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## Lesser British Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin Writers during the French Revolution

*H T Dickinson*

In the late eighteenth century Britain possessed the freest, most wide-ranging and best circulating press in Europe.<sup>1</sup> A high proportion of the products of the press were concerned with domestic and foreign politics and with wars which directly involved Britain and affected her economy. Not surprisingly therefore the French Revolution and the French Revolutionary War, impacting as they did on British domestic politics, had a huge influence on what the British press produced in the years between 1789 and 1802. Modern scholars in various disciplines have long been greatly interested in what has been termed the Burke-Paine debate, which generated one of the most profound, exciting, influential and widely-read ideological debates ever conducted in Britain. This debate was actually initiated by the prior appearance of Richard Price's *A discourse on the love of our country*. Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the revolution in France* (November 1790) was actually as much concerned to condemn Price's influence on British politics because he wanted to warn his readers about the dangers of what was happening in France. Burke's work provoked Thomas Paine to produce the two volumes of his *Rights of man* (1791-92), which was supportive of developments in France, but which devoted many more words advocating the need for reforms to benefit all men. Some of the leading political thinkers in Britain, including William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and James Mackintosh, soon joined this debate and intense scrutiny was given to the question of whether or not France was initiating a new age of liberty and what the consequences were when many Britons were inspired by the French to renew and re-invigorate earlier efforts at political reform at home.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Gregory Claeys, *The French Revolution debate in Britain: The origins of modern politics* (Basingstoke, 2007).

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The excitement engendered by this debate and the enormous significance of what was at stake in winning or losing the argument encouraged hundreds of authors to take up their pens and to produce print materials of all kinds. Many authors new to writing or possessing inferior abilities transformed what had begun as a profound ideological debate into a propaganda war in which the contestants frequently ignored the arguments and evidence marshalled by their opponents. They were ever ready to exaggerate or deliberately misconceive the claims made by their opponents, to traduce their characters, and to exaggerate the consequences of the political actions which they favoured or opposed. They largely advanced their own case by simple assertions rather than by reasoned arguments supported by reliable evidence. Although the French Revolution was frequently the initial topic of discussion, it was hardly ever the subject of serious enquiry. Many writers, on both sides of the argument, held limited, inaccurate, or misconceived views about events in France or about what the French revolutionaries were seeking to achieve. Events in France became a mere peg on which to hang polemics supporting or opposing the many proposals for achieving political reforms within Britain itself. The events in France allowed these lesser writers to air their political prejudices, to vent their spleen, and to mount passionate diatribes against those who held different views on the advisability of pursuing reforms at home. No attempt was made to treat an opponent fairly or to admit that he or she might have an argument that merited serious attention and a carefully mounted rejoinder.

These lesser writers, the subject of this paper, were labelled at the time, and the label has stuck right up to the present, as British 'Jacobins' or 'Anti-Jacobins'. These labels, however, are seriously misleading. Very few, if any, of the British reformers advocating political change expressed any serious support for the ideas, objectives or methods of the French Jacobins. The term 'Jacobin' was applied to British radicals by their opponents in a determined and largely successful effort to blacken their reputation with the British public and blast their hopes of reform. The majority of

reformers tried to reject the label; a few tried to undermine its effect on readers. Richard Dinmore explicitly denied that those British reformers labelled 'Jacobins' by their opponents advocated the same principles or policies as French Jacobins.<sup>2</sup> In one pamphlet aimed at the lower orders in Britain, a radical author, in the guise of 'Simple Truth', responded to the question, 'What is a Jacobin?' with these words: 'A set of men, who breathed love and good-will to the human race; and maintained that our Maker had made all men equal in rights – that God made of one man all the nations of the earth; therefore maintained that all men are brethren; that liberty and equality are the birth-right of every inhabitant of the earth.'<sup>3</sup>The overwhelming majority of so-called British Jacobins were primarily devoted to achieving constitutional reforms at home by peaceful means. This did not prevent their conservative opponents making almost no effort to accept this as the truth. The British Anti-Jacobins made little attempt to understand the problems facing the French Jacobins or to appreciate why they tackled them in the way that they did. They preferred to highlight the worst excesses of the French Terror, blamed the Revolutionary War on Jacobin ambition and aggression, accused them all of being atheists, and, in general, placed the worst possible interpretation on all of their actions. They then simply used these prejudices in order to condemn any Briton seeking reforms at home and to reject any suggested changes to Britain's political, religious, social or economic institutions.<sup>4</sup> Robert Bisset declared: 'Whoever is the enemy of Christianity, and natural religion, of monarchy, of order, of subordination, property and justice, I call a Jacobin.'<sup>5</sup> Years after the fall of Robespierre, John Bowles was still condemning the influence of Jacobinism as 'a conspiracy against *all* religion, *all* monarchy, *all* aristocracy, *all* laws, nay against *all* government –

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<sup>2</sup> *An exposition of the principles of the British Jacobins* (Norwich, 1796), pp.5-6.

<sup>3</sup> *An appeal to the inhabitants of Birmingham: designed as an answer to Job Nott, Buckle-Maker* ([Birmingham], 1792), p.22.

<sup>4</sup> See Mark Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-3', *English Historical Review*, 110 (1995), pp.42-69.

<sup>5</sup> *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, I (1798), p.223.

against property – in short, against social order, and everything by which it is constituted or maintained.’<sup>6</sup> It was a grossly unfair charge to make against the vast majority of British reformers, no matter how radical their demands were.

In this war of ideas between British Jacobins and Anti-Jacobins the press was used as a major weapon in a heated debate for political ascendancy and popular mobilization. In order to understand the activities, arguments and methods of these lesser Jacobin and Anti-Jacobin polemicists and propagandists, this paper will explore the range and scale of their press activities, explain the main arguments which they deployed, and attempt to understand how they sought to convert readers to their anti-French prejudices or reform proposals.

## I

### **The range and scale of press activities**

News and views about the French Revolution and Revolutionary War and the influence which they had on British political debate can be found in a huge number and wide range of publications produced by the presses in Britain. The most numerous and readily available publications were the newspapers published in London and dozens of provincial towns. Throughout the years 1789 to 1802 the total production of newspapers in Britain averaged around sixteen million copies per year. About thirty-five London newspapers were published during these years, with around fifteen daily newspapers appearing at any one time, as well as several tri-weekly or weekly newspapers. There were also about seventy weekly newspapers published outside London. The London newspapers had average sales around 2500 to 3500 per issue, with the provincial newspapers averaging around half these numbers. About half the London newspapers were distributed outside the capital. Historians of the press have suggested that there were about

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<sup>6</sup> John Bowles, *Reflections at the conclusion of the war* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London, 1801), pp. 60-61.

ten readers for every copy of the London newspapers and perhaps five for each provincial newspaper, because newspapers were passed around family members, were provided free to attract customers into alehouses and coffeehouses, and were also read in reading societies and in social and political clubs. A number of the leading London newspapers were subsidized by the Treasury and a clear majority of them, including *The Times*, *Public Advertiser*, *Morning Herald*, the *Sun* and the *True Briton*, supported the government throughout these years. A minority, including the *Morning Chronicle*, *Morning Post*, the *Gazetteer* and the *Courier*, supported the Whig parliamentary opposition, but not from the later 1790s. Only about four newspapers in London supported radical reform, and these were often short-lived. The most radical, the *Argus*, owned by Sampson Perry, began in 1789, but collapsed in December 1792, when Perry fled to France to escape prosecution. He was imprisoned in France during the Terror and then again when he was back in Britain from 1795 to 1802. About eight provincial newspapers, a clear minority, were committed to reform in 1792, but the *Leicester Chronicle* closed in February 1793, the *Manchester Herald* in March 1793, the *Newark Herald* in May 1793 and the *Sheffield Register* in June 1794. The *Sheffield Iris* ceased to support reform after 1797, and only the *Cambridge Intelligencer* was still supporting reform in 1802.<sup>7</sup>

Much the same conclusions can be reached about the periodical press. The most radical periodicals, including Thomas Spence's *Pig's Meat*, Daniel Isaac Eaton's *Hog Wash or Politics for the People*, the Norwich radicals' periodical, *The Cabinet*, and the London Corresponding Society's *Moral and Political Magazine* were all relatively short-lived, were subject to government persecution, and had collapsed by the mid-1790s.<sup>8</sup> Even the more

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<sup>7</sup> Martin John Smith, 'English Radical Newspapers in the French Revolutionary Era, 1790-1803', unpublished PhD thesis (London University, 1979); Arthur Aspinall, *Politics and the press, c. 1780-1850* (London, 1949); and Lucyle Werkmeister, *The London daily press, 1772-92* (Lincoln, NE, 1963).

<sup>8</sup> H T Dickinson ed., *The political writings of Thomas Spence*, (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1982); G I Gallop ed., *Pig's Meat: the*



moderately liberal *Analytical Review* collapsed in 1799, after its publisher, Joseph Johnson had been arrested, convicted and imprisoned for publishing Gilbert Wakefield's *Reply to the Bishop of Llandaff*.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, the *Critical Review* and the *Monthly Review* had to moderate their views<sup>10</sup> and yet they still lost readers in the later 1790s.<sup>11</sup> By contrast, the high-church and loyalist *British Critic* flourished and the most successful periodical of all from 1798 was *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, a fiercely anti-French and anti-reform publication, which continued in being until 1821.<sup>12</sup> In its prospectus it deliberately adopted a hostile attitude to

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*selected writings of Thomas Spence, radical and pioneer land reformer* (Nottingham, 1982); Marcus Wood, 'Thomas Spence and modes of subversion', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 10 (1991), pp.51-77; Michael T Davis, "'Food for the Public Example': Daniel Isaac Eaton, Prosecution, Punishment and Recognition, 1793-1812", in Michael T Davis ed., *Radicalism and revolution in Britain, 1775-1848* (Basingstoke, 2000), pp. 110-32; and Michael T Davis, "'That Odious Class of Men Called Democrats': Daniel Isaac Eaton and the Romantics 1794-1795", *History*, 84 (1999), pp.74-92.

<sup>9</sup> On the *Analytical Review* and the French Revolution, see Stuart Andrews, *The British periodical press and the French Revolution* (London, 2000), pp.152-65.

<sup>10</sup> For the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* and the French Revolution, see *ibid.*, pp.138-51.

<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Mori, 'Languages of Loyalism: Patriotism, Nationhood and the State in the 1790s', *English Historical Review*, 118 (2003), pp.33-58; and Brian Rigby, 'Radical Spectators of the Revolution: the Case of the *Analytical Review*' in Ceri Crosby and Ian Small eds., *The French Revolution and British Culture* (Oxford, 1989), pp.63-83.

<sup>12</sup> *The Anti-Jacobins 1798-1800: the early contributors to the Anti-Jacobin Review*, ed. Emily Lorraine de Montluzin (London, 1988); and Stuart Andrews, *The British periodical press and the French Revolution*, pp.69-82 and 97-110.

its periodical rivals and promised ‘to review the *Monthly*, criticise the *Critical*, and analyse the *Analytical Review*’.<sup>13</sup>

During the years 1789 to 1802 about three thousand individual sermons, tracts and pamphlets, which focused on the French Revolution and the Revolutionary War, and their impact on British politics, were published across Britain. Most of these were published in runs of five hundred, but some were distributed in far larger numbers. Two hundred thousand copies of William Jones’s *A Letter to John Bull, Esq. from his second cousin Thomas Bull*, a fiercely loyalist tract, were supposed to have been distributed. Although this may have been an exaggeration, it was certainly distributed in huge numbers.<sup>14</sup> Much more reliable is the claim that two-thirds of these publications adopted an anti-French, loyalist and politically conservative stance, whereas about one-third were more sympathetic to the French Revolution, critical of the war, or supported some measure of political reform at home. The pro-reform publications achieved rough equality of numbers in the first three years of the French Revolution and marginally predominated in 1795, but were heavily outnumbered by conservative publications during the critical years 1792-94 and were entirely swamped by them after 1797.<sup>15</sup> Most printed sermons were written by Church of England clergymen, such as William Jones and Robert Nares, and these almost all expressed loyalist and anti-reform views.<sup>16</sup> The Association for the Preservation of Liberty and

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<sup>13</sup> Andrews, *The British periodical press and the French Revolution*, p.138.

<sup>14</sup> See the note on p.4 of the London 1793 edition.

<sup>15</sup> Gayle Trusdel Pendleton, ‘English Conservative Propaganda during the French Revolution, 1789-1802’, unpublished PhD thesis, Emory University (1976); G T Pendleton, ‘Towards a bibliography of the Reflections and Rights of Man Controversy’, *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 85 (1982), pp.65-103; and Robert Hole, ‘British Counter-revolutionary popular propaganda in the 1790s’, in Colin Jones ed., *Britain and Revolutionary France: conflict, subversion and propaganda* (Exeter, 1983), pp.53-69.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Hole, ‘English Sermons and tracts as media of debate on the French Revolution 1789-99’, in Mark Philp ed, *The French*

Property, established by John Reeves with informal government backing,<sup>17</sup> encouraged the production of large numbers of different loyalist tracts, which were distributed cheaply or freely in very large numbers in 1792-93. Tens of thousands of copies of single sheet publications, such as William Jones's *One penny-worth of truth from Thomas Bull to his Brother John* and his follow-up, *One Penny-Worth More, or a second letter from Thomas Bull to his Brother John*, were distributed by the Association in 1793, as was *Judge Ashurst's Charge to the Grand Jury of Middlesex* in late 1792. Some reformers responded in kind, with such single-sheet publications as *King Killing*, produced by Richard 'Citizen' Lee, and *More than a pennyworth of truth; in a letter from John Bull to his Brother Thomas*, but these circulated in significantly smaller numbers. Throughout the war John Bowles produced a series of pamphlets urging Britain to make every effort to defeat the spread of French principles.<sup>18</sup> From 1796 Hannah More and her collaborators produced about two hundred moral tales, supporting a conservative message. About two million of these *Cheap Repository Tracts* were distributed over the next two years.<sup>19</sup>

Printed tracts, sermons and pamphlets discussing revolution and war abroad and reform at home in prose form were often supplemented by poems, songs, novels, plays and caricatures produced both by reformers and conservatives. Propagandists on both sides of the political divide believed that poems, songs and

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*Revolution and British popular politics* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.18-37.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Duffy, 'William Pitt and the origins of the Loyalist Association Movement of 1792', *Historical Journal*, 39 (1996), pp.943-62.

<sup>18</sup> Emma Vincent, "'The Real Grounds of the Present War': John Bowles and the French Revolutionary Wars, 1792-1802", *History*, 78 (1993), pp.303-420.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Hole, 'Hannah More on Literature and Propaganda, 1788-1799', *History*, 85 (2000), pp.613-33; and G H Spinney, 'Cheap Repository Tracts: Hazard and Marshall editions', *The Library*, 4<sup>th</sup> series, 20 (1940 for 1939), pp.295-340.

ballads, which were short, entertaining and easily committed to memory, could advance the loyalist or the radical cause. New versions of traditional songs, anthems and hymns were produced as parodies of the original by both pro- and anti-reformers. Robert Merry, Thomas Spence and Daniel Isaac Eaton all published poems and songs supporting reform, and a modern anthology of radical poems and songs mainly published in the newspaper and periodical press has been edited by Michael Scrivener.<sup>20</sup> A large number of loyalist poems and songs were widely distributed through their publication in such works as *The AntiGallican Songster* and *The Anti-Levelling Songster*, while the *Anti Jacobin Review* published a selection in every monthly edition and, in 1799, William Gifford published a collected volume of poetry which had previously appeared in the *Anti-Jacobin; or, Weekly Examiner*. The number published expressing sympathy for the French Revolution and for reform at home declined significantly after 1793 and had largely disappeared by the later 1790s. A clear majority condemned French principles from late 1792 and subsequently supported the war against France and regularly celebrated British victories.<sup>21</sup> While, initially, the French Revolution was seen in poetic terms as the dawn of a new age, when disillusionment set in many poets turned away from political subjects altogether.<sup>22</sup>

Throughout the years 1789 to 1802, and indeed beyond them, British novelists took up themes inspired by what was happening in France and explored ideas which were under intense scrutiny by radicals and loyalists. A handful of reform minded novelists, notably Robert Bage, Thomas Holcroft, William Godwin and Elizabeth Inchbald, wrote novels, which showed the effect of dramatic external circumstances on particular individuals. They had their central characters expressing hostility to established

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Scrivener ed., *Poetry and reform: periodic verse from the English democratic press* (Detroit, 1992), pp. 37-160.

<sup>21</sup> Betty T Bennett ed., *British war poetry in the age of romanticism: 1793-1815* (New York, 1976).

<sup>22</sup> Simon Bainbridge, 'Politics and Poetry', in Pamela Clemit ed., *The Cambridge Companion to British literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s* (Cambridge, 2011), pp.190-205.

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authorities and abhorred the luxury, corruption and callousness of the aristocratic elite. They condemned the casual exercises of tyranny and oppression, whether political, social or economic, while praising the exercise of reason and efforts to achieve enlightenment and character reformation. Charlotte Smith's novels, *Celestina* (1791) and *Desmond* (1792), went so far as to celebrate the French Revolution and to express criticism of counter-revolutionaries. These so-called Jacobin novelists, however, abhorred violence and believed that individuals could be reformed most effectively by a process of rational enlightenment. Force was never seen as the best means of improving the individual or re-modelling society.<sup>23</sup>

From the mid-1790s, however, radical prose fiction ceased to sell and it also came under increasing attack from the *Monthly Review*, the *Critical Review*, as well as from the *British Critic* and the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. At the same time, conservative novels increased in numbers, were dominant in the later 1790s, and outlasted the appeal of Jacobin novels. As early as 1791, however, Edward Sayer's *Lindor and Adelaide* informed his readers through his sub-title that this was *A Moral Tale – in which are exhibited the Effects of the late French Revolution on the Peasantry of France*. These effects were certainly adverse. Several subsequent anti-Jacobin novels were actually set during the French Revolution. Mary Robinson's novel, *The natural daughter* (1799), is set during the Terror and has both Marat and Robespierre as central characters. Helen Craik's novel, *Adelaide de Norbonne* (1800), also has Marat as well as Charlotte Corday in prominent roles, while her heroine is a determined royalist. Other anti-Jacobin novels, although not set in France, carry an essentially anti-reform message. While not directly mentioning the French Revolution, they condemn mob violence, satirize the hypocrisy of radicals, who foolishly claim to prefer reason above experience and express alarm at radical political ideas being transmitted to the poor and the uneducated. George Walker's novel, *The vagabond* (1799), traces

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<sup>23</sup> Gary Kelly, *The English Jacobin novel 1780-1805* (Oxford, 1976).

the career of a young, ardent disciple of William Godwin's philosophy, which leads him into a life of vice, which he seeks to justify by appeals to the 'new philosophy'.<sup>24</sup> Thus, like many of the anti-Jacobin pamphleteers, these novelists sought to combat radical principles and endeavoured to inculcate what they regarded as correct moral values.<sup>25</sup>

The theatre was still under prior censorship in the late eighteenth century and few theatres were licensed and hence few plays in the legitimate theatre were able to raise political issues. Thomas Otway's play, *Venice preserv'd* (1682), was not performed for decades after 1795 because it dealt with conspiracy and rebellion. Minor unlicensed theatres and popular 'circuses' did, however, mount popular spectacles carrying a simple political message. Thus, John Dent's 'The Triumph of Liberty: Or, the Fall of the Bastille' was performed at Philip Hughes's Royal Circus as early as 5 August 1789 and two weeks later Philip Astley produced 'Paris in an Uproar' at his 'circus'. In 1792, Robert Merry produced a comic burlesque on William Pitt's government, which ran for four nights at Covent Garden before the government secured its closure.<sup>26</sup> Church and king were defended in George Watson-Taylor's historical drama, *England preserved*, in 1795, while social hierarchy and the rule of law were defended in George Colman's *The heir at law* (1797). In the legitimate theatre, at Covent Garden and Drury Lane, British military and naval victories were commemorated in large-scale pageants and spectacles rather than in

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<sup>24</sup> A D Harvey, 'George Walker and the Anti-Revolutionary Novel', *The Review of English Studies*, new series, 28 (1977), pp.290-300.

<sup>25</sup> M O Grenby, 'The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Fiction, British Conservatism and the Revolution in France', *History*, 83 (1998), pp.445-71; M O Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge, 2001); and M O Grenby, 'Novels of Opinion', in *The Cambridge Companion to British literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s*, ed. Pamela Clemit, pp.160-74.

<sup>26</sup> Jon Mee, 'The Political Showman at Home: Reflections on Popular Radicalism and Print Culture in the 1790s', in Davis ed., *Radicalism and revolution in Britain, 1775-1848*, p.51.

dramatic plays.<sup>27</sup> Popular interest in the theatre, in London in particular, inspired some radicals to produce single-sheet handbills or broadsides in the form of mock advertisements for spoof theatrical productions. Parodies of actual play bills were stuck up on walls, handed to people in the street, or sold cheaply. They mounted satirical attacks on leading politicians, such as Prime Minister Pitt, who was referred to as Pittachio, or claimed to be offering ordinary people, ‘the swinish multitude’, a front seat from which they could observe the extinction of hereditary monarchy, as in the handbills entitled ‘King Killing’ or ‘La Guillotine’. They created a radical visual culture reaching out and involving any passer-by.<sup>28</sup>

Many hundreds of individual caricatures and graphic satires influenced by the French Revolution, the Revolutionary war and the subject of domestic political reforms poured from British presses during these years, many of them published in editions of several hundred. Those produced by the greatest engraving artists of the age – especially James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson and Isaac Cruikshank – sold primarily to the propertied classes. These were overwhelmingly critical of the violence and terror of the Revolution and of French military aggression, as well as being opposed to radical political reform. James Gillray even contributed graphic prints to illustrate the early collected volumes of the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. Thomas Rowlandson’s famous print, *The contrast* of 1793, was used on the title-page of both volumes of *The AntiGallican Songster* (1793), a collection of loyalist songs, and part of his graphic print, *Philosophy run mad, or a stupendous monument of human wisdom* of 1792, which was subsidized by

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<sup>27</sup> Gillian Russell, ‘Revolutionary Drama’, in Clemit ed., *The Cambridge Companion to British literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s*, pp. 175-89. See also Marc Baer, *Theatre and disorder in late Georgian London* (Oxford, 1992); and George Taylor, *The French Revolution and the London stage, 1789-1805* (Cambridge, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> John Barrell ed., *Exhibition extraordinary! Radical broadsides of the mid-1790s* (Nottingham, 2001).

Reeves's Crown and Anchor Association, was used on the title page of the two *Anti-Levelling Songster* songbooks of 1793. Many less-gifted engravers followed the political lead of these major artists. They might attack heavy taxation and the government's repressive legislation, but they showed no readiness to sympathize with the French abroad or to support radical reform at home.<sup>29</sup> A tiny handful of graphic prints did, however, show some interest in radical political change. In addition, Thomas Spence produced a series of rather amateurish prints, which attacked the oppression of the poor. He used some of these as the basis of metal tokens or badges, which he gave away or sold very cheaply in large numbers.<sup>30</sup>

## II

### **Arguments and Objectives**

#### 1 *The British Jacobins*

Richard Price was one of the first British radicals to express his enthusiasm for the French Revolution and to proclaim his confidence that a new age of liberty was at hand. This brought down upon him the wrath of Edmund Burke. Thomas Paine did not write directly on the French Revolution, but he endorsed revolutionary principles when he developed a natural rights ideology, rejected the lessons of history, advocated the creation of a democratic republic in Britain, and was later prepared to support a French invasion of Britain. In the eyes of nearly all loyalists and conservatives he was the prime example of a British Jacobin. If we look at the hundreds of minor British commentators on politics at this period, we find very few who expressed genuine sympathy for

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<sup>29</sup> M Dorothy George, *English political caricature: a study of opinion and propaganda* (2 vols., Oxford, 1959); Diana Donald, *The age of caricature: satirical prints in the age of George III* (New Haven, 1996); David Bindman, *The shadow of the guillotine: Britain and the French Revolution* (London, 1989); Richard Godfrey ed., *James Gillray: The art of caricature* (London, 2001); and E B Krumbhaar ed., *Isaac Cruikshank* (Philadelphia, 1966).

<sup>30</sup> Marcus Wood, 'Thomas Spence and modes of subversion', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 10 (1991), pp.51-77.



the French Revolution by the time the French Jacobins came to the fore and most of them did not go so far as Paine in their hostility to monarchy. There is clear evidence that some of the British radicals did believe in the universal, indefeasible and inalienable political rights of men, but none of these writers developed a coherent or detailed argument in favour of a democratic republic or a political system based on the French model. A great many of them would have been satisfied with the elimination of those abuses, which they believed had corrupted Britain's mixed and balanced constitution. They did attack the high expenses of monarchy and the corrupt influence of the aristocracy over the composition of the House of Commons, but their prime focus was on proposals, which would make the Commons truly representative of the male population at large.<sup>31</sup> They advocated such reforms as universal manhood suffrage, equal sized constituencies, more frequent general elections, the secret ballot, the abolition of property qualifications for MPs and the payment of MPs.

These demands were not new, but the outbreak of the French Revolution encouraged British radicals to renew and increase their demands for such reform proposals. They were galvanized by the initial successes of the French Revolution, which appeared to have brought down the prime example of absolute monarchy in Europe, to have proclaimed the political rights of all citizens, and to have placed significant limits on the French monarch. It appeared to many that France was advancing towards an effective limited or constitutional monarchy and to some that France had leapfrogged over Britain to become the freest country in Europe. Even as opposition developed within France to the reforms being attempted, there were still British writers ready to defend what the French revolutionaries were seeking to achieve. On 14 July 1791, a Norwich Baptist minister, Mark Wilks, preached a sermon on *The origin and stability of the French Revolution*, in which he prayed that providence would protect the revolution from its enemies: 'the

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<sup>31</sup> Thomas Holt-White, *Letters to William Paley ... on his objections to a reform of the representation of the Commons* (London, 1796).

French Revolution is of God, and that no power exists or can exist, by which it can be overthrown ... this glorious event carries with it the most indubitable evidence of the Divine approbation'.<sup>32</sup>

The serious violence that began in 1792 was of some concern to British radicals, but for some time they argued that it might be justified in order to remove so much despotism and they blamed the war, which began in 1792, on the reactionary rulers of Austria and Prussia. Even after the September Massacres the *Morning Chronicle* published a poem, on 30 November 1792, entitled, 'The Genius of France', which began:

While France, full of Sense and of spirit, pursues  
The cause of the world, with noblest of views;  
Where tyranny held her unbounded control,  
Made nature fractious, and fetter'd the soul.  
Let us fill the gay glass, and with rapture advance,  
The soul and the song, to the Genius of France.<sup>33</sup>

Joseph Towers complained that, in the flood of publications produced by the new loyalist association established by John Reeves at the end of 1792, 'the revolution in France, and the transactions in that country, are misrepresented in the grossest manner; and much pains is taken to instil into the minds of the common people the most absurd and illiberal prejudices against the French nation'.<sup>34</sup> Even when France declared war on Britain in February 1793, significant numbers of British radicals criticized Pitt's government for allying with such reactionary powers as Austria and Prussia and appearing to be willing to interfere in the internal affairs of France. Daniel Isaac Eaton advised his readers:

Britons! Be assured that in fighting against  
the French, ye are fighting against yourselves,

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Wilks, *The origin and stability of the French Revolution* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Norwich, 1791), p.6.

