the texts reviewed, but his text had the advantage that the recommendations for treatment were set out very clearly. Many books gave numerous recommendations, possibly because of their double purpose as domestic guides and professional reference books. However, even in comparison to contemporary Thomsonian books designed for domestic use, such as Coffin, Stevens and Hollins, Skelton’s advice was more explicit as regards treatment directions and thus would be easier to follow in a domestic setting.

Skelton’s proposed treatment for whooping-cough was based on the perceived cause: “the causes are numerous, but one word may answer the enumeration of all, *cold*, or obstructed perspiration.”¹⁰⁴ So, throughout the *Adviser*, the primary recommendations relied on external application of heat which was variously given as hot baths, footbaths, heat applied to the sides, and poultices. For whooping-cough:

in the cure of this disease we must begin by seeking at once to restore the balance. For this purpose the lower part of the body should be immersed in warm water, and kept there about five minutes. It should then be wiped perfectly dry and put into a warm bed, with a hot brick wrapped in a vinegar cloth applied to the feet, and bottles of hot water to the sides.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Skelton, *Adviser*, 73.

¹⁰¹ Skelton, *Adviser*, 74; Comfort, *Practice of Medicine*, 138

¹⁰² Graham, *Modern Domestic Medicine*, 454; Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 300; Worthy, *Treatise on Botanic Theory*, 276.

¹⁰³ Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 300-301; Stevens, *Medical Reform*, 215; Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 309-10.

¹⁰⁴ Skelton, *Adviser*, 73.

¹⁰⁵ Skelton, *Adviser*, 73-75.

This wording remained the same throughout the first seven editions with minor modifications in the eighth and eleventh. A poultice of fine oatmeal and powdered *Zingiber officinale* Ginger, applied hot to the neck, was recommended throughout.

Three medicines were proposed: Infants' Cayenne syrup;¹⁰⁶ a cough syrup, and a medicine for whooping cough "to promote general perspiration."¹⁰⁷ The cough syrup combined seed and herb of *Lobelia inflata* Lobelia, *Capsicum annuum* Cayenne and powdered *Pimpinella anisum* Aniseed. The cough syrup was claimed to "remove[s] the thick mucous from the parts, cleanse[s] the passages, besides assisting to keep the perspiration to the surface" and was recommended to relieve the whooping, with the instructions to "put to bed, raise the perspiration" and give a teaspoonful (3.5 mL) every 20 minutes in a warm tea of *Mentha pulegium* Pennyroyal. The cough syrup could also be taken daily alongside the main whooping cough medicine which was as follows:

Figure 2: Medicine for Whooping cough ¹⁰⁸		
Herb	Amount	Editions
<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> Licorice, root	16g	unchanged
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i> Ground Ivy, herb	8g	unchanged
<i>Althaea officinalis</i> Marshmallow, root	16g	omitted from 11 th ed.
<i>Achillea millefolium</i> Yarrow, herb	16g	<i>Angelica archangelica</i> Angelica substituted from 6 th ed.
Composition powder	4g	Pulmonary powder, substituted from 5 th ed. but omitted from 11 th ed.
<i>Scutellaria lateriflora</i> Scullcap, herb, powdered	4g	Teaspoon (3.5 mL) of <i>Lobelia inflata</i> , herb substituted from 11 th ed.
<p>Directions: Bruise roots and boil in 900 mL water for 20 minutes, pour this onto herbs and powder, mix, strain, sweeten.</p>		
<p>Dosage: give sufficient to promote gentle perspiration.¹⁰⁹</p>		

¹⁰⁶ From the fifth edition this was changed to Emetic syrup No. 2 which contained *Lobelia inflata* herb and powdered *Syzygium aromaticum* Cloves in raspberry vinegar.

¹⁰⁷ Skelton, *Adviser*, 74.

¹⁰⁸ Skelton, *Adviser*, 74.

¹⁰⁹ Unusually here, Skelton does not give a precise dose.

Skelton warned that “the child must also be kept from the cold; the bowels attended to.” He usually recommended ensuring there had been a bowel movement in fevers, and in this case advised an enema or injection, after which “Infants Soothing syrup No. 1” could be given as required. This combined the laxative *Rheum rhaponticum* English Rhubarb, with the carminatives *Cinnamomum* spp. Cinnamon and *Pimpinella anisum* Aniseed. As in other diseases, he warned “beware taking cold after the disease has subdued, and gently reduce your medicines proportionably with returning health.”¹¹⁰

This whooping-cough prescription was different from the prescriptions provided by other authors. Mattson also included *Scutellaria lateriflora* Scullcap, but this was alongside three typical Thomsonian herbs: *Capsicum annuum* Cayenne, *Lobelia inflata* Lobelia and *Myrica cerifera* Bayberry.¹¹¹ Skelton’s prescription contained four European herbs, one American herb, Scullcap, and Composition powder. In contrast, Hollins gave two Cough syrups: No. 42 (three European herbs, two American and one tropical in a recipe including Hollands gin), and No.43 (three European, and three American).¹¹²

In conclusion, the recommendations for the treatment of whooping-cough provide a typical example of Skelton’s usage of Thomsonian heating remedies. However, apart from the use of Cayenne, and of Lobelia in the cough syrup, Skelton revealed his individuality by choosing herbs that were different from those given by other authors. Although similarities between the *Adviser* and other texts were discovered, there equally were clear differences, for example in the description of the cough. In consequence, no particular text was identified as a primary source for Skelton. An interesting point is that he emphasized the importance of cold and of obstructed perspiration, which shows that his discourse on inflammation and his treatment methods were in harmony.

Pleurisy

My second example pleurisy was selected from Part 3, “Of acute diseases – colds, cough, inflammations and fevers.” Pleurisy refers to a group of symptoms, rather than a disease, which can be associated with various diseases including pneumonia. These characteristic symptoms were identified in Hippocratic texts, and, taking Adrian Wilson’s cautions about reliance on the “natural-realistic approach,” then pleurisy should be

¹¹⁰ Skelton, *Adviser*, 75. Carminatives are aromatic herbs considered to relieve flatulence and promote digestion.

¹¹¹ Mattson, *American Vegetable Practice*, 584.

¹¹² Hollins, *Reformed Botanic Practice*, 220.

perceived as a group of symptoms not as a pathological change in the respiratory tract.¹¹³ Skelton's description included the characteristic symptom of pain "most severe each time of breathing, and is often so excessive that the patient cannot bear to draw his breath."¹¹⁴ The distribution of the "pricking pains" was given as "in one or both of the sides, between the ribs; sometimes extending to the back bone, and other times towards the fore part of the breast, and shoulder blades."¹¹⁵ The wording of this distribution is almost identical to that of Buchan who added that "this, like most other fevers, generally begins with chilliness and shivering, which are followed by heat, thirst, and restlessness."¹¹⁶ Skelton used similar words to describe the feverish symptoms, but with a loss of meaning: "it is generally accompanied with chilliness, shivering, thirst, fever, and restlessness." Examination of the text suggests that Skelton's description of the symptoms of fever was probably taken directly from Buchan, as Beach, who also repeated Buchan, substituted "inquietude" for "restlessness."¹¹⁷ This detail is significant as Beach frequently copied Buchan, and initially it was not possible to know whether Skelton had only met Buchan's recommendations second-hand through Beach. For example, Buchan, Beach and Skelton all described pleurisy as a form of inflammatory disease "inflammation of the lining or membrane of the lungs, called the pleura" and stated that "the pulse is quick and hard; the urine high in colour."¹¹⁸ This clue leads us to the probable conclusion that Skelton had a copy of Buchan to hand.

Returning to the causes, Buchan started his list with "the pleurisy may be occasioned by whatever obstructs the perspiration," and Beach's paraphrased list stated that "generally speaking, whatever obstructs perspiration may occasion pleurisy."¹¹⁹ Skelton copied Buchan by giving the cause as obstructed perspiration, but his rationale and treatment was completely different. To discuss treatment by bleeding is outside the scope of this dissertation, but the following quotation from Buchan usefully summarises his approach:

¹¹³ Adrian Wilson, "On the History of Disease-Concepts: The Case of Pleurisy," *History of Science* 38, no. 121 (2000), 276, 284.

¹¹⁴ Skelton, *Adviser*, 105-107.

¹¹⁵ Skelton, *Adviser*, 105.

¹¹⁶ "Of the Pleurisy" Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 175-82.

¹¹⁷ Skelton, *Adviser*, 105; Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 323.

¹¹⁸ Skelton, *Adviser*, 105-107. Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 176; Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 323.

¹¹⁹ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 175; Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 323.

Nature generally endeavours to carry off this disease by a critical discharge of the blood from some part of the body, by expectoration, sweat, loose stools, thick urine, or the like. We ought therefore to second her intentions by lessening the force of the circulation, relax the vessels, diluting the humours, and promoting expectoration.¹²⁰

Later, Buchan stated that “almost every person knows, when a fever is attended with a violent pain of the side, and a quick, hard pulse, that bleeding is necessary.”¹²¹

Thomsonians were strongly opposed to the bleeding, as “our lancet is cayenne, and the vapour bath.”¹²² Equally, Beach singled out bleeding in the treatment of pleurisy for particular criticism,¹²³ and described his successful treatment of a patient with a decoction which caused copious perspiration.¹²⁴ Beach’s recommendations in pleurisy included a decoction of *Nepeta cataria* Catnip, with sudorific drops.¹²⁵ Sudorific drops contained opium and camphor which were medications which Skelton opposed.¹²⁶ Another point to note about Beach is that, in giving a choice of treatments, he was more in line with contemporary conventional texts. For example, Graham gave a long list of remedies, both mineral and herbal.¹²⁷ As discussed earlier, Eclectics characteristically did not exclude the possibility of any one treatment, but then neither did Graham in that he also included a wide repertoire of remedies. Beach opposed bleeding and the use of minerals, but otherwise, from the patient’s point of view, may not have been immediately distinguishable from “regular” doctors.

Skelton again proposed a Thomsonian method of treatment for pleurisy and recommended an immediate vapour bath, as hot as possible, and then alternating “Stimulating poultice No.1” applied to the painful area, with “Liniment No. 6” while

¹²⁰ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 176.

¹²¹ Buchan, *Domestic Medicine*, 177.

¹²² Fox and Nadin, *Family Botanic Guide*, 128.

¹²³ Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 125-49.

¹²⁴ Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 132-34. He followed this by prescribing a vegetable purgative the next morning. A decoction is a strong tea.

¹²⁵ Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 324.

¹²⁶ Skelton, *Botanic Record*, no. 1 (May 1852): 6. Sudorific drops included ipecacuanha, saffron, camphor, Virginia snakeroot and opium in Holland gin. See Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 728. Other Eclectics preferred to substitute other sedative herbs for opium such as *Cypripedium pubescens* Ladies Slipper, see King, *American Eclectic Dispensatory*, 595. Sudorific means that the action of the medicine is to create heat and sweating.

¹²⁷ Graham, *Modern Domestic Medicine*, 510-12. Graham recommended prompt and copious bleeding followed by cupping, the laxative draught, cooling febrifuge mix (subcarbonate of potash, purified nitre, camphor mixture, syrup of saffron in lemon juice or tartaric acid) and blisters to the chest after the fever has subsided.

reheating the poultice with steam. He advised that treatment should be persevered with until the pain ceased completely. This treatment was to be accompanied by the application to the feet of a hot brick covered with vinegar clothes, a hot water bottle to the side, and an enema if required.¹²⁸ These methods were in line with Thomsonian authors such as Biggs, Comfort and Worthy who gave detailed accounts of the treatment of pleurisy and pneumonia using warm teas, steaming and hot foot baths as well as oral medicines.¹²⁹

Skelton did not change these recommendations in later editions. In the 8th edition of 1866, the heading was altered to include bronchitis but the description remained similar. In a note he distinguished between “pneumonia, inflammation of the substance of the lungs, and bronchitis, inflammation of the passages conveying air to the lungs” but explicitly stated that he still treated both “according to one grand principle.”¹³⁰ This Thomsonian approach allowed Skelton to choose a different method from Graham, and give only one prescription and set of recommendations. The *Adviser* was much shorter than Graham’s *Modern Domestic Medicine*, but that could have been an advantage in a domestic setting as the list of possible treatments given by Graham could be confusing.

I concluded that Skelton’s prescription for whooping-cough was different from that given by other authors, and we find the same situation here.

¹²⁸ Skelton, *Adviser*. Stimulating poultice No. 1 contains 2 large teaspoons of oatmeal, 1 large teaspoon of Ginger powder, mixed with boiling water, spread between two flannels and kept as hot as possible. Liniment no. 6 contained tinctures of *Commiphora molmol* Myrrh, and Cayenne, see *Adviser*, 134.

¹²⁹ Biggs, *Botanico Medical Reference*, 315-17; Comfort, *Practice of Medicine*, 142; Worthy, *Treatise on Botanic Theory*, 135-36.

¹³⁰ Skelton, *Adviser*, 8th ed., 108.

This was Skelton’s main prescription for pleurisy:

Figure 3: Medicine for Pleurisy ¹³¹		
Herb	Amount	Editions
<i>Satureia hortensis</i> Summer Savory	15g	30g from 11 th ed.
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> Elderflower	30g	Omitted from 11 th ed.
<i>Verbena officinalis</i> Vervein	30g	15g <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> Pleurisy root substituted from 6 th ed.
<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> Licorice	30g	7g powder from 5 th ed.
<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> Cloves, powder	2 tsp	Omitted from 6 th ed.; 1/2 tsp Lobelia seed added in 8 th ed.
<i>Capsicum annuum</i> Cayenne	Half tsp	Quarter tsp from 6 th ed.; half tsp from 8 th ed.
Directions: Boil in 1600 mL for 5 minutes, strain, add 2 tablespoons of treacle.		
Dosage: Take teacups until there is profuse perspiration and reduce dose until the perspiration is mild but “still keeping up a gentle moisture to the surface of the skin.” After a day or two substitute White horehound for Elder flowers (Savory from 11 th ed.). Take half a wineglassful six times per day. In the 8 th ed. this was changed to a wineglass.		

I was unable to find any author, British or American, who recommended *Satureia hortensis* Summer Savory in the treatment of pleurisy. Coffin stated that Savory was similar to *Thymus vulgaris* Thyme, excellent for colds and “with other gentle stimulants, will induce and keep up a perspiration that seldom fails to remove the [unspecified] disease, if properly attended to.”¹³² The dosage instructions above show that promoting perspiration was the aim here, which means that the herb was being used a diaphoretic – to promote circulatory flow and thus sweating. Savory was combined with *Sambucus nigra* Elderflower which is a more commonly used diaphoretic. Savory was traditionally recommended as a carminative, for relieving flatulence but, alongside this, Nicholas Culpeper (1616-1654) noted that it was hot and dry, and “it cures tough phlegm in the chest and lungs, and helps to expectorate it the more easily.”¹³³ This suggests that

¹³¹ Skelton, *Adviser*, 106.

¹³² Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, 91. Thyme is antiseptic and also used as an expectorant, ie to aid the expulsion of mucus by effective coughing.

¹³³ Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Complete Herbal*, (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 234. Gerard recommended Savory for flatulence, eaten with “windie pulses,” and compared it to Thyme.

Skelton had a copy of *Culpeper's Herbal* to hand, and we will return to his use of herbals in chapter 4.

A change to note was the introduction of *Asclepias tuberosa* Pleurisy root in the 6th edition of the *Adviser* 1861. This American herb was widely recommended in pleurisy, but not exclusively as examination of Thomsonian texts found that many different herbs were used. Pleurisy root was not recommended by Coffin or Comfort, but was recommended to promote perspiration in the management of fevers by Carter, Worthy and Sperry & Sperry.¹³⁴ Of the contemporary British texts, Hollins gave a prescription composed wholly of American herbs: *Asclepias tuberosa* Pleurisy Root, *Corallorhiza odontorhiza* Crawley root, *Lobelia inflata* Lobelia, *Symplocarpus foetidus* Skunk cabbage.¹³⁵

Skelton's description of pleurisy suggests that he read Buchan. Skelton was unusual in his choice of herbs for pleurisy and no definite source for this has been found. What we can conclude is that he had formed his own points of view and, in so doing, had not merely copied from American texts. In comparison, Hollins may have copied his prescription from another text without having any practical experience of using that combination of herbs. Skelton repeatedly affirmed the value of "knowledge through experience" and his selection of British herbs suggests that these were his personal recommendations rather than a compilation from other texts.

Asthma

The final of the three conditions chosen is asthma which was included in Part 4: "*Of general diseases, incident to adults.*" The term asthma has been used since antiquity, to describe severe coughing bouts and attacks of breathlessness especially at night.¹³⁶ In this section, I will consider the descriptions given by different authors and their views on the causes of asthma.

Skelton gave the main symptoms as "wheezing, tightness upon the chest, and great difficulty in breathing" but, along with most other authors, distinguished between dry or

John Gerard, *The Herbal, or, General History of Plants* (New York: Dover Publications, 1975), 576-77.

¹³⁴ Carter, *The Botanic Physician*, 232; Worthy, *Treatise on Botanic Theory*, 570; Sperry and Sperry, *Adviser*, 333-34. For further discussion of *Asclepias tuberosa*, see chapter 4.

¹³⁵ Hollins, *Reformed Botanic Practice*, 211.

¹³⁶ Mark Jackson, *Asthma: The Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 10-46.

spasmodic asthma which is “unattended with expectoration” and humid asthma “attended with a discharge of heavy mucus.” Again, like other authors, Skelton stated that asthma was “generally more severe at night, with fits of coughing and discharge of heavy matter, after which there is some little cessation; the patient awakes often with a sense of suffocation, and has to be bolstered up in bed.”¹³⁷ Mattson included the expression “bolstered up in bed” and he was quoted by Biggs, so could be the source of this phrase.¹³⁸ Some authors gave a lengthy and vivid account of the paroxysms such as Beach who stated that the sufferer “starts up into an erect posture and flies to the window for air.”¹³⁹ Throughout these accounts, it is noteworthy how many echoed Buchan. For example, Buchan’s description of prodromal listlessness and indigestion was included by Biggs, Comfort, Graham, Gunn, Hollins and Mattson.¹⁴⁰

Skelton did not involve himself in the debate as to the causes of asthma, tersely stating that asthma results from obstruction and leaving it at that! Most authors, Beach being typical, listed causes including congestion of the tissues, fog, noxious vapours, and irritation of the mucous membranes.¹⁴¹ Graham gave a detailed account of diagnosis and treatment, and usefully distinguished between breathlessness caused by organic disease of the heart, breathlessness with a dry cough and thickened mucous membranes, or finally, resulting from nervous influence. He also drew attention to spasm in the terminal bronchi in acute attacks.¹⁴² This point was taken up by Worthy who cited Cullen as ascribing asthma to spasmodic contraction of the airways, whereas Worthy agreed with Dr Bree who viewed the mucus excreted as the proximate [immediate] cause of acute attacks of asthma.¹⁴³ Biggs, writing later in 1847, returned to this debate which interestingly remains active today.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁷ Skelton *Adviser*, 197. Expectoration refers to coughing up mucus.

¹³⁸ Mattson, *American Vegetable Practice*, 434; Biggs, *Botanico Medical Reference*, 299.

¹³⁹ Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 306. Breathlessness at night can happen in many other conditions, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and in orthopnea associated with heart disease. Orthopnea means breathlessness when lying flat.

¹⁴⁰ Biggs, *Botanic Medical Reference*, 296, Comfort, *Practice of Medicine*, 134; Graham, *Domestic Medicine*, 247; Gunn, *Domestic Medicine*, 319; Hollins, *Reformed Botanic Practice*, 34. Prodromal refers to an early, warning symptom.

¹⁴¹ Beach, *American Practice Condensed*, 306.

¹⁴² Graham, *Domestic Medicine*, 246-56.

¹⁴³ Worthy, *Treatise on Botanic Theory*, 283. Robert Bree (1759–1839) published a book on asthma in 1797.

¹⁴⁴ Biggs, *Botanico-Medical Reference*, 298.