<sup>33</sup> Scrivener ed., *Poetry and reform* p.43. This had been sung at a meeting of the Friends of the People.

<sup>34</sup> [Joseph Towers], *Remarks on the conduct, principles, and publications, of the Association of the Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers* (London, 1793), p.32.

that if the liberties of France are lost, your own, such as they are, will not long survive ... we are involved in the most inhuman of all wars, A WAR AGAINST FREEDOM, a war in which the King, the Nobility, and the Priesthood can alone be interested, and from which the People can derive no possible advantage whatever.<sup>35</sup>

The survival of the French Revolution was clearly still seen by some radicals as a stimulus for reform in Britain and a security for the survival of liberty at home. A fierce radical, such as John Oswald, was prepared to proclaim his confidence that, 'The late glorious revolution in France holds forth an example which sooner or later will be imitated by every nation in Europe.'<sup>36</sup>

There was, however, no support from British radicals for the extreme violence, which accompanied the Terror of 1793-94. Undoubtedly embarrassed by the Terror's scale and intensity, British reformers tried to excuse it rather than defend it and expressed the hope that the disorder would be short-lived. The fall of Robespierre was widely welcomed even by committed radicals.<sup>37</sup> The three liberal monthly magazines, the *Monthly Review*, the *Critical Review* and the *Analytical Review*, all remained critical of the conduct of the war in the mid-1790s and all published critical reviews of Edmund Burke's *Letters on a regicide peace*, which opposed coming to terms with France.<sup>38</sup> As the war dragged on, with little prospect of a British victory, some British radicals preferred to blame Pitt's government rather than the French for the failure to negotiate a satisfactory peace. Radical support for

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<sup>35</sup> *Extermination, or an appeal to all the people of England on the present war with France* (London, 1793), pp.9 and 13.

<sup>36</sup> John Oswald, *Review of the constitution of Great Britain* (3<sup>rd</sup>edn., London, 1793).

<sup>37</sup> Martin John Smith, 'English Radical Newspapers in the French Revolutionary Era, 1790-1803', unpublished PhD thesis (London University, 1979), p.27.

<sup>38</sup> Andrews, *The British periodical press and the French Revolution*, pp.43, 45, 69-72.

France steadily declined, when the war showed no sign of ending, despite France defeating its continental enemies and successfully protecting its own political system. When, in 1798, France invaded Switzerland, Bonaparte led an expedition to Egypt and a small French force invaded Ireland, British sympathy for France's political system almost entirely collapsed. The war continued to produce very considerable popular disaffection across Britain, because of its high cost in blood and taxes, but there were few or no signs now of any admiration for French principles or French actions.

Although British radicals and reformers were undoubtedly inspired by the early achievements of the French Revolution, they were far more motivated by their desire to accomplish reforms at home than to support developments in France. They wanted the revolution to stimulate the reform movement within Britain, which had been languishing in the late 1780s. They revived attacks on the undue influence of monarch and aristocracy over the composition of the House of Commons and urged the reform of the electoral system to make it more representative. Most of those writers who were castigated as Jacobins were in favour of adult manhood suffrage, but few of them believed that poor men ought to be elected to parliament and hardly any of them advocated enfranchising women. They regarded women as dependent on their father or husband and as incapable of exercising the active political rights of a fully independent citizen. Adult women were generally seen as mere appendages of men and as existing in a similar dependent position as children and domestic servants. There were a few exceptions. Thomas Spence was prepared to let women participate in elections, but not to play an active role in the legislature or the executive because of the 'delicacy of their sex'.<sup>39</sup> A handful of other radicals were prepared to advocate enfranchising women, including George Phillips and Thomas Cooper, while two anonymous contributions to *The Cabinet* were

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<sup>39</sup> Dickinson ed., *The political works of Thomas Spence*, pp.xiv-xv, 62-63, 107.

even prepared to see women sitting in parliament or holding political office.<sup>40</sup>

While many radicals attacked the extravagance of the British monarchy and criticized the undue political influence of the landed aristocracy, hardly any followed Paine in advocating the creation of a republic or the abolition of hereditary distinctions. John Oswald was a rare exception.<sup>41</sup> The British Jacobins did, however, expect parliamentary reform to lead to social and economic improvements as parliament became more accountable to the common man. They wished to see government expenditure severely reduced and hence a reduction in the taxes particularly affecting the poor. They also wished to see church tithes reduced, the game laws abolished, the poor law extended, the harsh criminal code reformed, wages increased, the conditions in the workplace improved, and greater educational opportunities provided.<sup>42</sup> When, however, their opponents accused them of wishing to seize the property of the rich and the middling orders in order to achieve economic equality, many radicals were quick to deny that they had such levelling intentions. The Manchester radicals published a statement declaring: ‘To render property insecure would destroy all motives

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<sup>40</sup> George Phillips, *The necessity of a speedy and effectual reform of Parliament* (Manchester, 1792), p.12 note; H M Ellis, ‘Thomas Cooper – A survey of his Life: Part I – England 1759-1794’, *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 19 (1927), p.38; and *The Cabinet* (3 vols., Norwich, 1795), I, pp.178-85 and II, pp.42-48.

<sup>41</sup> *Review of the constitution of Great Britain* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn., London, 1793), p.12.

<sup>42</sup> Daniel Isaac Eaton, *Hog’s wash or politics for the people*, 9 Nov. 1793; [Thomas Bentley], *The poor man’s answer to the rich associators* (London 1793); *Rights of swine: an address to the Poor* (London, 1794); and George Dyer, *The complaints of the poor people of England* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London, 1793), pp.2-5, 7, 13-14, 16.

to exertion, and tear up public happiness by the roots'.<sup>43</sup> The Sheffield radicals went further in their published statement: 'We demand equality of rights, in which is included equality of representation; ... We are not speaking of that visionary equality of property, the practical assertion of which would desolate the world, and replunge it into the darkest and wildest barbarism'.<sup>44</sup> John Thelwall insisted:

Equality of property is totally impossible in the present state of the human intellect and industry; and if one of you once could be reduced to attempt a system so wild and so extravagant, you could only give to rascals and cut-throats an opportunity by general pillage and assassination, of transferring all property into their own hands and establishing a tyranny more intolerable than anything of which you now complain.<sup>45</sup>

An Anti-Jacobin writer could hardly have expressed this opinion more forcibly.

There were, however, a tiny number of British Jacobins, who were prepared to challenge the existing grossly unequal distribution of wealth and to advocate some redress of this unjust situation. John Oswald protested that the rich 'have divided the earth among them, as if it were the patrimony of a few individuals, and not the common inheritance of the human race'. His solution

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<sup>43</sup> Thomas Walker, *A review of some of the political events which have occurred in Manchester during the last five years* (London, 1794), pp.46-47 note.

<sup>44</sup> This can be found in William Cobbett ed., *The Parliamentary history of England* (36 vols., London, 1806-26), XXXI, p.738.

<sup>45</sup> *The speech of J. Thelwall at the general meeting of the Friends of Parliamentary Reform* (London, 1795), p.14. See also *The Cabinet*, I, p.37; [Towers], *Remarks on the conduct, principles and publications of the Association...*, pp.34-35; *An appeal to the inhabitants of Birmingham: designed as an answer to Job Nott, Buckle-maker* ([Birmingham,] 1792); *An explanation of the word equality* (London, 1792); and *Political dialogues upon the subject of equality* (London, 1792).

to this was to propose that waste and common land should be divided among the poor.<sup>46</sup> A similar proposal was made by an anonymous contributor to *The Cabinet*.<sup>47</sup> Only Thomas Spence tried to develop a plan to re-distribute wealth more fairly among every man, woman and child. He insisted that all private property in the form of land and natural resources, such as mines, forests and lakes, should be taken over by a corporation in each parish elected by universal suffrage. The land and natural resources would then be rented out on a short lease to the highest bidders. The revenue so raised would be used to meet the expenses of government and to provide parishioners with a wide range of amenities, such as houses, schools, hospitals, libraries, roads, bridges, and harbours. Any remaining income would be divided each quarter day equally among every man, woman and child living in the parish.<sup>48</sup>

Convinced of their military weakness and aware that their political enemies were regularly accusing them of fomenting disaffection and plotting revolution, the overwhelming majority of British radicals advised that reforms could best be achieved by rational arguments, effective persuasion and constitutional methods. It is difficult to find any printed work advocating a resort to violence. The Manchester Constitutional Society published a handbill, on 15 May 1792, openly declaring: ‘We disclaim any intention of endeavouring the overthrow of the British Constitution: Our aim is to restore the constitution to its original purity, by removing the corruptions and abuses that deform it, and which render its practice at perpetual variance with its applauded

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<sup>46</sup> John Oswald, *Review of the constitution of Great Britain*, pp.16, 59.

<sup>47</sup> *The Cabinet*, I, p.190.

<sup>48</sup> *The political works of Thomas Spence*, ed. Dickinson, *passim*. Several scholars have mistakenly read Spence’s many works detailing his Land Plan as if he wanted the state to nationalize all the land and natural resources of the country and place them under the control of the central government.

theory.<sup>49</sup> In *The end of oppression* (1795), Thomas Spence did accept that armed resistance to his proposed Land Plan by the existing landowners might have to be combatted, but he was confident that the numerical strength of the landless masses would easily prevail without much blood being spilled.<sup>50</sup> John Oswald went further. He rejected a policy of relying on reason and persuasion alone, but he did maintain that there would be no need for a violent revolution if the whole nation armed itself: 'Let us not be deceived, for it is force alone that can vindicate the rights of the people. Force is the basis of right, or rather right and force are one ... on the invincible power of the people the rights of man stand upright.'<sup>51</sup>

## 2 *The Anti-Jacobins*

Most British conservative writers met the outbreak of the French Revolution with a mixture of surprise and self-satisfaction, rather than with hostility. Their long-standing criticisms of French politics appeared to have been justified and the early internal disorder in France was welcomed since it appeared to weaken France. A few conservatives immediately expressed concern at the nature of the upheaval in France. The Reverend William Jones of Nayland preached as early as 20 October 1789 on 'Popular Commotions to Precede the End of the World'.<sup>52</sup> In November 1790, Edmund Burke raised major fears about the possible consequences of the French Revolution in his *Reflections*, but his alarm was not widely shared even among conservative writers until mid and later 1792. The declaration of the French Republic, the September massacres and the outbreak of war in Europe, in particular, helped launch a tidal wave of anti-radical propaganda condemning political developments in France. Arthur Young wrote one of the most alarmist pamphlets warning that what was

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<sup>49</sup> Walker, *A review of some of the political events...* (1794), pp.26-27.

<sup>50</sup> Dickinson ed., *The political works of Thomas Spence*, pp.34-37.

<sup>51</sup> John Oswald, *Review of the constitution of Great Britain*, pp.52.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Hole, 'English Sermons and tracts ...' loc.cit., p.19.



happening in France must not be allowed to cross the Channel.<sup>53</sup> John Reeves's Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers encouraged the writing and dissemination of large numbers of sermons, tracts and pamphlets accusing British radicals of conspiring to emulate the French example, which would result in the complete destruction of the British constitution, private property, the nation's prosperity, and Christian morality.

Once Britain was engaged in war with France, from February 1793, the British newspaper press was full of detailed reports on the progress of the war and most newspapers supported Britain's military and naval efforts and gloried in any successes gained in the conflict. An overwhelming majority of printed sermons and pamphlets also supported British efforts in the war. For a decade John Bowles in particular led a crusade in support of a war aiming to defeat the principles of the French Revolution and not simply French expansion across Europe.<sup>54</sup> Bowles and other 'war crusaders'<sup>55</sup> insisted that Britain was not at war with the French people, but with the political principles supported by France's revolutionary leaders. These revolutionary leaders were charged with being ready to sacrifice the lives, liberties and property of all their citizens in an effort to win this war. Hence, Britain was facing an unprecedented threat and it needed to respond with a new kind of military effort. Britain was not fighting for territory or imperial advantages, but to prevent the poison of pernicious French principles from infecting all her neighbours, not least Britain herself, which had more advantages to lose than any of the less fortunate continental powers. George Hill informed his readers:

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<sup>53</sup> Arthur Young, *The example of France a warning to Britain* (London, 1793).

<sup>54</sup> Emma Vincent, "'The Real Grounds of the Present War': John Bowles and the French Revolutionary Wars, 1792-1802", *History*, 78 (1993), pp.393-420.

<sup>55</sup> See, Emma Vincent Macleod, *A war of ideas: British attitudes to the wars against Revolutionary France, 1792-1802* (Aldershot, 1998), chapter 3, 'Loyalists and War Crusaders', pp.65-89.

We are not fighting for a commercial interest, ... for the aggrandizement of a foreign Prince ... for ... the balance of power ... But we are fighting for the defence of the Constitution under which we have enjoyed security and prosperity, and in support of existence as a free independent Nation, against enemies who have avowed by their words and their actions, that it is their purpose to rob us of everything we hold dear.<sup>56</sup>

The use of arms against French principles was sanctified by appeals to both reason and religion.<sup>57</sup> Although the war proved costly in blood and treasure, British loyalists insisted that it would be cowardly or treacherous to abandon the conflict, since a premature peace would allow France to spread her political poison even further.<sup>58</sup> In a sermon delivered in 1794, Thomas Hardy, a minister of the Church of Scotland, expressed his conviction that Britain was engaged in an ideological crusade against atheism and barbarism:

This war resembles no former contest, in its principles or objects. It is not for the acquisition of foreign territory; it is not for redress of particular wrongs, or the support of national honour. It is for national existence, that we arm. It is for Religion against Atheism; for justice and security against universal depredation; for humanity against barbarous cruelty; for social order; for legal freedom; for all that distinguishes men in civil society, from a band of robbers, or an horde of savages. The British sword is drawn in the cause of

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<sup>56</sup> George Hill, *Instructions afforded by the present war, to the people of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1793), pp.5-6.

<sup>57</sup> William Vincent, *A sermon ... on 25 Nov. and 16 Dec. 1798* (London, 1799), p.32.

<sup>58</sup> William Agutter, *An address to every subject on the late important victories and on the means to improve them to the best advantage* (London, 1798), p.12.

God, and of our country, and in defence of our lives, our families, and our all.<sup>59</sup>

Even when peace was finally in the offing, John Bowles maintained that it would not bring security to Britain because France was left too strong and her revolutionary principles had not been abandoned. He and others wished to see a successful counter-revolution in France, aided by British forces.<sup>60</sup>

Since the British Anti-Jacobins regarded the conflict with France as essentially a war of ideas, they feared that French principles might reach Britain through the influence that the French Revolution was having on British radicals. A huge propaganda effort was therefore made to defend Britain's existing institutions and to defeat the arguments advanced by the radicals. Repeated efforts were made to convince readers of the danger of putting their trust in speculative theories and to stress the importance of relying upon experience. Britain's mixed government and balanced constitution were widely praised as the best that had ever been achieved in human history. Despite some imperfections and anomalies, they could be credited with preserving civil liberties, maintaining the rule of law, securing political stability, defending private property, and expanding economic prosperity. The radical reform of parliament would threaten these very considerable successes because the representation of property brought much greater benefits than the representation of persons. The possession of property attached a man physically to his country and gave him a strong motive to protect its interests. Civil governments had invariably been created to secure every man's property, however small it was. The poor were ignorant, too ready to follow the lead of demagogues, and too quick to be inflamed by ill-designing men. To enshrine the sovereignty of the people would be to entrust government to the

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<sup>59</sup> Thomas Hardy, *Fidelity to the British Constitution, the duty and interest of the people* (Edinburgh, 1794), pp.33-34.

<sup>60</sup> John Bowles, *Reflections at the conclusion of the war* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London, 1801), pp.3-59.

uneducated, the passionate and the irresponsible, whose first objective if they gained power would be to seize the property of the rich.<sup>61</sup> Government in the hands of the poor would be unstable and anarchic, with never-ending struggles between the poor and the propertied.<sup>62</sup> The French Revolution had provided clear proof that this threat was very real: ‘The leading conclusion, deducible from the French experiment, and written in characters, which he that runs may read, is this IF PERSONS ARE REPRESENTED, PROPERTY IS DESTROYED. We know then what to think of the proposal for reform hitherto made in this kingdom.’<sup>63</sup>

The Anti-Jacobins maintained that a state of nature, in which all men had originally been equal, had never existed or had been extremely short-lived. All the earliest traces of man revealed him living in civil society and under some form of government. No civil government had ever been created by a voluntary contract agreed to by all men. There was no evidence that such a contract had ever been found. Governments had been established by those with the greatest strength, wealth, industry, courage, etc., but had been accepted even by those without such qualities and abilities because the rule of law preserved the lives, liberties and possessions of all. Men therefore had either been compelled to subordinate themselves to those of superior strength, wealth or abilities, or had found it expedient to do so because of the benefits of living under established authority. To imagine a civil society in which every man was entirely free and absolutely equal, and which had been created by the consent of all, was both visionary and absurd. It was beyond proof and beyond belief.

The Anti-Jacobins challenged the radical doctrine of natural rights by insisting that, while God made all men equal as moral beings, he had not endowed them with equal strength, intelligence, industry, courage, etc. If men were given their freedom, their different endowments would soon enable them to acquire unequal

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<sup>61</sup> *Thoughts on the new and old principles of political obedience* (London, 1793), p.32.

<sup>62</sup> *Short hints upon levelling* (London, 1792), pp.4-6.

<sup>63</sup> Young, *The example of France...*, p.44 note.

amounts of power, wealth and influence. Only the application of force could destroy the natural distinctions between men. Moreover, once a natural hierarchical social order was overthrown by revolution, it would not be long before those with greater abilities sought to overthrow the new government in an effort to re-establish themselves as the elite. There would therefore be a constant cycle of revolutions from which no one would benefit. These conservative views rested on the conviction that men were guided more by their passions than their reason and, for this reason, God had enjoined government upon mankind in order to secure the rule of law and the better observance of His moral precepts. No government was perfect, because all men were flawed, but God enjoined government on man in order to avoid the ills of a state of nature where no man's life, liberty or property was secure. Since that was the case, Providence dictated that all men, especially the poor, should be satisfied with their rank in the social hierarchy and should obey the powers that be. William Paley even went so far as to maintain that the poor had more reasons to be content with their lot than the rich. A life of labour rescued men from the luxury, corruption and idleness, which afflicted the rich. They had more to hope for, less to fear and a greater chance of everlasting bliss in the next world.<sup>64</sup>

The Anti-Jacobins placed great stress on the role of the Christian religion and the importance of the established church in teaching men to obey those in power. Human reason and human morality had never proved sufficiently strong to restrain the passions and desires of men. Even legal restraints were not always powerful enough. Hence, religious sanctions and the promise of future rewards or the threat of future punishments in the next world were absolutely necessary. Both governors and subjects should be guided by the commands of God and the precepts of the law of

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<sup>64</sup> William Paley, *Reasons for contentment, addressed to the labouring poor of the British public* (1793). See also, Richard Watson, *The wisdom of God in having made rich and poor* (London, 1798).

nature. The will of men, even of a large majority of men, must not be placed above justice and morality. The right to govern and the duty to obey were both sanctioned by the will of God and the operation of divine providence. These religious convictions made the British anti-Jacobins particularly fearful of what they saw as a French Revolution assault on Christianity and a resort to the worship of human reason. As early as December 1792, William Jones accused the French revolutionaries of breaking all Ten Commandments. He had John Bull accusing the French of a host of crimes: 'The Robbery of their Neighbours! Murder of their fellow creatures! Treason to their King and Ruin to their County! No Order! No Laws! No honour! No justice! King! Religion! Or God! – God forbid that *Englishmen* should follow such an example.'<sup>65</sup> In February 1798, the *Gentleman's Magazine* maintained that the French Revolution was 'a plan laid for some time, originating in a most obstinate enmity to Christianity, working in darkness ... to inculcate Atheism, to propagate vice'.<sup>66</sup> In *The History of Mr Fantom* (1798), Hannah More observed of the French Jacobins: 'The connection of jacobinism with impiety is inseparable. I generally find in gentleman of your fraternity an equal abhorrence to Christianity and good government. The reasons are obvious. There are restraints in both; there is subordination in both. In both cases the hatred arises from aversion to a superior.'<sup>67</sup> The British Anti-Jacobins made frequent references to the attacks on Christian orthodoxy launched by earlier French *philosophes*, such as Voltaire. They accepted the views of the Abbé Barruel and Professor John Robison that the French Jacobins were part of a long-standing conspiracy to destroy orthodox religious beliefs in order to promote licentiousness.<sup>68</sup> They were convinced that the French Jacobins had drawn many

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<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Hole, 'English Sermons and tracts...', loc.cit., p.26.

<sup>66</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, 68 (1798), p.148.

<sup>67</sup> Cited in *ibid.*, p.36.

<sup>68</sup> Barruel, *Memoirs illustrating the history of Jacobinism* (1797) and Robison, *Proofs of a conspiracy against all religions and governments of Europe* (London, 1797).

British radicals into their nefarious conspiracy and were secretly spreading throughout Britain disaffection, immorality and irreligion, which were highly dangerous to the constitution and the social hierarchy.<sup>69</sup>

By the later 1790s there were very few British Jacobins openly advocating radical political reforms, but the continuance of the war, which was increasingly unpopular, meant that the Anti-Jacobins believed that it was vital to keep up their propaganda campaign against French principles. The *Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner* was established on 20 November 1797, ran until 9 July 1798, and was then replaced by the monthly *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*, which survived until 1821. In its early years the latter stressed the need to continue the war primarily in order to combat the spread of Jacobin principles to Britain. It warned its readers ‘that nearly all the presses of the continent of Europe are under the immediate influence either of FRENCH PRINCIPLES, or of FRENCH INTRIGUES. ... From these contaminated sources the poison of Jacobinism might be successfully diffused over our country, and, circulated through secret channels, disguised in various ways, might ultimately undermine that fabric which can never be destroyed by an open attack.’<sup>70</sup> The magazine’s Prospectus claimed that the French had dangerous allies within Britain among those radicals holding Jacobin opinions: ‘The torrent of licentiousness, incessantly rushing forth from the numerous presses, exceeds in violence and duration all former examples.’<sup>71</sup>

From 1795 to 1798 Hannah More and her associates took a different tack in order to combat what they perceived to be the same threat. Instead of promoting the war effort or directly attacking the political objectives of British radicals, More and her

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<sup>69</sup> *The Anti-Jacobins 1798-1800*, ed. Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, p.10.

<sup>70</sup> *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, I (July 1798), pp.4-5.

<sup>71</sup> Andrews, *The British periodical press and the French Revolution*, p.98.

allies decided that they needed to strengthen the religious and moral fabric of the nation in an effort to make it impervious to the poison spread by French or British Jacobins. They believed that no attempted French invasion could succeed so long as the religion and morality of the common people remained strong. Hannah More wrote about fifty moral tales and edited around two hundred which appeared in the *Cheap Repository Tracts*. Their strategy outflanked British reformers by diverting public discourse from political into spiritual and moralistic channels. They assiduously rejected any appeal to universal abstract rights, admired Britain's social hierarchy and endeavoured to persuade the poor to be content with their lot and their lowly rank in society. Their moral tales were addressed to the poor, but received an enthusiastic welcome from the upper and middling orders because they attempted to encourage deference and suppress popular discontent. They wrote tales in which the poor benefited from a dutiful acceptance of their lot, which brought them peace of mind, and earned them charity and protection from their social superiors. The poor were advised to avoid such vices as drunkenness, gambling, idleness, petty crimes, and, especially, the abandonment of regular attendance at church. These authors also advised the rich to abandon the vices brought about by luxury, idleness, and a neglect of religion, and urged them to respect the rights and dignity of the poor. Rich and poor should endeavour to live together in a harmonious, though stratified, society. While in their tracts class hostility was explicitly condemned, class distinctions were implicitly accepted. In their opinion the secular life should always be subordinated to the religious life. In their fictional world the virtuous were always rewarded and the wicked were always punished. Moral reform was seen as the surest means of combatting French principles and promoting loyalty and patriotism.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> On Hannah More and the *Cheap Repository Tracts*, see Robert Hole, 'Hannah More on Literature and Propaganda, 1788-1799', *History*, 85 (2000), pp.623-33; and Susan Pedersen, 'Hannah More meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in



### III

#### **Reaching out to the Public**

Clearly, a great many lesser writers contributed to the propaganda war fought out between the British Jacobins and Anti-Jacobins during the era of the French Revolution. Many thousands of publications and millions of comments in newspapers reflected their views and endeavoured to influence public opinion to sympathize or attack the French Revolution and to promote or resist political reforms at home. To have a political effect, however, these works needed to be read and needed either to strengthen or to change existing opinions and convictions. By conducting their campaigns by the written word these authors recognized that they were likely to appeal only to the literate members of society. To appreciate what impact this mountain of printed material might have had, we need some notion of literacy rates at this time. Many scholars have attempted to assess literacy rates, but it is an enquiry fraught with difficulties, not least because entirely reliable statistics are not available and rates clearly varied from place to place.<sup>73</sup> In much of west Wales and in the highlands and islands of Scotland, for example, much of the population did not speak or read English. The best estimates are that over fifty per cent, but not much above sixty per cent of males in England were literate, but that literacy rates among women were probably not

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late Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of British Studies*, 25 (1986), pp.84-113. See also, Richard A Solway, 'Reform or Ruin: English Moral Thought during the First French Republic', *The Review of Politics*, 25 (1963), pp.110-28.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Lawrence Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England 1640-1900', *Past and Present*, 42 (1960), pp.68-139; Michael Sanderson, 'Literacy and Social Mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England', *Past and Present*, 56 (1972), pp.75-104; R S Schofield, 'Dimensions of Literacy, 1750-1850', *Explorations in Economic History*, 10 (1973), pp.437-54; and E G West, 'Literacy in the Industrial Revolution', *Economic History Review*, new series, 31 (1978), pp.369-83.

above forty per cent. Almost all elite males were literate, as were about ninety per cent of middling order men engaged in the professions and the financial, commercial and manufacturing sectors of urban society. Rates among middling farmers in rural areas were below this. Among the lower orders, males in skilled trades living in an urban environment may, on average, have had a literacy rate of a little over fifty per cent, but rates were lower among urban and rural labourers and domestic servants.

Literacy, of course, can be possessed to differing degrees and not all readers would fully appreciate what an author was seeking to convey, when he used verse, novels, plays or when his prose tracts relied heavily on satire, irony or parody. Modern scholars, for example, have decided to categorize a significant number of novels of this period as Jacobin or Anti-Jacobin in character, but we cannot be sure that this distinction was obvious to those who read them when they first appeared. Most caricatures and satirical prints were too expensive for the lower orders to buy and only a handful of print shops in a few towns displayed them in their windows.<sup>74</sup> These prints moreover often required the ability to read or to be familiar with particular people or political situations. Modern scholars have come to recognize the difficulty of reading and understanding most caricatures and graphic prints without considerable knowledge of contemporary politics and public affairs.<sup>75</sup> Even the radical prints and tokens produced by Thomas Spence would have meant little to the illiterate or politically ill informed. A street ballad of 1795, 'Wholsome Advice to the Swinish Multitude', has been praised for offering an ironic celebration of working-class participation in radical print

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<sup>74</sup> Eirwen Nicholson, 'Consumers and Spectators: the Public of the Political Print in Eighteenth-Century England', *History*, 81 (1996), pp.5-21.

<sup>75</sup> Roy Porter, 'Seeing the Past', a review essay, *Past and Present*, 118 (1988), pp.186-205.

culture.<sup>76</sup>We can only wonder how many poor men who might have read or sung this would appreciate such lines as these:

You lower class of human race, you working part I mean,  
How dare you so audacious be to read the works of  
Pain,  
The Rights of Man – that cursed book – which  
such confusion brings,  
You'd better learn the arts of war, and fight for  
George our King.  
But you must delve in politics, how dare you this intrude,  
Full well you do deserve the name of Swinish multitude.

These lines could be read as seriously critical of the lower orders or ironically critical of them. It also seems unlikely that songs or ballads taught orally to the illiterate had much of an impact on their political views and actions. A leading literary scholar, John Barrell, who has investigated radical broadsides and mock theatre advertisements of the 1790s, has claimed that they were published by 'the lowest of the low, the most popular of the popular, the most plebeian of the plebeian' and that they were aimed at Britons with little disposable income or formal education.<sup>77</sup> Having looked at these, it is difficult to agree with these claims. They are satires or parodies, which require a quite sophisticated understanding of contemporary personalities and events in order to understand clearly the message being transmitted by their authors. They demanded a level of literacy, which the lower orders did not often possess. Even William Jones's famous loyalist dialogues between John and Thomas Bull were published on single sheets in tiny print in narrow columns which required quite a high level of literacy in any reader.

Despite these important caveats, it is clear that these lesser British Jacobin and anti-Jacobin writers made considerable efforts

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<sup>76</sup> Simon Bainbridge, 'Politics and Poetry', in Clemit ed., *The Cambridge Companion to British literature of the French Revolution in the 1790s*, p.197.

<sup>77</sup> Barrell ed., *Exhibition extraordinary!*, p.xiv.

to reach as many readers as possible. One common tactic, used by a significant number of writers, on both sides of the political divide, was to present their texts in the form of dialogues between two or three representative characters.<sup>78</sup> These dialogues were usually populated by stock characters, whose political positions could be easily understood from the names attached to them, such as Thomas Bull, Simple Truth, John Simple, David Trusty, Mr Worthy, Wat Tyler, and Parson Orthodox. Some conservative tracts depicted a conversation in which a well-informed man of property (a gentleman, squire, clergyman, farmer or master manufacturer) gets the better of a peaceable dispute with a man from the lower orders, who has been too easily deluded by the natural rights argument of a dangerously specious writer such as Thomas Paine. More rarely, radical authors showed an honest reformer getting the better of an ignorant loyalist.<sup>79</sup> Modern readers do not find these very convincing now and they were probably not very convincing to their contemporary readers. In one short tract, which records a dialogue between a master manufacturer and one of his workmen, the latter announces his easy conversion in these terms:

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<sup>78</sup> For example, *Principles of order and happiness under the British Constitution. In a dialogue between our parish clerk and the squire* (London, 1792); *Equality as consistent with the British Constitution, in a dialogue between a master-manufacturer and one of his workmen* (London, 1792); *A dialogue between a labourer and a gentleman* (Woodbridge, 1793); *A Dialogue between Mr Worthy and John Simple, on some matters relative to the present state of Great Britain* (London, 1792); *A dialogue between a tradesman and his porter* (London, 1793); *Liberty and equality; a dialogue between a clergyman and his parishioner* (London, 1794); and *A dialogue between Wat Tyler, mischievous Tom, and an English farmer* (London, 1793).

<sup>79</sup> *Dialogue between an associator and a well-informed Englishman on the grounds of the late associations, and the commencement of a war with France* (London, 1793); and Thomas Spence, *The end of oppression: being a dialogue between an old mechanic and a young one concerning the establishment of the rights of man* (London, 1795).

Right, master! And I thank you for explaining all this to me; and instead of going to the liberty-club, I will begin my work; for, I should not like to see a Frenchman lie with my wife, or take the bread out of my children's mouths; and I now see, that, if I go on as you do, and mind my business, I may in time be as rich and as happy as you.<sup>80</sup>

Rather more successful were the tracts, which played off each other because they were written in a friendly if slightly exasperated manner, in the form of a letter of political advice to a relative, which then engendered a response by that relative which put forward an opposing viewpoint. Examples of these include the well-distributed tracts written by William Jones, in which a loyalist Thomas Bull writes a letter of advice to his radical-minded brother, John Bull, which then provoked an anonymous author to write letters of response from John Bull seeking to show the errors of Thomas Bull's ways.<sup>81</sup> Similar, if not quite so well written or so widely circulated, are the conflicting tracts in the form of letters between John Nott and Job Nott.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> *Equality, as consistent with the British constitution, in a dialogue between a master manufacturer and one of his workmen* (London, 1792), pp.14-15.

<sup>81</sup> William Jones, *One penny-worth of truth from Thomas Bull to his brother John* (London, 1792); *More than a pennyworth of truth; in a letter from John Bull to his brother Thomas* (London, 1792); *John Bull's answer to Thomas Bull's pennyworth of truth* (London, 1792); and William Jones, *A letter to John Bull, Esq. from his second cousin Thomas Bull* (London, 1793).

<sup>82</sup> *Job Nott's Address to the inhabitants of Birmingham* ([Birmingham,] 1792); *An Appeal to the inhabitants of Birmingham: designed as an answer to Job Nott, buckle-maker. By his elder brother John Nott, button maker* (Birmingham, 1792); *Job Nott's humble advice, with a postscript* (Birmingham 1792); *The life and adventures of Job Nott, buckle maker of Birmingham* (Birmingham, 1793); and *More advice from Job Nott the Birmingham buckle-maker, first cousin to John Nott* (Birmingham, 1795).

The most famous dialogue published at this time, and today the most highly regarded, was Hannah More's *Village politics* (1793), which is attributed to Will Chip, a carpenter, and has Jack Anvil the conservative blacksmith and Tom Hod the potentially radical mason engaging in a very lively, humorous and good natured dispute about the wisdom of accepting natural rights arguments. This is a rare dialogue in which the dispute is between two members of the labouring poor and in which the two protagonists have a genuine exchange of views. Tom is not portrayed as dim witted or too easily deluded, he sticks to his position for some time, and he even holds on to certain values, such as a belief in the rule of law, the liberty of the press, and a concern for the poor, before conceding that Jack has the superior political case. In winning the argument, however, Jack has unwittingly provided Tom with a set of criteria by which to judge a government and not simply to take the established order on trust.<sup>83</sup> Hannah More also played a major role in the production of the moral tales, which made up the *Cheap Repository Tracts*, which were very widely disseminated. These were deliberately designed to compete with and even to replace the popular chapbooks, which had long been sold across the country by a veritable army of hawkers. Most of these stories have simple plots written in vivid prose and containing lively and believable dialogue, and they carry a moral message made clear by the actions rather than the words of the participants. Most have a central character, usually poor, who responds well or ill to some kind of trial and, as a result of the actions taken, is either moderately rewarded in this world and promised greater rewards in the next or is severely punished. To instruct the reader, positive role models are created or dangerous examples are given of what can befall anyone guilty of such vices as drunkenness, gambling, idleness, non-attendance at church, etc. Realistic possibilities are woven into the day-to-day experiences, which a poor person might well experience. Authors made appeals to the heart as well as to the head in order to persuade readers to

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<sup>83</sup> Philp, 'Vulgar Conservatism, 1792-3', loc.cit., p.63.

acknowledge the wisdom or the danger of pursuing particular responses to life's challenges.

There are clear indications that lesser writers on both sides of the political divide recognized that they had to take care with the vocabulary, syntax and sentence construction which they adopted, if they were to be read by poor men of modest levels of literacy. They strove to write in a style of English, which moved away from the refined language normally adopted by authors to what has been termed an intellectual vernacular language, which was nearer to that normally spoken by the common people.<sup>84</sup> Some of these efforts were very patronizing and failed to convince, because the authors clearly looked down upon those readers among the lower orders whom they wished to convert. A number of conservative authors could not manage to adjust their prose style to match the language of the poor, and so they resorted instead to appeals to popular fears, emotions and prejudices in order to convince readers among the lower orders to accept their political opinions. They wished to instruct the poor about political principles and current affairs and yet avoid encouraging them to think for themselves. In trying to reach the poor in this way, however, they may have unwittingly encouraged them to develop their own political views and to seek to engage more actively than ever before in political debates and discussions. In terms of adjusting one's prose style to suit a mass readership, Hannah More probably set the best standard among conservative writers, mainly because she had learned from the style and content of the cheap chapbooks which had for many years been popular with the semi-literate poor,<sup>85</sup> but she did not develop a vernacular written language so well as some radical authors. Thomas Paine has long been credited with trying to reach a very wide readership by writing in a language which was far

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<sup>84</sup> Olivia Smith, *The politics of language 1791-1819* (Oxford, 1984), pp.88-107.

<sup>85</sup> Pedersen, 'Hannah More meets Simple Simon...', loc.cit., 25 (1986), pp.84-113

more colloquial than that employed by Edmund Burke.<sup>86</sup> The radical Daniel Isaac Eaton made serious efforts to emulate Paine in reaching out to the poor, but his own prose style and the content of his publications betrayed his inability to write the language which the poor spoke. He achieved more success from early 1794, when he filled issues of his periodical, *Politics for the People*, with contributions sent in by his readers. Thomas Spence was more successful, because, of all the lesser radical writers of whom we have certain knowledge, he himself undoubtedly came from a very poor background and was almost entirely self-educated. While Hannah More consciously wished to encourage the thoughtless poor to aspire to higher things, Spence did not see himself as different from his readers. He knew and he placed his trust in his readers. He made a genuine attempt to write the way common men spoke, but he neither patronized his readers nor resorted to condescension or sentimentality. The poor men in his published works spoke a confident and politically conscious language. He even went so far as to assert that the poor might reason better without books. He proclaimed that a future political revolution ‘depends not on me, or on Mr Burke, or on any other writer ... It depends on a much more important class of men, the class that cannot write; and, in a great measure on those who cannot read.’<sup>87</sup> No other writer, not even Paine, would have gone so far. Spence himself knew full well, in fact, that he had to have readers to achieve any political changes. He therefore tried to invent a phonetic alphabet in his *Grand repository of the English language* (1801) so that the poor without formal schooling might more easily learn to read. Perhaps unwittingly, he revealed the influence of his local Newcastle dialect in the way that he wrote his birthplace, Newcastle, in his new phonetic language. Some radical writers may have succeeded in reaching readers by the tone rather than the

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<sup>86</sup> See the introduction to Henry Hayden Clark ed., *Thomas Paine: representative selections* (New York, 1944); and Jack P Greene, ‘Paine, America and the “Modernization” of Political Consciousness’, *Political Science Quarterly*, 93 (1978), pp.73-92.

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Spence, *Pig’s Meat*, III, p.56.



language of their works, when they showed anger at or contempt for the elite by lampooning their actions and personalities and subjecting them to humorous, slanderous or scatological attacks. Some, because of their popularity, cheapness or availability may even have reached illiterate men because their works were read to them in political clubs, alehouses or small workshops.

What is very clear about the propaganda produced in this war of words between conservatives and radicals is that a huge number and a very wide range of print publications were produced and that a clear majority supported the loyalist cause rather than the campaign for reform. The vast majority of these publications were produced by little known or anonymous authors of whom we know nothing. It is clear that more than a few of the conservative publications were produced by minor government ministers and placemen, by clergymen in the Church of England, and by those seeking preferment in church or state. Robert Nares and William Jones were particularly successful conservative Anglican clergymen contributing loyalist tracts. Judge Ashurst published his famous *Charge to the Grand Jury of Middlesex* in order to ingratiate himself with the government. William Paley a dean and Richard Watson a bishop in the Church of England wrote to persuade the poor to accept their miserable lot. George Canning, an under secretary of state for foreign affairs, played a major role in setting up the *Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner*, while Bishop Beilby Porteus of London encouraged Hannah More to write and edit many of the *Cheap Repository Tracts*. Some conservative publications were given subsidies by the government and a great many more were produced as a result of encouragement from activists in the government approved Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers set up by John Reeves, a minor government official. Reeves's own Crown and Anchor Association in London published over fifty different tracts on its own initiative and it also paid to distribute tens of thousands of these works throughout its network of provincial associations. A large proportion of Anti-Jacobin publications were produced spontaneously without the

initiative being taken by anyone in power or seeking preferment. Local loyalist associations bought and distributed thousands of these publications. Seven thousand tracts were distributed in and around Maidstone, the corporation of Blandford distributed 5,000 copies of *Judge Ashurst's Charge to the Grand Jury of Middlesex*, the Woodbridge Association ordered 500 copies of Thomas Rowlandson's graphic satire, *The contrast*, and posted them all over the town, while the Bull's Head Association in Manchester handed out 10,000 copies of its loyal address of March 1793 and, in 1795, distributed over 16,000 pamphlets and broadsides in and around the town.<sup>88</sup>A large proportion of anti-Jacobin publications were produced spontaneously without the initiative being taken by anyone in power or seeking preferment. The conservative cause, however, undoubtedly benefited from securing far greater financial support from the wealthier sections of British society. A good number of conservative publications were offered for sale in bulk at preferential rates so that rich men could purchase large numbers of them quite cheaply.<sup>89</sup>It is known that these were distributed free of charge to workshops and workhouses, to army barracks and Royal Navy ships, and even to prisons. Bookshop owners and hawkers were also encouraged to buy these publications at the reduced bulk rate so that they could make a greater profit when selling them on at the individual face price.

Radical authors, by comparison, faced much greater difficulties. The London Corresponding Society and other radical societies

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<sup>88</sup> H T Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism', in H T Dickinson ed., *Britain and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Basingstoke, 1989), p.111; and H T Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', in Eckhart Hellmuth ed., *The transformation of political culture: England and Germany in the late eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1990), p.528.

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, the title pages of Hannah More, *Village politics* (London, 1793); *John Bull's answer to Thomas Bull's pennyworth of truth* (London, 1793); *Equality, as consistent with the British Constitution* (London, 1792); *The life and adventures of Job Nott* (Birmingham, 1793); and *A few plain questions, and a little honest advice, to the working people of Great Britain* (Newark, 1792).

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undoubtedly tried to distribute reform propaganda as widely as possible, sometimes freely, but their financial resources were never as great as those men supporting Reeves's loyalist association, the *Cheap Repository Tracts* or the *Anti-Jacobin Review*. Nor were there many, if any, rich men ready to buy up radical publications in bulk in order to distribute them at their own expense as the Society of Constitutional Information had done in the early 1780s. Thomas Spence might hand out his cheap metal tokens by the handful or even write radical slogans on walls, but such tactics had very limited impact. Worse still, the government issued a royal proclamation against seditious publications in May 1792 and thereafter proceeded to harass radical writers and print distributors by legal action. This effort was given enthusiastic support by judges and magistrates and a great many laymen. The leaders of the Stationers' Company recommended 'all AUTHORS, EDITORS of Public papers, PRINTERS, BOOKSELLERS, and whoever are concerned in the writing and publishing of Opinions on Government, throughout the Kingdom, to declare with this court their determined Resolution utterly to Discountenance and Discourage all Seditious and Inflammatory Productions whatever.'<sup>90</sup> Some of the best and most active writers and distributors of radical works, such as Thomas Spence, Daniel Isaac Eaton, Richard Lee and Sampson Perry were arrested, imprisoned or driven into exile. Several radical newspapers were closed down by government-inspired arrests or mob activities. Dozens of printers, bookshop owners or print hawkers and distributors were arrested or harassed, even imprisoned.

The radical cause was defeated in part because the authors contributing to it did not have the same opportunities as their conservative opponents to promote their political ideas. They did not fight this war of words on a level playing field.<sup>91</sup> It is also clear that the anti-Jacobin writers did not prevail with the public

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<sup>90</sup> Davis ed., *Radicalism and revolution in Britain 1775-1848*, p.114.

<sup>91</sup> Philp, 'The fragmented ideology of reform', in Philp ed., *The French Revolution and British popular politics*, pp.50-77.

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simply because they had the best of this war of words. Many of these lesser conservative authors wrote political works, which were specious, complacent, evasive, misleading, crudely negative and weakly argued exercises in special pleading. They triumphed in large part because the violent events in France and the long, bloody and expensive conflict that Britain fought against France did so much to persuade a great many fearful Britons to adopt a conservative and loyalist stance by the later 1790s. The radical authors were writing at a time when external circumstances made their arguments appear inopportune at best and dangerous at worst. They therefore lost the argument in part because of these adverse external circumstances rather than because their arguments were weak in themselves or because they displayed inferior writing abilities.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> John Dinwiddy, 'Interpretations of anti-Jacobinism' in *ibid.*, pp.38-49.

## Concepts of modesty and humility in eighteenth-century British discourses\*

*William Stafford*

### I

To begin with modesty: that modesty was a virtue promoted for women in the eighteenth century, and no doubt at other times too, is well known. In recent decades, feminist historians and literary critics have explored it.<sup>1</sup> In the eighteenth century, Mary Wollstonecraft forcibly stated a feminist criticism.<sup>2</sup> Promulgation of modesty for women attempted to secure male dominance in two ways. As sexual reticence in word and gesture it might produce sexual inhibition securing control of sexual behaviour by father or husband. As sexual modesty in a broader, non-sexual sense it might promote deference to male authority. It is of course a question how well this preaching of a virtue achieved its intended aims: the recommendation of any virtue implies the danger or even the prevalence of the opposite vice.

Because modesty for women in the eighteenth century has received much scholarly attention, this paper will not revisit it. Instead, it will consider modesty as a virtue for men.<sup>3</sup> Potentially

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- I am grateful for the helpful comments of Jeremy Gregory and Janet Nelson on a previous draft, to Harald Braun for his advice about Begriffsgeschichte and to the two anonymous reviewers.

<sup>1</sup> Ruth Bernard Yeazell, *Fictions of modesty. Women and courtship in the English novel* (Chicago, 1991). Mary L Poovey, *The proper lady and the woman writer: ideology as style in the works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen* (Chicago, 1984). Vivien Jones, *Women in the eighteenth century: constructions of femininity* (London, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> In her *A vindication of the rights of woman* (London, 1792), ch. 7 is 'Modesty – Comprehensively Considered, and not as a Sexual Virtue'.

<sup>3</sup> Modesty for men has received very little attention. Even classic studies of politeness have not focussed explicitly upon it, e.g.

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this raises questions about gender: if modesty is potentially a feminine virtue, is it possible for men without modifying or threatening their masculinity? It will come as no surprise that the application of modesty to men is affected by life cycle, and further questions must address the issue of cultural and social contexts of meaning. It will not do to invoke social context in a crudely determinist way, proposing a simple correlation between social class and interpretations of modesty. But it is clear that discourses using the word may be understood as strategies for apprehending and also for acting upon social relations.

A term such as modesty cannot usefully be studied in isolation from other terms, for the meanings it carries may also be conveyed and elaborated with other synonyms and indeed, by contrast, antonyms. A number of these will come to light as this study progresses. But at the outset a decision has been taken to examine modesty and humility together. The two terms can on occasion be precise synonyms. But their meanings can also diverge, and this tension between equivalence and difference is revealing. The place to start is with dictionaries, beginning with the most celebrated and richest, by Samuel Johnson.<sup>4</sup>

By giving 'modesty' as one of the meanings of 'humility', Johnson signals that the terms may be used synonymously. Consideration of all his definitions reveals ways in which the terms may diverge in meaning. Of course modest and modesty have meaning in relation to sexual language and conduct, a meaning not shared by humility. A further difference is the definition of modest

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Philip Carter, *Men and the emergence of polite society, Britain 1660-1800* (London, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> Eighteenth-century dictionaries are surveyed in Jonathon Green, *Chasing the sun: dictionary-makers and the dictionaries they made* (London, 1996). The definitive edition of Johnson's *A dictionary of the English language* is the 4th (London, 1773). I have used the *English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Gale Group. <http://galenet.gale-group.com/servelet/ECCO>, hereafter [ECCO].

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as moderate, an equivalence still to be found, as in expressions such as 'at modest/moderate cost'. 'Modest' and 'modesty' appear predominantly as terms of commendation, but 'bashful' as a meaning strikes a negative note. His definition of humility reveals a religious dimension of meaning, less appropriately and less commonly signified by 'modesty', in 'Mortification; external expression of sin and unworthiness.' Humility too is predominantly a positive term, but the definition of the closely related term 'humiliation' includes 'Descent from greatness'. The pejorative implication here is clearer in the also related term 'humble', defined as 'low; not high; not great', and 'to humble' defined as 'to crush; to break; to subdue; to mortify.'

A term affiliated to humility for Johnson is 'meek'. The words by which the complex humility/humble/modest/meek are negatively explicated include arrogance, haughtiness, insolence, presumption, impudence and ostentation. The most significant antithesis is 'pride', 'proud'. Pride as the negation of modesty and humility may be a contrasting vice: 'inordinate and unreasonable self-esteem', 'insolence; rude treatment of others'; to be proud is to be 'arrogant; haughty; .... presumptuous.' 'Vanity' and 'vainglory' are wholly reprehensible forms of pride: pride in petty things, pride above merit. But pride is also evaluated positively, implying that humility and modesty are not always best. Pride may be dignity of manner, loftiness of air, generous elation of heart, elevation, dignity, grandeur of person and splendour.

Other eighteenth-century dictionaries largely but not entirely confirm the patterns here revealed. For example, Nathan Bailey's *Dictionarium Britannicum* (London, 1736) asserts the equivalence of humility and meekness, but this is the only positive meaning he attributes to the humility/humble complex; to be humble is to be low-minded and mean. In this dictionary however and in some others pride is wholly a vice, equated with haughtiness and being puffed up. John Baskerville's *A Vocabulary, or Pocket Dictionary* (London, 1765) defines humility as 'Meekness; Modesty; Mildness' thus confirming the interrelation of those terms. Benjamin Martin's *Lingua Britannica Reformata* (2<sup>nd</sup>edn., London,

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1754) agrees with a number of other dictionaries in linking modesty to moderation and related ideas such as sobriety, temperance and decorum. Thomas Dyche, Anglican priest, schoolmaster and lexicographer, in his *A new general English Dictionary* (6<sup>th</sup>edn., London, 1750)<sup>5</sup> marks a distinction between ‘humility’ and ‘humble’. Humility is an ‘amiable virtue that renders the possessor universally esteemed ... founded upon the knowledge of our own imperfections, unworthiness, and dependence upon God’s assistance.’ No dictionary more firmly asserts the religious significance of humility. A humble man ‘has his affections and passions in perfect subjection’ but also to be humble is ‘to have a mean opinion of one’s self, voluntarily to submit to what is below the station or dignity of a person.’ John Wesley’s *The complete English Dictionary*, which its author claims to be ‘the best *English* DICTIONARY in the world’ has no entries for humble, humility, modest, modesty, proud and pride. Why an evangelical divine should omit those words is puzzling.<sup>6</sup>

Attention to dictionaries takes us a certain (modest?) distance towards understanding the meaning and power of these terms. It provides an introduction to their range of meanings and to their interrelations. It reveals evaluative disagreement and ambiguity. To go further in exploring these issues it is necessary to consider the words in use, and contemporary discussions of them.

## II

Modesty and humility are common terms in eighteenth-century ethical discourse: so common that it would be difficult to produce a comprehensive account of them, impossible in a short paper. They

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<sup>5</sup> This dictionary was completed after Dyche’s death by William Pardon, Gent., first appearing in 1735.

<sup>6</sup> John Wesley, *The complete English dictionary, explaining most of those hard words, which are found in the best English writers...N.B. The author assures you, he thinks this is the best English dictionary in the world* (Bristol, 1764 [ECCO]).



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appear in virtually every genre, and not only in obvious places: sermons, conduct books, novels and essays. A study might for example compare their usage in different genres, or track the development of their usage across the century. This paper chooses a different way to limit, focus and structure a discussion. It is a commonplace to remark that there was a polarity in eighteenth-century thought which sometimes evolved into tension and disagreement. Gibbon's great history is explicit about the opposition of the ethical values of classical antiquity, values expressed in a literature central to eighteenth-century elite education, and the moral precepts of Christianity. Some of the authors examined in this paper – Henry Grove, David Hume, Hannah More, James Fordyce – explicitly recognized that these two cultural systems entailed divergent evaluations of modesty and humility. This therefore will be the shape of the ensuing discussion: first to examine uses of modesty and humility in texts composed within a Christian framework, and then to consider different meanings in part coloured by the long shadow of Greece and Rome. The selection of texts has obviously been determined by whether they significantly discuss modesty and humility, but also to represent a wide range of cultural and social standpoints.

In the Authorized Version of the Bible, 'modest' is used once, in reference to the clothing of women.<sup>7</sup> 'Humility' occurs three times in the Old Testament and four times in the New, and is associated with 'humble'; both terms convey a positive evaluation and are contrasted with pride.<sup>8</sup> 'Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.'<sup>9</sup> In Miles Coverdale's Psalter, in the Magnificat, the Lord 'hath exalted the humble and meek.'<sup>10</sup> Meekness is frequently commended in the

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<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy 2:9.

<sup>8</sup> These frequencies are as indicated in Cruden's *Concordance*.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Peter 5:5.

<sup>10</sup> Jeremy Gregory reminds me that the Coverdale Psalter, remarkable for beauty of language, was kept in the 1662 Book of Common

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bible, and, as in the Magnificat, is associated with lowliness. In the two Testaments, there are over fifty commendatory uses of 'humble' and its derivatives, and, most frequent of all, pride, associated with arrogance, loftiness and haughtiness, is condemned. 'When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.'<sup>11</sup> 'Better is it to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.'<sup>12</sup> And again from the Magnificat: 'He hath shewed strength with his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.' Therefore devout Christians could be in no doubt about scriptural doctrine in relation to humility and pride. Nevertheless Christian writers differed over the amount of attention and weight given to and the interpretation of these evaluative terms.