Moving on to the treatment of asthma, although Skelton distinguished between humid and dry asthma, the treatment recommended for attacks was broadly the same. He started by quoting Thomson's advice to "put the feet in warm water, and increase the heat until perspiration starts upon the temples and in the palms of the hands."¹⁴⁵ The addition of mustard, recommended by Coffin and Comfort, was not adopted.¹⁴⁶ In common with all Thomsonian authors, except Coffin, Skelton's recommendations relied primarily on the use of *Lobelia inflata* Lobelia.¹⁴⁷ Firstly he gave an inhalation: pour a teacup of boiling vinegar into a half pint (280 mL) cup, add a teaspoonful of Cayenne, and a large tablespoonful of Lobelia. The patient was to breathe the steam arising from the mixture which was then to be strained, allowed to clear, and made into a syrup using treacle. The dose was half or one teaspoonful 4-8 times a day in a little Ginger tea. In the 5th edition, *Petasites* sp. Butterbur was substituted for the Lobelia, but for the 11th edition Lobelia returned. This advice to use steam inhalations reflected that found throughout Thomsonian literature. For asthma, Coffin began by recommending inhalations during attacks, and Stevens added to this by citing a contemporary publication on the value of steam inhalations.¹⁴⁸

The next recommendations recall those in pleurisy and began with an enema containing Composition powder and Lobelia. The patient was then to lie down, if possible, with a hot brick and vinegar clothes on the feet, and a stimulating poultice applied to the chest. Where lying down was impossible, the advice was to prop the patient up with pillows and give *Achillea millefolium* Yarrow as tea with Cayenne. In addition, 2-3 teaspoonsfuls of tincture of Lobelia could be taken at night in a teacup of Ginger tea. In the 5th edition, Composition tea was substituted for Ginger and in the 6th edition, the recommendation was added that as much can be taken as will induce vomiting. In humid asthma, Skelton recommended tincture of Lobelia "as freely as the system can bear." The value of Lobelia in asthma is that it acts as an antispasmodic and loosens mucus, and it continues to be used by herbal practitioners today.¹⁴⁹ The use of Lobelia, Thomson's No.1

¹⁴⁵ Skelton, *Adviser*, 197.

¹⁴⁶ Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, 36th ed., 308; Comfort, *Practice of Medicine*, 134.

¹⁴⁷ Skelton, *Adviser*, 198-99.

¹⁴⁸ Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, 308; Stevens, *Medical Reform*, 249.

¹⁴⁹ Alison Denham, "The 1968 Medicines Act: Schedule III Herbs, and their Use by Practitioners," *European Journal of Herbal Medicine* 4, no. 3 (1999):19-28.

was described in detail by Thomson and by House.¹⁵⁰ Taking the British texts, Steven’s account of the Thomsonian course of treatment was clear and practical, and easier to follow than Skelton’s summary.¹⁵¹

Again, we find that Skelton’s prescription for spasmodic asthma did not follow the Thomsonian norm and relied on a British herb. This was *Prunella vulgaris* Selfheal, and I have been unable to identify any other author who recommended it in asthma.

Figure 4: Medicine for Spasmodic Asthma¹⁵²

Herb	Amount	Editions
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i> Selfheal	45g	
Onions	60g	5 th edition, <i>Petasites</i> sp. root
Antispasmodic powder	15g	
Antispasmodic powder: <i>Arctium lappa</i> Burdock seeds, <i>Scutellaria lateriflora</i> Scullcap, <i>Carum carvi</i> Caraway, <i>Zingiber officinale</i> Ginger, <i>Lobelia inflata</i> Lobelia, <i>Hydrastis canadensis</i> Goldenseal and <i>Capsicum annum</i> Cayenne. ¹⁵³		
Directions: Boil onions in 1600 mL down to 1100 mL (from the 5 th edition, 2200 mL down to 1600 mL). Add the herbs and powder, boil for 5 minutes, strain and sweeten with treacle.		
Dosage: Wineglassful 3-4 times per hour.		

In contrast, Skelton’s prescription for humid asthma reflected that of other Thomsonians. Here, Skelton recommended equal parts of powders of *Inula helenium* Elecampane, *Symplocarpus foetidus* Skunk cabbage, Composition powder and Lobelia. The dose was a teaspoonful in a teacup, sweetened with treacle and cooled to allow the powder to settle, then taken 3-4 times daily. *Inula helenium* has a long-established

¹⁵⁰ Thomson, *New Guide to Health*, 1849, 19-36; For a full account of the Thomsonian course and Nos. 1-6, see House, *Botanic Family Friend*, 184-251. Lobelia was Thomson’s “cure-all” and the extensive Thomsonian literature on Lobelia is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

¹⁵¹ Stevens, *Medical Reform*, 83-105.

¹⁵² Skelton, *Adviser*, 197.

¹⁵³ Skelton, *Adviser*, 214.

European usage in breathing difficulties and cough.¹⁵⁴ The American plant *Symplocarpus foetidus* Skunk cabbage was proposed by Carter and Comfort,¹⁵⁵ and Kost and Abel Tennant, who was not a Thomsonian, recommended it particularly in “nervous asthma.”¹⁵⁶ Examination of different Thomsonian texts has shown the value of comparing the detail. For example, although Mattson stated that Thomson stopped using Skunk cabbage, finding it to have a “narcotic” effect, Thomson actually described it as “one of the best preparations” for asthma, cough and breathing difficulties.¹⁵⁷ Comparison of texts has also identified some places where prescriptions were copied. For example, the prescriptions of Fox & Nadin for asthma copied the prescriptions of Coffin and Stevens.¹⁵⁸ The concept of intertextuality has been particularly helpful in the process of comparing texts which apparently echoed Buchan, by looking for nuances of phraseology in reading and rereading texts, and in the analysis of repetition of phrases, of paraphrasing and of recurring themes. Using Bazerman’s advice, the analysis of the text of the *Adviser* was structured using a database, and analysis of other texts was structured using tables. This will make it possible to refer back to the data, and allow for re-analysis in the future.

Comparison of the *Adviser* with Thomsonian texts shows that while Skelton used some Thomsonian methods and herbs for the three conditions considered here, no prescriptions were copied. Each was a combination unique to Skelton, notably in that he relied on British herbs. This chapter has identified sources which Skelton used and compared his text with other Thomsonian, Eclectic and conventional texts. Comparison between Beach and the Thomsonian texts suggests that there was less difference between Thomsonian and Eclectic practice than it would appear from the studies reviewed in chapter 1 which centred on their significance as social movements. In this chapter some Thomsonian texts were identified from which Skelton quoted directly, but none of them appear to have been a major source. This finding was surprising, in that I had expected, wrongly as it turns out, to find more conformity with other texts. There were some echoes of Carter, an elusive author from Tennessee, who was the only Thomsonian author who I was unable to identify through secondary sources. Overall, Skelton had his own style and made herbal recommendations that were not found in other texts. He took

¹⁵⁴ Tobbyn, Denham, and Whitelegg, *Western Herbal Tradition*, 201-10.

¹⁵⁵ Carter, *Botanic Physician*, 421-3; Comfort, *Practice of Medicine*, 135.

¹⁵⁶ Kost, *Practice of Medicine*, 21; Abel Tennant. *The Vegetable Materia Medica and Practice of Medicine*. (Batavia, NY: D.D. Waite, 1837), 182.

¹⁵⁷ Mattson, *American Vegetable Practice*, 284; Thomson, *New Guide to Health*, 1849, 50.

¹⁵⁸ Fox and Nadin, *Family Botanic Guide*, 133; Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, 36th ed., 308; Stevens, *Medical Reform*, 249.

up the challenge of providing medical knowledge in a readable and practical format, and the *Adviser* fulfilled his objective which was to produce a handbook for the working-class reader. In this capacity, he demonstrated that he was someone with many attributes, and we begin to form a more rounded impression of Skelton the person, not just as a representative of “fringe” medicine.

Another finding which questions the version of Skelton as an exemplar of Thomsonianism is the observation that Skelton was influenced by both Buchan and Beach. He was not alone in his reliance on Buchan whose style and presentation of information set the scene for many of the books discussed in this chapter. My findings therefore support Charles Rosenberg’s contention that he was very influential.¹⁵⁹ As a author, Skelton was probably similar to his audience of medical botanists and domestic users of herbs in that he used conventional texts, such as Hooper’s dictionary, alongside Thomsonian and Eclectic texts. Accounts of herbal medicine which focus on the political aspects forget that both practitioners and lay people could use books and journals of any persuasion alongside conventional medical texts. This point was made by Murphy, and certainly Skelton’s fluid relationship with contemporary texts suggests that, apart from his basic repertoire of Thomsonian treatment to “raise the inward heat,” “overpower the cold” and promote free perspiration, there is limited evidence of a wholly separate therapeutic rationale or vocabulary.

In this chapter we have seen Skelton drawing creatively on older literatures, and the next chapter will explore this process further in reviewing the medicinal plants recommended in his publications.

¹⁵⁹ Rosenberg, “Medical Text and Social-Context.”

Chapter 4: Medicinal plants recommended by John Skelton

Too often, while stars at the uttermost verge of telescopic range were receiving profound attention, the herbs which grew at our feet were neglected, or were not practically applied to the relief of human suffering.¹

This chapter explores the herbs recommended by Skelton throughout his career, to see what this can tell us about his herbal practice. There are few models for this investigation as, in contrast to earlier periods of history, there has been little exploration of medicinal plant usage in the nineteenth century.² There are few clues in most modern books on herbal medicines which focus on pharmacology and clinical recommendations and are organized alphabetically as reference books, such as *Potter's Herbal Cyclopaedia*.³ A recent author who has taken up the challenge of reinvigorating the use of traditional sources is Matthew Wood, who has written on both North American and European herbs.⁴ He has taken a tantalising look into the nineteenth century, but my aim was to make a systematic study which included all the herbal medicines recommended by Skelton. In this dissertation, it is only possible to cover some examples but, as in chapter 3, the discussion is based on a detailed study of his publications. As shown in chapter 1, there has been some investigation of the herbs listed by Thomson, but little study of other Thomsonian authors.

The context for this chapter is the ongoing debate amongst herbal practitioners concerning the relative value of herbs which grow naturally in Britain as against herbs which are imported. One aspect of this debate is whether herbalists continue to rely excessively on North American medicinal plants. The different views came to the fore in around 1980 when the name of the school which trained future Members of the National Institute of Medical Herbalists was changed from the School of Herbal Medicine to the College of Phytotherapy. This reflected a change in focus from therapeutics based on an

¹ "Introduction," *Coffin's Journal*, 1, no. 43 (January 1850), n.p.

² Paula De "European Materia Medica in Historical Texts: Longevity of a Tradition and Implications for Future Use," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 132, no. 1 (2010); *Health and Healing from the Medieval Garden*, ed. Peter Dendle and Alain Touwaide (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2008); Laurence M. V. Totelin, *Hippocratic Recipes: Oral and Written Transmission of Pharmacological Knowledge in Fifth- and Fourth-Century Greece* (Boston: Brill, 2009).

³ *Potter's Herbal Cyclopaedia* was first published in 1907, and the most recent revised and enlarged edition includes many North American medicinal plants, see Elizabeth M. Williamson *Potter's Herbal Cyclopaedia*. (Saffron Walden, Essex: C.W. Daniel, 2003).

⁴ Matthew Wood, *The Earthwise Herbal* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2008).

approach based on American practice, to one based on to modern European practice.⁵ There was subsequently a reduction in the usage of herbs which are native to North America, but many American herbs continue in use in current herbal practice. Equally, as we saw in chapter 3, European and tropical herbs formed an important element of Thomsonian practice. It is in the context of this debate, that an examination of the herbs advocated by Skelton might provide some relevant evidence as the current debate relies only on professional opinion, rather than an analysis of data.

An analysis of Skelton's three main publications found a total of 195 herbs and these are listed alphabetically in Table 3 (Appendix 2), according to current botanical nomenclature and the methodology used to compile the list is explained in the notes. Discussion of the findings is organized around the successive phases in Skelton's publications, using the seven editions of the *Family Medical Adviser* (1852-1878), *Dr Skelton's Botanic Record and Family Herbal* (1852-1855) and *The Science and Practice of Herbal Medicine* (1870). His first publication, the *Adviser* of 1852, was a Thomsonian text but in chapter 3, we saw that Skelton prescribed from a wider palette. This chapter then considers his monthly journal, the *Botanic Record* which was published for three years and consistently advocated the use of indigenous herbs. His articles drew on earlier herbals, and discussion of his sources gives some indication of the influences on his prescribing. Lastly, I examined the herbs recommended in his text book, *Science and Practice* to see what changes there had been over the years, and this chapter therefore considers his increased use of North American herbs and of concentrated plant extracts imported from Eclectic manufacturing houses in America.

The provenance of medicinal plants was a topic of lively if not acrimonious debate amongst herbalists in the mid-nineteenth century, but debate and practice are not the same, so a comparison has been made of the proportion of European, American and tropical herbs in each of his publications. International trade in herbal medicines has long been a contentious issue, and Culpeper was a firm advocate of the use of English herbs, contrasting self-reliance, through the collection of fresh local plants, with dependence on expensive preparations from the apothecary. He asserted that their quality was dubious and that unnecessary tropical plants were imported through numerous traders.⁶

⁵ Brown, "Vicissitudes of Herbalism," 81; Denham, "Origins and Proponents," 29; Julian Barker, *History, Philosophy and Medicine: Phytotherapy in Context* (West Wickham, Kent: Winter Press), 139-40; Rudolf F. Weiss, "What is Herbal Medicine?," *British Journal of Phytotherapy* 1, no.1 (1990).

⁶ Nicholas Culpeper, "A Treatise of the Transcendent Sufficiency of our English herbs, as they may be rightly used in Medicine", in Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's School of Physick, or, the English Apothecary* (London: Nathaniel Brook, 1659), 3-70.

Furthermore, Culpeper argued that indigenous plants would be effective in treating disease in this country as

Our English bodies, through the nature of our Region, our kinde of dyet and nourishment, our custom of life, are greatly divers from those of strange Nations By Natures law, all things being abundantly ministred [sic] unto us for the preservation of health at home in our own Fields, Pastures, Rivers, &c. How can the Wisdom of God, and his Goodness, stand with the absence of Medicines and Remedies necessary for the recovery of Health, the need being as urgent of one, as of the other.⁷

However, if we revisit the context in which Skelton started his professional career, then medical botanists were not looking in our own fields and pastures, but using an American system which relied on imported dried plant material. Skelton was initially an employee of Coffin who, as we saw in chapter 1, used a fixed range of herbs. In 1848, a letter from the Liverpool branch of the British Friendly Medico-Botanic Society stated that “we will no longer be under the dictation of Coffin, truth will be our guide.”⁸ From the beginning, the aims of the Liverpool branch had been to increase the use of indigenous herbs alongside Coffin’s medicines.⁹ They were obviously not alone in this aspiration as, in 1850, Coffin felt it necessary to repeat again that his system was sufficient, and that “unanimity, and strict adherence to the principle, and instructions of our founder, is all that is required to establish us as the only safe, and natural school of medicine extant.”¹⁰ He opposed the introduction of any new herbs into his system saying they had been determined “after most minute and searching study of their various properties” and went on to say that

many people hold the absurd opinion, that by using anything in the shape of a herb, possessed of perhaps a certain property, they are acting in strict conformity with the principles laid down as the foundation of our system. In this point they are most egregiously erring; and for their special information we will explain to them their error. Many plants are possessed of one, two, three or sometimes four different and distinct properties, the principal distinguishing property can only be known by the experienced in these matters.¹¹

This was not likely to go down well with the average plebeian knowledge-seeker, and in any case exaggerated Coffin’s own role in the transmission of knowledge as many of the herbs he recommended were found in the Thomsonian system. The 1850 edition of

⁷ Culpeper, “Treatise of the Transcendent Sufficiency,” 18, 7.

⁸ *Coffin’s Journal* 1. no.19 (July 1848): 153.

⁹ *Coffin’s Journal* 1 no.16 (April 1848): 132. The British Friendly Medico-Botanic Society was founded in 1845, and the Liverpool branch was established in February 1848.

¹⁰ *Coffin’s Journal* 2, no. 43 (January 1850): 10,12

¹¹ *Coffin’s Journal* 2, no. 46 (February 1850): 41.

Coffin's *Botanic Guide to Health*¹² included seventy-one herbs, of which thirty-two were amongst the forty-nine herbs given in the British edition of Thomson's *New Guide to Health*. Of these forty-nine herbs, 40% (19) were American.¹³ There may be something in Coffin's claim that he had adapted Thomsonian methods to the British context. Although Coffin listed 11 of the aforementioned 19 American herbs, he did include more European herbs. Oddly enough, he did not use some American herbs listed by Thomson which are still widely used today such as *Cimicifuga racemosa* Black Cohosh, *Hamamelis virginiana* Witch Hazel and *Eupatorium perfoliatum* Boneset.

Thomsonian authors, both American and British, used a substantial proportion of "new" American herbs. But was this unique to herbalists, or did medical practitioners use American herbs as well? As we saw in chapter 3, British medical texts included herbal medicines, but further examination found that they only used a very small number. For example, the "Materia Medica" in Hooper's medical dictionary included only four North American plants: *Polygala senega* Seneca snake root, *Sassafras albidum* Sassafras, *Spigelia marilandica* Pink root and *Veratrum viride* American false hellebore.¹⁴ Robert Thornton (1768-1837), lecturer in botany at Guy's Hospital, published a book specifically on herbal medicines but again, only the same four North American herbs were listed.¹⁵ Each of these is mentioned by Skelton, albeit briefly in the case of Seneca snake root which was listed by Thomson but not by Coffin. Seneca snake root was extensively used in mainstream medicine as a respiratory herb, as it had been popularised in Britain through a publication by an American, John Tennent.¹⁶

So, the introduction of North American herbs into British herbal practice was not influenced by current mainstream use of herbal medicines, and depended directly on the

¹² Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, 15th ed. The figures are indicative rather than precise as the common names used present some uncertainties.

¹³ Thomson, *New Guide to Health*, 1849. The herbs given varied in different editions, see Haller, *People's Doctors*, 76-77, 255-59.

¹⁴ Hooper, *Medical Dictionary*, 534-36. This edition was published in 1820, and was consulted by Skelton.

¹⁵ Robert J. Thornton, *A New Family Herbal* (London: Richard Phillips, 1810), ix-xvi. Thornton qualified in medicine in 1793, and was a serious botanist who devoted many years to producing an illustrated British flora on Linnean principles, see Martin Kemp, "Thornton, Robert John (1768–1837)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman. Oxford: OUP, 2005. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27361> [accessed July 8, 2013].

¹⁶ John Tennent, *An epistle to Dr. Richard Mead*, . . . (Edinburgh: P. Mathie, 1738), Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale <http://find.galegroup.com> [accessed June 27, 2013].

use of texts such as those of Thomson, Coffin and the other Thomsonian and Eclectic texts discussed in chapter 3. In the light of this, then let us look at the three phases in Skelton's publications.

Family Medical Adviser (1852): Thomsonian methods

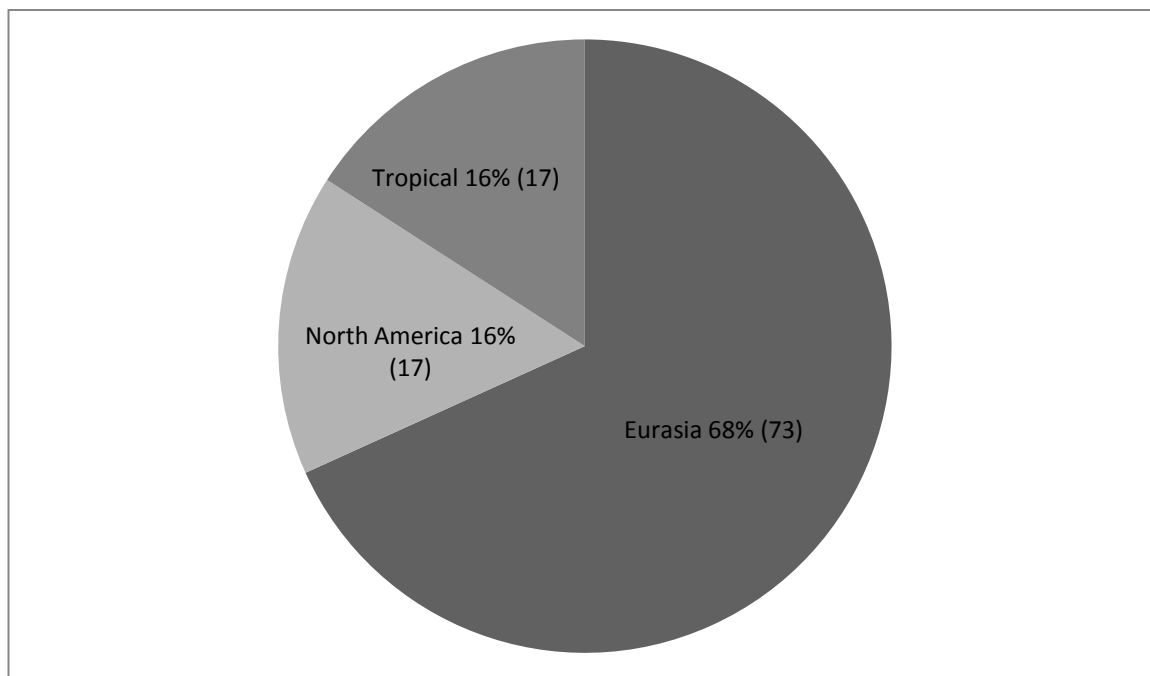


Figure 5: Geographical origin of herbs in the *Family Medical Adviser* (See Appendix 2).