The importance and positive value of Christian humility was enforced in widely read texts. In *Pilgrim's Progress* is Bunyan's well-known hymn:

He that is down needs fear no fall;  
He that is low, no pride;  
He that is humble, ever shall  
Have God to be his guide.  
I am content with what I have,  
Little be it, or much:  
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,  
Because thou savest such.<sup>13</sup>

Bunyan's theoretical justification for humility rests upon the thesis of utter sinfulness:

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Prayer (although biblical readings now used the King James Version, the psalms were not updated).

<sup>11</sup> Proverbs, 11:2.

<sup>12</sup> Proverbs, 16:19.

<sup>13</sup> John Bunyan, *The pilgrim's progress* was first published in 1678 (part 1) and 1684 (part 2), and has never been out of print. References are to the World's Classics edition (London, 1902), p.232.

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The Word of God saith that man's ways are crooked ways; not good, but perverse. It saith they are naturally out of the good way, that they have not known it. Now, when a man thus thinketh of his ways, - I say, when he doth sensibly, and with heart-humiliation, thus think, then hath he good thoughts of his own ways, because his thoughts now agree with the judgment of the Word of God.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, it is difficult to ignore a social message alongside the religious one. Christian asks Faithful about the Valley of Humility, and Faithful replies

Yes, I met with one *Discontent*, who would willingly have persuaded me to go back again with him; his reason was, for that the valley was altogether without honour. He told me, moreover, that there to go was the way to disobey all my friends, as *Pride*, *Arrogancy*, *Self-conceit*, *Worldly-glory*, with others, who he knew, as he said, would be very much offended, if I made such a fool of myself as to wade through this valley.<sup>15</sup>

William Law's influential *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* has much to say about humility, which he regards as the very essence of religion, the life and soul of piety. He calls upon his readers 'To be humble in all our actions, to avoid every appearance of pride and vanity, to be meek and lowly in our words, actions, dress, behaviour, and designs, in imitation of our blessed Saviour.'<sup>16</sup> Humility should be part of the Christian's daily discipline: 'think no day safe, or likely to end well, in which you have not thus early put yourself in this posture of humility, and called upon God to carry you through the day, in the exercise of a

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p.140.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.69.

<sup>16</sup> William Law, *A serious call to a devout and holy life* (London, 1729) References to the free online edition, [http://www.ccel.org/Law/serious\\_call.html](http://www.ccel.org/Law/serious_call.html):74.

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mEEK and lowly spirit.<sup>17</sup> Humility is no sign of a lack of courage: it takes more fortitude to be poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world than to endure the fire of battle.<sup>18</sup> A posture of humility is required for two reasons. First, it is a recognition of God's omnipotence and, by contrast, of our own powerlessness and insignificance. Second, it is an acceptance of our inherent sinfulness and therefore worthlessness. Even more clearly than in *Pilgrim's Progress* a social message is evident. True religion, Law insists, is opposed to the passions of pride, ambition and the pursuit of honour.

Hate and despise all human glory, for it is nothing else but human folly. It is the greatest snare, and the greatest betrayer, that you can possibly admit into your heart.<sup>19</sup>

Be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind.<sup>20</sup>

The man of quality must so far renounce the dignity of his birth, as to think himself miserable till he is born again. Servants must consider their service as done unto God. Masters must consider their servants as their brethren in Christ.<sup>21</sup>

[A good priest] is so far from desiring to be considered a gentleman, that he desires to be used as the servant of all; and in the spirit of his Lord and Master girds himself, and is glad to kneel down and wash any of their feet.<sup>22</sup>

Given their social origins, these sentiments demand no explanation. John Bunyan was the son of a tinker, himself a tinker

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p.143.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp.241-2.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p.167.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.168.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.76.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.204.

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and later a Baptist preacher.<sup>23</sup> The social origins of Law, a non-juror priest, were a little higher, but he was not from the gentry.<sup>24</sup> To advocate extreme social humility was more of a problem for preachers from elevated social backgrounds, or who were specifically addressing an audience from such backgrounds. In his *Addresses to Young Men* James Fordyce has a chapter 'On the beauty of humility'. Fordyce is no advocate for the enthusiasm, asceticism and sense of abject sinfulness to be found in Law's *Serious Call*. 'The Humility taught and exemplified in the New Testament, is too amiable, and too unaffected, to enjoin the laborious ceremonies, or unnatural rigours, of the cloister. It requires no man ... to pine amidst the bounties of Heaven.'<sup>25</sup> When Christians strive for humility, it becomes an affectation:

Does the man who is endowed with sincere Humility affect to rail against himself: to confess crimes which he never committed, or offences which he never designed; to sink beneath his station, to yield up lightly the respect to which he is entitled?<sup>26</sup>

Humility for Fordyce is an ingredient of the politeness characteristic of a gentleman.<sup>27</sup> It is a virtue which fosters good social relationships, especially because it promotes candour, in eighteenth-century discourse meaning a readiness to approach others with respect, tolerance and understanding: 'More modesty and candour will be practised by that youth, who is careful to keep

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<sup>23</sup> Richard L Greaves, 'Bunyan, John (*bap.* 1628, *d.* 1688)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/3949>, accessed 16 July 2013]).

<sup>24</sup> Isabel Rivers, 'Law, William (1686-1761)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004 [<http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/16154>, accessed 16 July 2013]).

<sup>25</sup> James Fordyce, *Addresses to young men* (2 vols., Dublin, 1777[ECCO]), vol.2, p.219.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.2, p.216.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.1, p.18.

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alive, in his own mind, a tender and uniform spirit of true religion for this will teach him meekness, moderation, forbearance with others, and diffidence in himself ... a readiness to put the fairest interpretation possible on the words and actions of other men.’<sup>28</sup>

Fordyce was a Scottish Presbyterian minister and a liberal, broad churchman: the tenor and ethos of his work contrasts with William Law’s uncompromising piety. He also differed in social stance and message, and this too modified his concept of humility. James Fordyce, DD, was a prosperous and fashionable London preacher.<sup>29</sup> He refers to the young men he is addressing as ‘gentlemen’, and his listing of what he expects them to become when grown – masters, men of business, teachers, tutors, physicians, lawyers, divines, magistrates, judges, legislators – makes it clear that his audience is the gentry.<sup>30</sup> Not for him any suggestion of equality with the common herd, nor any readiness to wash the feet of the poor as a gesture of Christian humility. He will not recommend, he says, anything ‘vulgar or illiberal’<sup>31</sup>, and he advises his young men to think ‘If I am to attempt something great indeed, and worthy of ambition, let it be to rise above the vulgar herd, by the power of superior worth.’<sup>32</sup>

Isaac Watts was a dissenting minister, an independent, renowned throughout Britain and America for his hymns. In his sermons and hymns a standard Christian and biblical defence of humility is in evidence. In his sermon ‘Humility represented in the character of St. Paul’ he reminds his readers that pride was the first sin, the cause of the fall of the rebel angels, the cause of the fall of

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, p.270.

<sup>29</sup> Alan Ruston, ‘Fordyce, James (1720-1796)’, *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, (Oxford, 2004 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/9879, accessed 16 July 2013])

<sup>30</sup> Fordyce, *Addresses to young men*, vol. 1, p.10-11.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p.4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p.61.

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man.<sup>33</sup> Humility is promoted by a sense of our sinfulness and worthlessness beside Christ – who was himself a model of humility: ‘He made himself of no reputation.’<sup>34</sup> He wrote a hymn to humility:

There’s no Ambition swells my Heart  
Search, Gracious God, and see  
Nor scornful Pride looks through mine Eyes,  
I dare appeal to thee.

Lowly and Meek my Carriage is,  
And all my Thoughts are mild,  
Content (my Father) with thy Will,  
And quiet as a Child.<sup>35</sup>

A section of his *Doctrine of the passions* is devoted to rules to subdue pride and scorn:

Consider what you shall be. Your Flesh returns to Corruption and common Earth again; nor shall your Dust be distinguished from the meanest Beggar or Slave.... And as for your Soul, that must stand before God in the World of Spirits, on a level with the rest of Mankind, and divested of all your haughty and flattering Circumstances.<sup>36</sup>

But like Fordyce, though more subtly, Watts is ambiguous about humility. He was of lowly origins, the son of a clothier, but educational opportunities came his way. He was learned in Latin, Greek, French and Hebrew, in Divinity and Philosophy. He worked for and lived with titled gentry.<sup>37</sup> So he had a sense of his own

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<sup>33</sup> Isaac Watts, *Humility represented in the character of St. Paul*, (London, 1737[ECCO]), p.v.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>35</sup> Watts, *Hymns and spiritual songs*, (London, 1707[ECCO]), vol. 1, p.33.

<sup>36</sup> Watts, *The doctrine of the passions explain’d and improv’d* (London, 1732[ECCO]), p.109.

<sup>37</sup> Isabel Rivers, ‘Watts, Isaac (1674–1748)’, *Oxford dictionary of national biography* (Oxford, 2004 [<http://0->

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worth, of his status in the world, in a middle rank. In his sermon on St Paul he writes that,

Surely a Man of Letters and Education is not bound to think himself as illiterate as a Peasant, nor a Youth of Ingenuity to fancy himself a Fool: A Person of Figure and Quality must not suppose himself in all Respects upon a Level with the lower Ranks of Mankind.<sup>38</sup>

In a section on pride among the poor he writes, 'Art thou content with that low Station in which God hath placed thee?... Dost thou submit to the Will of God as wise, in making thee Poor and not Rich, a Servant and not a Master?' And he suggests that the pride of the poor causes more quarrels and contentions than pride among the rich, whose polite education teaches them to imitate humility and good humour.<sup>39</sup>

So Fordyce and Watts take care to explain that there are limits to how humble a man should be. Similar arguments in a work on virtue by Henry Grove further support the thesis that modesty and humility were problematic and debateable for men with a status to maintain, and that there was a need to convince such men that these virtues were appropriate to them:

To prevent mistakes I shall premise, 1. That this virtuous modesty or humility does not oblige a man to *wrong* the *truth* or *himself*, by entertaining a *meaner* or a *worse* opinion of himself than he *deserves*.... 2. That humility does not oblige a man, right or wrong, to give *every body* else the *preference* to *himself*.... *Finally*, humility does not imply an *utter indifference* to *praise* and *honour*, and much less an *industrious declining* it, or *pretended aversion* to it.<sup>40</sup>

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www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/28888, accessed 16 July 2013]).

<sup>38</sup> Watts, *Humility represented*, p.3.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.56, 58.

<sup>40</sup> Henry Grove, *A system of moral philosophy* (2 vols., London, 1749[ECCO]), vol. 2, pp.287-8, 291.



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A later remark highlights the ineluctable bond between discussions of these virtues and social perceptions and strategies. Grove was the son of an apothecary and never well off: but he was a Presbyterian minister, and a learned man who became Head of the Taunton Academy:<sup>41</sup>

Humility is never unattended with *affability* and *complacency* of manners; a quality equally distant from haughtiness, and mean servile compliances.... The humble man will not dispute for *rank* or *precedency* with his *equals*, and to show how little he sets by these things, rather than contend about them, will sometimes give way to an *inferior*: unless the nature of his station obliges him to assert his right, and even then he will manage himself with that moderation, as to make it visible, that he challenges respect, not as due to his *personal* merit, but to his *place* and *character*.<sup>42</sup>

But to return to Isaac Watts: Watts also promotes what might be termed an epistemological humility, a modest doubt in religious matters rather than dogmatism. This is most systematically presented in *The strength and weakness of human reason*. This booklet is at issue with Deism, arguing that human reason is insufficient as a guide: better by far to trust to Revelation. Elsewhere he remarks upon those who have abandoned the Christian religion from a pride of reasoning. This epistemological humility is also directed against sectarian passion and intolerance.<sup>43</sup> Watts the dissenter was a friend of Thomas Secker, Bishop of Oxford: and he requested that at his own funeral there should be officiating ministers from the Presbyterians and Baptists as well as

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<sup>41</sup> Brian W Kirk, 'Grove, Henry (1684–1738)', *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, (Oxford, 2004 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/11681, accessed 12 Nov 2013]).

<sup>42</sup> Grove, *System*, p.299.

<sup>43</sup> Watts, *The strength and weakness of human reason* (London, 1737[ECCO]), pp.11-12, 49.

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from the Independents. After the bitter religious conflicts of the seventeenth century, an irenic humility is not uncommon among latitudinarian divines of the eighteenth.<sup>44</sup> Humility in this manner may go hand in hand with meekness and with candour, candour meaning a willingness to think well of others.<sup>45</sup> So Bishop Butler commends ‘this meekness, and, in some degree, easiness of temper, readiness to forego our right for the sake of peace as well as in the way of compassion, freedom from mistrust, and disposition to believe well of our neighbour’, a meekness rooted in an epistemological humility. Such humility is the theme of a sermon ‘Upon the Ignorance of Man’.<sup>46</sup>

A similar stance is evident in the sermons of John Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, sermons which were popular throughout the eighteenth century and often read by parish priests from their pulpits.<sup>47</sup>

When we speak to God, we should do it with great humility .... And when we think or speak of him, we should do it with great Modesty, we should not rashly pronounce or determine anything concerning God.... He that rightly values his own short Understanding, and the unlimited Perfections of God, will not be apt to say, this

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<sup>44</sup> Jeremy Gregory, *Restoration, reformation and reform 1660-1828*, (Oxford, 2000), pp.210-13.

<sup>45</sup> A candour frequently withheld from Catholics offering allegiance to the Pope: (Peter Nockles, ‘The changing legacy and reception of John Foxe’s “Book of Martyrs” in the “long eighteenth century”’, eds. Robert D Cornwall & William Gibson, *Religion, politics and dissent 1660-1832* [Farnham, 2010], pp.219, 224).

<sup>46</sup> The Right Hon. W E Gladstone ed., *The works of Joseph Butler, D.C.L. Sometime Lord Bishop of Durham* (2 vols., Oxford 1896), vol. 2, pp.220, 259-274.

<sup>47</sup> Isabel Rivers, ‘Tillotson, John (1630–1694)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford, 2004 [http://0-www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/article/27449, accessed 16 July 2013]).

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God cannot do, this he cannot know, such Ways are not agreeable to his Wisdom.<sup>48</sup>

He holds up as an example Christ's meekness, his willingness to forgive, his slowness to anger against those who failed to understand and believe as they should.<sup>49</sup> In Watts and Tillotson, this assertion of epistemological humility is frequently signalled by 'meek', 'meekness'. Tillotson was a latitudinarian priest, who maintained good relations with dissenters and opposed persecution of them. This kind of humility differs markedly from that advocated by Wesley in his sermons. He recommends Christian humility in the face of God, a humility stemming from a sense of worthlessness and sinfulness.<sup>50</sup> But Wesley, stern crusading evangelical that he was, does not adopt a posture of humility towards men. The Methodist may be ready to forgive those who differ from him – forgiveness is a Christian obligation – but at the same time he labours to distinguish himself from 'nearly Christians', from the mass of practising churchgoers whose religion, he thinks, does not go deep enough. Meekness for Wesley does not mean a lack of zeal, or doubts about the truth.<sup>51</sup> Towards men zeal is preferred to humility; perhaps this is why humility and modesty are not in Wesley's dictionary.

Humility may have an explicit political meaning. This is evident in the Baptist preacher Robert Hall's *Modern infidelity considered*

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<sup>48</sup> *The works of the most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson* (2 vols., London, 1722[ECCO]), vol. 1, p.769.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp.230-2.

<sup>50</sup> John Wesley, *Sermons on several occasions*, (Leeds, 1799[ECCO]), pp.259.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, pp.269-70: Wesley, *The Character of a Methodist*, (Dublin, 1747[ECCO]), 12; 'Not for nothing did Wesley's opponents accuse him of reviving civil war "enthusiasm"', Jeremy Gregory, 'Wesley's context: the long eighteenth century', ed. Randy L Maddox & Jason E Vickers, *The Cambridge companion to John Wesley* (Cambridge, 2010), p.19.

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of 1799.<sup>52</sup> Modern infidelity, Hall contends, is in great part the consequence of arrogance and pride, or rather, (Hall's preferred term) of vanity. The vain man longs for distinction and superiority, and seeks to attain it by startling new opinions, enabling him to look down upon those whose minds are not emancipated.<sup>53</sup> Christian humility is the opposite of this and the necessary protection against it. For Hall humility – a sense of our nothingness in the face of God – promotes acceptance of the social order: 'In so august a presence he sees all distinctions lost, and all beings reduced to the same level. He looks at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt.'<sup>54</sup> Vanity not only leads to infidelity: it opens the road to revolutionary politics, as in France:

The same restless and eager vanity which disturbs a family, when it is permitted in a great national crisis to mingle with political affairs, distracts a kingdom; infusing into those entrusted with the enactment of laws, a spirit of rash innovation and daring empiricism. A disdain of the established usages of mankind, a foolish desire to dazzle the world with new and untried systems of policy, in which the precedents of antiquity and the experience of ages are only consulted to be trodden under foot; and into

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<sup>52</sup> Like Fordyce and others, Hall defends humility as an essential ingredient of politeness, without which society could not subsist. Robert Hall, 'Modern infidelity considered', (1799), *The miscellaneous works and remains of the Rev. Robert Hall*, (Bohn's edn., London, 1846), p.271. And like Watts, this celebrated Baptist preacher will not embrace humility to the extent of foregoing all distinction: 'There is, it will be confessed, a delicate sensibility to character, a sober desire of reputation, a wish to possess the esteem of the wise and good, felt by the purest minds, which is at the farthest remove from arrogance or vanity. The humility of a noble mind scarcely dares to approve of itself, until it has secured the approbation of others.' pp.269, 286.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp.268-9.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.273.

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the executive department of government, a fierce contention for pre-eminence, an incessant struggle to supplant and destroy, with a propensity to calumny and suspicion, proscription and massacre.... The persons ... with whom we are at present engaged, have discarded humility and modesty from the catalogue of virtues.<sup>55</sup>

Hall thus imparts a Christian emphasis to an epistemological humility most famously applied to political affairs by Edmund Burke.<sup>56</sup> Burke brilliantly mobilizes the words and evaluations associated with modesty/humility and their antonyms against the revolutionaries in France.<sup>57</sup> Rousseau, according to Burke, was the great professor and founder of '*the philosophy of vanity*'.<sup>58</sup> The members of the Revolution Society can be seen 'strutting with a proud consciousness of the diffusion of knowledge, of which every member had obtained so large a share in the donative'.<sup>59</sup> For Burke himself 'our weak, unthinking pride is humbled under the dispensations of a mysterious wisdom.'<sup>60</sup> And 'the basis of the

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp.271-2, 274.

<sup>56</sup> Hall's politics were by no means the same as Burke's. With other dissenters, and with religious toleration and equality in mind, he defended the rights of man and was at first an admirer of what was being done in France. See Olinthus Gregory's Brief memoir in *The miscellaneous works*.

<sup>57</sup> For the sources of Burke's epistemological modesty see I Hampsher-Monk, 'Rhetoric and Opinion in the Politics of Edmund Burke', *History of political thought*, ix (1988), pp.455-84, & 'Burke and the religious sources of skeptical conservatism', in J. van der Zande and R H Popkin eds, *The skeptical tradition around 1800* (Dordrecht,1998), pp.235-59.

<sup>58</sup> 'A letter from Mr Burke to a member of the National Assembly' (1791), Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790, edn. London, 1910), p.263.

<sup>59</sup> Burke, *Reflections*, p.64.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p.78.

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Christian system, humility, is the low, but deep and firm foundation of all real virtue.<sup>61</sup>

Burke's initial target in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was the dissenting minister Dr. Richard Price. Price, an advocate for achieved rather than inherited status, exemplified Burke's argument that radical politics and pride in superior knowledge went together.<sup>62</sup> In exactly the same way as Isaac Watts, Price did not escape ambiguity about humility. It comes as no surprise to find him taking a standard Christian stance:

You know that you ought ... to cultivate meekness and purity, to be ready to submit to the lowest offices for the good of others, to imitate children in simplicity and humility.<sup>63</sup>

But like Watts, Price was a man distinguished for his learning, a notable philosopher and mathematician and a Fellow of the Royal Society.<sup>64</sup> On another occasion he wrote

It is knowledge that raises one being above another. It is what gives us our distinction as reasonable creatures; and the greater stores of it we possess, the higher we are advanced in the scale of intelligences. One man is superior to another, because he knows more.... Without knowledge a mind is rude, empty and dark, embarrassed in prejudices and deformed by errors and folly.<sup>65</sup>

We have the utmost reason for looking upon ourselves with reverence. There is a solid foundation for ambition of the noblest kind; and we shall deprectate and vilify

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<sup>61</sup> 'A Letter from Mr Burke', p.262.

<sup>62</sup> Though Price's own stance in matters of religion was irenic and latitudinarian: D O Thomas, *The honest mind. The thought and work of Richard Price*, (Oxford, 1977), p.4.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Price, *The vanity, misery, and infamy, of knowledge without suitable practice*, (London, 1770[ECCO]), p.30.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas, *Honest mind*, pp.7-13, 18.

<sup>65</sup> Price, *The nature and dignity of the human soul*, (London, 1766[ECCO]), p.13.

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ourselves most grossly, if we take no pains in the work of self-cultivation.<sup>66</sup>

In these sermons and religious writings the terms ‘humility’ and ‘modesty’ are sometimes used interchangeably, as synonyms. But on the whole, ‘humility’ is the preferred term in Christian discourse. In part this is because the two terms, though not sharply and consistently, diverge in meaning. ‘Modesty’ is usually a term with a social reference, indicating a mode of self-presentation towards others. Understood in this way, modesty requires as a condition of its manifestation a social relationship, and would be difficult or impossible to practise alone on a desert island. ‘Humility’, so often expressive of a relationship especially with God, may be inward-looking and would be as appropriate on the desert island as in the busiest city. So Law in his *Serious Call* uses ‘humility’ almost exclusively, reserving ‘modest’ to refer only to the apparel and demeanour of women.<sup>67</sup> Fordyce, polite preacher that he was, promotes modesty for men alongside humility, insisting that modesty is a part of humility.<sup>68</sup> Humility is principally a Christian state of mind, but not entirely or necessarily so. It is inward-looking and commendable for Adam Smith, without any reference to God. The place of the Deity in his theory is taken by ‘the impartial spectator .... the great demigod within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of conduct’ - the standard of exact propriety and perfection which is revered by the person of real modesty and which is higher and more demanding than the standard of virtue commonly attained in the world and recognized interpersonally.

So far as our attention is directed towards the first standard, the wisest and best of us all, can, in his own character and conduct, see nothing but weakness and imperfection; can discover no ground for arrogance and

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>67</sup> Law, *Serious Call*, pp.178, 180, 182.

<sup>68</sup> Fordyce, *Addresses*, vol. 2, p.235.

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presumption, but a great deal for humility, regret and repentance.<sup>69</sup>

### III

Turning to mentalities which embraced the legacy of classical antiquity is often to witness strikingly different attitudes to the virtues with which this paper is concerned. The classical culture of Greece and Rome in which they were steeped gave eighteenth-century writers scant incentive to esteem modesty, at least for adult males, and ignored Christian humility altogether. As Hannah Arendt has explained, in the absence of anything like the Christian faith in an afterlife in paradise, the ethic of the Greek city state and of the Roman republic proposed instead a goal of earthly immortality, attained heroically in immortal words and deeds, spoken and acted in the public realm.<sup>70</sup> Modesty would be inimical to such an ethic, though it would be forced upon all women, largely excluded from the public.<sup>71</sup> It is even debateable whether Latin had a concept on all fours with modesty in our sense. 'Modestia' means moderation rather than modesty - and that classicist Samuel Johnson cites moderation as one of the meanings of the term.

Perhaps a closer Latin term to our modesty is 'verecundia' but this implies blushing and shame. That classical attitudes should find ready acceptance in elite eighteenth-century culture comes as no surprise: one aristocratic and patriarchal society spoke to another, both thinking it natural that modesty should be appropriate for all women and for young men, but questionable and indeed troubling as a virtue for men of honour, for gentlemen. This

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<sup>69</sup> Adam Smith, *The theory of moral sentiments* (1759), (Indianapolis, 1984), pp.246-8.

<sup>70</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The human condition*, (1958) (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Chicago, 1998.), pp.18-19, 48, 180.

<sup>71</sup> For a careful consideration of the limited access of women to the public realm (rather greater in Rome than in Greece) see Lin Foxhall, *Studying gender in classical antiquity* (Cambridge, 2013).



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gendered difference in the estimation and application of modesty is signalled by Ruth Yeazell.<sup>72</sup>

So for example in the *Tatler*, ‘It is to be noted, that modesty in a man is never to be allowed as a good quality, but a weakness, if it suppresses his virtue, and hides it from the world, when he has at the same time a mind to exert himself.’<sup>73</sup> Here modesty appears not as a virtue, but as a bad quality. This is an instance of a conflict between two concepts of virtue. Instead of virtues in the plural, of which modesty might be one, the author of the *Tatler* advocates virtue in the civic republican sense, virtue as public-spirited, assertive, courageous, independent masculinity, virtue modelled on narratives of classical Roman manliness.<sup>74</sup> Civic republicanism included an expectation of prominent public service by elite males, in respect of which modesty was not a virtue. Similar attitudes are evident in other eighteenth-century texts. In the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of 1731, the humility of Cicero’s friend Atticus, who declined all public roles, is denigrated as meanness or cowardice.<sup>75</sup> Ferguson’s *An essay on the history of civil society* has not a single reference to modesty, nor to humility. Indeed the whole tenor of the book excludes modesty from the concept of virtue: Ferguson as a strenuous classical republican admires ambition, effort and achievement provided that these are subservient to the public good.<sup>76</sup> Robust classical republican that he was, he even has doubts about the related virtue of moderation, denigrating it as the false virtue of monks and anchores.

After all, the merit of a man is determined by his candour and generosity to his associates, by his zeal for national

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<sup>72</sup> Yeazell, *Fictions of modesty*, p.9.

<sup>73</sup> *The Tatler* (London, August 8, 1709).

<sup>74</sup> The classic study of virtue in this sense is J G A Pocock, *The Machiavellian moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition* (Princeton, 1975).

<sup>75</sup> *Gentleman’s Magazine* (London, 1731), p.916.

<sup>76</sup> See Duncan Forbes’s Introduction to Adam Ferguson, *An essay on the history of civil society 1767* (Edinburgh 1966), pp.xxvi-xxxi.

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objects, and by his vigour in maintaining political rights; not by moderation alone, which proceeds frequently from indifference to national and public interests, and which serves to relax the nerves on which the force of private as well as a public character depends.<sup>77</sup>

In Samuel Johnson's periodical writing, modesty has a very low profile as a value. And the reason for this appears to be his preoccupation with fame, with reputation.

The advocates for the love of fame allege in its vindication, that it is a passion natural and universal; a flame lighted by heaven, and always burning with greatest vigour in the most enlarged and elevated minds. That the desire of being praised by posterity implies a resolution to deserve their praises, and that ... the soul of man ... rejoices to consider herself as co-operating with future ages, and as co-extended with endless duration.<sup>78</sup>

This could serve as an epitome of the classical ethic as characterised by Arendt.

But could it be that modes of discourse about modesty and humility depend on generic conventions? Johnson was deeply religious: is modesty or humility – absent in his public utterances – more salient in his prayers and religious meditations? Here there are, indeed, references to being humble before God. But they read as clichés rather than as something deeply meant. Johnson frequently lists his failings and resolutions to be better. He never resolves to be more modest or humble. The virtue in which he finds himself lacking is self-control. He deplores his sensuality

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<sup>77</sup> Ferguson, *Civil society*, pp.199 &258.

<sup>78</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, no. 49 (Tuesday, 4 Sept., 1750): W J Bate & Albrecht B Strauss eds., *The Yale edition of the works of Samuel Johnson* (23 vols., New Haven & London, 1969), vol. 3, p.266.

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(especially in relation to food) and indolence.<sup>79</sup> The classical virtue of temperance is invoked – and his deficiencies in it lamented – without any sense that modesty might be an implication of it.

There are occasional and varying defences of modesty in the *Spectator*. One long essay likens modesty to frugality.<sup>80</sup> Just as frugality enables a man to preserve his credit and avoid bankruptcy, so modesty – not overstating his worth and achievements – enables a man to preserve his reputation. The same essay celebrates the tranquil pleasures of the man who eschews ambition. Though the classical texts with which educated men were so familiar gave little reason to value modesty, another *Spectator* essay finds a distinguished Roman advocate:

But notwithstanding an excess of modesty obstructs the tongue, and renders it unfit for its offices, a due proportion of it is thought so requisite to an orator, that rhetoricians have recommended it to their disciples as a particular in their art. *Cicero* tells us that he never liked an orator, who did not appear in some little confusion at the beginning of his speech, and confesses that he himself never entered upon an oration without trembling and concern. It is indeed a kind of deference which is due to a great assembly, and seldom fails to raise a benevolence in the audience towards the person who speaks.<sup>81</sup>

A later essay gleans similar advice from Pliny<sup>82</sup>. Defended in this way, modesty is different from humility. In Cicero and Pliny it is at least partly a rhetorical strategy for manipulating an audience, and need not be an authentic expression of the speaker's feelings. Modesty thought of in this way is nowhere more in evidence than in Lord Chesterfield's *Letters of advice to his son*. It is significant

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<sup>79</sup> *Prayers and meditations, composed by Samuel Johnson, LL.D, and published from his manuscripts. By George Strahan, A.M.* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London, 1785[ECCO]), pp.76, 139.

<sup>80</sup> *Spectator* (London, 26 October 1711).

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 November 1711.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 15 September 1712.

that Chesterfield's cultural references are almost entirely to the classical world. He encourages his son to keep up his reading of Latin texts, wherein role models are to be found. Not once does he urge him to read the bible or to take Christ as his pattern. Obsessively he advises his son to assert himself, to behave as a distinguished person and to be ambitious. 'When I was of your age, I should have been ashamed if any boy of that age had learned his book better, or played at any play better than I did; and I would not have rested a moment till I had got before him.'<sup>83</sup> His son should aim to be admired in the arena of public life. But modesty is a serviceable stratagem: 'Modesty is the only sure bait, when you angle for praise...By this modesty, I do not mean timidity, and awkward bashfulness. On the contrary, be inwardly firm and steady, know your own value, whatever it may be, and act upon that principle; but take care to let nobody discover that you do know your own value.'<sup>84</sup> Implicitly therefore a strategic show of modesty is good, genuine modesty bad.<sup>85</sup> 'You must be firm, and even bold, but with great seeming modesty.'<sup>86</sup> 'An outward modesty is extremely becoming.'<sup>87</sup> 'Modesty is the surest way of gratifying your vanity.'<sup>88</sup>

The difference between this way of thinking about modesty, congenial as it was to elite men steeped in classical culture, and Christian humility, was recognized by the devout evangelical Christian Hannah More.

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<sup>83</sup> *Letters written by the late right honourable Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield, to his son Philip Stanhope, Esq.* (3 vols., London 1777[ECCO]), vol. 1, p.195.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p.19

<sup>85</sup> A similar sentiment is in the *Tatler* essay for August 8, 1709, where the writer differentiates between appropriate and 'rustic modesty'.

<sup>86</sup> *Letters written by the...Earl of Chesterfield*, vol.3, p.300.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p.201.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p.294.

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Do not teach them humility on the ordinary ground that vanity is *unamiable*, and that no one will *love* them if they are proud; for that will only go to correct the exterior, and make them soft and smiling hypocrites.<sup>89</sup>

They should be taught that humility being the appropriate grace of Christianity, is what makes Christian and Pagan virtues *essentially* different. The virtues of the Romans, for instance, were obviously founded in pride; as a proof of this, they had not even a word in their copious language to express humility, but what was used in a bad sense, and conveyed the idea of meanness or vileness.<sup>90</sup>

Surely More is right about humility: a strategic, insincere affectation of it is a negation of it, a corruption. Uriah Heep merits unreserved condemnation. But this is not necessarily the case with modesty, in spite of the expression, familiar to us, of 'false modesty'. In today's usage, false modesty refers to a particular and narrow form, in which the speaker affects to lack an excellence which all know he or she possesses, with a view to eliciting a countervailing compliment. When Chesterfield writes of modesty as a bait when angling for praise he commends false modesty in this sense, and for this and other reasons many critics found Chesterfield's letters despicable. But a modest reticence about the speaker's qualities could be admirable rather than a matter for censure. So Catharine Macaulay conventionally recommends modesty on the part of the young. She also has suggestions as to why modesty is more generally estimable. It is a component of politeness, of civility, and as a mode of self-presentation – 'the beauty of ... modesty and gentleness' - has an aesthetic value.

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<sup>89</sup> Hannah More, *Strictures on the modern system of female education*, (2 vols., London, 1799), vol. 1, p.154.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, vol. 1, pp.269-70. The way in which More challenges conventional gender conceptions, in this and other ways, is discussed in William Stafford, *English feminists and their opponents: unsex'd and proper females* (Manchester, 2002), pp.29-31, 38, 150-1.

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The pleasure of relating any story or anecdote in which we have ourselves borne the principal part, is a satisfaction that is seldom neglected ... but as all such habits only serve to render persons ridiculous and tiresome to those with whom they converse, and to foster vain glorious sentiments, timely care should be taken to correct this propensity ... children ... should be told ... that in the judgment of wise persons, their ostentation would weigh down the merit of those actions they were so forward to relate; and that the appearance of modesty is always affected by those who understand ... the way to conciliate the affections of mankind.<sup>91</sup>

Putting together Fordyce, Watts, Chesterfield, More and Macaulay an important point can be made about modesty. It could be sold to elite males as a component of politeness: but at the same time, as false modesty, it contributed to the doubts of those critics who associated politeness with inauthenticity and hypocrisy.

Modesty in the non-sexual sense was also problematic for men because it was implicitly gendered. Some writers, aware of the gender issue, argue for modesty or humility as masculine virtues. One of these was Henry Grove. He had a foot in both cultural camps, drawing upon both classical and Christian literatures. He reminds his readers that the root of the word virtue is the Latin *vir*, man, and that virtues are manly accomplishments.<sup>92</sup> He adopts the Aristotelian theory of four cardinal virtues – prudence, justice, fortitude or courage, and temperance, adding some Christian or theological virtues.<sup>93</sup> He then goes on to argue that humility, the ability properly ‘to *regulate a man’s value for himself*’<sup>94</sup> is an aspect of temperance or self-control, and that meekness is an aspect of fortitude or courage: ‘*Meekness*, as far as it concerns this virtue

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<sup>91</sup> Catharine Macaulay Graham, *Letters on education* (London, 1790), pp.170, 184-5.

<sup>92</sup> Grove, *System of moral philosophy*, vol. 2, p.196.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p.219.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p.287.

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of *Fortitude*, is no more than a *partial* consideration of patience; or bearing *affronts, reproaches, and injuries*, with a due *composure* of mind.' It is the opposite of a vengeful disposition, that disposition which is the source of the sin of duelling: 'For as he who *gives the challenge* has not *patience to bear* an affront; so he who *answers* it is *afraid of reproach*, and thus both are equally *cowards*.'<sup>95</sup> As noted earlier, William Law similarly remarked upon the courage of the humble man.

Without the philosophical framework, the same message is found in Samuel Richardson's novel *Sir Charles Grandison*, which carries an endorsement of the virtue of modesty and not only for women. Harriet Byron loves and reveres a modest man, and she finds one in Sir Charles.<sup>96</sup> All of the admired men in the novel are characterised as modest and in this way modesty ceases to be a gender marker, a characteristic of women by contrast with men. Commentators have noted that the ideal of manliness as represented by Sir Charles challenges a sharp gender distinction.<sup>97</sup> Not only is Grandison woman-friendly; he is also gentle and possessed of an acute sensibility. Richardson protects his hero against any insinuation of effeminacy by stressing his courage and manly spirit: 'I have always considered Spirit as the distinction of a man. My father was a man of spirit. I never fear'd man, since I could write man. As I never sought danger, or went out of my way to meet it, I looked upon it when it came, as an unavoidable evil, and as a call upon me for fortitude.'<sup>98</sup> What might have been the factors causing Richardson to be an advocate of modesty in men as well as in women? One factor might be that he wrote the novel in consultation with a number of female advisers, consulting their views about what was admirable in men. His limited formal

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., vol. 2., pp.280-1.

<sup>96</sup> Samuel Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison* (7 vols., London, 1754[ECCO]), vol. 1, p.101.

<sup>97</sup> David Morse, *The age of virtue. British culture from the Restoration to romanticism*, (Basingstoke, 2000), pp.116, 134, 145.

<sup>98</sup> Richardson, *Grandison*, vol. 2, p.45.

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education meant that he was not immersed in classical culture: his intellectual formation was essentially Christian.<sup>99</sup> Grandison exemplifies a Christian masculinity distinct from a classical or secular one, a distinction discussed by Jeremy Gregory.<sup>100</sup> Thirdly, despite the fact that the cast list of his *Grandison* is stuffed with Baronets and Lords, it may be significant that he was a tradesman and a tradesman's son. Modesty was a Christian virtue, and also a socially-dependent one, problematic for titled persons who had a status to maintain in the world. But it might appeal to tradesmen such as Richardson who could prefer it to aristocratic arrogance.

How difficult was it to convince men that modesty was a virtue for them? Implicitly, *Sir Charles Grandison* raises a problem for all eighteenth-century men regardless of class. For it is plausible to argue that modesty functioned both as a consequence of and a support for patriarchal authority. The modesty inculcated in young men and all women is a key component of the ideology of submission to male heads of households. Conversely this implies that modesty would be dangerous for those patriarchs, undermining their authority. In Richardson's novel this threat is spotlighted in Sir Charles's rebellious younger sister, who is wittier and more intelligent than the man she is destined to marry – she knows it, and resists submission. So how does the modest Sir Charles maintain his authority over his household, and ultimately tame his rebellious sister? Part of the answer is crudely material: Sir Charles is immensely rich and the females are economically dependent upon him. But the rest of Richardson's answer is somewhat romantic. Those females are overwhelmed by the spectacle of his

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<sup>99</sup> John A Dussinger, 'Richardson, Samuel (*bap.* 1689, *d.* 1761)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/view/23582>, accessed 18 July 2013]).

<sup>100</sup> Jeremy Gregory, '*Homo religiosus*: masculinity and religion in the long eighteenth century', in Tim Hitchcock & Michelle Cohen eds., *English masculinities 1660-1800*, (London, 1999), pp.85-110.



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transcendent virtues, and the truly modest among them collaborate to teach the rebellious sister her proper demeanour.<sup>101</sup>

There are formal discussions of modesty and humility in Hume's *Treatise* and *Enquiry*, and he also wrote a witty, ironic essay 'Of Impudence and Modesty'. In his formal discussions the difference between the two qualities, and the tension between Classical and Christian discourses, is sharply focussed. Like other commentators, he has reservations about modesty: too much of it might be bad. 'It is necessary ... to know our rank and station in the world, whether it be fixed by our birth, fortune, employments, talents, or reputation. It is necessary to feel the sentiment and passion of pride in conformity to it, and to regulate our actions accordingly.'<sup>102</sup> But he also says that modesty gives pleasure to others and fulfils an important social function. 'In like manner, therefore, as we establish the *laws of nature*, in order to secure property in society, and prevent the opposition of self-interest, we establish the *rules of good-breeding*, in order to prevent the opposition of men's pride, and render conversation agreeable and inoffensive.'<sup>103</sup> As with Catharine Macaulay, an aesthetic evaluation is in evidence: modesty is an aspect of nobility of character. '[Vanity] is besides a sure symptom of the want of true

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<sup>101</sup> Virtues expected of clergymen – modesty, moderation, meekness – potentially undermined their masculinity: Jeremy Gregory, 'Gender and the clerical profession, 1660-1850', *Gender and Christian religion: Studies in church history*, xxxiv (1998), pp. 243-4. How did men of the cloth meet this threat? Possible strategies are discussed in William Stafford, 'Gentlemanly masculinities as represented by the late Georgian *Gentleman's Magazine*', *History*, xciii (January 2008), pp.47-68.

<sup>102</sup> David Hume, *A treatise of human nature* (1739, Everyman edition, 2 vols., London, 1911), vol. 2, p.293.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

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dignity and elevation of mind, which is so great an ornament in any character.’<sup>104</sup> Vanity is unaesthetic and impolite.

Hume’s qualified commendation of modesty contrasts sharply with his remarks about humility. He thinks that taking a lower view of one’s qualities than is justified can be inimical to important goods. A touch of not altogether justified pride in one’s merits or even a certain measure of overestimating of oneself may help to promote those goods. He explains this in the section of his *Treatise* entitled ‘Of greatness of mind’. Another term for this, which Hume employs, is magnanimity, implying heroism and nobility. Hume compares the passions of pride and humility. Excessive and greatly unjustified pride is vicious: but a due measure of pride is a valuable quality. If men have confidence and pride in their own merits, they will be more successful in their projects and enterprises. ‘Were it allowable to err on either side, it would be more advantageous to overrate our merit, than to form ideas of it below its just standard. Fortune commonly favours the bold and enterprising; and nothing inspires us with more boldness than a good opinion of ourselves.’ Furthermore, ambition for praise is inseparable from genius and nobility of character.<sup>105</sup>

[But] we find that many religious declaimers decry those virtues as purely pagan and natural, and represent to us the excellency of the *Christian* religion, which places humility in the rank of virtues, and corrects the judgement of the world, and even of philosophers, who so generally admire all the efforts of pride and ambition.<sup>106</sup>

So Hume regards humility as a Christian virtue by contrast with the pride of pagan, that is classical Roman, culture. He is explicit about his preference. He contends that all men of the world know

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<sup>104</sup> David Hume, *Enquiries concerning the human understanding and concerning the principles of morals* (1748 & 1751, Oxford edn., 1962), p.266.

<sup>105</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, p.291; *Enquiries*, pp.265-6.

<sup>106</sup> Hume, *Treatise*, pp.293-4.

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that good-breeding and decency do not require humility to be sincere, to be anything more than an outward show. On the contrary, a sincere humility would not be a virtue: it would be a vice.

And as every Quality, which is useful or agreeable to ourselves and others, is, in common Life, admitted under the Denomination of Virtue or personal Merit; so no other will ever be receiv'd, where Men judge of Things by their natural, unprejudic'd Reason, without the delusive Glosses of Superstition and false Religion. Celibacy, Fasting, Penances, Mortification, Self-denial, Humility, Silence, Solitude and the whole Train of monkish Virtues; for what Reason are they everywhere rejected by Men of Sense, but because they serve no Manner of Purpose; neither advance a Man's Fortune in the World, nor render him a more valuable Member of Society; neither qualify him for the Entertainment of Company, nor encrease his Power of Self-enjoyment? We observe, on the contrary, that they cross all these desirable Ends.... We justly, therefore transfer them to the opposite Column, and place them in the Category of the Vices.<sup>107</sup>

Hume's attack on the Christian virtues, including humility, did not go unchallenged. To return to James Fordyce's *Addresses to Young Men*, in his chapter 'On the beauty of humility' he takes issue with 'A late noted free-thinker'.<sup>108</sup> To some extent he talks past Hume, defending humility with biblical references – for Hume the bible was no authority worthy of credence. But he also engages with the arguments, contending that Christian humility has been wrongly characterised by Hume, that it is not disabling and objectionable. Fordyce, as already noticed, is no advocate for the enthusiasm, asceticism and sense of abject sinfulness to be found in

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<sup>107</sup> Hume, *Enquiries*, p.270.

<sup>108</sup> Fordyce, *Addresses to Young Men*, vol. 2, p.213.

William Law's *Serious Call*.<sup>109</sup> Fordyce also refuses to separate humility and the modesty which Hume commends, thereby, in Fordyce's opinion, falling guilty of self-contradiction. 'Who, that is not blinded by Pride, or by prejudice, can be ignorant, that Humility includes Modesty, as the greater comprehends the less ... and that no man can be truly modest who is not truly humble?'<sup>110</sup> He therefore quotes from Hume's *Enquiry*: "Were the door opened to self-praise, every one is sensible, that such a flood of impertinence would break in upon us, as would render society wholly intolerable." Thus, you see, Modesty is praised by the very man who reprobates Humility.<sup>111</sup>

But even Fordyce cannot escape the pull of classical discourse, and the imperatives dictated by an unequal, hierarchical society. He contends that too much humility may be an evil: 'It is very certain that great virtues, and great powers have been often obscured by timidity in the possessors.' Young men should not be over bold: but neither should they be timid and bashful.<sup>112</sup> He insists that religion is not unfriendly to the love of fame.<sup>113</sup> Ambition is a virtue, and pride may be admirable: 'Is there not an honest, a generous, a noble Pride? Yes, certainly, if you mean by these words an exalted sense of honour, or magnanimity in a man's principles and actions.'<sup>114</sup> He is critical of the arrogance of ancient Roman triumphs<sup>115</sup> but nevertheless is prepared to say that,

The best days of pagan antiquity might display ... higher flights of friendship, fortitude, and patriotism, than have been often seen in after generations that enjoyed superior light; owing, we suppose, chiefly to a stronger passion for fame....By joining with this motive institutions directly

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, p.219.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, p.235.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, p.234.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p.80.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, p.94.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, p.235; vol. 1, p.13.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, p.173.

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calculated to inspire temperance, patience of toil, fearlessness of danger, disregard for wealth, and a zeal for their country, they certainly produced wonderful effects in the way of magnanimity and heroism.<sup>116</sup>

Fordyce, a classically-educated Christian, a priest to whom humility is enjoined by scripture but addressing young gentlemen, looks both ways, contriving to combine Christian and classical themes which others found less compatible. Grove essays to combine them too, but is aware that there is a difference. As already remarked in his theory of virtue he draws upon both classical and Christian literatures. He finds examples of classical authorities exhibiting a modest frame of mind,

But allowing the most to this passage, which does not speak expressly of humility, as regarding our *virtues*; I may well say to the honour of divine *Revelation*, that it is this alone which fully discovers to us the *purity* and *perfection* of the *divine* nature, and the *frailty* and *imperfection* of our *own*; the *great evil* of *sin*, and our intire *dependence* on the *grace* as well as the *providence* of God; and therefore this alone which is every way fitted to form this virtue in us.<sup>117</sup>

There is a discussion of modesty and humility, magnanimity, pride and vanity in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*.<sup>118</sup> There are points of agreement with his friend David Hume, but also significant differences – as mentioned above, he does not dismiss humility as a vice but rather thinks that it will inform the self-perception of a truly wise man.<sup>119</sup> Like Henry Grove, Smith combines the teachings of classical and Christian culture. For he too theorises within the long-standing tradition of virtue ethics, according to which to be moral is not, for example, to

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., vol. 2, p.154-5.

<sup>117</sup> Grove, *A system of moral philosophy*, vol. 2, p.293.

<sup>118</sup> Smith, *Theory of moral sentiments*, pp.244-262.

<sup>119</sup> It is not clear that he would denominate it a virtue, though it will be characteristic of the truly virtuous person.

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live according to certain rules, or to promote utility: it is to possess the virtues and to behave in accordance with them.<sup>120</sup> From classical authors – Plato, Aristotle, stoics – he derives the virtues of justice, courage, wisdom/prudence and temperance/self-command. From Christianity, doubtless influenced by his teacher Francis Hutcheson, he takes the virtue of charity/benevolence. These are primary virtues, but secondary, lesser ones derive from them. So his advocacy of modesty and humility comes in a section on self-command or temperance. But these virtues incorporate elements of wisdom, justice in the sense of judging self and others fairly, and benevolence by taking care not to arouse unpleasant feelings in others. This reference to a plurality of virtues, the constant effort to combine and balance their different demands, is what lends subtlety to Smith's discussion.

Smith groups together as virtues temperance, decency, modesty and moderation – note once again that classical linking of the latter two. They are always amiable, and they bestow beauty and grace upon conduct.<sup>121</sup> They are part of the idea of exact propriety and perfection which the internal monitor, the impartial spectator, takes

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<sup>120</sup> Virtue ethics was an important and perhaps the most influential moral discourse from Plato through Aquinas and to the late eighteenth century. Then it fell out of fashion, to be superseded by versions of utilitarianism (e.g. Bentham), deontology (e.g. Kant) and natural rights/contract (e.g. Rousseau). From the middle of the twentieth century there has been a revival of interest in this way of thinking pioneered by philosophers such as Elizabeth Anscombe, Alastair Macintyre, Iris Murdoch and Philippa Foot. See for example Rosalind Hursthouse, *On virtue ethics* (Oxford, 1999); Roger Crisp & Michael Slote, *Virtue ethics* (Oxford, 1997); Stephen Darwall ed., *Virtue ethics* (Oxford, 2003); Raymond J Devettere, *Introduction to virtue ethics* (Georgetown, 2002); Stephen M Gardiner ed., *Virtue ethics, old and new* (Cornell, 2005). Specifically for Smith see Dierdre McCloskey, 'Adam Smith, the last of the former virtue ethicists', *History of political economy*, xl (2008), pp.43-71.

<sup>121</sup> Smith, *Theory of moral sentiments*, pp.238, 242.

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as the model, a model of ‘exquisite and divine beauty’ to which the wise and virtuous person strives to conform. Smith likens this effort to the work of a ‘divine artist’ and pursues the aesthetic analogy with reference to painting, poetry and music.<sup>122</sup> He also celebrates magnanimity, the combination of courage and self-command exhibited by those who undertake great and difficult public purposes. By contrast with these virtues, he is clear that pride and vanity are vices.<sup>123</sup> Smith’s ideal is ‘the man who neither ascribes to himself, nor wishes that other people should ascribe to him, any other merit besides that which really belongs to him’.<sup>124</sup>

This is not the end of the story: Smith elaborates his thinking about pride and vanity by discussing them as passions. This strategy for discussing ethical matters was a discourse common to him, his teacher Hutcheson, and his friend Hume.<sup>125</sup> A passion, he argues, can err in the direction of too much, or too little. For example, puffed up with worldly triumph, an excess of pride can transform magnanimity into madness and folly. The Duke of Marlborough was a rare example of a man who did not fall into a vicious excess of pride, by contrast with Alexander the Great and Caesar who did.<sup>126</sup> Pride is an unlovely, sullen and severe passion: the proud man resents equals and especially superiors, thinking that they are excessively esteemed by comparison with himself. He is too self-satisfied to think that his character requires any amendment. By contrast, and here Smith swims against the tide of opinion, ‘Vanity is almost always a sprightly and a gay, and very often a good-natured passion’, as the vain man attempts to win the good opinion of others, a good opinion which he is not sure that he

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., pp.247-8.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p.255.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p.253.

<sup>125</sup> Hutcheson published *An essay on the nature and conduct of the passions and affections* (London, 1728) and Hume’s *A treatise of human nature* has a lengthy section ‘Of the passions’.

<sup>126</sup> Smith, *Theory of moral sentiments*, pp.246, 250-2.

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merits. It may spur him to acquire those admirable qualities which will bring him respect.<sup>127</sup>

But, and here Smith agrees with Hume, a certain excess of pride is better than a deficiency, and may even be good.

Great success in the world, great authority over the sentiments and opinions of mankind, have very seldom been acquired without some degree of this excessive self-admiration....This presumption was, perhaps, necessary ... to prompt them to undertakings which a more sober mind would never have thought of.<sup>128</sup>

Those whom nature has formed a good deal below the common level can nevertheless maintain their proper rank among their equals in age and situation, with the help of an excess of pride. By contrast, too much humility can have the opposite effect and sink them into idiotism.<sup>129</sup>

To the man who under-rates himself, unless we have both more discernment and more generosity than belongs to the greater part of men, we seldom fail to do, at least, all the injustice which he does to himself, and frequently a great deal more....In almost all cases, it is better to be a little too proud, than, in any respect, too humble.<sup>130</sup>

#### IV

To conclude, the meaning, importance and evaluations attached to the related but diverging terms modesty and humility, their antonyms such as pride and vanity, and the attitudes and behaviours they entailed, were conditioned and produced in different ways by cultural, theoretical, religious, social and political factors. They were far from neutral terms and were deployed in the working-out

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., pp.255-9.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p.250.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p.260.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., pp.261-2.



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of significant conflicts. Humility came freighted with great prestige from Christian scripture and tradition: but it was difficult and troubling for elite members of an unequal, hierarchical society, as is apparent from the critical or defensive remarks found for example in the *Tatler* and the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and in the writings of Grove, Hume and Fordyce. Conversely those outside the elite could mobilize it against their supposed betters. Modesty bore a different freight: traditionally assigned to the young and to women, it had the potential to undermine masculine gender and authority. There was a clear difference from humility here, which was not gendered nor tied to a particular stage in the life cycle. Modesty could be degendered, however, and also deprived of its threat to authority, by understanding it as a key ingredient of politeness. As part of politeness it could become a marker of the cultivated and polished elite male. This is the way indicated by Watts, Catharine Macaulay, Fordyce, Chesterfield, Hume and Smith. Such a strategy for rendering it not merely acceptable for men, but also desirable, would not work for those who had doubts about politeness itself, for example Ferguson. Critics of politeness found an easy target in an affected humility, or in false modesty as notoriously proposed by Chesterfield. In spite of its gender neutrality, humility was no doubt more difficult for elite males. Clergymen such as Grove defended it as a masculine virtue, and in certain circumstances it could have tactical and theoretical value for men, as it did for Tillotson, Archbishop of Canterbury, as a support for an irenic stance, or for Edmund Burke, MP, champion of aristocracy, as a weapon against political radicalism; or for Adam Smith, as a consequence of his working-out of the theory of the impartial spectator.