Figure 5 shows that 107 herbs were included in the first edition of the *Adviser*. Over two thirds of these herbs were Eurasian. In this category, most herbs are European or Mediterranean, with four herbs from further east. The remainder were equally divided between the Tropical and North American categories. Although only 16% of the herbs included were tropical, this gives a misleading impression as two of these, *Capsicum annuum* Cayenne and *Zingiber officinale* Ginger, were of particular importance in Thomsonian therapeutics. As we saw earlier, another mainstay of Thomsonian practice was the North American herb *Lobelia inflata*.

Although Thomsonian practice led to the introduction of North American herbs into British usage, medical botany also relied heavily on the use of tropical plants which had been articles of commerce in Britain at least since the seventeenth century. In chapter 3, I showed that the fruits of Cayenne *Capsicum* spp., Thomson's, No. 2, were used throughout the *Adviser*. Cayenne may also have been introduced to North America directly from Central America, as the five species of *Capsicum* were domesticated in

Central America in prehistory and there are numerous cultivars.¹⁷ Usage was not original to Thomson as it was included in pharmacopoeia of the time, but he claimed that he was the first to make it his own and use it consistently, and recounted his initial purchase and experimentation with Cayenne.¹⁸ Coffin equally advocated Cayenne as a pure stimulant which would equalize the circulation, obviate congestion, reduce inflammation and promote perspiration.¹⁹

Furthermore, three of the four ingredients in Composition powder were of tropical origin. The rhizome of *Zingiber officinale* Ginger was the second stimulant included in Composition powder. Paula de Vos analysed twelve texts dating from *Hippocrates* to the *Spanish Pharmacopoeia* of 1865 and found that Ginger was included in ten of these sources.²⁰ Ginger is indigenous to Southeast Asia and has been cultivated in India since antiquity. It was introduced into the West Indies by Spanish colonists in the late sixteenth century where it proved very successful in cultivation.²¹ Coffin described Ginger growing abundantly in the southern United States, and how he chewed preserved pieces after lecturing in overheated rooms.²²

The third tropical spice in Composition powder was *Syzygium aromaticum*. As the dried flower buds of a tropical tree, these must always have been expensive. Cloves are indigenous to the northern Moluccas, and one of the spices associated with the exploitation of these islands by the Dutch East India Company.²³ To conclude, these three

¹⁷ Eric J. Votava, Jit B. Baral, and Paul W. Bosland, "Genetic Diversity of Chile (*Capsicum annuum* var. *annuum* L.) Landraces from Northern New Mexico, Colorado, and Mexico," *Economic Botany* 59, no. 1 (2005): 11905-906. Native Americans used long trade routes, where goods and knowledge could be transferred from one area of trade to the next one at meeting points.

¹⁸ Haller, *People's Doctors*, 22-23; Berman and Flannery, *America's Botanico-Medical*, 88-91. Cayenne was included in the United States Pharmacopoeia from 1820-1942: Vogel, *American Indian Medicine*, 408; Thomson, *New Guide to Health*, 1849, 36-39.

¹⁹ Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, 36th ed., 75-78.

²⁰ I. Rahath Kubra and L. Jagan Mohan Rao, "An Impression on Current Developments in the Technology, Chemistry, and Biological Activities of Ginger (*Zingiber officinale* Roscoe)," *Critical Reviews in Food Science and Nutrition* 52, no. 8 (2011), 1040; De Vos, "European Materia Medica in Historical Texts."

²¹ Paula De Vos, "The Science of Spices: Empiricism and Economic Botany in the Early Spanish Empire," *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (2006), 422-23.

²² Coffin, *Botanic Guide*, 36th ed., 78-80.

²³ Julie B. Hochstrasse, "The Conquest of Spice and the Dutch Colonial Imaginary," in *Colonial Botany*, ed. Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 169-86; Paul M. Taylor, "Introduction," *F.S.A. De Clercq's Ternate: The Residency and Its Sultanate*, ed. Paul M. Taylor (Smithsonian Institution Libraries, 2001), ii-iv. <http://www.sil.si.edu/DigitalCollections/Anthropology/Ternate/>

medicinal plants were not specific to Thomson, Coffin or Skelton, or even to herbal medicine. They are examples of herbs used in particular settings in ways which relied both on practical experience and on the interweaving strands of written sources and tacit traditional knowledge.²⁴

Botanic Record (1852-1855): European sources and herbs

Returning to Britain, the focus of this section is on Skelton's own accounts of his use of common European medicinal herbs and on the texts cited in the *Botanic Record*. Possibly because these herbs were advocated for self-care, Skelton endorsed the use of indigenous plants throughout and his entries show that his practice was influenced by the use of European texts.

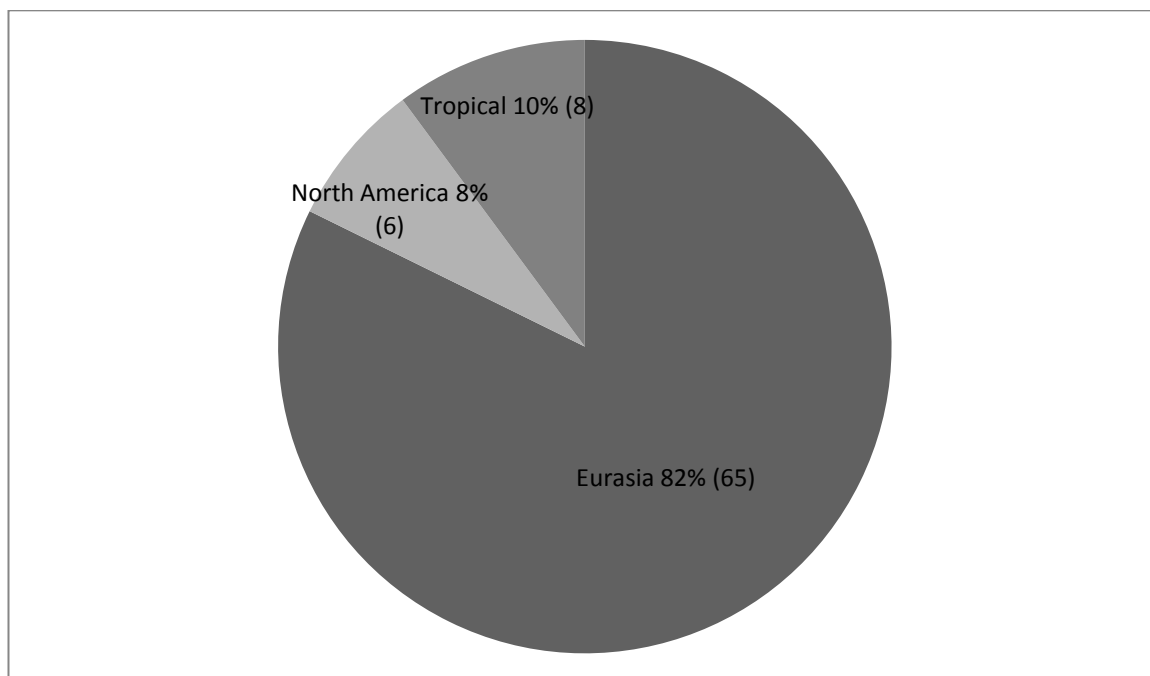


Figure 6: Geographical origin of herbs in the *Botanic Record* (See Appendix 2)

Each number of the *Botanic Record* included a brief article on two herbs, a total of 79.²⁵ Figure 6 above shows that most of these were Eurasian. The entries in the *Botanic Record* varied but included: some botanic description with perhaps an account of where

²⁴ For the argument that oral knowledge in Southern Europe is interwoven with influences from written sources see Marco Leonti, "The Future Is Written": Impact of Scripts on the Cognition, Selection, Knowledge and Transmission of Medicinal Plant Use and Its Implications for Ethnobotany and Ethnopharmacology," *Journal of Ethnopharmacology* 134, no. 3 (2011), 55-67.

²⁵ Of these 79 herbs, half (39) had already been included in the first edition of the *Adviser* and seven were added in later editions. The total is an odd number as extra herbs were sometimes included.

the plant grew; recommendations on usage often including Skelton's own experiences; and quotations predominantly from European texts. The number of references to texts decreased substantially over the three years from May 1852 to August 1855, whereas Skelton consistently placed importance on his own experience. For example, he recommended *Potentilla erecta* Tormentil to speedily stop diarrhoea.²⁶ He then gave a vivid account of visiting a woman "reduced to extreme weakness through a continued relax" and noticing bunches of Tormentil hanging up to dry. On being questioned, she said this was for her husband who had been recommended Tormentil by "an old man" for "weakness of the bowels and relax" - but she had not taken any as she wasn't sure whether it would suit her. In this anecdote, Skelton ably conveyed the message, try the commonplace herb!

Such anecdotes conveyed his commitment to personal responsibility and knowledge in medical matters. He repeatedly argued that people had to be self-reliant because doctors no longer used the gifts of Nature. In the *Plea*, Skelton offered an extended history of medicine and argued that botanic medicine was swept aside because "the old Galenists were asleep in the fancied seclusion of the schools and the cloister, secure in the arms of settled faith and dignified self-consciousness." He continued, "*nor is it possible to contemplate the total wreck of the immense fabric of botanic knowledge, and calculate upon the world's loss in consequence, without feeling that in the sacrifice there is much over which the philanthropist must mourn.*"²⁷

A typical example illustrates Skelton's advocacy of simple British herbs available at no cost. After lecturing in Brighouse, Yorkshire, Skelton showed *Plantago major* Plantain growing by the roadside to a man who was unable to pay a medical fee to Skelton for treatment of "ulceration of the bladder." The man sought him out a year later in Halifax to say that he had been restored to health by taking a daily tea of a mixture of seeds, root and leaves.²⁸ Alongside this anecdote, Skelton gave a long excerpt from John Gerard (1545-1612) on the many uses of Plantain.²⁹ In the *Plea*, he recounted his purchase of a 1633 edition of *The Herball, or General Historie of Plantes, gathered by John Gerarde, of*

²⁶The dose given was a teaspoonful of powder taken in half a teacup of boiling milk. *Botanic Record*, no. 27 (August 1855), 425.

²⁷ Skelton, *Plea*, 57.

²⁸ *Botanic Record*, no. 13 (April 1853): 184.

²⁹ *Botanic Record*, no. 13 (April 1853): 185-186; "Chapter 97 Of Land Plantaine," John Gerard, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes. Gathered by John Gerarde of London Master in Chirurgie*, ed. Thomas. Johnson (London, 1633), 419-21. <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>. [accessed December 5, 2012].

London. Skelton was lecturing in Wakefield and visited a “very old bookseller’s shop, for it is with old books that I love to mingle, to hold communion with ages past, while experiencing the realities of the present.”³⁰

Skelton used an assortment of herbals in his research for the entries in the *Botanic Record*, and he started with enthusiasm at *Agrimonia eupatoria* Agrimony.³¹ For this herb he gave the most references and, taking these references chronologically, he cited Old Gerard (1597),³² Parkinson (1640),³³ Tournefort (1740),³⁴ Boerhaave (1757),³⁵ Sir John Hill (1789)³⁶ and Dr Thornton (1812).³⁷ Of the six, Gerard, John Hill (1714-1775) and Thornton were the most regularly cited, but Thornton may have been his most important source. Skelton referred to Thornton regularly and quoted or paraphrased his use of earlier sources. For example, on *Galium aparine* Cleavers, Skelton wrote that “Boerhaave says, the herb made into a tea is an excellent remedy for the gout and epilepsy” and this passage was taken from Thornton.³⁸ For *Berberis vulgaris* Barberry, Skelton gave Thornton as the source for the recommendation for use of the fruit, stating that “Prosper Alpinus mentions (says Dr Thornton) his being attacked with a bilious diarrhea, and that he owes his recovery wholly to eating the fruit of the barberry tree. Simon Pauli ...found it

³⁰ Skelton, *Plea*, 58-60. The description given by Skelton of the title page matches the title page of the edition in the note above. The book cost two guineas, and the title page showed that, in 1654, it had been given to Ann Egleton who was from a local family. The purchase could have been made in Autumn 1849, see *Coffin’s Journal* 1, no. 35 (September 1849): 304.

³¹ *Botanic Record*, no. 1 (May 1852): 10.

³² Gerard, *The Herbal*. The first edition was dated 1597.

³³ John Parkinson, *The Herball: the Theater of Plantes. Or, an Universall and Compleate Herbal* (London: printed by Thomas Cotes, 1640), 594. <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>. [accessed July 6, 2013].

³⁴ Joseph Pitton de Tournefort, *Materia Medica; . . .* (London, 1708). Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale. <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>. [accessed January 23, 2013]. (This is a different edition).

³⁵ *Dr. Boerhaave's academical lectures on the theory of physic* Vol. IV. (London, 1757). The reference to Agrimony could not be identified, and this account of Boerhaave’s lectures may have been quoted by another of Skelton’s sources.

³⁶ John Hill, *The useful family-herbal* (London: A. Millar, W. Law, and R. Cater, 1789), 55. John Hill was a prolific writer on natural history, and on medicinal plants with the intention of popularising their usage, see Barry O’Connor, “Hill, Sir John (bap. 1714, d. 1775),” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2011). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13281> [accessed July 8, 2013].

³⁷ Thornton, *Family Herbal*, 470.

³⁸ *Botanic Record*, no. 76 (November, 1852): 105. Thornton, *Family Herbal*, 95.

to produce similar results; and J. Bauhin recommends the same remedy in dysentery.³⁹ Skelton was further indebted to Thornton in that the illustrations in the *Botanic Record* were unacknowledged copies of the engravings from Thornton's *New Family Herbal*.⁴⁰

In later numbers of the *Botanic Record*, further sources were introduced. Interestingly, Skelton's references to Culpeper were generally brief, although he singled out a reference to Clary Sage which Culpeper described as, "most blasphemously called Christ's Eye, because it cures disease of the eye." It was not possible to identify a specific edition as there were many editions and reissues of Culpeper's *Complete Herbal* which was originally based on the *English Physitian* first published in 1652.⁴¹ Further authors cited were Rembert Dodoens (1516-1585), Cullen, William Woodville (1752-1805), Robert James and Robinson. He quoted directly from Dodoens on the value of external use of leaves of *Ophioglossum vulgatum* Adder's tongue for wounds. Skelton referred to "his black letter Herbal of 1586, a copy of which I now quote from" adding that "I well remember when a boy, some forty years ago, that my grandmother, who was a famous village doctress, used the adder's tongue in this way."⁴² Here is an interweaving of textual knowledge with an elusive mention of oral knowledge which recalls Thomson's mention of "Widow Benton" who took him out collecting herbs as a boy.⁴³

A rare quotation from Cullen advocated a fresh decoction of *Cytisus scoparius* Broom in dropsy [fluid retention] where it "operates both by stool and urine."⁴⁴ Skelton chose

³⁹ *Botanic Record*, no. 5 (September, 1852): 73. Thornton, *Family Herbal*, 360. The actual detail of the dosage used by Simon Pauli is to be found in William Woodville, *Medical Botany* (London: William Phillips, 1810), 618.

⁴⁰ The illustrations have not been compared throughout.

⁴¹ *Botanic Record*, no. 10 (February, 1853): 153; Nicholas Culpeper, *Culpeper's Complete Herbal* (London: Richard Evans, 1816), 51; Graeme Toby, *Culpeper's Medicine: A Practice of Western Holistic Medicine* (Shaftesbury: Element, 1997), 22-24. Here all references to Culpeper are from the edition above or from Culpeper, *Culpeper's Complete Herbal*, 1995). These two editions are very similar, whereas other nineteenth-century editions consulted had more discrepancies, additional herbs, and additional modern sections.

⁴² *Botanic Record*, no. 3 (July, 1852): 41. "Adders toong," Rembert Dodoens. *A New Herball, or Historie of Plants . . .* trans. Henry Lyte, (London: Ninian Newton, 1586), 149-50. The original text was published in Flemish as the *Cruydeboek* in 1555. This was translated into French by Charles de l'Ecluse and this French edition was translated into English by Henry Lyte. See Philippe Jacques van Meerbeeck, *Recherches Historiques Et Critiques Sur La Vie Et Les Ouvrages De Rembert Dodoens (Dodonaeus)* (Utrecht: Hes, 1980), 272-73.

⁴³ Thomson, *New Guide to Health*, 1849, 131-32.

⁴⁴ *Botanic Record*, no. 4 (August, 1852): 57; William Cullen, *A Treatise of the Materia Medica*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Charles Elliot, 1789). The meaning but not the wording are the same so this may have been taken from another later edition.

another recommendation for dropsy from Woodville who advocated *Arctium lappa* Burdock stating that “in this way, we have seen it succeed in two dropsical cases where other powerful medicines have been ineffectual.”⁴⁵ Skelton returned to the *Medicinal Dictionary* of James on the value of *Pimpinella anisum* Anise in “cold affections of the lungs, difficulty of breathing and asthma.”⁴⁶

To conclude, Skelton advocated and used British herbs, and his practice was influenced by the use of earlier texts. A pertinent example is *Ruscus aculeatus* Butcher’s Broom. Skelton advocated the use of Butcher’s Broom “one of the five diuretical roots” in the hope that it “may no longer be suffered to remain in obscurity.”⁴⁷ This debate over the relative use of indigenous and imported herbs continues in herbal circles, and Butcher’s Broom still remains much more widely used today in Europe than in Britain.⁴⁸ To support his argument, Skelton used citations from Dioscorides via Gerard, from Parkinson, from Tournefort and from Riverius via Thornton.⁴⁹ Yet, Skelton conspicuously did not refer to *Culpeper’s Complete Herbal*, which has an entry on Butcher’s *Brooom*.⁵⁰ Skelton may have been using this book without citing Culpeper who, then as now, remains the underlying source for authors writing on British herbs. Of the 135 Eurasian herbs included in Skelton’s publications (see Appendix 2), 104 were included in *Culpeper’s Complete Herbal*.⁵¹

Although Skelton advocated indigenous herbs, only half of the British herbs given in the *Botanic Record* are still to be found in *Science and Practice*, published fifteen years later. It may be that some herbs included in the *Botanic Record* did not actually find a place in his practice. This potential contradiction between intention and practice is notable

⁴⁵ *Botanic Record*, no. 6 (October, 1852): 88. Woodville, *Medical Botany*, 34-35. The dose copied is two ounces of the fresh root of, boiled in 3 pints of water down to two, and a pint taken over the day.

⁴⁶ *Botanic Record*, no.10 (February, 1853): 153: James, *Medicinal dictionary*, Image 623. The last author mentioned was “Dr Robinson”, but this source could not be firmly identified.

⁴⁷ *Botanic Record*, no.7 (November, 1952): 104. Quotation from Parkinson. Diuretical refers to diuretics which are used to increase the volume of urine, promote the flow of urine or improve urinary function in a general sense.

⁴⁸ Assessment report on *Ruscus aculeatus* L. Rhizome. European Medicines Agency. London, 4 September, 2008, http://www.emea.europa.eu/docs/en_GB/document_library/Herbal_-_HMPC_assessment_report/2009/12/WC500018288.pdf [accessed January 24, 2013].

⁴⁹ Gerard, *The Herball*; Parkinson, *Theatrum Botanicum*; Tournefort, *Materia Medica*, 104-105; Thornton, *Family Herbal*, 855.

⁵⁰ Culpeper, *Complete Herbal*, 44.

⁵¹ Of the 21 herbs not found in Culpeper, nine were in any case, not native to Britain.

in *Alchemilla vulgaris* Ladies Mantle which did not reappear in *Science and Practice*. Yet, in the *Botanic Record*, Skelton recounted a conversation with “a very zealous, active, successful Medical Botanist” who said

candidly, I shall not push it [the *Adviser*] ... you have put so many of our *common English herbs into it*, that if these are used by the people, what is to become of the *American* preparations that we live by selling?” “I write for *truth's sake* and not for private gain,” was my reply; “and since our own herbs will do equally with foreign ones, and often better, I prefer telling truth to making profits, and if I would not do so for myself, of course you cannot expect me to do it for you.”⁵²

We do know that in later years, Skelton remained committed to practical botany. In 1868, he published a series of articles on the “Sexual System of Linnaeus,” adding an admonition on the development of mind:

the first great difficulty is to awaken it out of the dormant state...; this done, it pushes forward, often with an alacrity which surprises itself and others” and that “It was for the love of Botany and the perseverance with which he worked it out that Linnaeus outstripped all others, and that which he did with so much success, we also may do if we love it and follow in his footsteps.”⁵³

⁵² *Botanic Record*, no. 11 (March 1853): 169-70.

⁵³ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 4 (April 1868): 46.