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## The Invention of Female Biography

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### Abstract

This article reports on the Female Biography Project (FBP), an international scholarly collaborative, assembled in 2009 to produce the Chawton House Library Edition of Mary Hays's *Female biography; or, memoirs of illustrious and celebrated women from all ages and nations* (CHLE), in six volumes, originally published in 1803 (Pickering & Chatto, 2013, 2014).<sup>1</sup>

The invention of 'female biography' was Mary Hays's major, if still unacknowledged, contribution to Enlightenment culture.<sup>2</sup> After three years of intensive effort, Hays published *Female biography; or, memoirs of illustrious and celebrated women of all ages and countries: alphabetically arranged*, in six volumes, in late 1802, part of Richard Phillips's aggressive effort to corner the booming market for life-writing. *Female biography* was the first history of women since Christine de Pizan's *City of ladies* (1405), the first in English, the first compendium of women by either male or female compilers since Thomas Heywood's *Generall historie of women* (1624, 1657) to include rebellious and impious figures, and a compelling response to the 'great forgetting' of women in traditional histories. Following Pierre Bayle's strategy in his *Historical and critical dictionary* (1697), and complementing its Dissenting adaptation, *Biographia Britannica*, Hays sought out, discovered, researched, and compiled accounts of (approximately) 302 women's lives – the largest number ever assembled. This was a prodigious feat, albeit flawed, and still

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\* I appreciate the encouragement Grayson Ditchfield has provided for this article, and research support from Melanie Kelliher, Juliana Ossa Martinez, Daniella Polyak, Luz Santodomingo, and Sam Yelton.

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the article, I refer to Hays's original text as '*Female biography*'.

<sup>2</sup> Isabel Rivers, 'Biographical dictionaries and their uses from Bayle to Chalmers,' in Isabel Rivers ed., *Books and their readers in eighteenth-century England: new essays* (London, 2001), p.137.

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represents the most comprehensive recovery of the female past by the end of the Enlightenment.<sup>3</sup>

Like Hays's previous publications, the work provoked controversy, much of it critical of her principles of selection which, it was alleged, promoted skepticism and licentiousness.<sup>4</sup> Despite and

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<sup>3</sup> This article is an expansion of the 'Introduction' to the Chawton House Library Edition of *Female biography*, ed. Gina Luria Walker, v. 5, *Women's memoirs* parts II and III, pp. (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013, 2014), xi-xxx. For a chart of the 'female biographies' and the scholars and researchers who annotated each, please see <http://www.scribd.com/doc/190670349/List-of-Contributors-to-Memoirs-of-Women-s-Writing-Parts-II-and-III>. Additional sources include Gina Luria Walker, *Mary Hays (1759–1843): the growth of a woman's mind* (Surrey, 2005); *The idea of being free: a Mary Hays reader* (Peterborough, ON, 2005); "Energetic sympathies of truth and feeling": Mary Hays and rational dissent', *Intellectual exchanges: women and rational dissent*, in Gina Luria Walker and G M Ditchfield eds., Special issue of *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 26 (2010); Gina Luria Walker 'The two Marys: Hays writes Wollstonecraft', in *Called to civil existence: Mary Wollstonecraft's A vindication of the rights of woman*, ed. Enit K Steiner (Amsterdam, 2013), 259-285; Gina Luria Walker, 'Women's voices', in *The Cambridge companion to British literature of the French revolution in the 1790s*, ed. Pamela Clemit (Cambridge, 2011), pp.265-294; M L Brooks ed., *The correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British novelist* (Lewiston, 2004).

<sup>4</sup> Writing to a friend on 27 Jan. 1803, Lucy Aikin, the niece of poet Anna Barbauld, asked for her correspondent's view of Hays's 'singular work'. Aikin identified Hays as 'a great disciple of Mrs. Godwin, you know, and a zealous stickler for the' equal rights and equal talents of our sex with the other.' Aikin hastened to offer her own opinion: 'Alas, alas! Though Miss Hayes has wisely addressed herself to the ladies alone, I am afraid the gentlemen will get a peep at her book and repeat with tenfold energy that women have no business with anything but nursing children and mending stockings. I do not think her book is written quite in an edifying manner neither — the morals are too French for my taste.' Aikin distanced herself from Hays, yet was influenced by her when she wrote her own different history of

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because of this, it sold well enough to allow her to buy ‘a cabin’ of her own outside London. Hays intended her work to reach a wider audience than her earlier, more sectarian and political works; she wrote for a cohort of women privileged enough to be educated beyond the simple ‘letters and numbers’ of their working-class contemporaries, and higher on the socio-economic register. She was successful in that goal. For example, Lady Elizabeth Austen Knight received the six volumes as an anniversary gift from her eldest son in 1805, when they became part of the library at Godmersham, where Lady Elizabeth’s sister-in-law, Jane Austen, may have consulted Hays’s texts while she revised and composed her novels. Without fanfare, entries in *Female biography* quickly became the source for information about individual women’s lives, and the work itself served as an unofficial Rosetta Stone for the many compendia about women that appeared through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Hays was rarely acknowledged as the original author. Over time, the revolutionary subjects and perspectives of the work disappeared, and by the 1990s, *Female biography* was relegated to the critical dust bin of ‘hack work’.<sup>5</sup>

Kenneth R Johnston has recently described Hays as ‘a victim of prejudice if there ever was one.’<sup>6</sup> The characterization is apt, and not, and belies the passion, persistence, and productivity of her professional ambitions. Hays did not shy away from controversy: she defended her Dissenting associates when they came under internal and external attack; she was the only radical woman to support Wollstonecraft after her second, nearly successful, suicide attempt; she allied herself with William Godwin and the members of his circle, deploying her intimate correspondence with him and William Friend, the Cambridge mathematician who was barred from the

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women. *Memoirs, miscellanies and letters of the late Lucy Aikin*, ed. P H Le Breton (London, 1864), p.126.

<sup>5</sup> Garry Kelly, *Women, writing and revolution 1790-1827* (Oxford, 1993), p.234.

<sup>6</sup> *Unusual suspects: Pitt’s reign of alarm and the lost generation of the 1790s* (Oxford, 2013), p.6.

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University because of his defense of the execution of Louis XVI, in her explosive first 'fiction,' *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* (1796); she was one of the 'Wollstonecraftian band' that conservative Richard Polwhele excoriated in his *The unSex'd females* (1798). In the witch hunt by the government of Pitt the Younger against its critics, Hays was the witch.

Yet Hays refused to be a victim, like her character, Mary Raymond, in her second novel, *Victim of prejudice* (1799), the title taken from 'Letter XXVI' in Rousseau's *La nouvelle Heloise*. *Female biography* was and is a major form of resistance to prevailing social norms at the end of the Enlightenment, and a prescient example of alternative history and approaches to knowledge in our time.

Much modern scholarship emphasizes Hays's provocative textual *persona* in her correspondence and experimentation with genre in her two major novels.<sup>7</sup> These chart her frustration to be

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<sup>7</sup> See, for example, *Rebellious hearts: British women writers and the French Revolution*, ed. Adriana Craciun and Kari Lokke (Albany, NY, 2001); Tilottama Rajan, 'Unbinding the personal: auto-narration, epistolarity, and genotext in Mary Hays's *Memoirs of Emma Courtney*', in her *Romantic narrative: Shelley, Hays, Godwin, Wollstonecraft*, (Baltimore, Maryland, 2010), pp.82-116; Vivien Jones, "'The Tyranny of the passions': feminism and heterosexuality in the fiction of Wollstonecraft and Hays', *Political gender: texts and contexts*, eds. Sally Ledger, Josephine McDonagh, Jane Spencer (London, 1994), pp.173-88; Katherine Binhammer, 'The persistence of reading: governing female novel-reading in *Memoirs of Emma Courtney* and *Memoirs of modern philosophers*', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 27, no. 2 (Spring 2003), pp. 1-22; Brian Michael Norton, 'Emma Courtney, feminist ethics, and the problem of autonomy', *The Eighteenth Century*, v. 54, No. 3, (Fall, 2013); Mary Jacobus, "'the science of herself': scenes of female enlightenment', *Romanticism, history, and the possibilities of genre: re-forming literature, 1789-1837*, ed. Tilottama Rajan and Julia M Wright (Cambridge, 2006)

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recognized in the male Republic of Letters, her pursuit of ‘the idea of being *free*’ which her male associates enjoyed, and, like other women, her urgent desire to find sanctioned female satisfactions in love and marriage. She achieved none of these, by her own or her contemporaries’ standards. It is likely that Hays originally conceived the commission for Phillips as the means to further her interest in life-writing as a crucial ingredient of women’s reading, and, therefore, education, as well as a money-making enterprise. In the course of amassing women attested to in historical records, Hays discovered the larger project of *Female biography*. The mystery is how she did it, and what this can tell us about the gendering of knowledge in her time.

*Female biography* was a long time gestating, and drew on Hays’s omnivorous reading and intense conversations with a varied group of mainly male intellectuals. The December 1798, issue of the liberal *Monthly Magazine* announced that Mary Hays, a frequent contributor, had embarked on a ‘biographical work of great and lasting interest to the female world, to contain the lives of illustrious women, of all ages and nations.’ The timing of Hays’s enterprise is intriguing: she waited until after the devastating death of her professional associate and close friend Mary Wollstonecraft, in September 1797, to counter Wollstonecraft’s stern admonition against segregating exceptional women for attention. Although, as Mary Spongberg suggests, Wollstonecraft was writing her own ‘history’ of all women just before she died in her second, unfinished novel, *The wrongs of woman; or, Maria*.<sup>8</sup>

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240-69; Barbara Taylor, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the feminist imagination* (Cambridge, 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Mary Spongberg, ‘Remembering Wollstonecraft: Feminine Friendship, Female Subjectivity and the “invention” of the Feminist Heroine’, ed. Amy Culley and Daniel Cook *Women’s life writing: gender, genre and authorship 1700-1850* (London, 2012), pp.165-180; ‘Representing Woman: Historicising Women in the Age of Enlightenment’, ed. Ned Curthoys, Shino Konishi and Alex Cook,

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Wollstonecraft rejected both the idea and the practice of distinguishing ‘female worthies,’ traditionally pious women of some accomplishments.<sup>9</sup> In *A Vindication of the rights of woman* (1792), she described those women ‘who, from having received a masculine education, have acquired courage and resolution.’ At the conclusion of ‘Chapter IV. Observations on the State of Degradation to which Woman is Reduced by Various Causes’, Wollstonecraft argues that all women are degraded because of their lack of education. In a footnote she identifies several learned female figures – Sappho, Eloisa, Mrs. Macaulay, the Empress of Russia, Madame d’Eon, ‘&c’, to pose a question: ‘These and many more, may be reckoned exceptions; and are not all heroes, as well as heroines, exceptions to general rules?’ And provides her own answer: ‘I wish to see women neither heroines nor brutes; but reasonable creatures.’<sup>10</sup>

Like Hays and most female intellectuals, Wollstonecraft was an autodidact, with only ‘conditional access’<sup>11</sup> to ‘masculine

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*Representing humanity in the age of Enlightenment* (London, 2013), pp.27-39.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Taylor explains Wollstonecraft’s position, ‘Why should women’s mental reach be artificially curtailed, when their capacities were naturally equal to those of men? And, even more daringly, why should women’s minds be given over to domestic affairs when higher intellectual concerns beckon? The idea surfaces repeatedly in the *Rights of woman*, only to be undermined by Wollstonecraft’s insistence that it pertains only to an outstanding minority, who are not her political concern.... In a book devoted to the advancement of Everywoman, women of ‘rare abilities’ can be left to fend for themselves. One of the leading genres of eighteenth-century pro-woman writings was the collective biography of celebrated *savants*, but Wollstonecraft had no use for these’; *Mary Wollstonecraft and the feminist imagination*, ch. 2, ‘The female philosopher’, pp. 47-8.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A vindication of the rights of woman and the wrongs of woman, or Maria*, ed. A K Mellor and N Chao. (New York, 2006), p.101, n.51.

<sup>11</sup> Michele Le Doeuff, *The sex of knowing*, trans. Kathryn Hamer and Lorraine Code (New York, 2003), p.4.

education.’ She struggled with the ‘wild wish’<sup>12</sup> of her talent and ambition to become ‘a reasonable creature’. Wollstonecraft was determined to make her mark in the male Republic of letters by interrupting the conversation among ‘canonized forefathers’ to argue for women’s political rights.<sup>13</sup> By contrast, the prevailing impulse of Hays’s life was to know what learned men knew, and to transmute such knowledge into forms accessible to the majority of women. In her first book, *Letters and essays, moral, and miscellaneous* (1793), she resolved to extend enlightenment to her female contemporaries so that they, too, might learn ‘to use their own understanding,’ according to Immanuel Kant’s definition.<sup>14</sup> She recognized that even *femme philosophes* could be fallible and weak, not always heroic, sometimes not even amenable to reason. Women needed instruction to find themselves in the record of human progress.<sup>15</sup> The promise of education was everything for Hays, one of the foundations of her abiding Dissenting faith. ‘In the intellectual advancement of women and their consequent privileges in society’, she counseled in her *Memoirs of Mary Wollstonecraft* (1800), ‘is to be traced the progress of civilization, or knowledge gradually superseding the dominion of brute-force.’<sup>16</sup> The *Memoirs* of Wollstonecraft was Hays’s first

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<sup>12</sup> Barbara Taylor, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft and the wild wish of early feminism’, *History Workshop Journal* 33 (1992); ‘For the love of God: religion and the erotic imagination in Wollstonecraft’s feminism’, *Mary Wollstonecraft and 200 years of feminism*, ed. Eileen Janes Yeo (New York, 1997), pp.50-60.

<sup>13</sup> Wollstonecraft, *A vindication of the rights of men, in a letter to the right honourable Edmund Burke, occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn. London, 1790).

<sup>14</sup> Immanuel Kant, ‘What is Enlightenment?’

<sup>15</sup> Mary Spongberg comments, ‘While she drew on narratives created by men, she subtly shifted their focus, giving women agency, while also emphasizing the way in which the prejudices arising from the distinction of sex shaped their existence. In so doing she showed how exceptional women were nonetheless still formed and shackled by the constraints that bound all women’; ‘Representing Woman...’, pp. 27-39.

<sup>16</sup> Op.cit., p.423.



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‘female biography,’ providing the template for the others to come, demonstrating the common threads that linked Wollstonecraft’s extraordinary life with all women’s, whether educated, heroic, reasonable, or not.<sup>17</sup>

[CHLE includes the complete text of Hays’s *Memoirs*, published for the first time in its entirety, edited by Fiore Sireci in an appendix to CHLE Volume 10.]

At the heart of Hays’s project was the vexed question of female competence, shadowed by an obdurate misogyny that made women’s pursuit of the life of the mind perilous. British, French, and American reviewers of *Female biography* discerned this.

The work before us, [the male critic for *The Critical Review*<sup>18</sup> pronounced], ‘has been compiled to counteract the contempt in which some yet hold the female mind and in this intention it cannot fail to produce a powerful diversion in favour of the latter. Here, indeed, are ample materials, by which contending opinions may be repelled or confirmed. Those who exalt the capacity of the fair sex must expect to be asked for proofs; and what more striking than a body of evidence, which comprehends the characters and actions of the most illustrious women of all nations? For producing such a testimony, Miss Hays will probably receive the thanks of her sex; and, although we shall have occasion to produce some objections of considerable weight, we cannot, upon the whole, deny her the praise of much laudable zeal and industry.’

In *An Appeal to the men of Great Britain in behalf of women* (1791, 1798), Hays had earlier contributed anonymously to contemporary debate over ‘*l’égalité des deux sexes*,’ first articulated by Cartesian Poullain de la Barre in the seventeenth century. In *Female biography* she marshaled evidence of women’s achievements. These, she proclaimed, were incontestable evidence that ‘the mind has no sex’, signaling her awareness of the idea’s

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<sup>17</sup> Spongberg, ‘Representing Woman...’.

<sup>18</sup> *The critical review; or, annals of literature; extended and improved*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Series, v. 37 (London, 1803), pp.415-24.

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historical roots.<sup>19</sup> Women had always been active culturally, but descriptions of them as ‘learned’ still gave no quarter to those, like Hays who desired to pursue the life of the mind, but had to work hard on her own in order to be ‘learned,’ and against the explicit and implicit sanctions which prohibited women from gaining a classical education and the title of scholar. Even in an ‘age of enlightenment,’ only classically educated men could be confidently erudite.

As an artifact, the small volumes of *Female biography* were intended for women’s hands, and, a place alongside other biographical dictionaries in the libraries of learned men. Hays conspicuously identified her work with Pierre Bayle (1647-1706) and his provocative *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697). Bayle’s *Dictionary* provided an intentionally controversial context for *Female biography*: his strategy was to focus on individuals that had been ignored, written out, and, in his view, made hostage to sectarian conflicts, as vehicles for correcting the perpetuation of historical mistakes based on ignorance, superstition, and fear. Bayle’s *Dictionary* teemed with obscure figures, as well as his correctives about famous ones. Bayle’s tactic in his entries and extensive footnotes suggested to Hays a way to rationalize her compendium of women. Women attested in historical records had been criticized, ignored, trivialized, manipulated, and mistrusted. They had been deliberately slandered because they were women who dared to create stories about themselves, in spite of the Christian imperative that each daughter of Eve be chaste, submissive, and still, and behave like every other. Individuating women in *Female biography* was a crucial element of the situational feminism<sup>20</sup> Hays had been developing with Wollstonecraft before the latter’s sudden death, as well as a strategy for social change.

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<sup>19</sup> Phyllis Thompson, ‘Elizabeth Bury’, in Mary Hays, *Female biography* (1803), *Chawton House Library Series: women’s memoirs*, ed. Gina Luria Walker, *Memoirs of women writers Part II* (London, 2013), vol. 6, pp.69-73, editorial notes, pp.417-18.

<sup>20</sup> Harriet Guest, *Small change: Women, learning, patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago, 2000), p. 14.

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In addition, Hays adopted the Enlightenment intent of Bayle's *Dictionary*. CHLE scholar Susannah Åkerman writes, in doing so, 'Hays foresees a new woman who will free herself by thinking anew about her position in society by being inspired by all these female role models - who show that their roles are not to submit to preconceived opinions about a Christian woman's role but to display the women's lives in their full variety.'<sup>21</sup> Mary Spongberg points to the central role of biography and collective 'lives' in the 'intellectual culture of Rational Dissent in the late eighteenth century.'<sup>22</sup> Hays educated herself in the dissenting legacy of writing lives that perpetuated a separate history to provide real examples of courageous and ethical men for the living to emulate. In Hays's hands, this practice was transformed into 'female biography,' the stories of real women's experiences as the means to distinguish specific historical agents, assemble the striking number of learned women, the new knowledge they produced, the linkages between and among them and men, and, to the extent the information was available, their actual contributions.<sup>23</sup>

Her own access to higher learning depended on informal apprenticeships in the mental world of predominantly male Dissent. After the sudden death of her Baptist lover and 'monitor,' John Eccles, in 1780, Hays sought out a series of Nonconformist mentors: Robert Robinson, George Dyer, John Disney, Hugh Worthington, William Frend, William Godwin, and, especially, Joseph Priestley, from his residence in London until his emigration to Pennsylvania in 1794. Priestly may have been instrumental in the appearance of a three-volume American edition of *Female biography* in 1807: the printers Birch (sometimes spelled 'Byrch'), and Small, and sold by

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<sup>21</sup> Susanna Åkerman to Gina Luria Walker, 28 Aug. 2012, personal communication (email).

<sup>22</sup> M Spongberg, 'Mary Hays and Mary Wollstonecraft and the Evolution of Dissenting Feminism', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 26 (2010), pp. 230-58, at p.254.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p.256.

Fry and Kammerer,<sup>24</sup> were connected with the First Unitarian Society of Philadelphia, whose founders Priestley encouraged. A copy of *Female biography* was included in the sale catalogue of Priestley's library at his death.

'Female biography', both the concept and the volumes, was also the confluence of Hays's long interest in the actual experiences of women, her own experiments with writing 'drawn from truth,'<sup>25</sup> and her changing understanding of misogyny and abiding gender prejudice. As a result of her immersion in Dissenting print culture and pedagogy, Hays was, as I have noted, one of the late Enlightenment female thinkers to explore the possibility that Rational Dissent, to date solidly male, had potential to become something more inclusive and more radical, that its optimistic view of human nature, its commitment to theological inquiry, its willingness to tolerate heterodoxy, and its profound belief in progressive education gestured toward a new kind of human equality and freedom: enlightened feminism.<sup>26</sup>

Informed by the trenchant empiricism of her Dissenting mentors, Hays (likely unknowingly) deployed individual biography as 'perfect history', exemplifying Frances Bacon's definition in *The advancement of learning* (1605)<sup>27</sup> as subjective accounts that

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<sup>24</sup> On June 12, 1796, twenty of Philadelphia's intellectual leaders formed the First Unitarian Society of Philadelphia, becoming the first continuously functioning church in the country to name itself 'Unitarian'. The founders were directed and encouraged by the Unitarian minister Joseph Priestley, and its first settled minister was the Rev. Dr. William Henry Furness

<sup>25</sup> Mary Hays to Hugh Worthington, 3 July 1792, in private hands.

<sup>26</sup> See Gina Luria Walker, "'Energetic sympathies of truth and feeling': Mary Hays and rational dissent", *Intellectual exchanges..., Enlightenment and Dissent*, 26 (2010), p.260.

<sup>27</sup> Bacon wrote, '**History, which may be called just and perfect history, is of three kinds**, according to the object which it propoundeth or pretendeth to represent: for it either representeth a time, or a person, or an actions. The first we call chronicles, the second lives, and the third narrations or relations. [--] Of these, although the

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illuminated a cultural moment, as well as a private one. ‘Female biography’ signaled that women’s lives were played out differently than men’s in every social, economic and political dimension, and in the face of the threats and sanctions associated with relentless gender intolerance. Each woman’s experience was idiosyncratic as she resisted social expectations, and, in the details, told her own ‘perfect history’ as a constituent part of the uncharted history of all women, in addition to the chronological moment.

The Dissenters who mentored Hays held themselves to the highest standards of learning and objectivity. Education – moral and political, as well as cognitive – informed their lives. In their differing interactions with her, they supplied her with books, discussed ideas, edited her writing, and, to the extent possible, shared glimpses of the mysteries of classical male training, even encouraging her to attempt the study of geometry and philosophy. Robert Roberson exposed her to the record of historical dissent, providing his own translations of the works of Huguenot theologians Jaques Saurin and Jean Claude that included an account of the turbulent French Wars of Religion.

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first be the most complete and absolute kind of history, and hath most estimation and glory, yet the second excelleth it in profit and use, and the third in verity and sincerity. For history of times representeth the magnitude of actions, and the public faces and deportments of persons, and passeth over in silence the smaller passages and motions of men and matters. [--] But such being the workmanship of God, as He doth hang the greatest weight upon the smallest wires, MAXIMA È MINIMIS SUSPENDENS, it comes therefore to pass, that such histories do rather set forth the pomp of business than the true and inward resorts thereof. **But lives, if they be well written, propounding to themselves a person to represent in whom actions both greater and smaller, public and private, have a commixture, must of necessity contain a more true, native, and lively representation.** Bacon, Francis. *The advancement of learning: book two* (1605). *Renaissance: an online repository of works printed in english between the years 1477 and 1799*. Copyright 1998 Dr. Hartmut Krech, Bremen, Germany (kr538@zfn.uni-bremen.de). April 20, 2001. My emphasis, at: <<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/adv2.htm>>.

In his sermons that Hays heard and read, Robinson insisted on ‘the right to private judgement’ and ‘universal toleration’.<sup>28</sup> ‘I love the inquisitive, the reasoned, who never takes mysayso, and who wants to know the why, and the wherefore’, he wrote Hays in March 1789.<sup>29</sup>

Hays met Joseph Priestley, perhaps through George Dyer, after the Birmingham Riots in July 1791, when Priestley was at a turning point in his life, and they spent time conversing together.<sup>30</sup> Sometime that year, she professed Unitarianism, likely influenced by Priestley.<sup>31</sup> In his sermons, publications, and conversation, Priestley offered Hays a comprehensive approach to history, a way to conceptualize and structure an account of the uncharted female past. Alison Kennedy advises, that for Priestley, ‘History provided an “anticipated knowledge of the world” which was a “better guide to us, than any thing [sic] we could have learned from our own random experience.”...In other words, the way in which we chose to make use of our appreciation and understanding of the past guided us toward the glories of the times that were destined to come.’<sup>32</sup> Hays read Priestley’s *Lectures on history and general policy* (1788) and *The history and present state of electricity* (1767) which offered methods of presentation and instruction to advance the instructional life-writing she had experimented with in *Letters and essays, moral and miscellaneous* (1793), her correction to the traditional ‘conduct book’ for women. The work, praised by Theophilus Lindsey and

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<sup>28</sup> Gina Luria Walker, ‘Brief encounter: Robert Robinson and the right to private judgment’, *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 24 (2008), pp.54-70.

<sup>29</sup> Gina Luria Walker, ‘An Age of Controversy’, in *The growth of a woman’s mind*, p.43.

<sup>30</sup> See David L Wykes, ‘Joseph Priestley, minister and teacher’, in Rivers and Wykes eds., *Joseph Priestley*, pp.45-7 and *passim*.

<sup>31</sup> Wykes, ‘Joseph Priestley’, p.48.

<sup>32</sup> Alison Kennedy, ‘Historical perspectives in the mind of Joseph Priestley’, in Rivers & Wykes eds., *Joseph Priestley* (2008), p.176. Kennedy’s quotations are from Priestley’s, *Lectures on history and general policy*, ed. J T Rutt (London 1840), p.38.

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other Unitarians, was blasted by conservative critics. *The Critical Review* expressed the majority view:<sup>33</sup> ‘The pupils of Mrs. Wollstonecraft actually invalidate, these specimens of themselves, the very doctrines which they are laboring to establish. Proudly to vaunt their intellectual powers, and to exhibit, at the same instant, the most “damning proofs” of mental imbecility, has (providentially, we had almost said) been the fate of these literary ladies.’<sup>34</sup>

Enthusiasm for life-writing permeated the culture of Dissent.<sup>35</sup> Hays knew distinguished scholars, writers, educators, translators, and bibliophiles within her Unitarian network with special interest in historical biography: Andrew Kippis, editor of the *Biographia Britannica*, and Joseph Towers, his assistant editor; William Beloe; William Tooke, the Elder, and his son, William Tooke, the Younger; John Aikin, Anna Barbauld, Rochemont Barbauld, and William Enfield, who at the time of his death was collaborating with John Aikin on a general biographical dictionary.<sup>36</sup> Reading lives was an essential part of Hays’s self-education, as it was of Priestley’s New College curricula. But when she decided to write a general biographical dictionary of women, Hays entered uncharted terrain.