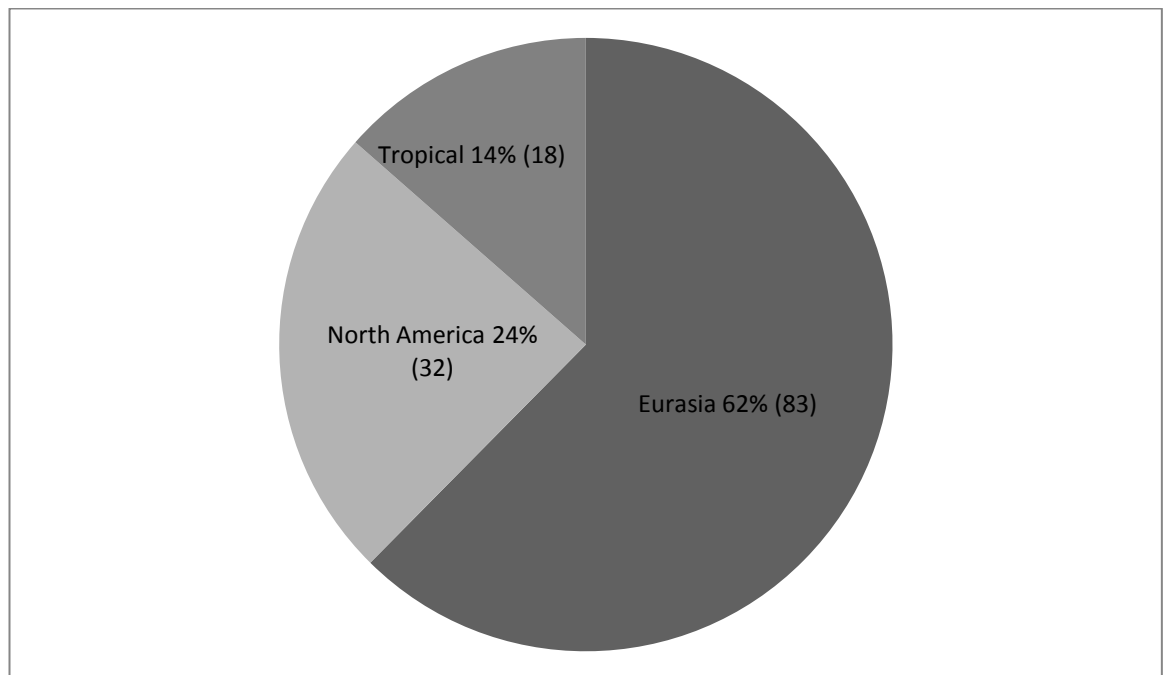


Figure 7: Geographical origin of herbs in *Science and Practice* (See Appendix 2)

Looking at *Science and Practice*, published in 1870, a review of the herbs recommended found notable changes.⁵⁴ 24% of the 133 herbs listed were American which was 8% more than in the *Adviser* (16%). Equally, there were new British herbs such as *Sanicula europaea* Sanicle which had been presented first in the *Botanic Record*, and was recommended in *Science and Practice* for consumption.⁵⁵ Many prescriptions appeared to contain fewer herbs and lastly, there was a change of emphasis in that, in contrast to its recurrent usage in the *Adviser*, *Capsicum annum* Cayenne was first mentioned on page 222. No firm conclusions can be drawn, but Skelton did change his practice over the years and the most notable change was the introduction of Eclectic concentrated preparations. *Science and Practice* was profoundly different from Skelton's earlier texts. It was a medical textbook with substantial attention to diagnosis and clinical care. The intended audience was probably students at the Leeds Eclectic School of Medicine established in October 1868.⁵⁶ It was first published in parts during 1869, where

⁵⁴ The recommendations for treatment of disease and the prescriptions are not analysed here.

⁵⁵ Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 384.

⁵⁶ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 23 (November 1869): 348-49. There was a second school in London. John Skelton, probably his son, was amongst the honorary Medical Officers.

the authors were given as “the Drs Skelton” including as editor, Dr John Skelton junior, who had already been using Eclectic preparations in 1857.⁵⁷

Skelton advocated twelve resinoids, Eclectic concentrated herbal products, in his speech at the Whittington Club in 1862.⁵⁸ With hindsight, there is some irony in this situation in that he remained firmly on the side of “vox populi” but was advocating expensive manufactured products. They were imported as articles of commerce – in contrast to his earlier recommendations of decoctions made at home from wild-collected plant materials. The concentrated powders were resinous extracts obtained by first making a percolated tincture of the plant material, then distilling off the ethanol. The residual matter was precipitated in water and dried.⁵⁹ These extracts were first developed by John King during the 1830s, but manufactured on a commercial scale by W.S. Merrell & Co. of Cincinnati from 1847.⁶⁰ They became very popular and during the 1850s, there were at least ten American manufacturers of similar products. Skelton could have purchased from any of these companies, and may have been introduced to them through his contacts with the Worcester School of Medicine.⁶¹ When he first used resinoids is unclear, but an advertisement in 1864 included a testimonial from the homeopath, Garth Wilkinson, who described Skelton as “the first to introduce into this country the Podophyllin, Macrotin, Leptandrin, Stillingia, and other indigenous remedies, which entirely supersede the use of Mercury...He is the most fearless apostle of medical freedom in this country.”⁶²

⁵⁷ *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 14 (February 1869): 217-18; “Dedicated to my father, we should say it was Eclectic;” n.p. John Skelton, junior, *A Treatise on the Venereal Disease and Spermatorrhœa* (Leeds: Samuel Moxon, 1857), n.p.; The son was editor of the *Eclectic Medical Journal*, no. 1-12, 1858.

⁵⁸ British Library, “The Present and Future of Medicine.”

⁵⁹ King, *The American Eclectic Dispensatory*, 595-96, 1001. The details of the method varied between manufacturers.

⁶⁰ John U. Lloyd, “The Eclectic Alkaloids, Resins, Resinoids, Oleo-Resins and Concentrated Principles,” *Pharmacy Series Bulletin of the Lloyd Library* 2 no. 12 (Cincinnati, Ohio: Lloyd Library, 1910), 9-14, 19, 25. Southwest School of Botanic Medicine. http://www.swsbm.com/ManualsOther/Eclectic_Alkaloids-Lloyd.pdf; Francis Brinker, *Complex Herbs-Complete Medicines* (Sandy, Oregon, USA: Eclectic Medical Publications, 2004), 129-33; Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 171-76.

⁶¹ See chapter 2. Calvin Newton, Head of the Worcester Medical School, manufactured such products from 1851, see Lloyd, “Eclectic Alkaloids,” 30.

⁶² Notice, Plymouth Directory for 1864/65, Margery Payne, e-mail messages to author, 29 November 2012; Richard Lines, “James John Garth Wilkinson,” Paper presented at the Second Bloomsbury Project Conference, 16 June 2009. UCL Bloomsbury Project. <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/articles/events/conferences.htm> [accessed July 10, 2013].

There could have been a change of rationale in Skelton's prescribing as the most common preparation recommended in *Science and Practice* was used to promote "cleansing" via hepatic action and regular bowel movements.⁶³ This was Compound powder of Leptandrin, which included three concentrated powders: Leptandrin, *Veronicastrum virginica* syn. *Leptandra virginicum* Blackroot; Podophyllin, *Podophyllum peltatum* American Mandrake; Hydrastin, *Hydrastis canadensis* Goldenseal, and one herb *Zingiber officinale* Ginger. All these ingredients, except for Ginger, are North American. The regular use of Eclectic preparations, such as Compound powder of Leptandrin, indicates a marked change in Skelton's prescribing but these products fell out of favour, probably because of uncertainty about their quality, safety and effectiveness.⁶⁴

A change with more long-term implications for herbal practice in Britain was the increasing usage of North American plants. This point can be illustrated by returning to the respiratory herbs discussed in chapter 3, where it was noted that *Asclepias tuberosa* Pleurisy root was added to the prescription for pleurisy in 1861. This was one of the *Asclepias* species used by Native Americans, and recommended as an expectorant and diaphoretic in pleurisy by early botanic authors including Constantine Rafinesque (1783-1840), professor of botany at Transylvania University, Kentucky, who published a *Medical Flora: Or, Manual of the Medical Botany of the United States of North America*.⁶⁵

The frequent contact between Native Americans and European settlers throughout the continent included ordinary people anxious to use local plant medicines, "Indian" doctors, medical practitioners and botanists.⁶⁶ Doctors, such as Benjamin Smith Barton (1755-1815) of Philadelphia, were involved in efforts both to increase the number of medicinal

⁶³ Leptandrin, Podophyllin and Hydrastin were all cholagogues which promote the flow of bile, although Leptandrin was particularly recommended as useful to promote liver function without having a laxative action. King, *American Eclectic Dispensatory*, 593-96; David Lyte, "Forgotten and Neglected American Medicinal Plants," in *American Herbalism* ed. Michael Tierra. (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1992), 103-104.

⁶⁴ Lloyd, "Eclectic Alkaloids," 27-29, 39-49.

⁶⁵ Charlotte Erichsen-Brown, *Medicinal and Other Uses of North American Plants : A Historical Survey with Special Reference to the Eastern Indian Tribes* (New York: Dover Publications, 1989), 431-36; Vogel, *American Indian Medicine*, 287-88; Constantine S. Rafinesque, *Medical Flora: Or, Manual of the Medical Botany of the United States of North America* (Philadelphia: Atkinson & Alexander, 1828), 74-78. Haller, *Medical Protestants*, 66-68. The relationship between Rafinesque and further developments in medical botany would make a dissertation in itself.

⁶⁶ "Indian" doctors could be Native Americans or settlers. For accounts of these interactions, see Vogel, *American Indian Medicine*, 36-137; Martha K. Robinson, "New Worlds, New Medicines: Indian Remedies and English Medicine in Early America," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 3, no. 1 (2007), 94-110.

remedies available and to classify the flora of North America.⁶⁷ The complex relationships between Native Americans, collectors, herbalists, medical practitioners and domestic users mean that when Skelton began to use Pleurisy root, he was drawing on a vibrant tradition. In *Science and Practice*, “Asclepin” was listed as “most excellent in Inflammatory attacks of the Lungs, Pleurisy, Catarrh, Asthma, Hooping cough and Bronchitis. It should be taken with hyssop or ground ivy tea.”⁶⁸ The concentrated preparation from *Asclepias tuberosa*, Asclepidin, was a soft resinoid, a dark semiliquid mass “used for all purposes to which the crude article is applied in doses of from one to five grains, three or four times a day, or as may be indicated.”⁶⁹ An 1858 catalogue included fluid extract of *Asclepias tuberosa*, Asclepidin and pills of Asclepidin.⁷⁰ Such products were presented in a medicinal format and represented a major change from his earlier practice. However, returning to the relevant sections of *Science and Practice* on Bronchitis and Pneumonia, Skelton recommended teas prepared using powder of *Asclepias tuberosa*.⁷¹ His recommendations were therefore not so different from those in the *Adviser*, and he continued to argue that “Let no one presume, however, that the crude preparations can be dispensed with, or that they can ever be superseded by active or concentrated medicines.”⁷²

A final point on *Science and Practice* is that it was written for a new audience, to demonstrate that Eclecticism was a professional system of medicine. Taking an example of the changes in practice in the intervening twenty years, Skelton recommended Compound powder of Leptandrin in chronic disease “when it becomes necessary to completely change the character of the blood.”⁷³ However, I hesitate to argue that there was more than a trend towards increased usage of American plants, as this textbook may have represented only Skelton’s public face.

⁶⁷ Lewis, “Gathering for the Republic,” 66-80.

⁶⁸ Skelton *Science and Practice*, 720. The different spelling may be a misprint or may indicate that he purchased supplies for a company who used a slightly different name.

⁶⁹ King, “Eclectic Alkaloids.”

⁷⁰ Tilden & Co., *Formulae for Making Tinctures, Infusions, Syrups, Wines, Mixtures, Pills, &C., Simple and Compound, from the Fluid & Solid Extracts Prepared by the Laboratory of Tilden & Co.* (New Lebanon, NY: Tilden & Co., 1858), 12-13.

⁷¹ Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 292, 301.

⁷² Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 677.

⁷³ Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 719. Ironically, use of Eclectic compounds made his practice less safe in that *Podophyllum peltatum* has been shown to be embryotoxic and is no longer used internally.

To conclude, the focus of this chapter has been the herbs recommended by Skelton in his main publications and it has shown that he used a wide range of herbs from European, Thomsonian and Eclectic practice. The addition of American herbs was in marked contrast to mainstream medicine at the time, and still distinguishes British herbal practice from European practice. This finding shows that, although the use of herbal medicines was not specific to herbalists, they relied on a different and extended range of herbal medicines. Although herbalists were responsible for the introduction of North American herbs into clinical practice in Britain, equally they relied on both tropical and Eurasian herbs which were long-established in British usage. Analysis of the changes in the *Adviser*, *Botanic Record* and *Science and Practice*, showed that Skelton continued to advocate the use of indigenous plants. 68% of the herbs listed in the *Adviser* were Eurasian and still in 1870, 62% of the herbs listed in *Science and Practice* were Eurasian. This finding supports the argument that the differences between American and European practice might not be so great as they might appear on first examination. In itself, this finding is perhaps unremarkable, but could be helpful in allowing herbal practitioners to understand more about traditional usage. The change to a modern European phytotherapeutic approach briefly mentioned in the introduction to this chapter was part of a necessary modernization of the curriculum, but meant that sources of the traditional knowledge that underpins herbal practice was cast aside.⁷⁴

In some senses, although it has been such a matter of debate, the division between British and American clinical practice may be illusory in that both tropical herbs and Eurasian herbs were used in both countries by herbalists and medical practitioners.⁷⁵ Perhaps the important point in the debate is that made by Skelton himself in 1852 when he considered the contribution of Coffin to British herbal medicine. Skelton credited Coffin with introducing “the system of medicine known as the “Botanic” or Vegetable system.” He acknowledged that herbs were used before but “because grandfather and grandmother did it before them” rather than according to any structured body of knowledge. He went on to point out that others had imported American herbs but that “to Dr Coffin, however, the honour belongs of introducing it to the British public.”⁷⁶ Although a rift arose between Coffin and Skelton, Skelton owed his “big chance” to Coffin when, in 1848, he became his assistant. It can be argued that it was this Thomsonian practice that provided the framework in which Skelton was able to develop his use of British herbs. In that

⁷⁴ Sue Evans, "Changing the Knowledge Base in Western Herbal Medicine," *Social Science & Medicine* 67, no. 12 (2008); Toby, Denham and Whitelegg, *Western Herbal Tradition*, ix-x.

⁷⁵ Murphy, *Enter the Physician*, 72-73.

⁷⁶ *Botanic Record*, no. 1, (May, 1852): 2-3.

professional herbal practice in Britain today remains, albeit loosely, based on this form of practice, then maybe this is the legacy – the sense of herbal medicine as a body of clinical knowledge. The examination of the herbs used by Skelton forms part of an endeavour to explore and to elucidate the underlying rationale for this knowledge.

Finally, throughout the years, the ethos of Skelton's practice appears to have remained remarkably unchanged as is shown by this excerpt from *Science and Practice*:

We have more than once stated, whilst descanting upon the order and economy of Providence, that "nature, with no niggardly hand, has dispensed liberally and bounteously the remedies necessary for the disease of the human family, wherever, and under whatever conditions it is found," and this is certainly a great fact.⁷⁷

Why Skelton should compose this sentence when introducing a chapter of *Formulae* is a question which will be considered in the next chapter where the focus is on the formation of his opinions, in particular the connected meaning of his concepts of knowledge and class, and his moral and religious views which were connected with his sense of the order of Nature.

⁷⁷ Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 676.

Chapter 5: Knowledge is power

That 'knowledge is power'- . . .all will admit . . . without its aid, without the benign influence of purified and exalted intellect, the world must have remained in darkness, immorality have prevailed, despotism have triumphed, ... I long to see knowledge prevalent . . . long to see the temple of nature, the Almighty's shrine, with its thousand charms and blandishments, appreciated by man; to behold the truth written in the hearts of all men, embalmed in the starry firmament, sung in the zephyr . . .¹

In the last two chapters we have reviewed the prescribing practices and herbal recommendations in Skelton's works and shown that earlier scholars have underestimated the complexity and fluidity of his thinking in that their focus was only on his political statements. This chapter returns to the themes explored by historians writing in the 1970s and 1980s within the emerging social history of medicine and the social history of scientific ideas. It builds upon the idea that "knowledge is power" so eloquently and Romantically expressed in the quotation above, and explores the extent to which one can relate Skelton's political career outlined in chapter 2 and his medical botany. Within the scope of this dissertation one cannot explore every aspect of this and so the analysis focuses on four themes. The first section on the "Zetetic principle" explores the meaning of the term knowledge as Skelton used it, considers Skelton's reading matter and touches on the influence of his radical colleagues. The second section "Universal happiness" recalls his Socialist days, briefly explores his use of the term class in the light of the debate between historians over the meaning of class for Chartists. The third section, "Nature's laws" returns to his conception of health, and the last section "Man is progressive" considers his religious views. These themes were initially selected from the *Adviser* but this chapter draws more directly on his other publications.

The Zetetic principle

Knowledge alone, when it shall have accomplished its mission in the providing of such arrangements as determine human security, can alone rescue society in the aggregate. We must content ourselves at present to improve the units or individual men and women²

¹ "D.W. Heath of the Nottingham Medico-Botanic Society, introducing his lecture on Dr Skelton's *Plea*," *Botanic Record*, no. 15 (July 1853): 226.

² Skelton, *Adviser*, 13.

In March 1842, “Mr Skelton” spoke at a Socialist meeting in favour of the motion that “Education for all, and may national measures sufficiently enlarged to secure it be speedily adopted.”³ He put this commitment into practice by enrolling his son at Leeds Medical School in 1851, and himself qualifying as a medical practitioner in 1863 at the age of 58. His publishing career spanned 18 years and his obituary singled out for praise his educational efforts and thus his pamphlets.⁴ He advocated self reliance in healthcare, arguing that everyone, men and women, should take responsibility for their own life wherever possible, and that the necessary resources should be available.

For Skelton, education did not mean the transmission of knowledge in the simple sense but more the development of human character. Trygve Tholfsen argued that “interwoven in the texture of working-class radicalism was the legacy of Enlightenment rationalism, which provided a distinctive temper of mind” such that “once ignorance and superstition were overcome, men of good will could build a free society of reason.”⁵ This ethos was found throughout Skelton’s writings, and his experiences in radical London may have been the basis of his beliefs. Edward Thompson argued that the “impulse of rational enlightenment” was “seized upon by the artisans with an evangelistic zeal to carry it to numbers unlimited,” and identified Richard Carlile (1790–1843) as the leading participant in this process.⁶ Carlile defined the “power of popular knowledge” as the “zetetic principle” and in the 1820s his supporters founded societies for “rational discussion” of “republican and materialist principles.” The zetetic groups were committed to self–education and their definition of knowledge included both knowledge in the sense of understanding and political knowledge in the sense of Carlile’s slogan “knowledge is power.”

Skelton’s advocacy of education paralleled that of other reformers. Education was central to Socialist beliefs in that Owen believed that the youthful surroundings determined future personality, and had pioneered active learning for children as a factory owner in New Lanark in the first decades of the century.⁷ Richard Johnson has given a vivid account of Socialist education highlighting the cross-over between formal and informal

³ *New Moral World* 3, no. 37 (March 12, 1842): 296.

⁴ *National Anti-Compulsory Vaccination Reporter*, 2, no. 6 (March 1, 1880): 105. Apart from the two pamphlets on cholera, and the report of the Whittington lecture, these have not been identified.

⁵ Trygve R. Tholfsen, *Working Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1976), 72.

⁶ Edward .P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, paperback. first published 1963. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), 798; “Richard Carlile the publisher,” Holyoake, *Sixty Years*, 187-90.

⁷ Harrison, *Owen and the Owenites*, 159-62.

endeavours, and the role of the family in encouraging learning both for pleasure and to develop skills.⁸ These skills included the literacy needed to partake in society, for which the radical William Cobbett (1763-1835) published the *Grammar of the English Language* in 1817, yet equally reading allowed engagement with the meaning of Shakespearean texts.⁹ Education as an “a universal instrument for advancing the dignity of man” was very important to Lovett, Skelton’s colleague in the LWMA. In his autobiography, Lovett highlighted his role in the spread of literacy and the availability of popular literature. Although Lovett appears in the literature on Chartism as Secretary of the LWMA and as an experienced negotiator and author, his autobiography revealed that he was brought up in Cornwall in a home with only the Bible as reading matter, and arrived by sea into London as a unemployed rope-maker.¹⁰

Unfortunately for us, Skelton chose not to divulge any details about his childhood and mentioned reading only one book, *Robinson Crusoe*, but it is likely that his voracious reading habits resembled the reading experiences of other Chartists. Cooper was born in the same year as Skelton and probably had a more difficult start in life as his mother was widowed. However she paid for Cooper’s schooling, and he managed to obtain an assortment of reading materials in Gainsborough as a boy. His radical reading was obtained through other apprenticed shoemakers.¹¹ Harney, who was born in 1817, eventually left a library of 1600 books.¹² The early nineteenth century had a lively reading culture of newspapers, pamphlets and books.¹³ Chapters 3 and 4 showed that he had read widely, and both primary and secondary sources conjure up a context in which texts opened worlds of adventure and possibility.¹⁴

⁸ Richard Johnson, "Really Useful Knowledge': Radical Education and Working-Class Culture, 1790-1848," in *Working Class Culture: Studies in History and Theory*, ed. John Clarke, Charles Critcher, and Richard Johnson (London: Hutchinson, 1979).

⁹ Kathryn Prince, "Shakespeare in the Early Working-Class Press," in *The Working-Class Intellectual in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain* ed. Aruna Krishnamurthy (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 129-42.

¹⁰ Lovett, *Life and Struggles*, 19-23; Large, "William Lovett;" Stack, "William Lovett and the National Association."

¹¹ Cooper, *Autobiography*, 32-36.

¹² A quarter were published in English before 1852, although many may have been purchased later in life, see Margaret Hambrick, *A Chartist's Library* (London: Mansell, 1986).

¹³ To read the newspapers of the unstamped press required a high level of literacy. Further journals and books were advertised. For example, a typical issue of *The Poor Man's Guardian*, headed "Knowledge is Power," listed 10 serial publications, 61 weeklies, and 56 books sold by Hetherington, *Poor Man's Guardian*, April 5, 1834.

¹⁴ For a discussion of the number and variety of journals in the early nineteenth century, and the complex way in which the audience for each type of journal was constituted, see Jon P. Klancher,

Skelton undoubtedly had the opportunity to improve his political education and awareness through membership of the LWMA, although, disappointingly, the minutes did not disclose the topics for the weekly discussion meetings. Reading groups were important in radical circles, and Place recalled his reading group of “15 working men,” members of the London Corresponding Society, who met weekly in 1795 and “each in turn read a small portion of some useful book, and then each was requested to make his observations thereon.” In the 1830s, Place recommended *Godwin’s Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* for use in such meetings.¹⁵

Skelton will have used the library of the LWMA to read newspapers or to borrow books on a weekly basis.¹⁶ His opportunities for reading periodicals and books improved after 1842 when he joined the newly formed London branch of the National Association for Promoting the Political and Social Improvement of the People. This Chartist organisation had a library and reading room from the outset.¹⁷ Every sort of periodical was taken, and it would be fascinating to discover more about contemporary influences on Skelton’s thinking. He did later refer to his choice of newspaper, the *Manchester Guardian*.¹⁸

A potentially significant influence was James Watson (1799-1874).¹⁹ Watson was a long-standing Socialist, and both men were members of the LWMA and the Anti-

The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790-1832 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

¹⁵ No. 85, Letter to Mr Morton, Journeyman Carpenter. 2 April 1836 Add. Ms. 35150, in Rowe, *London Radicalism*, 156-58.

¹⁶ In January 1839, there was substantial discussion which resulted in a change of the rules on nomination, but the motion to reduce the subscription to six shillings a year failed. This may have been because a major expense was the provision of a meeting room, a library and newspaper subscriptions.¹⁶ Books could be taken out for a week at a time, and in March 1838 the income from fines was used to purchase *Society in America* by Harriet Martineau.

¹⁷ British Library, Minutes of the National Association, Add. 37774. The minutes included records of acquisitions of books from Lovett and from the LWMA. In March 1843, the newspapers taken were discussed and listed as: *Times*, *Morning Advertiser* (daily); *Nonconformist*, *Despatch*, *Lloyds London*, *Northern Star*, *Spectator* (weekly); *Chartist Circular*, *Moral World*, *Punch*, *Fireside Journal*, *Penny Magazine*, *Chambers Edinburgh*, *Chambers London*, *Penny Mechanic*, *Phrenological Monthly*, *Tates*, *Blackwoods*, *Dickens’ Martin Chuzzlewit* (monthly); *Westminster*, *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly Reviews* (quarterly).

¹⁸ He referred to a notice of death for four children who died of scarlatina. He read the account on the train between Manchester and Stockport. *Coffin’s Journal* 1, no. 23 (November 1848): 186; Skelton, *Adviser*, 75-76.

¹⁹ Thomas Seccombe, “Watson, James (1799–1874),” rev. Matthew Lee in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman (Oxford: OUP, 2005). <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28842> [accessed July 8, 2013]; David Vincent, “James Watson,” in *Testaments of Radicalism*, 103-14.

Persecution League. They later came into contact as Skelton chose Watson as his publisher for the *Plea*. This was a political choice in that Watson was a prominent radical publisher and bookseller.²⁰ He had been imprisoned for blasphemy in 1823 when he was a shopman for Carlile, and in 1834 for selling unstamped newspapers.²¹ He was familiar with the radical literature of the eighteenth century: in 1832 Watson's branch of the National Union of the Working Classes read Godwin's *Political Justice* before planning political activities. The Home Office spy reported that "Watson has a great quantity of old books by him, by Paine, Sherwin, Carlile, and others which he lends us to read from Sunday to Sunday."²² Watson remained committed to both Socialism and Chartism during the 1840s, and was, like Skelton, an advocate of "moral force."

This section has combined primary and secondary sources to outline possible influences on Skelton which underlay his commitment to education but which, if any, was influential is a matter for conjecture. However, I would argue that Skelton wrote the *Adviser* in the spirit of Carlile as it was written in clear, readable prose with careful attention to directions for usage. James Epstein argued that Carlile, influenced by Thomas Paine (1737-1809), "linked directness and transparency of expression to the engendering of democratic politics."²³

Universal Happiness

Skelton's expressed aim in writing the *Adviser* was "increasing the sum of human happiness."²⁴ He introduced two themes which recur in his writings: "man is so constituted in every part, that the body is fully capable, when in health, of fulfilling all the duties and obligations of life with pleasure; and seeing that happiness is the great end of his exertions, . . . his first and greatest consideration should be how to best secure it."²⁵

²⁰ Later in 1853, Watson retained the copyrights, but sold the business at 147 Fleet Street to Holyoake who paid instalments until 1858. George Holyoake, *The History of the Fleet Street House: A Report of Sixteen Years* (London, 1856), 8.

²¹ William Linton, *James Watson: A Memoir of the Days of the Fight for a Free Press in England and of the Agitation for the People's Charter* (Manchester: Abel Heywood and Son, 1880), 19, 26; F. B. Smith, *Radical Artisan: William James Linton 1812-97* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), 18-19.

²² Large, "William Lovett," 123.

²³ James Epstein, *Radical Expression: Political Language, Ritual, and Symbol in England, 1790-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 100-46; Royle, *Victorial Infidels*, 128.

²⁴ Skelton, *Adviser*, 4.

²⁵ Skelton, *Adviser*, 6.

Happiness “the object of all animated existence” was equally central to Socialist beliefs: “The means to attain and enjoy happiness . . . are now in sufficient abundance . . . We desire to commence measures to arrange and combine these means, to enable all to enjoy happiness in full security.”²⁶

Happiness was also the goal of Utilitarianism which considered human welfare as central regardless of other religious or moral views.²⁷ Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), writing in 1777, integrated happiness with utility by arguing that God was concerned about the happiness of his creatures and therefore motivated to produce “general utility.”²⁸ Priestley was writing much earlier, but there is a sense in which Skelton’s words “fulfilling all the duties and obligations of life with pleasure” hark back to the requirement for active citizenship endorsed by Priestley who established the Unitarian church.²⁹ To claim any dominant influence would be rash but the idea of happiness can be seen as part of a general move away from the idea of the inevitability of suffering, and towards intellectual independence within a moral framework.³⁰ Skelton was a contemporary of John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) but Mill’s major works *On Liberty* (1859) and *Utilitarianism* (1861) were published later so it is clearly impossible to know whether Mill was an influence on Skelton.³¹

To achieve happiness required access to the common resources of society and this takes us into a discussion of class. Skelton stated in the *Adviser* that he had tried to write clearly “never once losing sight of the class for whom we write.”³² This was in 1852,

²⁶ . “Manifesto of the Rational Society,” *New Moral World* 3, no. 49 (June 1842): 394.

²⁷ The classic phrase “the greatest happiness of the greatest number” was first used by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) in 1776, but then not used again in his writings until much later in the context of his writings on government, see J. H. Burns, Happiness and Utility: Jeremy Bentham’s Equation,” *Utilitas* 17, no. 1 (2005): 46-61.

²⁸ James Dybikowski, “Joseph Priestley, Metaphysician and Philosopher,” in *Joseph Priestley, Scientist, Philosopher and Theologian*, ed. Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 99.

²⁹ Martyn Fitzpatrick, “Joseph Priestley, Scientist, Philosopher and Theologian,” in *Joseph Priestley, Scientist, Philosopher and Theologian*, ed. Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 80-112.

³⁰ For a discussion of the complex relationship between different belief systems in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, see Claeys, *Citizens and Saints*, 30-35. Pertinent to my argument that there were interweaving influences on Skelton is the finding that Owen and Godwin met regularly in the years following 1813, *Ibid*, 33.

³¹ Fred Wilson, “John Stuart Mill,” in *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, 2007. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/mill/> [accessed July 4, 2013].

³² Skelton, *Adviser*, 79.

less than two years after the *Communist Manifesto* was first published in English, and I wondered what he meant by class.³³ He appears to have used the term when discussing the relative ability of different sections of society to obtain the resources necessary to achieve happiness. Writing twenty-six years later in 1878, he commented that “but a few years since . . . medicine was a sealed profession, confined to a class for their exclusive benefit; time is breaking through the monopoly, however, and daily the ranks are being filled up by a more successful body of healers, whose sympathies agree with the views and necessities of the class who require their services.”³⁴ The phrase “confined to a class for their exclusive benefit” recalls a theme discussed at length in the *Plea*: “hitherto the study of medicine has been confined to a class; it has therefore been a sealed book, save only to those who were fortunate enough to be born with either a pill box or silver spoon in their mouth.”³⁵

Here Skelton was alluding to an exclusive social group, but his meaning remains similar to his usage of the term in 1842 when he declared that “the grand master evil was class legislation.”³⁶ He was speaking at a meeting of shoemakers and arguing that proposed legislation would serve the interests of one group of society at the expense of another. This recalls the use of the term in 1831 by the National Union of the Working Classes who called for adult male suffrage, declaring that “all men are born equally free, and have natural and certain inalienable rights” and that therefore no government legislation should advantage “any single man, family, or set of men.”³⁷

This same use of class in the context of asserting equal rights was noted by Timothy Randall in his discussion of Chartist poetry, and Kelly Mays in her discussion of Chartist autobiography.³⁸ Mays introduced her discussion by pointing out that “answers to ostensibly ‘literary’ questions about genre inevitably lead one into the very heart of

³³ First publication was in the *Red Republican*, November 1850. See David Black, *Helen Macfarlane* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 91-97.

³⁴ Skelton, *Adviser*, 11th ed., vi.

³⁵ Skelton, *Plea*, 19.

³⁶ *Northern Star*, April 2, 1842. After the 1832 Reform Act, middle-class and working-class commonly referred to those with and without the vote. Working-class was also used in the wider sense to mean those reliant on a regular wage and so vulnerable to unemployment and thus the workhouse after 1834, and those vulnerable to disease through poverty and insanitary housing conditions.

³⁷ Lovett, *Life and Struggles*, 59. This declaration was the work of Lovett and James Watson, who were both Socialists at the time.

³⁸ Timothy Randall, “Chartist Poetry and Song,” in *The Chartist Legacy*, ed. Owen Ashton, Robert Fyson, and Stephen Roberts (Rendlesham, Suffolk: Merlin Press, 1999), 177.

contested socio-historical terrain.”³⁹ She was referring to the opposing views of historians who perceived Chartist activity as the growth of the political struggle of the working-class in the Marxist sense, and historians who argued that this view was biased by a political viewpoint. This debate was initiated by Gareth Stedman Jones who argued convincingly that the demands in the *People’s Charter* had developed from earlier radicalism.⁴⁰ Whatever one’s view on that debate, the focus on class in some accounts of Chartism depersonalised the participants in political activity.⁴¹ Introducing an opposing approach which focused on individuals, Joyce suggested that a sense of “democratic imaginary” is a better way to visualize an English attachment to an ethos of free speech and self-reliance. This allows for a sense of narrative in both the individual and the social group, and thus makes it possible to take a longer view of history.⁴² As an example of this, although his interest is in the confrontational style of the “mass platform,” John Belchem set Chartist activism within a process stretching from the eighteenth century which encouraged political moderation.⁴³ Skelton’s continued adherence to the “moral force” view could be located within this view of radicalism, and set within the “constitutional idiom” described by Epstein where it was possible to combine radical toasts to the republican Paine with the endeavour to achieve democratic representation within the institutions of the state.⁴⁴

Skelton’s view was that the exclusivity of medicine was the cause of the relative lack of progress in therapeutics. Speaking in 1849, he complained that doctors had a magical aura like the priests of old, “his power over the mind has but little decreased. There is

³⁹ Kelly J. Mays, "Subjectivity, Community, and the Nature of Truth-Telling in Two Chartist Autobiographies," (Rendelsham, Suffolk: Merlin Press), 213, 196-99. This view has been expressed in a sympathetic account of Lovett’s autobiography by another scholar of English literature, see Margery Sabin, "Working-Class Plain Style: William Lovett Vs. Carlyle, Gaskell, and Others," *Raritan* 18, no. 2 (1998): 41-62.

⁴⁰ Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English Working Class History, 1832-1982* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 90-178; For a discussion of the connections with earlier radical activity, see Chase, *Chartism*, 7-9. For a similar document to the six points, see “The Westminster Committee” in G. D. H. Cole and Alexander W. Filson, *British Working Class Movements: Select Documents, 1789-1875* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 34-35. The Philosophic Radical group of MPs had argued for parliamentary reform to “reduce the influence of the aristocracy and enhance the influence of the populace” and were strongly committed therefore to the secret ballot, see Hamburger, *Intellectuals in Politics*, 65, 70-75.

⁴¹ For example, Goodway, “London Chartism.”

⁴² Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects: The Self and the Social in Nineteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-20, 153-62; also see Joyce, *Visions of the People*, for his earlier contribution to this debate.

⁴³ John Belchem, "Radical Language, Meaning and Identity in the Age of the Chartists," *Journal of Victorian Culture* 10, no. 1 (2005), 1-14.

⁴⁴ James A. Epstein, “The Constitutional Idiom: Radical Reasoning, Rhetoric and Action in Early Nineteenth-Century England,” *Journal of Social History* 23, no. 3 (1990): 553-74.

mystery in his very gait, his look is significant of superiority, his nod of alarm, his physic of wonder."⁴⁵ He argued that the medical profession had "not fulfilled its compact with society" and had broken the "beautiful arrangements ever existing in the mutual obligations of man to man" in that medicine had not modernized. This was in contrast to the technical advances seen in every other sphere, so that "the march of intellect was unchecked save in one department of science. The science which treats of life, health and disease, the one which most especially concerns all, and ought to be free to all."⁴⁶

He returned to this theme in 1853, stating that "there is no mental vigour without exchange of thought"⁴⁷ and here, he was in agreement with John Stuart Mill.⁴⁸ In contrast to Coffin, Skelton sought to encourage open discussion in Botanic societies, remarking on "instances where men unacquainted with the most simple facts either in the philosophy of life or morals, were nevertheless enabled to cure the sick when the skill of the learned diplomatist had been exercised in vain."⁴⁹ Skelton ascribed this success to the inherent value of herbal medicines, but equally believed that real knowledge was only gained through discussion and experience. Although Skelton was a firm advocate of education, he unequivocally argued that knowledge relies on experience and is thus open to all who make the effort to experiment.

Although such democratic beliefs on medicine were attractive to medical botanists, they were not a necessary concomitant of radicalism. Holyoake took Skelton to task over this belief in his review of the *Plea*, saying that

we do not have much more faith in Botanic Practice than we have in Spirit Rapping. Of the two we do prefer the botanist to the 'medium.' The author of this book thinks that a man needs no other qualification to practice medicine than the public approval – a doctrine from which we altogether dissent.⁵⁰

A correspondent to the *Botanic Record*, made a robust and positive response:

Upon what other foundation does Mr Holyoake stand . . . The religious public would annihilate him *if it could*, as the faculty would you, and why? Because he invades their *sanctum sanctorum*. 'Public sufferance alone sustains him and no

⁴⁵ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 40, (November 1849): 349.

⁴⁶ *Coffin's Journal* 2, no. 43, (January 1850): 10.

⁴⁷ Skelton, *Plea*, 19.

⁴⁸ Helen Small, "Argument as Conflict: Then and Now," in *Conflict and Difference in Nineteenth-century Literature* ed. Dinah Burch and Mark Llewellyn (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 16-18.

⁴⁹ "Lecture in the Court House at Rotherham," *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 20 (August 1848): 165.

⁵⁰ *Reasoner*, no. 19 (May 11, 1853): 294. By 1854, Holyoake was the publisher of the *Plea*, *Adviser* and *Botanic Record*. See, *Botanic Record*, no. 23 (March 1854): 368.

other . . . Really it is grievous to see our strongest minds in some subjects, so weak in others.⁵¹

Skelton sought to conciliate, suggesting that Holyoake was stating that public approval was not always just, yet Skelton stood by his argument, saying that the will of the public was the only “practical standard by which to determine the merits of the question.” However, he continued on to say that there is never “universal consent” but always two sides in every question as “it would be as easy to conceive a stick without ends, a hill without a valley, . . . vice without virtue.”⁵² To summarise, Skelton was committed to freedom of thought, freedom of speech and as a corollary of these, freedom to self-prescribe and individual choice in medical care. He used the term class in discussing access to the resources of societies, and the interests of different groups in society – although this did not mean he couldn’t be confrontational!

Nature’s laws

7th principle: all the essential conditions which determine the progressive perfection of SOCIETY, EXIST ETERNALLY IN NATURE; and in proportion as men discover and apply them, so will they go on perfecting that progression.⁵³

The lines above are taken from Skelton’s “constituent or fundamental principles of vegetable medicine” at the beginning of the *Adviser*. The idea that the medical treatment must support the operation of nature has an ancient pedigree.⁵⁴ Throughout *Domestic Medicine*, Buchan used the concept of the healing power of nature.⁵⁵ This “healing power implicit in the body’s fundamental design” meant that Buchan perceived the symptoms of disease as nature’s effort to resolve the situation, so that diarrhoea could be considered a “salutary evacuation” and “a fit of gout rather to be considered as Nature’s method of curing a disease, rather than a disease in itself.” Therefore treatment had to support the elimination of the disease, rather suppression of symptoms which could lead to chronic disease. Rosenberg described this as an “agreed-upon metaphor which shaped his and

⁵¹ Letter to the editor, Henry Ingledue, Bristol, 16 May 1853, *Botanic Record*, no. 15 (July 1853): 230.

⁵² *Botanic Record*, no. 15 (July 1853): 230.

⁵³ Skelton, *Adviser*, 8. The 23 principles were repeated in each edition with some rewording.

⁵⁴ This does not mean that the concept has been in continuous usage as it was associated with the renewed support for clinical observation and case-taking. See Smith, “Self-help and Advice,” 239. According to Cunningham, the influential Boerhaave dismissed all clinicians between Hippocrates and Sydenham, see Cunningham, “Medicine to Calm the Mind,” 48-50.

⁵⁵ Lawrence, “William Buchan,” 29-30.

his contemporaries' perception of the world."⁵⁶ This perception that herbal medicines support the healing intentions of nature was held by Skelton and remains that of many herbalists today. Although Skelton's treatments were different, he also inherited two other important concepts from Buchan, namely resistance to giving specific remedies for specific diseases, and, as we saw in chapter 3, the emphasis on regime and lifestyle.⁵⁷

But what was Skelton's concept of Nature? Nature has many meanings which encompass both the lived experience of the natural world, and a sense of the complex patterns observed therein. To reconstruct the meaning which Skelton gave to Nature is problematic, as the term was used in contradictory and ambiguous ways throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His early childhood was spent in a village which even today is in a remote and verdant valley. He collected herbs with his grandfather, and kept both the knowledge and perhaps a sense of the numinous from his early herbal experiences. In the *Botanic Record*, some of his plant descriptions evoke a sense of place, such as his description of Angelica growing amongst the ruins of Nottingham Castle "in all the beauty and perfection of vegetable life."⁵⁸

In his writings, Skelton associated Nature with Divine Providence, the idea that God provided man with the wherewithal to heal sickness.⁵⁹ He described Thomson as the "simple ploughman," and thus intrinsically more in touch with the natural world. This was not a new idea and had been vividly expressed by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737-1814) who was quoted on the title page of the *Plea*: "GOD has made nothing in vain! A scholar with his systems and methods, finds himself stopped short in nature every step he takes; while furnished with this help, the RUSTIC is able to unlock every door of knowledge."⁶⁰ St Pierre gave evocative descriptions of plants and perfumes, imagining how vivid the shapes and colours must be to insects. It is easy to imagine Skelton sitting in central London delighting in his words and recreating the fields of his own rural childhood in his mind's eye.