### **The English Baylean Folio Dictionary**

Hays aspired to produce a dictionary modeled on Bayle’s.<sup>37</sup> Isabel Rivers writes, ‘With the death of Kippis, the English Baylean folio

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<sup>33</sup> Karen O’Brien, ‘Mary Hays recommended biography as a way of writing history in her *Letters and essays, moral and miscellaneous* (1793), before producing her own six-volume *Female biography* in 1803’. ‘The history market in eighteenth-century England’, in Rivers ed. *Books and their readers*, p.127.

<sup>34</sup> *The English Review*, 22L pp.253-7.

<sup>35</sup> Mary Spongberg, ‘Remembering Wollstonecraft...’.

<sup>36</sup> R K Webb, ‘Enfield, William (1741–1797), *Unitarian minister*’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* (Oxford, 2004).

<sup>37</sup> Richard Yeo distinguishes between ‘an Enlightenment notion of the encyclopedia as a set of volumes containing a comprehensive summary of knowledge [that] highlight one version of the

dictionary died too.' *Female biography* may be an exception to this conclusion. Rivers continues, 'This does not mean that its reputation collapsed.' Rivers identifies the demanding characteristics of the English Baylean dictionary as, 'the love of detail, the urge to fill columns of notes with quotations, the struggle to keep up with recent publications in order to remain true to Bayle's original concept of the dictionary as a library', and advises that these eventually brought about its 'extinction'. Kippis confided that sometimes he read sixteen hours a day. Working on the *Biographia Britannica*, he could compile and write as many hours as he chose because in his voluminous library the sources for his 'lives' stood at the ready. Gwyn Walters' account of the sale of Kippis's library after his death attests to the extent of Kippis's private resources which included 'in excess of sixty volumes of collective biography.'<sup>38</sup> Kippis 'always cited his authorities, and never referred to a book which he had not seen. If his information came from secondary sources, he cited those sources. He thought it an essential aspect of the *Biographia* to provide details of the writings of learned men and the controversies to which they gave occasion.' Although he had assistance, 'Kippis' desire for a dictionary that would be among other things a record of literary history and a conveniently accessible library is perfectly consistent with Bayle's original plan, but in the face of the publishing explosion of the late eighteenth century it was manifestly impossible. Kippis had seriously misjudged the time and space needed to bring the *Biographia* up to date on this model'.<sup>39</sup>

Easy access to a wealth of material combined with his own extensive learning enabled Kippis to produce biographies that he

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encyclopedia we have lost: namely, the original Greek notion of ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία [*enkyklios paideia*], or instruction in the circle of subjects considered the basis of a liberal education, 'Ephraim Chambers's *cyclopædia* (1728) and the Tradition of Commonplaces', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57.1 (1996), pp. 157-175.

<sup>38</sup> Gwyn Walters, 'The auction sale catalogue (1796) of the library of Andrew Kippis, "Literary ornament of the dissenters",' *The Price-Priestley Newsletter*, no. 3 (1979), p.73.

<sup>39</sup> Rivers ed., *Books and their readers*, pp. 157, 158.



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confidently advertised in the preface to his first edition. His reader, he announced, would 'find 'a BRITISH TEMPLE OF HONOUR, sacred to the piety, learning, valour, publick-spirit, loyalty, and every other glorious virtue of our ancestors, and ready also for the reception of the WORTHIES of our OWN TIME, and the HEROES OF POSTERITY'.<sup>40</sup>

The making of *Female biography* was necessarily different. Hays knew 'male' was synonymous with 'learned,' and that men set the standard for a level of erudition she could not hope to achieve.<sup>41</sup> She had no illusions about her claims to classical scholarship, or her fluency with the forms of thought in which learned men customarily communicated with each other. She recognized that her capacity for inter-textual dialogue with the sources she located was seriously circumscribed by her lack of familiarity with their roles in the diffusion of ideas. In *Cursory remarks* (1791), her first published pamphlet, she had assumed the guise of 'Eusebia,' the Greek word for 'piety', with connection to the historical roots of Unitarianism, that likely suggested to readers the 'good Eusebia' in William Law's popular and influential *A serious call to a devout and holy life* (1728). Despite Eusebia's association with wisdom, Hays had been careful to set a low benchmark for her readers' expectations for her performance. Her reply to linguist Gilbert Wakefield's blast against public or social worship opened with a description of herself which combined a default female apology and an ironic modesty that underscored Wakefield's authorial arrogance.

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<sup>40</sup> 'It was a monumental achievement of scholarship, not only on Kippis's part but also on that of the contributors whom he employed. The first volume appeared in 1778, the second in 1780, the third in 1784, the fourth in 1789, and the fifth in 1793, ending with Fastolf.' Alan Ruston, 'Kippis, Andrew (1725–1795)', *ODNB* (2004); online edn. Jan 2008 <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15642>, accessed 2 July 2014

<sup>41</sup> See Siep Stuurman, 'Social cartesianism: François Poulain de la Barre and the origins of the Enlightenment,' *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58.4 (1997), pp.617-40.

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Should Mr. Wakefield take the trouble of perusing the following pages, [she began,] he will probably charge the writer with great presumption; a woman, young, unlearned, unacquainted with any language but her own; possessing no other merit than a love of truth and virtue, an ardent desire of knowledge, and a heart susceptible to the affecting and elevated emotions afforded by a pure and rational devotion.<sup>42</sup>

This Eusebia labored under the handicaps of having no institutional credentials; she was ignorant of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Aramaic, or Chaldee, as well as modern languages, except French. Crucially, she lacked training in disputation that translating and parsing original texts provided. She acknowledged her circumscribed, because gendered, understanding.

The 'Preface' to *Female biography* conceded its limitations and the unique challenges to its subjects and author. Hays disavowed the possibility of providing 'an account, however concise, of every woman who, either by her virtues, her talents, or the peculiarities of her fortune, has rendered herself illustrious or distinguished, would, notwithstanding the disadvantages civil and moral under which the sex has labored, embrace an extent and require sources of information, which few individuals, however patient in labour or indefatigable in research, could compass or command.'<sup>43</sup>

Bayle included 165 entries for women. Kippis's editorial predecessor, Oldys, included sixteen female figures in the first edition of the *Biographia Britannica*. In the five volumes, halfway through the 'F's,' that he lived to complete, Kippis included eleven. Available compilations about women were classified by specific category: piety or its absence, nationality, historical period, or other narrowly defined parameters. No comprehensive biographical

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<sup>42</sup> [Hays, Mary], *Cursory remark on an enquiry into the expediency and propriety of public or social worship: inscribed to Gilbert Wakefield, B.A....by Eusebia*. (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., London, 1792), p.1.

<sup>43</sup> For the full text of Hays's 'Preface', please see Appendix 1.

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dictionary existed, devoted only to women, as inclusive as the one Hays planned.<sup>44</sup> There was no benchmark to exceed, no information about the same figures to correct and amplify, no operational definition for selection. In the process of researching women for her dictionary, Hays invented ‘female biography’ as a discrete empirical category of knowledge production because, like any Enlightenment thinker, she deduced that the data demanded a new genus that did not yet exist.

Without a precedent, Hays turned to Bayle’s *Dictionary* from which she selected fifty-eight women;<sup>45</sup> she included ten from Kippis’s *Biographia Britannica*. She consulted the recently published *A new and general biographical dictionary*, London, 1798, edited by William Tooke and others, as well as sources at the ready about women other compilers had produced. She wrote her friends, including Robert Southey to ask for the materials he had used for his *Joan of Arc* (1796). In reply, Southey asked their mutual acquaintance, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to serve as go-between. When Hays picked up the books Southey had sent her at Coleridge’s apartments, he famously complained to Southey, ‘To hear a Thing, ugly and petticoated...I do not endure it!’<sup>46</sup>

In her ‘Preface’, surveying all she had located and learned, she announced, ‘Yet no character of eminence will, in the following work, I trust, be found omitted, except among those who have nearer to our times; of whom, for reasons unnecessary to be detailed, but few have been brought forward.’<sup>47</sup> Previous commentators have usually read this last as code for the omission of Wollstonecraft, although Hays was already ‘writing’ Wollstonecraft in the memoirs

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<sup>44</sup> See Alison Booth’s account of female prosopography in *How to make it as a woman. Collective biographical history from Victoria to the present* (Chicago, 2004).

<sup>45</sup> See Appendix 3.

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Selected letters*, ed. E L Griggs (Oxford, 1966), I, p.563.

<sup>47</sup> See Appendix 1.

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published in 1800 in Phillips's short lived *The annual necrology for 1796-7*.<sup>48</sup>

The memoir of Wollstonecraft formed the template for Hays's collective biographies of other women, allowing her to link Wollstonecraft's struggle to the universal condition of women's lives. *Female biography* expressed Hays's views on reputation, manners, and attitudes as these were filtered through millennia of male intolerance toward women and women's surrender of the power to control their own lives because they lacked the knowledge to resist. With the memoir of Wollstonecraft already published, Hays now chose women who embodied the values she and Wollstonecraft had defined together. Among them two women Wollstonecraft had known, Manon Roland, Girondist martyr of the French Revolution, and Catharine Macaulay, pioneering historian of English liberties. Women's self-writing was an integral element of Hays's portraits,<sup>49</sup> as well as the assessments, positive and negative, of their contemporaries. Hays quoted big swatches of text from the recent English translation of Roland's posthumous *Appeal to impartial posterity* (1795).<sup>50</sup>

There were no sources for a biography of Catharine Macaulay, so Hays did original research by tracking down Macaulay's second husband's sister for accurate information that refuted the disgrace of Macaulay's marriage to a much younger man. Notably, Hays included a list of Macaulay's publication at the end of the 'female biography.' Hays brought together for the first time productive women in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy like Hypatia, 'Newtonian' Laura Bassi, and Émilie Du Châtelet ; members of the

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<sup>48</sup> See Walker, 'The two Marys: Hays writes Wollstonecraft' and Spongberg, 'Representing Woman...'

<sup>49</sup> Isabel Rivers advises, 'Citations and abridgements in other works were frequently inaccurate, hence judicious readers had ceased to trust them. The solution was to quote writers' own words as fully as possible,' *Books and their readers*, p.138.

<sup>50</sup> See Philip Hicks, 'Women Worthies and Feminist Argument in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Women's History Review*, DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2014.945795, published online: 13 Aug 2014

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‘new genus’ of professional women writers; women who led armies, forged political alliances, initiated apostolic revivals, achieved fluency in eleven languages, painted, travelled, and the many queens who, Hays posited, were exceptional as the sole class of females positioned to deploy real power.<sup>51</sup>

Like any biographer, Hays’s choice of subjects involved judgments based on class, race, education, theological persuasion, and political partisanship, colored by her own perspectives as female, Unitarian, critic of George III’s policies, and autodidact. Following Kippis, Hays pledged in her Preface that she had been evenhanded in her treatment of the diverse collection, choosing, as Mary Spongberg suggests, to judge her subjects ‘relative to the circumstances in which they found themselves’. This challenged the sense created in conjectural history ‘that the state of “woman” merely reflected the state of civilization.’<sup>52</sup> Hays confirmed that ‘Unconnected with any party, and disdaining every species of bigotry, I have endeavored in general, to serve the cause of truth and of virtue. Every character has been judged upon its own principles; the reflections, sparingly interwoven, have been such as naturally arose out of the subject; nor have I ever gone out of my way in favour of sects or systems.’

Her commitment was to her female readership: ‘My pen has been taken up in the [cause](#), and for the benefit, of my own sex. For their improvement, and to their entertainment, my labours have been devoted.’ She elucidated her pedagogical approach, and the differences in instructing a female audience:

‘Women, unsophisticated by the [pedantry](#) of the schools, read not for dry information, to load their memories with uninteresting facts, or to make a display of a vain erudition. A skeleton biography

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<sup>51</sup> Arianne Chernock, ‘Gender and the Politics of Exceptionalism in the Writing of British Women’s History: Queens, Warriors, and Other Worthies’, *Making women’s histories: beyond national perspectives*, ed. Pamela Nadell and Kate Haulman (New York 2013), pp. 115-136.

<sup>52</sup> Mary Spongberg, ‘Representing Woman...’.(Kindle edn.) location 1007.

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would afford to them but little gratification: they require pleasure to be mingled with instruction, lively images, the graces of sentiment, and the polish of language. Their understandings are principally accessible through their [affections](#): they delight in minute [delineation](#) of character; nor must the truths which impress them be either cold or unadorned.’

Uniting Wollstonecraft’s political critique with her own deepest feminist aspirations, she explained, ‘I have at heart the happiness of my sex, and their advancement in the grand scale of rational and social existence. I perceive, with mingled concern and indignation, the follies and vices by which they suffer themselves to be degraded.’

The authorial authority emerges from Hays’s experience as a veteran of the battle of the sexes, as well as teacher, champion, and biographer of women. She predicted that the ‘female biographies’ she had assembled would inspire her readers to progress beyond the intellectual and moral confines imposed on them.

She cautioned her readers that enlightenment could not be achieved in simple linear progression:

‘If, through prudence or policy, the generous contention between the sexes for intellectual equality must be waived, be not, my amiable country-women, poorly content with the destination of the slaves of an [Eastern haram](#), with whom the season of youth forms the whole of life! A woman who to the graces and gentleness of her own sex, adds the knowledge and fortitude of the other, exhibits the most perfect combination of human excellence [a description she included in her first obituary of Wollstonecraft]. Let not the cold sarcasms of the pedant stifle your generous [ardour](#) in the pursuit of what is praise-worthy: substitute, as they fade, for the [evanescent](#) graces of youth, the more durable attractions of a cultivated mind.’

### **A generous man and his library**

‘The durable attractions of a cultivated mind’ required access to knowledge. The surviving correspondence between Hays and her circles attests to her frequent use of the extensive library of William

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Tooke, the Elder, and his son, William Tooke, the Younger. No record has been found of the precise contents or sale of the Tookes' private library. Reading back from the plethora of sources Hays tells us she consulted, or that scholars demonstrated she used, as well as the still irretrievable information in some of her entries, it is likely that in the Tookes's library in their home in [Great Ormond Street](#), Bloomsbury, she found much of what she sought, and more. It is even possible that she was emboldened to propose a 'Baylean folio biographical dictionary' to Phillips because in 1792 Tooke initiated a revision of the *General Biographical Dictionary* which was completed in 1798. Tooke the Elder was renowned for his erudition; an early project was a translation from the Chaldee of *The loves of Othniel and Achsah* (1769). He was well-travelled and his bibliophilic interests extended far beyond Great Britain. We can conjecture that the Tooke collection included many of the rare, even arcane, sources Hays consulted. Perhaps Tooke himself offered counsel to Hays as she identified, located, and amassed her subjects.<sup>53</sup>

**The Chawton House Library Edition (CHLE): Retracing Hays's Paths**

Jennie Batchelor, CHLE Editorial Board, invited me to be editor of the Chawton House Library Series edition of *Female biography*, part of the Chawton House Library *Memoirs of women* series, in July 2009. Since 2003, Chawton House has emerged as one of the premier sites for research on historical women, a galvanizing force in the great engine of contemporary feminist empirical scholarship to discover, recover, and reclaim earlier female thinkers. I accepted the

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<sup>53</sup> 'In the hospitable and liberal enjoyment of a large and distinguished social circle, of which he was, on most occasions, the centre and the life, he, by the exercise of a lively recollection, and happy adaptation, of interesting anecdotes, collected in the court of Catharine, rendered them readily available for the purposes of the most entertaining and instructive conversation. 'Memorials of the family of Tooke', *The Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronicle, for the year 1839*, v. 166, p. 605.

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invitation gladly. Immediately, I recognized that the Female Biography Project (FBP), as it came to be called, would provide a laboratory and, eventually, a roadmap of the sources about women available to an autodidactic woman at the end of the English Enlightenment. I also recognized that I could not do it alone. Happily, I did not have to. Over the past forty years a critical mass of information has been generated about earlier women. In the process, there are now specialists in the lives of individual female figures or the female networks in the period in which a woman was active, or in the emerging scholarship on a woman's 'career' as queen, composer, politician, scientist, warrior, martyr, courtesan, prophetess, philosopher, linguist, writer, or 'learned lady', a category of compelling interest to Hays. This cohort offered a rich recruiting ground. Scholars of historical women's lives, texts, circles, interactions with canonical men, the new knowledge they produced, and their contributions to cultural and scientific understanding, have been quick to make use of new digital technology in inventive and democratizing ways. Here was an unprecedented opportunity to reclaim Hays's neglected text and burnish it with new information. I recruited feminist historian Mary Spongberg, then Professor of History at Macquarie University, to be FBP History Editor, and Koren Whipp, an honors undergraduate at the time who went on to a degree in Historical Studies at the New School for Social Research, to be Webmistress and Project Manager.<sup>54</sup> Others quickly joined the project as volunteer administrators and researchers.

On her own initiative, Koren created a private FBP website. She began by searching for images for each of Hays's subjects, as well as accurate spelling of names, birth and death dates, and anything else that would be useful to the collaborative. We devised pages to help scholars navigate Hays's idiosyncrasies, links to electronic databases and individual sources, as well as web pages for everyone involved the project. We encouraged participants to contact each other and the editorial staff through the website, and this proved

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<sup>54</sup> Her compilation of bibliographic citations from *Female biography* is printed as Appendix 2.



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immensely helpful as we encountered mysteries and puzzles trawling through the original six volumes.

Our efforts were greatly facilitated by the gift of both facsimile and modern type PDFs for each of the entries produced by Steven van Leeuwen, another of my gifted students and the founder of [bartleby.com](http://bartleby.com), the first textual website on the Internet.

The major editorial decisions involved organizing and annotating the 300 plus entries. The obvious strategy was to invite a specialist scholar to pair with each of Hays's subjects, and provide student research assistance, at the scholar's request. As the pairing of 'female biography' and specialist began, it was obvious that the variety of languages, academic disciplines, historical periods, cultural idiosyncrasies, and sources required differing kinds of review. We created section editorships: Greek, Latin, two English editors for earlier and later figures, French and Spanish, Italian, Miscellaneous, a general History editor, and a network of internal editors to vet the submissions and prepare them for publication, according to the Pickering & Chatto Editorial Guidelines. These included Editorial Editor, Submissions Editor, and Editorial Liaison, supported by Editorial Assistants. CHLE evolved into a collaborative feminist production that would probably astonish Hays.

I designed the editorial project to be genuinely collaborative and inherently pedagogical, taking advantage of our collective learning, as well as the partnerships between senior and junior scholars. The project took four years to complete, two years for the first set of annotations, two years for the second. When we submitted the manuscript for the last three volumes in September 2013, the Female Biography Project constituted 164 scholars, representing 116 institutions in eighteen countries, including academic luminaries and apprentices. New School University generously supported two 'Annotations Workshops' in which far flung scholars came together in New York to discuss the complexities of producing the edition.

According to our findings, *Female biography* included women of whom 94 were identified as English, 63 French, 33 Roman, 30 Italian, 28 Greek, 19 Miscellaneous, 8 Spanish, 6 German, 5 Irish, 3

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Scottish, 2 North American, 2 Polish, 1 Belgian, as well as a few figures from non-western cultures. We further categorized the biographies by careers and periodicity: Actors; Classical figures; Musicians, Singers; Nuns, Abbesses, Mystics; Painters; Playwrights; Renaissance, 17<sup>th</sup> English and French, respectively; 18<sup>th</sup> English and French, respectively. We found forty-three entries with embedded sources and forty-three entries with no sources at all<sup>55</sup> (not identical). Many of the entries Hays produced were copied verbatim or nearly so from her sources. In others, she interpreted or otherwise revised sources. When possible, she inserted herself into her text like Bayle. Hays's authorial activity depended on what she could access.

The entry for 'Anonymous' reveals the difficulties Hays encountered in her search for Baylean accuracy and detail, and that we faced in attempting to retrace her steps. In the 'Alphabetical Table of Contents' in the first volume of *Female biography*, when the reader turned to the list of figures under 'A' in volume 1, she would find 'Anonymous,' between Anne Wharton and Antoinette Bourignon, with a note, 'See letter C.' The entry for 'Anonymous' is also listed among the 'C's, between Cornaro, Helena Lucretia and Cornelia, 'mother of the Gracchi,' in Volume 3. No explanation is given for this.

Hays's entry reads:

**Anonymous**

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<sup>55</sup> In 'Plundering Philosophers', the authors note, 'The identification of sources material used by the *philosophes* is a massive undertaking in itself, as the authors rarely acknowledged the works upon which they relied in writing their contributions', *Plundering philosophers: Identifying sources of the Encyclopédie*, Timothy Allen, Charles Cooney, Stéphane Douard, Russell Horton, Robert Morrissey, Mark Olsen, Glenn Roe, Robert Voyer, *Journal of the Association for History and Computing*, vol. 13, no. 1, Spring 2010.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3310410.0013.107>

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[III.p.438] A DAUGHTER of a Boulognois gentleman, in the 13th century, devoted herself to the study of the Latin language, and of the laws. At the age of three-and-twenty she pronounced, in the great church at Boulogne, a funeral oration in Latin, which obtained, for its eloquence, great applause. At twenty-six, she took the degree of doctor, and undertook to read publicly, at her house, the *Institutions of Justinian*. At thirty, her reputation raised her to the chair of the professor, where she taught the law to a concourse of people of all nations. To masculine knowledge, she added all the elegance of her sex, and it was only when she spoke that her hearers forgot her beauty. The same example was, in the same city, renewed in the 14th century, and again in the 15th. Also, in more modern times, the philosophic chair of Boulogne has been filled with distinction by a woman.

There is no citation for this entry, and FBP scholars been unable to suggest any sources that Hays would plausibly have accessed. Koren Whipp found six possible figures, including Laura Bassi, Newtonian physicist. Bassi specialist Marta Cavazza added another two to Anonymous to bring the possible total to 8 women, but there may be more we have not yet uncovered,

The eight figures identified include:

**Bettisia Gozzadini** Marta Cavazza advises that Gozzadini may not have existed

**Novella d'Andrea**, (b. in Bologna-d.1333), an Italian legal scholar and professor in law at the university of Bologna.

**Bettina d'Andrea**, (b. in Bologna-d.1335), an Italian legal scholar and professor in law and philosophy at the University of Padua.

**Maddalena Bonsignori**, professor of law at the University of Bologna from 1380 to 1396.

**Dorotea Bocchi**, graduate in medicine In 1436, who succeeded her father in teaching duties and therefore continued to educate students from all over Europe, gaining a profit of one hundred pounds.

**Laura Bassi** (1711-78), one of Bologna's most celebrated women teachers who was made lecturer in philosophy in 1733 and in experimental physics in 1776. She studied logic, metaphysics, philosophy, chemistry, hydraulics, mathematics, algebra, geometry, and modern and ancient languages, and is credited with being among the 'Newtonian women' who encouraged the diffusion of Newtonian physics.<sup>56</sup>

**Milancia dell'Ospedale**, wife to Giovanni d'Andrea, and mother to Bettina and Novella.

**Giovanna Bianchetti** a Latin specialist of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Cavazza and Whipp identified as sources for this information C. Ghirardacci, *Della Historia di Bologna*, part 1, Bologne (1596), noting, 'His primary sources are unknown.'<sup>57</sup> There is no way to verify whether Tooke's library held this work.

A sampling of the scholarship on several entries reveals some of what we discovered.

### 'Hildegurdus'

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<sup>56</sup> 'The tradition of the medieval learned women was recalled in 1732 by the Bologna senate as a precedent for the degree in philosophy and the chair assigned in 1732 to Laura Maria Caterina Bassi (1711-1778),' P. Findlen, 'Science as a career in Enlightenment Italy,' 'The strategies of Laura Bassi,' *Isis*, 84, (1993), pp. 441-69; G. Berti Logan, 'The desire to contribute,' *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994), pp. 785-812; M. Cavazza, 'Laura Bassi e il suo gabinetto di fisica sperimentale,' *Nuncius*, 10 (1995), pp. 715-53; B. Ceranski, 'Und sie fürchet sich vor niemanden'. *Über die physikerin Laura Bassi (1711-1778)*, Frankfurt-New York, 1996.

<sup>57</sup> C Ghirardacci, *Della historia di bologna*, part 2, Bologne (1669); N. P. Alidosi, *I dottori bolognesi di teologia, filosofia, medicina e arti liberali dall'anno 1000 al 1623*, Bologne (1623); P A Orlandi, *Notizie degli scrittori bolognesi*, Bologne (1714); G. Fantuzzi, *Notizie degli scrittori Bolognesi* (Bologna: S. Tommaso d'Aquino, 1781).

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Medievalist Barbara Newman was ‘pleasantly surprised...that [Hays] had any knowledge of her at all. Hildegard was hardly famous in the 18th century.’<sup>58</sup> Hays cites the brief entry in *Biographium Fæmineum* as her source.

**Five Spanish Mystics**

According to CHLE scholar Carme Font Paz, Hays’s inclusion of five Spanish mystics, share ‘a common theme of their mystic-warrior connection and the differences/similarities between Catholic and Protestant mysticism. Hays’s description of these women follows the tenor of Spanish female mysticism in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century, while introducing a strong political component as their thread. This brings us back to the issue of Hays’s sources, since her inclusion of Maria Pacheco Padilla is unusual and rare even for Spanish readers.’<sup>59</sup>

**Cleopatra’s Pearls**

In the long entry for Cleopatra, Latinists Lea Bennis and Thomas Hilliard traced Hays’s information to Jean Baptiste Louis Crevier, *The Roman History from the Foundation of Rome to the Battle of Actium: That is, to the End of the Commonwealth (Being the Continuation of Mr. Rollin’s Work)*. Translated from the French. Vol. X. London, Printed for J. Rivington (1768). Hays may have credited Crevier’s work as ‘Rollin’s Ancient History.’ The scholars observed that Hays cites Rollin as the source for the banquet in which Cleopatra’s pearl augmented the cost of the meal so spectacularly. ‘But here again the plot thickens,’ they note. ‘Hays cites Rollin as saying that the banquet cost 10,000 sesterces = 52,500 l. sterling, while the English translation of Crevier says the cost was 10,000 sesterces =62,000 l. sterling.’

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<sup>58</sup> Personal email, May 8, 2012.

<sup>59</sup> Personal email, Jun 7, 2011. Paz notes that in the entry for Maria Pacheco Padilla, Hays revises the account in W Robertson, *The history of the reign of the Emperor Charles V* (4 vols., London: W. Strahan and T. Cadell / Edinburgh: J. Balfour, 1774).