However, the meaning assigned to Nature by Skelton was equally somewhat deterministic, and entwined in the quotation which introduced this section was a reference

⁵⁶ Quotations selected by Rosenberg, see Rosenberg, "Medical Text and Social-Context."

⁵⁷ Rosenberg, "Medical Text and Social-Context," 36-37.

⁵⁸ *Botanic Record*, no. 2 (June 1852): 25.

⁵⁹ Skelton, *Plea*, 181.

⁶⁰ Jacques-Henri B. de Saint-Pierre. *St Pierre's Studies of Nature* (Philadelphia: Joseph J. Woodward, 1835), 22, Insects 269.

to “the progressive perfection of society.” His main influence here appears to have been the widely read *Constitution of Man* by George Combe. Although Combe was a proponent of phrenology and commonly read in Skelton’s circles, it is the exegesis on natural law which is pertinent here.⁶¹ Combe stated that: “The Creator has bestowed on physical nature, on man and animals, definite constitutions, which act according to fixed laws. A law of nature denotes a fixed mode of action”⁶² so, “obedience to each of them is attended with its own good - and disobedience with its own evil consequences.” Laws were “unbending” and “those that are external to man are in harmony with his constitution.”⁶³ Combe continued, stating that “our moral sentiments desire universal happiness . . . the natural laws when obeyed, conduce to the moral and intelligent beings who are called on to observe them.”⁶⁴ These were attractive ideas because they allowed individuals to take personal responsibility for their lives through daily exercise of the “nervous and muscular systems,” acquisition of knowledge through the “knowing and reflecting faculties,” and “cultivation and gratification of our moral and religious sentiments.”⁶⁵ My impression from reading the *Adviser*, the *Plea* and the *Botanic Record* is that Skelton’s overall outlook was influenced by the *Constitution of Man*.

The idea that God is revealed by the beauty of natural creation can be combined with any aspect of religious belief or allow for a rejection of almost all other aspects of Christianity. This was particularly the case for deists, including Paine. Deism, described as a “spectrum of belief” entailed belief in God, and viewed reason as a gift of God through which natural laws could be investigated and comprehended. Deists denied that God intervened in world affairs through miracles, and did not believe either in the divinity of Jesus or that the Bible represented the word of God.⁶⁶ Today, much of this is uncontentious in Britain, but recalling that Skelton’s first appearance in the *Northern Star* concerned “that undefined thing, blasphemy” this was very much not the case in the early

⁶¹ See Stack, “William Lovett and the National Association,” 1029-34; For George Combe, see see Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 101-33.

⁶² George Combe, *Combe's Constitution of Man, and Nineteenth-Century Responses* ed. John van Wyhe (Bristol: Thoemmes, 2004), xiii-xiv, quotation 29. It was widely read: first published in 1828, sales had reached 72,000 by 1838. I have not identified any explicit references by Skelton to phrenology, but it was very attractive to Socialists as it explained how people could develop their personal attributes, see Cooter, *Cultural Meaning of Popular Science*, 225-55.

⁶³ Combe, *Constitution of Man*, 37.

⁶⁴ Combe, *Constitution of Man*, 40.

⁶⁵ Combe, *Constitution of Man*, 113-14.

⁶⁶ David L. Holmes, *Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 39-48.

nineteenth century. Belief in “nature, and the immutability of her laws” was also connected with infidelity and opposition to revealed religion, as shown by Watson’s imprisonment in 1823 for selling *Principles of Nature* by Elihu Palmer (1746-1806). This Deist text declared that “every intellectual being must depend upon himself; must rest upon his own energies” and oppose “those supernatural schemes of a vindictive theology, which have served only to destroy the harmony of nature, and demoralize the intelligent world” as “man’s highest happiness consists in perspicuously discovering his true connection with nature, and the eternal duration of this connection.”⁶⁷

Perhaps it was Skelton’s view of nature’s laws as “unbendable” that led to his intransigent views on vaccination against smallpox. Skelton opposed vaccination vehemently in the *Botanic Record* in 1854, and in 1867, Skelton and his son were on the committee of the Anti-Compulsory Vaccination League.⁶⁸ He was not alone in his opposition to the enforcement of compulsory vaccination and his concerns were similar to those summarized in the account given by Nadja Durbach. These were that the methods used would transmit both “constitutional disease,” meaning hereditary taints such as scrofula or consumption, and “weaken the vital powers of the human frame” making people more vulnerable to smallpox.⁶⁹ As Durbach pointed out, if healthy blood is considered of paramount importance, then vaccination was understandably perceived as polluting the blood. In 1868, Skelton drew particular attention to the impossibility even for the skilled vaccinator of distinguishing between “healthy and unhealthy lymph.”⁷⁰ The opposition to enforcement of legislation through compulsion was particularly strong, and the long-running campaign against vaccination throughout the nineteenth-century led to imprisonments for disobedience.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Elihu Palmer, *Principles of Nature*, 1819, 60, 72, 91. Reproduced by Steve Dowell and Jay Boswell, March 2009. Church of Nature’s God. <http://naturesgod.org> [accessed February 3, 2013].

⁶⁸ *Botanic Record*, no. 29 (September 1854): 419; The League was founded in 1866, Offices 1 South Place, Finsbury, see *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 5 (May 1868): 66; R. M. Wolfe and L. K. Sharp, “Anti-Vaccinationists Past and Present,” *British Medical Journal* 325, no. 7361 (2002).

⁶⁹ *National Anti-Compulsory Vaccination League Occasional Circular*, May 1, 1875: 1-2; Nadja Durbach, *Bodily Matters: The Anti-Vaccination Movement in England, 1853-1907* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 1-2.

⁷⁰ “Cholera, Fever, and Small-Pox in England,” Letter to the editor, John Skelton, Birmingham, 15 January 1868, *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 2 (1868): 16.

⁷¹ Wolfe and Sharp, “Anti-Vaccinationists Past and Present”; Durbach, *Bodily Matters*.

Skelton's opposition ran deep in a letter written in 1878. Firstly he described smallpox as

nothing more than outraged nature protesting against the violations to which ignorance has subjected her. She asks for 'bread,' and we give her a 'stone' . . . Nature knows nothing of 'political economy,' apart from the philosophy upon which she has based the science of human life; and laughs at the policy which shuts up millions of half-starved human beings in alleys, courts, ill-ventilated factories, workshops, badly-constructed streets, and worse-drained cities and towns.

His next argument was that: "when scrofula, consumption, and disease - which in all their varied forms corrupt the blood - have brought us to the verge of extinction, 'variola' sweeps from the system the effete matter, and gives full and complete recuperation to life. It is for this reason that so few suffer and die of consumption who are pitted with smallpox."⁷² He expressed similar views in the *Adviser* in 1852, where he devoted six pages to the care of patients with smallpox.⁷³ Skelton's views were based on his belief that vaccination transgressed the laws of nature and while I cannot suspend my "modern" views and agree with him, his views were based on his experience of the ability of the body to overcome disease.

His obituary described Skelton as "throughout his life a thorough and vigorous advocate of Medical Freedom and an uncompromising opponent of Vaccination and the Anti-Vaccination Laws, as well as the Contagious Diseases Acts and other Legislation." The editor refuted claims that he had "abandoned the struggle" and quoted the following as probably written only a few days before his death, "that such a delusion as 'Vaccination' should exist at all is a puzzle to all thoughtful men and women; that it should be enforced by law, however, would be inexplicable, were it not for the knowledge which they have of influence, power and craft."⁷⁴

With hindsight, his views on vaccination seem extreme and hard to comprehend, but to visualize the deeply held beliefs of the past is difficult and the following section of this chapter remains in mysterious territory.

⁷² "Vaccination and Smallpox", Letter to the editor, John Skelton, Plymouth, 1 April 1868, *National Anti-Compulsory Vaccination Reporter* 2, no. 8 (May 1, 1878): 155.

⁷³ Skelton, *Adviser*, 62-68.

⁷⁴ *National Anti-Compulsory Vaccination Reporter*, March 1, 1880, 105. Quotation from the *Free Monthly Circular of Hygiene and Domestic Medicine* edited by Dr Skelton. This must be amongst his "large number of pamphlets" to which the obituary refers.

Perfectibility is one of the most unequivocal characteristics of the human species, so that the political, as well as the intellectual state of man, may be presumed to be in a course of progressive improvement.⁷⁵

Skelton's first principle in the *Adviser* was: "Disease is the natural consequence of life, ...[and] 21st-That disease is natural to man is self-evident."⁷⁶ The rationale for these two principles was explained in the *Plea* in Skelton's discussion of progressive improvement, and this theme allows us to tease out Skelton's intertwined religious and philosophical beliefs. To do that we have to return to 1843, when Skelton was one of four members of the Theological Association who gave public lectures. Skelton's chose as his theme "Was Jesus Christ a real or fictitious person?" and rehearsed the arguments against the truth of the account of Jesus given by the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus. Skelton argued that the "religious excitement" of later "groups seeking miracles" meant that "apostolic accounts gained general credence."⁷⁷ This was in the spirit of the Theological Association which was founded in January 1843 "for free inquiry into the religious idea, religious systems, modes of worship, their origin, progress, present state and prospects, with a view to the discovery and promulgation of truth and the overthrow of error."⁷⁸

Yet, only six years later in 1849, Skelton announced his forthcoming lectures in Leicester, Derby and Bacup with the words: "Our mission is next to you; we come to speak God's truth as eternally established in nature, . . . we have been called to the greatest, the best, and the holiest work in which it is possible for man to be engaged, and by God's blessing we will do it."⁷⁹ He made his beliefs clear in 1852, by choosing an engraving of the Good Samaritan, for the *Adviser* entitled "Which of these was neighbor to him?"⁸⁰ Taken alone, these two instances need not show deep consideration of religious matters, but I will

⁷⁵ .Godwin, "Enquiry concerning Political Justice," 148.

⁷⁶ Skelton, *Adviser*, 7, 9.

⁷⁷ *Oracle of Reason*, no. 58 (January 21, 1843): 47. Whether the section on Christ was an interpolation has been a topic of disagreement over the centuries, see G.J. Goldberg, The Flavius Josephus Homepage, last modified 2010. <http://www.josephus.org/home.htm> [accessed June 4, 2013]. Adversarial debate continues today, see Kenneth Humphreys, Non-Christian Testimony for Jesus?, last modified 2004. <http://www.jesusneverexisted.com/josephus-etal.html> [accessed June 4, 2013].

⁷⁸ Bishopsgate Institute, Holyoake Collection, *Theological Association, a course of lectures*. 25 April 1843.

⁷⁹ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 29 (May 1849): 237.

⁸⁰ St. Luke. Chap. X, V., 36, *Adviser*, 2nd ed, n.p.

argue that Skelton's beliefs were carefully considered and to do this will return to the question of perfectibility.

Skelton made a speech in 1848 where he was "listened to with breathless attention" as he used the story of Job to reflect on the nature of disease, arguing that disease was prevalent not because of people's sinfulness, but because of "want of a proper understanding as to its nature."⁸¹ Skelton sought to disassociate disease from any sense of sinfulness and returned to this theme at length in the *Plea*, writing that "since all violation or transgression of the natural laws or conditions of health necessarily lead to suffering, where there is suffering or pain there is also disease. Disease exists then as a necessary consequence of progressive life." Skelton continued

when we say that the fact of disease existing in all ages of the world is proof that it does so in relation to causes, and that these causes are the necessary consequence of "progressive life," it will be at once conceded that disease is natural to man . . . Man by his very nature is compelled to suffer in a greater or lesser degree, all his knowledge is the result of experience, and being human, he is progressive, i.e. tending towards improvement.⁸²

This view recalls that expressed in *Principles of Nature*, but to explain his point that experience underpins all learning, Skelton told the story of Man Friday who burned his hand in the cooking pot because he had not previously experienced the effects of boiling water.⁸³ The point for Skelton was that people determine the laws of nature through experimentation, and, as it is natural for people to experiment, mistakes are made and pain or disease ensues. Progress depended on thought. Ernest Jones laughed at Skelton for advocating the power of the mind,⁸⁴ but the rationale for Skelton's approach was carefully constructed, as shown here:

3RD.-Nature presents an unbounded field for speculation; and when men's minds become developed by the progressive influences of society, so that they can demonstrate to the general satisfaction of others the relationship of great natural truths, which in their crude or untutored state were matters of speculation, then those newly discovered truths must be productive of good proportionably with their reception amongst mankind."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Lecture, Sheffield, 12 September 1848, *Coffin's Journal*, no 22 (October 1848): 182.

⁸² Skelton, *Plea*, 12.

⁸³ Palmer, *Principles of Nature*, 67; Skelton, *Plea*, 13-17; and see Daniel Defoe. *An abridgement of the new Robinson Crusoe*; (London, 1789), 108. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. CW117116318 <http://eebo.chadwyck.com>. [accessed June 18, 2013].

⁸⁴ See chapter 2.

⁸⁵ Skelton, *Adviser*, 7.

This statement reflected Skelton's Socialist view that changes in attitude were fundamental to and preceded changes in behaviour, and can be compared with the view expressed by Holyoake that society should rely on the moral behavior of individuals, rather than require laws to enforce rules of behaviour.⁸⁶ Skelton explained his views in the *Botanic Record* to a correspondent who questioned Skelton's claim that disease is natural. The correspondent argued that disease "is the punishment attached by nature to the violation of her laws," for example by drunkenness, but Skelton's reply was that "philosophy teaches that everything must have its opposite" and thus disease is natural to man.⁸⁷ He did not disagree that disease could be caused by drunkenness, for example, assuring readers of the *Adviser* that "nature tolerates evils of this kind but for a time and that when she re-acts her retribution is terrible."⁸⁸ He was arguing that disease is inherent to life, and sought a clear separation from either the idea that disease was retribution from God for sinfulness, or from Nature for disobedience.

It would be impossible to recreate the immediacy and intensity of Victorian debate over religious matters, but I have attempted here to show that Skelton thought carefully about his beliefs. Prothero considered the role of religion in the radicalism of the mid-nineteenth century, and suggested that there was no clear relationship between political belief and religious belief except in the sense of respect for the moral precepts of the "democrat of Galilee."⁸⁹ Skelton's Chartist colleague, Cooper, returned to Christianity during 1857 "after 12 years a sceptic" during which "indeed, I never remained long in any one state of belief or unbelief on the subject of the Divine existence."⁹⁰ Skelton could have encountered many possibilities - amongst the many middle-class supporters of Chartism were Christian ministers of various persuasions.⁹¹ He did not reveal which denomination he espoused, but his later writings returned regularly to Christian themes.⁹² In a letter in 1868, he referred again to the Good Samaritan, " 'He prayeth best who loveth best?' or has his

⁸⁶ Royle, *Victorian Infidels*, 128-30.

⁸⁷ Letter to the editor, W. Dale, *Botanic Record*, no. 4 (August 1852): 54-55.

⁸⁸ Skelton, *Adviser*, 22.

⁸⁹ Prothero, *Radical Artisans*, 248-65.

⁹⁰ Cooper, *Life*, 362-63.

⁹¹ A recent volume of six biographies of professional men involved in Chartism included three ministers: the Unitarian Henry Solly, Benjamin Parsons of the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion (a Calvinist Methodist group), and James Scholefield, a Bible Christian (beliefs which were influenced by Swedenborgianism), see Ashton and Pickering, *Friends of the People*.

⁹² Skelton, *Science and Practice*, 4-9.

parable of the Good Samaritan slipped out of his copy of the New Testament?”⁹³ He was quoting an editorial in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* which roundly criticising the Anglican bishop, claiming that he had refused to share a platform with the Catholic bishop. “Man is progressive” might seem an odd heading for a section on religious belief, but perhaps encapsulates the way in which Skelton was part of a trend towards more liberal views in British society. He returned to Christianity without losing his democratic values, and without espousing “original sin.”

This chapter has attempted to recreate Skelton’s values and his broad intellectual context, but has risked a superficial account of some complex philosophical viewpoints. However, my findings could serve as the basis of further investigation and it would be important to give more consideration to the work of John S. Mill on, for example, the nature of individuality in civil society, and the idea of moral progress or perfectibility.⁹⁴ One of the limitations of recourse to written documents is that they do not reveal the day-to-day discussion that Skelton must have had, or the lectures which he himself attended. In the 1840s lectures were important in the social life of Socialists such as Skelton and his wife, and Martin’s account of lecturing in the 1850s suggests that they could have continued to attend lectures throughout their lives.⁹⁵

To conclude, the first section on the “Zetetic principle” explored Skelton’s commitment to education in the widest sense as necessary for people to realize their potential as individuals and as members of the wider society. He used the concept of class to discuss access to the resources of society required in the pursuit of “universal happiness.” Over his lifetime, he regularly returned to the significance of “nature’s laws” in the sense that observation and investigation would eventually provide answers to medical problems. In this dissertation, I have not discussed Skelton’s views on cholera, or the changes in perception of infectious diseases over the nineteenth century as this would make another whole dissertation! However, his work can be seen as part of the long trend in Victorian Britain towards observation and empirical research – learning through experience. Equally, for Skelton nature was a source of beauty and vital energy, and in that sense, he remained loyal to his Thomsonianism and to his rural roots.

⁹³ “The Bishop of Durham and the Sunderland New Infirmary,” Letter to the editor, John Skelton, Birmingham, 15 January 1868, *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 2 (January 1868): 20-22. Skelton had received a request for a lecture from a dissenting minister, and had suggested “obtaining the co-operation of other Christian ministers in the town; one of whom we knew well.” He suggested a title “Healing considered in its relation to the duties and obligations of Christian ministers.”

⁹⁴ Piergiorgio Donatelli, “Mills’s Perfectionism,” *Prolegomena* 5, no. 2 (2006): 149-64.

⁹⁵ Martin, “Popular Political Oratory.”

Chapter 6: Conclusion

For nearly thirty years they were known as Medical Botanists in England . . .; but it became expedient, and very proper too, commensurate with the “march of progress,” that they ought to assume the name of Eclectics...Monopoly, narrow-mindedness, bigotry, and prejudice is altogether thrown over-board by the medical reformers, and their motto is, “*Light, light, more light.*”¹

The lines above are taken from an article entitled “What is Eclecticism? This is the Medicine of Nature” which incorporated a quotation used on the title page of every edition of the *Adviser*, “THIS IS THE MEDICINE OF NATURE.” *Sir John Hill, M.D.*” Beneath this on the *Adviser* title page was a quotation from “Old Gerard”:

Nothing can be confected either delicate for the taste, daintie for the smell, pleasant for the sight, wholesome for the body, conservative or restorative for the health, but it borroweth the relish of a herb, the savour of a flower, the colour of a leaf, the juice of a plant, or the decoction of a root.²

In using these quotations, both authors were positioning themselves within a tradition which perceived the use of herbal remedies as “the medicine of nature.” This appears to have been in spite of the changes of name whereby herbalists described themselves as medical botanists, medical reformers, Eclectic practitioners, Physiomedical practitioners and even briefly as thermo-botanic practitioners. However, if we take Skelton as typical, albeit, as shown in chapters 3 and 4, using more British plants than some of his contemporaries, then the conclusion must be that practitioners changed their names, but continued to use the same herbs. In preparing chapters 3 and 4, I consulted eighteen British and American herbal texts published between the 1820s and the 1850s, and found notable similarities throughout. This means that, whatever the rhetoric, there were commonalities of practice. Further research would reveal more about the Eclectic practitioners, and the extent to which they used additional therapies such as hydropathy and naturopathy.

Returning now to the first of the three questions raised in the introduction: To what extent can one make connections between Skelton’s political beliefs and his herbal practice? Building on the work of Prothero, Thompson and Goodway, chapter 2 traced Skelton’s Chartist activities throughout the 1840s and found that he remained a

¹ D. Turnbull, “What is Eclecticism? This is the Medicine of Nature,” *Eclectic Journal* 2, no. 18, 1 June 1869, 267-72.

² Skelton, *Adviser*, Title page.

determined advocate of “moral force.”³ Furthermore, I have shown that Skelton was actively involved in Socialist organisations, and, building on the work of Chase, was involved in the NAUT which sought to improve industrial relations through negotiation.⁴ Building on the work of Claeys, Harrison and Royle, this dissertation has argued that views which Skelton expressed later in life were based on his experience as a Socialist.⁵ To extricate the Socialist from the Chartist would be impossible and, thinking of the regular lectures at the Branch A1 of the Rational Religionists on everything from geology and anatomy to phreno-mesmerism, then this could have formed the roots of his lifelong commitment to self-care using herbs. Skelton can be added to the list of Socialists identified by Harrison who became involved in “alternative” healthcare.⁶ This dissertation has added to the literature in that it has provided more accurate information about Skelton’s life, which will amplify the historical record. For example, Pickering asked for more exploration of Skelton’s biography when reviewing Sanders’ book on the poetry of Chartism, but had to rely on Thompson for his comment that Skelton “went on to become a naturopath, affect the title ‘Dr’ and edit a medical reform journal.”⁷ Further research using Socialist and Chartist newspapers, personal archives such as those of Lovett and Holyoake, and “free-thinking” journals published after the mid-nineteenth century might enable a better understanding of the roots of his “democratic epistemology.”

Throughout this dissertation, my aim has been to make a careful examination of the language used in the texts. Skelton, like his contemporaries, used a combination of plain language, language which derived from his reading of philosophical works, and Romantic language.⁸ This investigation was influenced by the concept of intertextuality, and has followed the recommendation of Stedman Jones that historians could benefit from the close reading of texts.⁹ By taking a biographical approach, and attempting to unite the Chartist Skelton and the herbalist Skelton, it has been possible to explore his thinking more deeply than hitherto and attempt to answer the challenge set by Harrison to further

³ Prothero, *Radical Artisans*; Thompson, *Chartists*; Goodway, *London Chartism*.

⁴ Chase, *Early Trade Unionism*.

⁵ Claeys, *Saints and Sinners*; Harrison, “Early Victorian Radicals”; Royle, “Chartists and Owenites.”

⁶ Harrison, “Early Victorian Radicals,” 198.

⁷ Paul Pickering, review of *The Poetry of Chartism: Aesthetics, Politics, History*, by Mike Sanders, *Labour History*, no. 97 (2009): 225; Thompson, *Chartists*.

⁸ Rob Breton, “Genre in the Chartist Periodical,” in *The Working-Class Intellectual in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Aruna Krishnamurthy (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2009).

⁹ Gareth Stedman Jones, “The Determinist Fix: Some Obstacles to the Further Development of the Linguistic Approach to History in the 1990s,” *History Workshop Journal*, no. 42 (1996): 27-28.

explore the thinking of individuals.¹⁰ On reflection, this exploration relied on comparison of texts in a way that was previously impossible: for example, my first reading of Thomson's *New Guide to Health* was in Rare Books Reading Room of the Wellcome Library, yet now numerous editions are available online so that sections can be printed for detailed comparison.

Skelton continues to be referred to as a secularist in the Chartist literature, and this dissertation has been able to confirm this and enlarge the evidence using the *Oracle of Reason* and Holyoake's archive.¹¹ However, by August 1848, his lecture on the nature of disease incorporated a detailed discourse on Christian themes, and these themes recurred throughout his later publications and his letters to the *Eclectic Journal*. I have been unable to identify his choice of denomination, although some of his views suggest a Unitarian influence. While it may be irrelevant that his daughter Mary married in St Clements Dane in the Strand, this suggests that he did not oppose that decision. That Skelton erected a memorial stone in the parish graveyard at Holbeton must mean that he was not opposed to the Anglican church. His religious thinking would merit further investigation but the evidence so far does not support the contention of Pickstone that medical botany was uniformly associated with religious dissent. However, the continuing efforts of Skelton to promote self-care and education supports Pickstone's wider conclusion that whether "as a religious duty, as a means of self advancement, or as a contribution to the advancement of their class," the "democratic, empirical, self-help independence of the Coffinites continued to play a useful albeit less political role in society."¹² A common feature of Socialists, Nonconformists and medical botanists was an aversion to the use of alcohol. Skelton made no special reference to temperance, but that literature could provide fruitful leads.

The second question raised was: what can the writings of Skelton tell us about the philosophy and practice of herbal medicine in the mid-nineteenth century? Considering the studies of the 1980s in the light of Skelton's writings, Brown was the author who most clearly explored the commitment to self-care expressed by medical botanists, their criticism of the medical profession and their trust in the healing power of nature.¹³ Chapter 3 showed that Skelton was clearly a Thomsonian, or Neo-Thomsonian using Berman's

¹⁰ Harrison, "Early Victorian Radicals," 211-22.

¹¹ Iorwerth Prothero, "Chartists and Political Refugees," in *Exiles from European Revolutions: Refugees in Mid-Victorian London*, ed. Sabine Freitag (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 221.

¹² Pickstone, "Medical Botany," 95.

¹³ Brown, "Social Context," 219-23.

definition, but that from the start he also relied on the publications of Beach, the founder of Eclecticism. Chapter 4 demonstrated Skelton's use of much older European sources in his prescribing, and this finding is significant in understanding more about medical botanists. After 1860, Skelton styled himself an Eclectic, and used more American herbs, yet remained committed to "domestic medicine." Returning to the questions raised by Jewson and Fissell, this dissertation has made only a small step towards understanding more about the changes in medical care during the nineteenth century. Studies which build on the model of pluralism developed by Ernst and her co-authors could explain more about the practice of herbal medicine in the nineteenth century.¹⁴ In their investigation of hydropony, Bradley and Dupree argued that the terms orthodox and heterodox need further explication, and their research into the varied views of hydroponists could be used as a model for research into herbal practice in mid-nineteenth century Britain.¹⁵

The first step would be to build on the work of Miley, Brown and Marland and use the *Botanic Record* and *Coffin's Journal* to form a wider picture of medical botany in Britain.¹⁶ This would require further engagement with some of the themes raised by Barrow, and an investigation of the role of prosecutions in the coroners' courts in inhibiting the development of herbal medicine as a profession. Barrow argued that "many would-be democratic practitioners and self medicators, whose forebears the long eighteenth century had accustomed to splashing around in the Porters' global ocean of medical knowledge" were "herded by the 1858 Medical Act and others into backwaters, there to be intellectually stranded."¹⁷ Whether Barrow's "democratic epistemology" disappeared or merely went underground in the latter part of the nineteenth century is beyond the scope of this dissertation.¹⁸ This dissertation has confirmed Barrow's contention that Skelton was committed to working-class self-care and to the freedom to practise herbal medicine – but how typical Skelton really was awaits further research.

¹⁴ Waltraud Ernst, ed. *Plural Medicine, Tradition and Modernity, 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁵ Bradley and Dupree, *A Shadow of Orthodoxy*, 174-181.

¹⁶ Miley, "Herbalism and Herbal Medicine"; Brown, "Herbalists and Medical Botanists"; Marland, *Medicine and Society*.

¹⁷ Barrow, "Medical Heretics," 172.

¹⁸ For the only discussion of herbal medicine in the late nineteenth century, see P. S. Brown, "The Vicissitudes of Herbalism in Late 19th-Century and Early 20th-Century Britain," *Medical History* 29, no. 1 (1985).

A model for the study of local societies of medical botanists would be the study by Secord of botanical societies in the Northwest.¹⁹ She pointed out that the participants combined their knowledge and skills in the identification of botanical specimens, with horticultural interests in florists' societies, vegetable growing or the cultivation of newly introduced ornamentals. Her account of the botanical societies evoked the Chartist and Socialist societies discussed earlier, in that the "knowledge of one becomes the knowledge of all," where learning relied on group discussion and purchase of reference books. However, the most exciting quality of her study was the vivid sense it gave of a shared experience, of a "democratic epistemology." Sheffield could form the setting of a local study. In 1847, the Sheffield Botanic Society was reported to have 150 members. On being presented with a set of knives, Coffin declared that this freedom of thought in the town was because there were so many skilled workers.²⁰ His agent, William Fox, claimed that "thousands, instead of being in the public house, . . . wending their way, on all occasions when leisure hours could be found, into the green fields, from whence they gathered the herbs as a preparation against sickness . . . for myself, although a poor and uneducated man, I have acquired full confidence to grapple with disease in any form."²¹ That his descendants maintained the business may be one reason why Sheffield remains an active centre of herbal practice today.

The last question raised in the introduction was: what do the sources used by Skelton reveal about possible influences on his ideas and writing? This dissertation has shown throughout that not only did he read widely, but that there was a bewildering range of available reading material. In chapter 3 we saw that he was influenced by Buchan's *Domestic Medicine*, by Thomsonian texts and by Beach. Chapter 4 showed that Skelton used European, North American and tropical herbal medicines, and drew on British texts, especially Thornton's *New Family Herbal*. However, taken all together, the conclusion must be that he was very much "his own man." He was able to bring together different facets of knowledge to make a coherent statement about herbal medicine, and, apart from his use of the *Constitution of Man*, did not draw heavily on any one of the texts considered here.²² It is probable that further examination of contemporary publications would lead to undiscovered sources. In Chapter 3, I argued that his perception of inflammation relied on an unknown source that drew on the ideas of Boerhaave. A first step in searching for this

¹⁹ Secord, "Science in the Pub."

²⁰ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 9 (September 1847): 66.

²¹ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 20 (August 1848): 166.

²² Combe, *Constitution of Man*.

source would be the publications of James Morison who used similar language to Skelton in promulgating the central importance of the circulation of the blood.²³ Morison's conclusion was to advocate the universal use of laxative pills, but investigation of his rationale might lead back to a significant potential source.

The dissertation has shown Skelton's continuing reliance on a model of nature's laws. This supports Cooter's proposal that "heterodoxies" might retain a non-dualist view.²⁴ This was not so throughout herbal medicine by the 1860s - in the introduction, Physiomedicalism was briefly mentioned and there, there was an explicit reliance on a model in which healthy physical function depended on the tissues being able to respond to the flow of the vital force. Much has been published on vitalism in recent years, and this would be an interesting area of investigation as Physiomedicalists used the same herbs, but visualized their actions differently.²⁵ A weakness of my study is that while I have reviewed the prescriptions and the herbs used by Skelton, and sought to understand more about the sources, these sections remain descriptive. It could be possible to use the historiography discussed in Cooter's more recent essay to attempt to explore Skelton's rationale for treatment in the light of cultural studies of Victorian healthcare.²⁶

Finally, a theme which has emerged in the writing of this dissertation is that changes in practice can contain an unexpected continuity in underlying ethos. Firstly, the section on Socialism and Chartism found that, although the eventual social changes which led to a more liberal society were profound, the underlying ideas were already being explored earlier. Secondly, the chapter on the treatments advocated by Skelton in the *Adviser* found that, although Thomsonianism was a new system of treatment which led to a new identity for herbalists, Skelton continued to use concepts from far earlier times in his use of the non-naturals, and in his conception of the circulatory system. Thirdly, chapter 4 made the point that, although the Thomsonians and Eclectics introduced new American medicinal plants, herbal practice equally remained firmly based on herbs which have been used in Europe since Antiquity. This supports Joyce's contention that "new wine was to be

²³ Morison, *The Practical Proofs*, 37-45.

²⁴ Cooter, "Alternative Medicine, Alternative Cosmology," 62, 72.

²⁵ William H. Cook, *The Physio-Medical Dispensatory* (Cincinnati: W.H. Cook, 1869); Tobias Cheung, "Regulating Agents, Functional Interactions, and Stimulus-Reaction-Schemes: The Concept of "Organism" in the Organic System Theories of Stahl, Bordeu, and Barthez," *Science in Context* 21 (2008).

²⁶ Roger Cooter, "Framing the End of the Social History of Medicine," in *Locating Medical History : The Stories and Their Meanings*, ed. Frank Huisman and John Harley Warner, 309-37 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

found in old bottles.”²⁷ This was part of his discussion of class and the “very diverse sets of meanings contained with political language,” but has a resonance with these other themes of continuity within change.

This continuity within change is exemplified by the memorial stones erected by Skelton in the rural village of his childhood. His practice of herbal medicine was indeed new and different so that it subsumed, but yet preserved, the traditional knowledge of Skelton’s grandmother. In 1855, Skelton honoured his grandmother, Mary Edwards, “for many years the skilful doctress and midwife of the village” and her husband “Squire” Will Edwards; for many years the faithful and highly respected servant of the Bulteel family of Flete” on a memorial stone in the graveyard of All Saints, Holbeton. The stone had two epigrams: “to know the right and do it is the perfection of true greatness” and “Nobilitas sole est atque unica virtus.”²⁸ Skelton continued this theme in the epigram on a second memorial stone erected in 1866 in the graveyard of St James the Less, Kingston. This honoured his paternal line, “We should honour the virtues of our progenitors and emulate and transmit them to posterity.” This stone claimed that his family were descended from “the younger branch of Sir John Skelton of the Skeltons of Cumberland, and Dame Bridget Prideaux, his wife” who was related to “Edmund Prideaux, Attorney General during the Commonwealth whose son, Edmund, was unjustly imprisoned and fined £15,000 for his adherence to the civil and religious liberties of England, so nobly defended by his father.” To evaluate this claim would need more research but Skelton continued by describing his ancestors thus: “in adversity and prosperity they were true to their Country and themselves, So may their descendants ever be.”²⁹ He was locating his family in Devon and in a constitutional rhetoric, but perhaps also thanking his grandparents, and his parents, for their gift of the emotional, material and moral resources which allowed him an inner confidence of his own worth, such that he could travel far in life yet remain within a “democratic imaginary.”

²⁷ Joyce, *Visions of the People*, 28-29.

²⁸ See Appendix 3: Memorial Stone, “Virtue is the one and only nobility,” Juvenal, *Satire* 8, 20.

²⁹ There are records of the geneology of this family, but archival research would be required to make any comment. Skelton was in correspondence with the family of the following author on this topic, see P. Hamilton Baskervill, *The Skeltons of Paxton, Powhatan County, Virginia and their Connections* (Richmond, Virginia, Old Dominion Press, 1922), 7-8. http://archive.org/stream/skeltonsofpaxton00bask/skeltonsofpaxton00bask_djvu.txt [accessed July 11, 2013]; Sir John Skelton was lieutenant governor of Plymouth under Charles I, see Geoffrey Smith, *Royalist Agents, Conspirators and Spies: Their Role in the British Civil Wars, 1640-1660* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2011), 249; Edmund Prideaux (1634-1702) had contributed to the forces of Duke of Monmouth, defeated at the Battle of Sedgemoor, 1686, see PRIDEAUX, Edmund (1634-1702), of Forde Abbey, Devon, *History of Parliament*. <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/prideaux-edmund-1634-1702> [accessed June 4, 2013].

Appendices

Appendix 1.

Table 2: Lectures given by John Skelton, 1840-1867.

Date	Topic	Place
January 1840 ¹	Lecturer for the quarter, London District Board of the Universal Community Society of Rational Religionists	Chelsea, London
25 April 1843 ²	Was Jesus Christ a real or fictitious person?	Theological Association, London
August 1843 ³	Anti-Persecution Society	Scientific Institute, St John Street, London
23 June 1844 ⁴	Unknown	South London Chartist Hall
30 June 1844 ⁵	Unknown	Golden Lion Tavern, Dean Street, London
April 1845 ⁶	The Past and Present Position of Trades Societies	South London Chartist Hall
15 September 1845 ⁷	Unspecified, in aid of Veterans and Exiles' Widows and Children	City Chartist Hall, 1 Turnagain Lane, London
19 October 1845 ⁸	Principles of the National United Trades' Association	Parthenium-rooms, St Martin's Lane, London
21 December 1845 ⁹	What advantages would the working-classes derive from the repeal of the Corn Laws?	Coach-painters Arms, Circus Street, Marylebone, London
25 January 1846 ¹⁰	What will the working-classes obtain from the repeal of the Corn Laws?	South London Chartist Hall
7 March 1846 ¹¹	Trades unions: their past and present condition.	City Chartist Hall, 1 Turnagain lane, Farringdon
15 March 1846 ¹²	The Land Plans of the Chartist Cooperative Land Society, and the National United Association of Trades for the Employment of Labour	City Chartist Hall
3 May 1846 ¹³	The Philosophy of Society	South London Chartist Hall
29 November 1846, 6 December 1846 ¹⁴	Advantages of the Chartist Co-operative Land company, as a means of obtaining the People's Charter and consequently realising Political and Social Happiness	NCA, Marylebone Branch, Coach Painters' Arms, Circus Street; South London Chartist Hall
January 1847 ¹⁵	Meeting of local branch of the NCA	Globe and Friends, Morgan-street, Commercial-road
7 February 1847 ¹⁶	Course of three lectures: Civil Government, the Production and Distribution of Wealth, Theology and Education	Assembly rooms, 83 Dean Street
28 March 1847, 11 April 1847 ¹⁷	Progressive Civilization	83 Dean Street; Coach-painters Arms, Circus Street
26 June 1847 ¹⁸	The Social and Political Condition of England	South London Chartist Hall, Black Friars Road

24 October 1847, 31 October 1847, 3 November 1847 ¹⁹	Priestcraft versus Superstition, second in a course of lectures	NCA Westminster Branch, 83 Dean Street, Soho; Harrison's Assembly Rooms, East Lane, Walworth
1 February 1848 ²⁰	Public meeting against embodying the militia for the Charter, alongside Harney and Jones.	NCA Bermondsey Branch, Temperance Hall, Southwark
February 1848 ²¹	meeting of local branch of the NCA.	Globe and Friends, Morgan-street, Commercial-road
6 May 1848 ²²	Medical botany	Blackburn & Heywood, Lancashire; Bradford, Yorkshire
20 July 1848 ²³	Superiority of Medical Botany, as practised by Dr Coffin, over that of the mineral practice of the faculty	Rotherham
7 October 1848 ²⁴	Medical botany	Wesleyan Schoolroom, Longton, Staffs
17 February 1849 ²⁵	Medical botany	Independent Methodist School room, Oldham
May 1849 ²⁶	Medical botany	Sheffield, Barnsley, Preston in previous six weeks
September 1849 ²⁷	Medical botany	Barnsley (Monday), Wakefield (Tuesday), Bradford (Thursday)
15 September 1849 ²⁸	Opposed Mr Whitehead, on whether Lobelia is a poison	Mechanics Institute, Bacup
7 November 1849 ²⁹	Medical botany, Course of 8 lectures	Mechanics Institute, Bradford
19 November 1849 ³⁰	History of medicine	School Room, Wesleyan Association Chapel, Lever St, Manchester
November 1849 ³¹	Practice of Physic	ditto
8 August 1853 ³²	Medico-Botanic Sick and Burial Society	Temperance Hall, Leeds Road, Bradford.
Summer 1853 ³³	Medical botany, Course of lectures	Rochdale, Sowerby Bridge, Heckmondwike
September 1853 ³⁴	Medico-Botanic Society, 3 lectures	Northampton
26 October 1853 ³⁵	Medico-Botanic Society, Cholera, its history, progress, and past treatments	Council Hall, Sheffield
November 1853 ³⁶	Medical botany, weekly lectures	Matlock Bath
March 1853 ³⁷	Medical botany	Northampton
March 1854 ³⁸	Medical botany, Course of lectures	Potteries
Spring 1858 ³⁹	Medical botany	Northampton
10 October 1864 ⁴⁰	Excess of Infant Mortality – its Causes and Remedies ; How we Poison the People	Exchange Hall, Albion Street, Leeds
17 October 1864 ⁴¹	"Vaccination a delusion: Compulsory Vaccination a Great Political Blunder"	Exchange Hall, Albion Street, Leeds
February 1867 ⁴²	"having to lecture three times during the week"	Not known

¹ *New Moral World* 1, no. 66 (January 25, 1840): 1056.

² Bishopsgate Institute, Printed Materials, 1830s-1840s Holyoake 3/1(43).

³ *Northern Star*, Sept 2, 1843.

⁴ *Northern Star*, June 22, 1844.

⁵ *Northern Star*, June 29, 1844.

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- ⁶ *Northern Star*, March 29, 1845.
- ⁷ *Northern Star*, September 17, 1845.
- ⁸ *Northern Star*, October 25, 1845.
- ⁹ *Northern Star*, December 20, 1845.
- ¹⁰ *Northern Star*, January 24, 1846.
- ¹¹ *Northern Star*, March 7, 1846.
- ¹² *Northern Star*, March 14, 1846.
- ¹³ *Northern Star*, May 2, 1846.
- ¹⁴ *Northern Star*, November 28, 1846; *Northern Star*, December 5, 1846.
- ¹⁵ *Northern Star*, January 29, 1847.
- ¹⁶ *Northern Star*, February 6, 1847.
- ¹⁷ *Northern Star*, March 27, 1847; *Northern Star*, April 10, 1847.
- ¹⁸ *Northern Star*, June 19, 1847.
- ¹⁹ *Northern Star*, October 30, 1847.
- ²⁰ *Northern Star*, January 29, 1848.
- ²¹ *Northern Star*, January 29, 1847.
- ²² *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 17 (May 1848): 149.
- ²³ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 19 (July 1848): 160.
- ²⁴ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 24 (December 1848): 193.
- ²⁵ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 28 (April 1849): 233.
- ²⁶ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 29 (May 1849): 237.
- ²⁷ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 35 (September 1849): 304.
- ²⁸ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 35 (September 1849): 303.
- ²⁹ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 39 (November 1849): 340.
- ³⁰ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 40 (November 1849): 352.
- ³¹ *Coffin's Journal* 1, no. 40 (November 1849): 344.
- ³² *Botanic Record*, no. 17 (September 1853): 268-70.
- ³³ *Botanic Record*, no. 18 (October 1853): 274.
- ³⁴ *Botanic Record*, no. 17 (September 1853): 272.
- ³⁵ *Botanic Record*, no. 19 (November 1853): 292.
- ³⁶ *Botanic Record*, no. 19 (November 1853): 304.
- ³⁷ *Botanic Record*, no. 23 (March 1854): 368.
- ³⁸ *Botanic Record*, no. 35 (March 1855): 560.
- ³⁹ Letter to the Editor, Medical Eclecticism, *The Homeopathic Record* 3, no. 6, 1 April 1858, 116-19
- ⁴⁰ *Leeds Mercury*, no. 8264, October 6, 1863.
- ⁴¹ *Leeds Mercury*, no. 8264, October 6, 1863.
- ⁴² Columbia University Library, "Letter from Skelton to Jones, 1867."

Appendix 2.

Table 3: Herbs recommended in Skelton's publications¹

Binomial, Common Name²	Origin³	Adviser 1st ed.⁴ (Number of entries)	later eds.⁵	Botanic Record⁶ (Issue no.)	Science And Practice⁷ (Resinoid)
<i>Acacia nilotica</i> , Gum arabic	T	32			•
<i>Achillea millefolium</i> , Yarrow	E	6		23	•
<i>Acorus calamus</i> , Calamus	E	2		26	•
<i>Agathosma betulina</i> , Buchu	T	Diuretic formula			• Barosmin
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i> , Agrimony	E	5		1	•
<i>Alchemilla vulgaris</i> , Ladies mantle	E			11	
<i>Allium</i> sp., Onions	E	Y			
<i>Aloe perryi</i> , Socatrine aloe	T	Aperient formula			
<i>Althaea officinalis</i> , Marshmallow	E	76		28	•
<i>Amaranthus hypochondriacus</i> , Princes feather	N				
<i>Angelica archangelica</i> , Angelica	E	3		2	•
<i>Anthemis nobilis</i> , Chamomile	E			9	•
<i>Aphanes arvensis</i> , Parsley piert	E	2			
<i>Arctium lappa</i> , Burdock	E	2		6	•
<i>Arctostaphylos uva-ursi</i> , Uva-ursi	E	Diuretic formula			•
<i>Areca catechu</i> , Catechu	T				•
<i>Armoracia rusticana</i> , Horseradish	E	1			•
<i>Arnica montana</i> , Arnica	E				• External
<i>Artemisia absinthium</i> , Wormwood	E	External		24	•
<i>Artemisia dracunculus</i> , Southernwood	E				•
<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i> , Mugwort	E	2			•
<i>Arum maculatum</i> , Cuckoopint	E			1	
<i>Asarum europaeum</i> , Asarabacca	E			3	•
<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> , Pleurisy	N		6 th		• Asclepin
<i>Asplenium</i> spp., Spleenwort	E			25	•
<i>Ballota nigra</i> , Black Horehound	E	1			
<i>Berberis vulgaris</i> , Barberry	E	4		5	•
<i>Borago officinalis</i> , Borage	E			9	
<i>Bryonia nigra</i> , Black Bryony	E			12	
<i>Capsicum annuum</i> , Cayenne	T	13		34	•
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i> , Shepherds Purse	E	2			•
<i>Carum carvi</i> , Caraway	E				•
<i>Caulophyllum thalictroides</i> , Blue Cohosh	N	1	8 th		• Caulophyllin
<i>Centaurea erythraea</i> , Centaury	E	4			
<i>Chelone glabra</i> , Balmony	N				• Chelonin
<i>Chelidonium majus</i> , Greater Celandine	E				•
<i>Chenopodium ambrosioides</i> , Wormseed	T			26	•
<i>Chondrus crispus</i> , Caragheen	E	1			

<i>Cimicifuga racemosa</i> , Black Cohosh	N				• Macrostin
<i>Cinchona</i> sp., Peruvian bark	T		6 th		•
<i>Cinnamomum zeylanicum</i> , Cinnamon	T	3			
<i>Circaea lutetiana</i> , Enchanter's nightshade	E			37	
<i>Citrus aurantium</i> , Orange	T				•
<i>Commiphora molmol</i> , Myrrh	T	6			•
<i>Conium maculatum</i> , Hemlock	E				• External
<i>Copaifera officinalis</i> , Copaiba	T				•
<i>Coronopus didymus</i> , Swinecress	E			27	
<i>Crocus sativus</i> , Saffron	E			19	
<i>Curcuma longa</i> , Turmeric	T	Aperient 1		36	
<i>Cytisus scoparius</i> , Broom	E			4	•
<i>Daphne laureola</i> , Spurge laurel	E				•
<i>Datura stramonium</i> , Thornapple	E				•
<i>Daucus carota</i> , Wild carrot	E	2			•
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i> , Foxglove	E			18	
<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i> , Teasle	E			29	
<i>Drosera rotundifolium</i> , Sundew	E			26	
<i>Dryopteris felix-mas</i> , Male fern	E		6 th		•
<i>Elettaria cardamomum</i> , Cardamon	T			39	
<i>Eryngium maritimum</i> , Eryngo	E				•
<i>Eupatorium cannabinum</i> , Hemp or Water Agrimony	E	3		30	•
<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i> , Boneset, Thoroughwort	N				• Eupatorin
<i>Eupatorium purpureum</i> , Queen of the meadow	N				•
<i>Ferula asafoetida</i> , Asafoetida	E	Hysteria 4			•
<i>Ferula galbaniflua</i> , Galbanum	E				•
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> , Meadowsweet	E	10		22	
<i>Foeniculum vulgare</i> , Fennel	E	1			•
<i>Fragaria vesca</i> , Strawberry	E	2			
<i>Frasera caroliniensis</i> , American Columbo	N				• Fraserin
<i>Fumaria officinalis</i> , Fumitory	E	1			•
<i>Galium aparine</i> , Cleavers	E	9		7	•
<i>Galium odoratum</i> , Woodruff	E			16	
<i>Galium verum</i> , Lady's bedstraw	E			25	•
<i>Gaultheria procumbens</i> , Wintergreen	N	Alterative			
<i>Gentianella anglica</i> , Early Gentian	E	3			
<i>Gentiana lutea</i> , Gentian	E				•
<i>Geranium maculatum</i> , Cranesbill	N	2			• Geranin
<i>Geranium robertianum</i> , Herb robert	E			13	
<i>Geum urbanum</i> , Avens	E			2	•
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i> , Ground Ivy	E	6		17	
<i>Glycyrrhiza glabra</i> , Liquorice	E	3			•
<i>Guaiacum officinale</i> , Lignum vitae	T	1			
<i>Hamamelis virginiana</i> , Witch	N				•

Hazel					Hamamelin
<i>Hedeoma pulegiodes</i> , American false pennyroyal	N				•
<i>Humulus lupulus</i> , Hops	E				•
<i>Hydrastis canadensis</i> , Goldenseal	N	Female corrective		32	Hydrastin
<i>Hypericum perforatum</i> , St Johns wort	E	2			•
<i>Hypericum androsaemum</i> , Tutsan	E				•
<i>Hyssopus officinalis</i> , Hyssop	E	3			•
<i>Inula helenium</i> , Elecampane	E	3			•
<i>Ipomoea purga</i> , Jalap	T			40	• Jalapin
<i>Iris florentina</i> , Orris	E			36	
<i>Iris versicolor</i> , Blue flag	N		8 th		• Irisin
<i>Jateorhiza palmata</i> , Calumba	T	2			
<i>Juglans cinerea</i> , Butternut	N	1			• Juglandin
<i>Juniperus communis</i> , Juniper	E	1			•
<i>Knautia arvensis</i> , Field Scabious	E	1			
<i>Lactuca virosa</i> , Wild lettuce	E	Cough			•
<i>Leonurus cardiaca</i> , Motherwort	E	1			•
<i>Linum usitatissimum</i> , Linseed	E	1		41	•
<i>Lobelia inflata</i> , Lobelia	N	4		33	• Lobelin
<i>Marrubium vulgare</i> , White Horehound	E	2		18	•
<i>Melissa officinalis</i> , Lemon Balm	E	1			•
<i>Mentha aquatica</i> , Horsemint, watermint	E			21	
<i>Mentha piperita</i> , Peppermint	E	1			•
<i>Mentha pulegium</i> , Pennyroyal	E	6		3	•
<i>Mentha spicata</i> , Spearmint	E	1			•
<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i> , Bogbean	E	1		5	•
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i> , Dog Mercury	E		8 th		
<i>Mucuna pruriens</i> , Cowhage	T				•
<i>Myrica cerifera</i> , Bayberry	N	1		32	• Myricin
<i>Nymphaea odorata</i> , White Waterlily	E			35	
<i>Ononis spinosa</i> , Restharrow	E			21	
<i>Ophioglossum vulgatum</i> , Adder's tongue	E			3	
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i> , Red poppy	E				• External
<i>Parietaria judaica</i> , Pellitory	E	5			•
<i>Peltigera canina</i> , Liverwort	E		6 th	24	
<i>Persicaria bistorta</i> , Bistort	E	8			•
<i>Petasites hybridus</i> , Butterbur	E		5 th		•
<i>Petroselinum crispum</i> , Parsley	E	Diuretic			•
<i>Phytolacca decandra</i> , Pokeroor	N				• Phytolaccin
<i>Picrasma excelsa</i> , Quassia	T	1		19	
<i>Pilosella</i> syn. <i>Hieracium officinarum</i> , Mouse-ear	E	1			
<i>Pimpinella anisum</i> , Anise	E	1		10	•

<i>Piper cubeba</i> , Cubeb	T	2			
<i>Plantago major</i> , Plantain	E	2		12	
<i>Podophyllum peltatum</i> , American Mandrake	N			6 th	• Podophyllin
<i>Polypodium vulgare</i> , Polypoddy	E	2			•
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i> , Knotweed	E			23	
<i>Polygonatum odoratum</i> , Solomon's seal	E	Vegetable			
<i>Polygala senega</i> , Senega	N	End List			
<i>Populus tremuloides</i> , Aspen	N	Composition powder		33	• Populin
<i>Potentilla reptans</i> , Cinquefoil	E			14	
<i>Potentilla erecta</i> , Tormentil	E	4		27	•
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i> , Selfheal	E	4			•
<i>Prunus virginiana</i> , Chokecherry	N				• Prunin
<i>Psychotria ipecacuanha</i> , Ipecacuanha	T	Emetic		36	•
<i>Punica granatum</i> , Pomegranate	E			11 th	•
<i>Quercus robur</i> , Oak	E				• External
<i>Rhamnus catharticus</i> , Buckthorn	E			39	
<i>Rheum palmatum</i> , Turkey Rhubarb	E	Aperient no.1			•
<i>Rheum rhabarbarum</i> , English Rhubarb	E	4		26	•
<i>Rhus glabra</i> , Sumach	N			5 th	• Rhusin
<i>Rosmarinus officinalis</i> , Rosemary	E	2		11	
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> , Blackberry	E				
<i>Rubus idaeus</i> , Raspberry	E	6			
<i>Rumex crispus</i> , Yellow dock	E	3			•
<i>Rumex acetosa</i> , Sorrell	E	End List			
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i> , Butchers	E			7	
<i>Ruta graveolens</i> , Rue	E	2		20	
<i>Salix alba</i> , White willow	E				•,
<i>Salvia officinalis</i> , Sage	E	2		35	
<i>Salvia pratensis</i> , Clary Sage	E			10,	
<i>Sambucus nigra</i> , Elder	E	3			•
<i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i> , Greater Burnet	E	4		14	•
<i>Sanguinaria canadensis</i> , Bloodroot	N	Vegetable			• Sanguinarin
<i>Sanicula europaea</i> , Wood sanicle	E			5 th 20	•
<i>Saponaria officinalis</i> , Soapwort	E				•
<i>Sassafras albidum</i> , Sassafras	N	1			•
<i>Satureia hortensis</i> , Summer Savory	E	3			
<i>Scrophularia nodosa</i> , Figwort	E				•
<i>Scutellaria lateriflora</i> , Scullcap	N	8			• Scutellarin
<i>Sedum telephium</i> , Orpine	E			21	
<i>Senecio vulgaris</i> , Groundsel	E	End List			•
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i> , Ragwort	E				•
<i>Senna alexandrina</i> , Senna	T	Syrup			•
<i>Sinapsis alba</i> , Mustard	E				•
<i>Smilax</i> spp., Sarsaparilla	T	4			•

					Smilacin
<i>Solidago virgaurea</i> , Goldenrod	E			15	
<i>Spigelia marilandica</i> , Indian Pink	N		6 th	37	•
<i>Stachys betonica</i> , Betony	E	3		4	•,
<i>Stillingia sylvatica</i> , Queen's delight	N				•
<i>Styrax benzoin</i> , Benzoin	T				•
<i>Succisa pratense</i> , Devil's bit scabious	E	1			
<i>Symphytum officinale</i> , Comfrey	E	5			•
<i>Symplocarpus foetidus</i> , Skunk cabbage	N	1			
<i>Syzygium aromaticum</i> , Cloves	T	2			
<i>Tanacetum parthenium</i> , Feverfew	E			29	•
<i>Tanacetum vulgare</i> , Tansy	E	2		28	•
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> , Dandelion	E	1			•,
<i>Teucrium chamaedrys</i> , Germander	E	1			
<i>Teucrium scorodonium</i> , Wood sage	E	4			•
<i>Thymus vulgaris</i> , Thyme	E				•
<i>Trifolium arvense</i> , Hare's foot clover	E			17	
<i>Trillium erectum</i> , Beth root	N		5 th		• Trillin
<i>Tsuga canadensis</i> , syn. <i>Pinus canadensis</i> , Eastern hemlock	N	Compositi on No. 1			•
<i>Tussilago farfara</i> , Coltsfoot	E	1		8	•
<i>Ulmus fulva</i> , Slippery elm	N	End List		34	•
<i>Valeriana officinalis</i> , Valerian	E	7		16	•
<i>Veratrum viride</i> , America false hellebore	N				•
<i>Verbena officinalis</i> , <i>V. hastata</i> , Vervein	E	2			• Verbenin
<i>Veronica veronicastrum</i> , syn. <i>Leptandra virginica</i> , Blackroot.	N		8 th		Leptandrin
<i>Veronica beccabunga</i> , Brooklime	E			8	•
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i> , Germander speedwell	E			12	
<i>Zanthoxylum americanum</i> , Prickly ash	N		5 th		•
<i>Zingiber officinale</i> , Ginger	T	13		38	•

¹ The list was compiled using an Access database designed to record the herbs included in each publication. Each herb may have been used either as a medicine or as an external preparation, or in both forms.

External: these 4 herbs were only used in external preparations.

The *Family Medical Adviser* included a list of British herbs given as alternatives, and *Science and Practice* gave a list of herbs listed by their medicinal properties (pp. 682-88). These listings gave no hint that the herbs were used in practice. Where a herb was only found in one of these two lists, then it was not included in the database.

² Skelton usually identified herbs by the common name. It was generally possible to determine the Latin binomial, and these are given as current in 2012.

Reference was made to the Natural Resources Conservation Service *Plants Database* United States Department of Agriculture. <http://plants.usda.gov/java/> [accessed January 14, 2013]; Uppsala Monitoring Centre, *Accepted Scientific Names of Therapeutic Plants and Their Synonyms*

(Uppsala: World Health Organization, 2005); Clive A. Stace, *New Flora of the British Isles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

³ E: Eurasia (Europe, Mediterranean basin, 3 from Iran herbs and 1 from Central Asia); N: (North America); T: Tropical (includes Central America, Africa, India and Southeast Asia).

⁴ John Skelton, *Family Medical Adviser* (Leeds: Moxon and Walker, 1852). The number of entries refers to internal usage unless indicated. F: formula only. The common names used respectively for *Filipendula ulmaria* and *Eupatorium purpureum* made frequency of usage of these two herbs impossible to clarify. *Mentha* spp., excepting *M. pulegium*, could not be clearly delineated. Vervein was used interchangeably for *V. officinalis* and *V. hastata*.

⁵These changes are recorded according to edition, but may have been made in an earlier edition as only seven of the twelve editions were consulted: 1st, 2nd, 5th, 6th, 8th, 11th and 12th editions. No changes were noted between the 11th and 12th editions.

⁶ Skelton, *Botanic Record* (May 1st, 1852 - August 4th, 1855). The issue number is noted.

⁷ Skelton, *The Science and Practice of Medicine* (London: John Skelton, 1870). ● indicates an entry for the herb, and the Resinoid or Eclectic concentrated powder is listed where recommended.

Appendix 3.

Figure 8: Memorial Stone in the Graveyard, All Saints, Holbeton, Devon

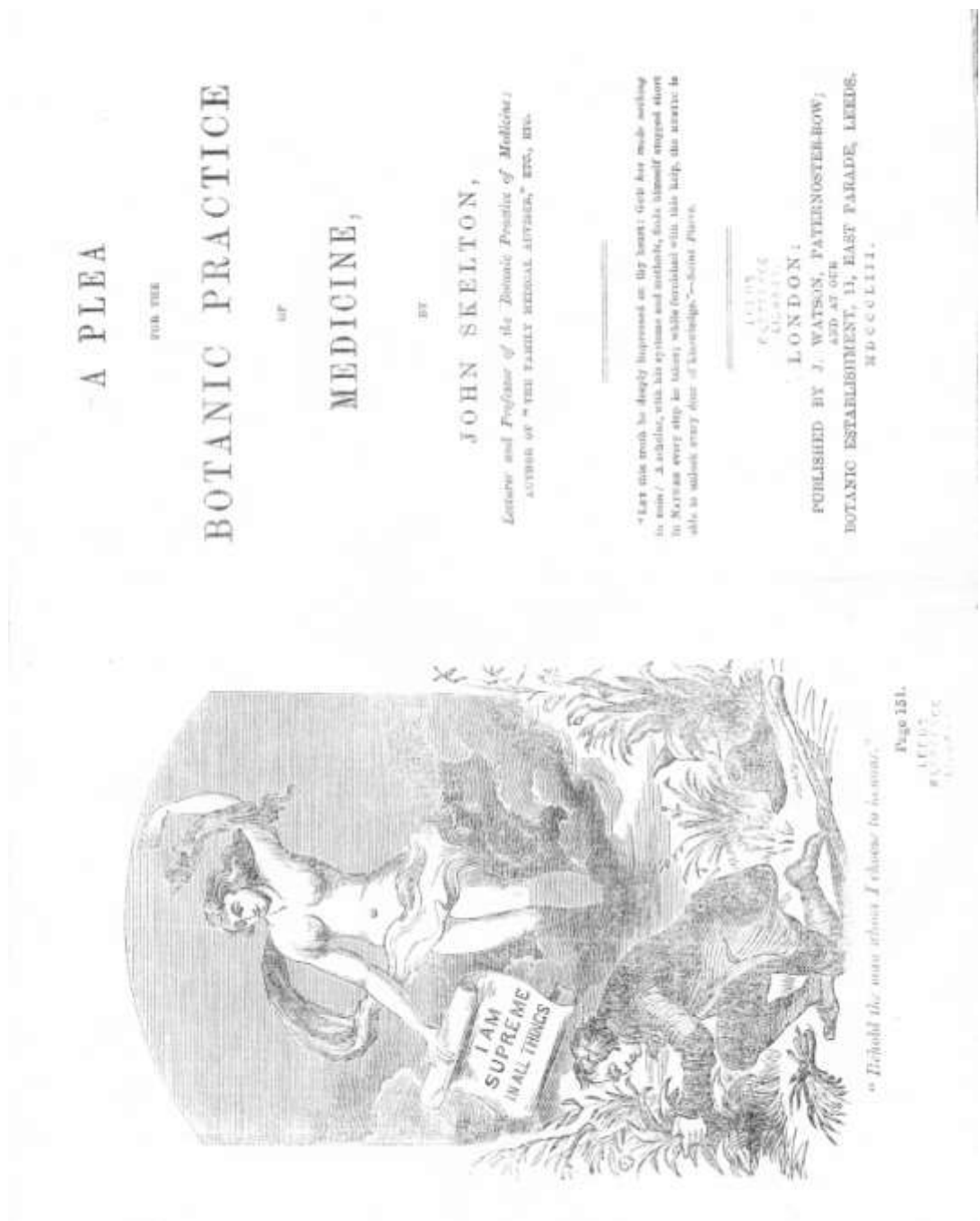


Appendix 4.

Figure 9: 105 Great Russell Street, London, WC1. (photograph taken in 2011)



Figure 11: scan of Title page of *A Plea for the Botanic Practice of Medicine*



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