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Lea Bennis also commented on the ‘scope’ of Hays’s Ancient entries, although she knew neither Greek nor Latin.<sup>60</sup>

**The Case of Isabella Losa of Cordova**

CHLE scholars María Jesús Lorenzo Modia and Elgin Eckert tracked down Isabella of Cordova, also known as Isabella Losa of Cordova, with the help of CHLE scholar Georgianna Ziegler, Louis B. Thalheimer Head of Reference, Folger Shakespeare Library, who traced Cordaud to Lempriere’s *Universal Biography* (London, 1808). That would have been too late for Hays’s use in *Female biography*. Lempriere’s entry reads, she ‘was so illustrious for her knowledge of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, that she was honored with the degree of D.D. When she became a widow she took the habit of Sr. Clair, and founded in Italy the hospital of Loretto, where she ended her days in the bosom of devotion, 1546, aged 73.’<sup>61</sup> The research on Isabella Losa continues.

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<sup>60</sup> Lea Bennis wrote, ‘By “scope”, I meant (from an ancient historian’s point of view) that she includes, alongside Elizabeth I and the Catherines of Russia (and English worthies) entries on the mythical Dido, the legendary Artemisia of Halicarnassus, two Aspasia (not just the one that springs to our mind [i.e., the associate of Pericles], but Aspasia, wife of the Persian Cyrus), Diotima, Veturia and various illustrious women of Rome, the expected Cleopatra and both Agrippinas, but also Valeria (the daughter of the emperor Diocletian [little discussed beyond the confines of Late Antiquity scholarship, except for a notable cameo appearance in Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall* which caught Mary’s eye) — amongst many others that not many will have read about recently, like Cheilonis, the wife and daughter of two Hellenistic Spartan kings, and (drifting back further in time) Cleoboule of Lindos, ‘daughter of Cleobulus, prince of Lindus’ (aka Cleoboulíne), not to mention the obscure Illyrian Eurydice, celebrated in passing by Plutarch for her aspirational values (she was an Illyrian woman who sought education for her barbarian sons [and who set up an inscription to that effect]; Plutarch’s *On the Education of Children* 20 [= *Moralia* 14B-C]).’ Personal email 8/13/12.

<sup>61</sup> Georgianna Ziegler to Koren Whipp, personal correspondence (email); Elgin K. Eckert to Gina Luria Walker and Koren Whipp, 14 Aug. 2012, personal correspondence (email); María Jesús Lorenzo

### **Catherine the Great**

The entry for Catherine the Great is the longest in the six volumes. CHLE scholar Hilde Hoogenboom, co-translator of the *Memoirs of Catherine the Great*,<sup>62</sup> identified Hays's Baylean interjections which attest to her close reading, her continuing commitment to republicanism. and, perhaps, her tutelage with Tooke. See the Appendix 4 for Hoogenboom's commentary on Hays's use of her sources, particularly J. H. Castera and W. Tooke, *The life of Catherine II, Empress of Russia* (1798).

### **Bayle's Women Revised**

Bayle's *Historical and Critical Dictionary* provided both template, subjects, and sources for Hays. For most of the fifty-eight figures she adopted from Bayle, but not all of these, she cites Bayle.

In earlier texts, Hays acknowledged that misogyny was so embedded in Western culture that even otherwise free-thinking Dissenters and political radicals could not discern that it presented another, pervasive obstacle to full humanity for both sexes. Her choice of Bayle's *Dictionary* as a model for her compendium was at once obvious and subtle. Robert Robinson introduced Hays to Bayle's work. Robinson's role as cultural gadfly was akin to Bayle's and an integral element in Hays's intellectual genealogy and authorial posture. She inherited Bayle along with the other mental 'furniture'<sup>63</sup> Robinson bequeathed her. However, she discovered that

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Modia to Gina Luria Walker and Koren Whipp, 15 Aug. 2012, personal correspondence.

<sup>62</sup> *The memoirs of Catherine the Great*, a new translation by Mark Cruse and Hilde Hoogenboom (New York, 2005).

<sup>63</sup> Joseph Priestley wrote, 'Certainly, the minds of women are capable of the same improvement, and the same furniture, as those of men; and it is of importance that, when they have leisure, they should have the same resource in reading, and the same power of instructing the world by writing, that men have'; *Reflections on death: a sermon, on occasion of the death of the Rev. Robert Robinson of Cambridge, delivered at the New Meeting in Birmingham, June 13, 1790* (Birmingham, 1790), in J T Rutt ed., *The theological and*

unlike Robinson, Bayle was an unrepentant misogynist, interested in the dynamics, but not the existential realities, of ‘the harsh law of honour, which exposes [women] to infamy when they succumb to the natural inclination.’<sup>64</sup> He accepted that ‘the reason that women abstain incomparably more than men from the crime of incontinence stems from the fact that men have established the glory of women as consisting in chastity.’ To confirm this, he quoted Ovid: ‘*Casta est quam nemo rogavit*: A pure woman is one whom no one has asked for,’ a charge Hays knew was insinuated by her own detractors. Yet Bayle elevated the 165 female figures he commented on to objects of historical inquiry. Hays recognized the opportunity to draw on Bayle’s scholarship, assess his female entries, and critique the skeptic himself.

Bayle was preoccupied with female chastity, especially as it interfered with the life of the mind. He never married, devoting his life to his writings. Bayle chose for his *Dictionary* entries women that were erudite and elite, courtesans and queens, as well as learned women. He was suspicious of ‘enthusiasm’: in his discussion of prophetess Antoinette Bourignon, for example, CHLE scholar Mirjam de Baar points out, ‘by adopting a rather mocking tone and focusing attention on inconsistencies in her pronouncements and on the discrepancy between her ideas and her actions,’ Bayle denigrated Bourignon for her Quietist faith, and emphasized her ‘remarkable chastity’ and her ugliness.<sup>65</sup> Hays rejected Bayle’s insistence that female chastity was the only criterion for women. She commented on women’s obedience or resistance to religious and social norms for sexual behavior as the touchstone to a woman’s reputation. Implicitly, Hays judged that while Bayle advocated religious

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*miscellaneous works of Joseph Priestley* (25 vols. in 26, London, 1817-31), XV, pp.404-419, at p. 419.

<sup>64</sup> P Bayle, ‘Ninth Letter (2 Aug., 1681)’, in R. C. Bartlett ed., *Various thoughts on the occasion of a comet* (Albany, N.Y., 2000), pp. 200-2.

<sup>65</sup> M de Baar, ‘Conflicting discourses on female dissent in the early modern period: the case of Antoinette Bourignon (1616-1680)’, *L’Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques* 4 (2009), at: <http://acrh.revues.org/1399> ; DOI : 10.4000/acrh.1399.



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toleration, he failed to connect universal toleration with the consequences of misogyny. Hays took a more generous view of the affairs, erotic and otherwise, of the women she represented. Intrigue, passion, and duplicity, were all part of distinguishing the individual, although she reprimanded the ‘licentiousness’ of Catherine II, among several others. Elsewhere, CHLE scholar Felicity James has interrogated Bayle’s representation of Susannah Perwich.<sup>66</sup>

Hays was the only radical British *femme philosophe* to connect toleration explicitly with gender: women, she explained, were the targets of the same intolerance as men, and of men’s intolerance, as well. She adapted Robinson’s historiography in *Female biography* to construct an imagined continuum of women, who encountered, but resisted, censorship and persecution because of religious and political persuasions.<sup>67</sup>

### **Confusions**

Hays, like Bayle and Kippis, is uneven in the length of her entries. A major editorial difficulty was assessing the reliability and accuracy of her information, and the internal consistency of her texts. We came to appreciate that her lack of training in the conventions of scholarship, her ignorance of the internecine disputes among scholars, and her restricted access to certain resources, should not be understood as her own shortcomings, but rather as a direct outcome of systemic misogyny. The deficiencies in her education produced

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<sup>66</sup> Felicity James, ‘Writing female biography: Mary Hays and the life-writing of religious dissent,’ *Grasmere 2011: selected papers from the Wordsworth summer conference*, compiled by Richard Gravil (The Wordsworth Conference Foundation, 2011), pp.204-221; James, ‘Writing *Female Biography*: Mary Hays and the Life Writing of Religious Dissent’, *Women’s life writing, 1700-1850: Gender, genre and authorship*, ed. Daniel Cook and Amy Culley (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 117-132.

<sup>67</sup> For a discussion of Robinson’s influence on Hays, see Gina Luria Walker, “‘Sewing in the next world’: Mary Hays as dissenting autodidact in the 1780s’, *Romanticism on the net* 25 (Feb. 2002), at: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~scat0385/25walker.html>.

unreliable citations, and factual mistakes. For example, sometimes Hays could not recognize the errors in her sources, like George Ballard's account of Margaret Cavendish.<sup>68</sup> Hays confuses historical figures: her biography of 'Henrietta of Bourbon' is actually Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans, Duchess of Montpensier; the entry for Isabella de Gonzaga is actually Elisabetta Gonzaga. Similarly, we encountered multiple women into one biography, adding sisters or nieces to the story. Perhaps because of a printer's error, Hays has Madame Seturman and Anna Maria von Schurman as two separate entries, although they are the same person. There is an entry for 'Harriet Harcourt' who CHLE scholar Ruth Scobie identifies as a character in 'two fictitious works' by Thomas Amory, although Harcourt is among the entries in *Biographium Faemineum*.<sup>69</sup>

Some of the disorder of Hays's work may be traced to Richard Phillips's sloppy business practices which made even his authors suspicious of him. His skinflint approach shows in *Female biography*: carelessness, haste, and exhaustion can be felt in the pages, beginning with the Table of Contents in which entries are alphabetized by last name, except when, as in the case of, for example, 'Agnes Sorrel' they are ordered by first name – and the correct spelling is 'Agnès Sorel'.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> For a discussion of Ballard's methods, see Melanie Bigold, "'Bookmaking Out of the Remains of the Dead': George Ballard's *Memoirs of Several Ladies* (1752)", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, vol. 38, no. 2, (Spring 2014), pp. 28-46.

<sup>69</sup> Ruth Scobie, 'Harriet Eusebia Harcourt,' Mary Hays, *Female Biography; or, memoirs of illustrious and celebrated women, of all ages and countries* (1803), *Chawton House Library Series: Women's memoirs*, ed. Gina Luria Walker, *Memoirs of women writers part II* (London, 2013), vol. 8, 389-93, editorial notes, p. 596.

<sup>70</sup> On the introduction of alphabetizing entries, "Zara's and Alsted's encyclopaedias were organized systematically by classification. The turning point came with Louis Moréri's alphabetically arranged *Grand dictionnaire historique* (1674), which was especially strong in geographical and biographical material. Its success was

**Missing Women: Christine de Pizan**

Despite Hays's claim to inclusiveness, with modern hindsight, her entries reveal missing women. The most obvious are Christian de Pizan, Lucy Hutchinson,<sup>71</sup> and Judith Drake.<sup>72</sup> The omission of Christine de Pizan speaks volumes about Hays's attempt to recover and record the lives of individual women. Their works reveal that the two women shared a common impulse to document a feminist intellectual tradition in their powerful desires for one. The evidence generated by the contemporary scholarship of recovery affirms a recurring dynamic: the appearance and disappearance of female subjects. The data suggest possible patterns among which one seems to predominate: individual women struggled to learn, produced hybrid forms of knowledge, were trivialized, dismissed, or silenced, and, over time, even those respected by their contemporaries, forgotten. Hays confronted the same question as the CHLE collaborative: how do we reach back into the past to identify and learn about 'missing women' now, as both de Pizan and Hays tried to do in their separate times?

Bayle did not include Christine de Pizan because in the sixteenth century her reputation diminished. By the eighteenth century, leading intellectuals reading Christine de Pizan in French and English were at odds with the political and ideological content of her

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immediate; six editions were issued by 1691, each incorporating much new contemporary information at: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/392129/Louis-Moreri>

<sup>71</sup> CHLE scholar Rebecca Nesvet discusses the absence of Hutchinson in 'Missing persons: Lucy Hutchinson, Roger Dodsworth, and the problem of English Republican Historiography', forthcoming.

<sup>72</sup> Hays perpetuates attribution of *A humouros essay in defence of her sex* to Astell, rather than to Judith Drake. Jane Rendall, 'Mary Astell', Mary Hays, *Female biography; or, memoirs of illustrious and celebrated women, of all ages and countries* (1803), *Chawton House Library Series: Women's memoirs*, ed. Gina Luria Walker, *Memoirs of women writers part II* (London, 2013) vol. 5, 239-48, editorial notes, pp. 446-47.

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writing. In particular Voltaire's reproof of de Pizan, dismissive of what he perceived to be her apologist account of the life of Charles V, had long-term negative consequences for her reputation. He also misnamed her 'Catherine.' The medieval period was out of fashion; her style was found to be somewhat *naïf*, and, therefore, disparaged. Her account of the life of Charles V kept her in the attention of academic France, although its objectivity was always in question.<sup>73</sup> Hays could have found de Pizan's works: in 1478 William Caxton published the first translation into English of a work by Christine, *The fook of fayttes of armes and chyvalrye*. There were subsequent translations into English of her texts, including *The city of Ladies*. The version Hays might have read in French was *Collection des meilleurs ouvrages composés par des femmes*, éd. Mademoiselle de Kéralio, Paris, 1787. Apparently, this was not in Tooke's collection. However, *Collection* was available in the library King George III had been collecting since he was Prince.<sup>74</sup>

[Mary Spongberg provides an appendix on Hays's sources in CHLE volume 10.]

### **The King's Library**<sup>75</sup>

At the same time as Hays sought access to sources for her biographical dictionary, George III was establishing the King's Library, intended for the nation.<sup>76</sup> This was an expression of Enlightenment intent to promote new knowledge and its dissemination, and to encourage wider literacy, as a practical

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<sup>73</sup> Glenda K McLeod ed., *The reception of Christine de Pizan from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries: visitors to the city* (Lewiston, 1991).

<sup>74</sup> [http://www.arlima.net/ad/christine\\_de\\_pizan.html#cit](http://www.arlima.net/ad/christine_de_pizan.html#cit)

<sup>75</sup> These preliminary data are part of a larger project, 'Mary Hays Considers the King's Library,' which will identify and contextualize the importance to the female intellectual tradition of the works by and about women that were included in George III's original collection.

<sup>76</sup> John Brooke, 'The Library of King George III,' *The Yale University Library Gazette*, v. 52, No. 1 (July 1977), pp. 33-45, at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40800480>; accessed: 24/06/2014 19:18.

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application of these interests. Recent scholarship counts the university libraries, the Inns of Court, and the British Museum Library, the inheritor of the King's Library, as separate from this effort, rather intended for an exclusive circle.<sup>77</sup>

Private libraries of royalty were meant to be exemplary in nature.<sup>78</sup> George III's library was, as a matter of policy, open to all who desired to use it, and there seems to have been no required formal application to the King. Nevertheless, it was a rarified place, intended for particular learned men. Hays may have known that in 1779 Joseph Priestley applied through Lord North for permission to use the library. 'Priestley, as a radical, pro-American, and a Unitarian, knew that his political and religious principles were obnoxious to the King, and perhaps felt that he ought not to use the library without the owner's express permission.' George III's reply to Lord North was, 'If Dr Priestley applies to my librarian he will

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<sup>77</sup> Ian Morrison includes print culture available to the general populace, in 'book clubs, subscription libraries, circulating libraries, and a range of other types of collections (parish and cathedral libraries, civic libraries, mechanics' institutes) that prefigured the institutions that we call public libraries. In the activities of the book clubs and subscription libraries, literacy emerges as a social act, a performance, a demonstration of engagement with culture and of acceptable attitudes toward it. Being seen to be active in the local book club or subscription library reinforced social standing. Though not all members of such associations were merely modish, there clearly was another dimension to literacy than that defined by the commonly articulated poles of instruction and amusement,' *A Nation of readers: the lending library in Georgian England*, by David Alan (London, British Library, 2008), *Information and Culture: a Journal of Libraries & the Cultural Record*, vol. 44, No. 3, (2009).

<sup>78</sup> See Isabel Bernal Martinez, 'The polished cornerstone of the temple: queenly libraries of the Enlightenment,' *Libraries & the Cultural Record*, v.42, no.1 (2007), pp.87-89; Emma Jay, 'Queen Caroline's library and its european contexts', *Book History*, 9 (2006), pp.31-55; Clarissa Campbell Orr, 'Lost Royal Libraries and Hanoverian Court Culture', in James Raven ed., *Lost libraries: The destruction of great book collections since antiquity* (Basingstoke, 2004), pp.163-180.

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have permission to see the library as other men of science have had, but I cannot think the doctor's character as a politician or divine deserves my appearing at all in it.<sup>79</sup>

Had Hays dared to access the library, or been able to move as freely through the holdings of the King's Library as she apparently did William Tooke's, she would likely have been struck by the quantity of the resources by and about women. She would have found, for example, Giovanni Fantuzzi, *Elogio della dottoressa Laura Maria Caterina Bassi Verati, Bologna, 1778*, in praise of Bassi, as well as the several installments of *Della Historia di Bologna* (Parte prima.) ... di nuovo corretta, etc. (Parte seconda ... data in luce dal R. P. M. A. A. Solimani. Parte terza [in MS.] ... con in fine il disegno della Pianta del Palazzo di Giovanni II. Bentivoglio ... fedelmente copiato dell'originale MS. dell'Autore. Aggiunta a questo tomo manoscritto, etc.) ,and Ghirardacci Cherubino , *Della Historia di Bologna* (Bologna: G. Rossi, 1596). She might have held these books in her hands, although she could not have read them.

She would have found primary texts by many of her more obscure figures, for example,

**Mary Agreda**, *La Cité mystique de Dieu, miracle de sa toute-puissance, abîme de la grace. Histoire divine et la vie de la Tres-Sainte Vierge Marie ... manifestée dans ces derniers siècles ... à la sœur Marie de Jesus ... qui l'a écrite par le commandement de ses superieurs ... Traduite ... par le P. Thomas Croset.Brusselle : François Foppens, 1717, 15.*

*Joannis Meursii Elegantiae Latini sermonis seu Aloisia Sigæa Toletana de arcanis amoris & veneris adjunctis fragmentis quibusdam eroticis. Nicolas Chorier, Londini [i.e. Paris] : [printed by Hubert Martin Cazin], MDCCLXXXI [1781] France Paris.*

There were contemporary publications in translation:

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<sup>79</sup> Sir John Fortescue ed., *The correspondence of King George the Third, from 1760 to December 1783* (6 vols., London, 1927-28), vol.4 (1778-79), p.286; John Brooke, 'The library of King George III', pp.33-45, at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40800480>; accessed: 24/06/2014 19:18.

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*An appeal to impartial posterity, 1795 / Jeanne Marie Roland de la Platière. Author: Roland,, Mme (Marie-Jeanne), 1754-1793*

*The Works of J. M. Philipon Roland, ... containing her philosophical and literary essays, written previous to her marriage; her correspondence and her travels. To which are annexed the justificative documents relative to her imprisonment and condemnation. The whole preceded by a preliminary discourse, interspersed with notes, illustrative and explanatory, by L. A. Champagneux. Translated from the French. London, 1800.*

There were important contextual works, like Juan Vives, *De institutione foeminae christiane*, 1524

**Enlightenment, but in eclipse**

But The King's Library, like the legal and academic repositories, perpetuated the exclusion of women which in a later time Virginia Woolf lamented in *A room of one's own* (1929). Enlightenment itself was gendered male; the enlightenment Hays experienced as she created her dictionary/encyclopedia of women was in eclipse, the *lumière* occluded by the shadows of the moon. In the precious volumes the King had assiduously collected, as in William Tooke's more modest but extensive archive, she could not hear the cadences of the many languages of the texts by and about her figures; in the constellation of books she was unable to recognize the intellectual circles that encouraged women's textual production, or discern the print battles between and among men that the women attempted to join. She was ignorant of the finely tuned harmonics in the contributions of each and all the titles to a female intellectual tradition from which she might have drawn comfort and strength. Yet, she intuited the nebulous possibility that with sufficient skills and resources, one might be conjured into existence.

Hays's inventiveness as a female autodidact created problems in composing the entries for *Female biography*, and difficulties for the editor and editorial team, scholars, and researchers in retracing her steps for the general reader of CHLE. In the truest sense, Hays's 'female biographies' are palimpsests, texts inscribed, like animal prints in a fossil bed, with centuries of different, and differing,

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markings. Reading the volumes of *Female biography* constitutes an education in itself, as Hays intended for her readers. The parade of the past, and the female narrator's voice, like Ariadne, lead the reader through the maze of personalities, events, and dynastic politics. *Female biography* is informed by the central motive of Hays's own life, 'an inexpressible passion for the acquisition of knowledge, an ardor approaching the limits of pain.'<sup>80</sup> The wonder is that Hays accomplished what she set out to do in *Female biography* at all, without willing scholars, editors and assistants, and without the ease of a multitude of virtual primary sources at her fingertips and a body of historiographical and critical commentary to guide her.

### Aftermath

A larger context for the mixed reception of *Female biography* and the erratic survival of only its individual parts is the longstanding cultural ambivalence towards women attested to the historical records as 'learned.' Brita Rang notes, in

'encyclopedias of learned women [which] constitute a subspecies of an older and broader genre that predates the coming of the printed book. As early as the fourteenth century, we find catalogues of "famous women", in which women renowned for their *scientia* ("knowledge") and *sapientia* ("wisdom") were included. It was not before the seventeenth century that encyclopedias dealing mainly with learned women became a separate genre. The oldest and most influential of the early catalogues is Giovanni Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* c. 1360.'<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Mary Hays to William Godwin, 6 May 1795, PC, MH 4, Brooks, 118, p. 391.

<sup>81</sup> Brita Rang, 'A "learned wave": Women of letters and science from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment', *Perspectives on feminist political thought in European history from the Middle Ages to the*



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In ‘A “learned wave”: Women of letters and science from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment,’ Rang identified the ‘rise of the catalogues of learned women in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.’ In *Female Biography*, Hays implicitly marks a new ‘wave’ in her attempt to incorporate differing varieties of female learnedness. She includes humanists, Catholic and Protestant theologians, *Conversos*, iconoclastic, obscure, and publicly active women. She includes erudite women like Cecilia Heron and Lady Grace Gethin, whose writings were found and published after their death. Interspersed among the well known figures are numerous ‘learned ladies’ of whom Hays could find little beyond the name and assertion that the woman knew Greek, Latin, and possibly Hebrew. Ian Plant, Greek Editor for CHLE, notes that in the entry for Charixena, Hays describes her as a ‘*learned Greek lady*.’ Hays uses the term ‘lady’ for Charixena twice, the second time being one of the few variations in wording from Charixena’s entry in *Biographium faemineum*. This alteration gives Charixena a status and respect she was not accorded in antiquity.<sup>82</sup> We can conjecture that Hays uses ‘lady’ as an honorific, not related to social or economic class. Susanna Åkerman advises, ‘A woman who knows Latin, Greek and some Hebrew is worth mentioning, because knowledge of these languages defines a “humanist” (males also), able to participate in the learned tradition of the West.’<sup>83</sup>

Hays includes many Ancient women, two contemporary women (Macaulay and Chapone), unchaste women (Ninon L’Enclos and Tullia d’Aragona, for example), women who demonstrated other kinds of training, as bibliophiles, editors, and translators, and Marguerite of Navarre, a *humanist* hero, whom she praised for the ‘exercise of her own judgment on subjects held important and sacred...despite...the censures she incurred, and the dangers which

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*present*, ed. Tjitske Akkerman and Siep Stuurman (London, 1998), p. 50.

<sup>82</sup> I Plant, ‘Charixena,’ *CHLE*, (6 vols., London, 2013), v. 3 pp.286.

<sup>83</sup> Susanna Åkerman to Gina Luria Walker, 28 Aug. 2012, personal communication (email).

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threatened her.<sup>84</sup> Hays signals her interest in martyrs, women who struggle whether they are Catholics or *Conversos*; and female warriors, from the Classical Egee, Queen of the Amazons, to the obscure Maria d'Estrada, wife of a Spanish soldier in Cortez's army who fought alongside her husband in Mexico.

What characterizes these women and links their 'female biographies' is their contemporaries' remembrance of them, their acknowledged competence, and the shards of evidence that survived about them and which Hays found. They are also connected by their textual fates: they were attested to in their time, included in public sources, forgotten, lost, remembered again in a later time, and then lost again and again and again. Hays anticipated the late twentieth century impulse to reclaim a female intellectual tradition. 'Female biography' as category, dictionary, concept, and prophecy was intended to establish the assemblage of women Hays had wrested from the archives as a beginning, a placeholder, to secure women on the *human* mental map for posterity.

In 1821, when she was 62, Hays produced *Memoirs of queens, illustrious and celebrated*, taking advantage of the scandalous 'The Caroline Affair of 1820' during which King George IV tried to divorce Queen Caroline of Brunswick. Hays made use in her account of contemporary newspaper accounts, and reported that English women viewed judged the scandal "as a common cause against the despotism and tyranny of man." She retained the optimism of her Unitarian convictions, concluding that, 'Morals are of no sex, duties are reciprocal between being and being, or they are abrogated by nature and reason. Brute force may subjugate, but in knowledge only is real strength, and to truth and justice is the last and only legitimate appeal.' With women's greater political participation, she predicted, 'All things will become new.' *Memoirs of queens* has received even

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<sup>84</sup> Barbara Stephenson, 'Margaret de Valois, *Queen of Navarre*', Mary Hays, *Female Biography; or, memoirs of illustrious and celebrated women, of all ages and countries* (1803), *Chawton House Library Series: Women's memoirs*, ed. Gina Luria Walker, *Memoirs of women writers part II* (Pickering & Chatto: London, 2013), vol. 9, pp.458-75, editorial notes, pp.576-80.

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less scholarly attention than *Female biography*. Preliminary research reveals that Hays added twenty-eight figures to the queens in *Female biography*. CHLE scholar Frances Chiu compiled a working list.<sup>85</sup> Intriguingly, these include Marie Antoinette, Catherine Parr, and a number of non-Western monarchs.

**Project Continua**

The Female Biography Project research generated an abundance of new and revealing evidence, much of which could not be included in

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- <sup>85</sup> **Chiu List**  
Artemisia [no source]  
Another Artemisia [Source--Les Femmes Celebres--Bayle's Historical Dictionary]  
Batilda  
Ageltrude Benevento [no source]  
Brunehaut [History of France]  
Caroline, Wife of George IV  
Clothilda, Queen of France [History of France]  
Fredegonda [history of France]  
Fritiglia  
Galeria  
Helena, Queen of Adiabene in Arabia  
Isabella, wife to Edward II [History of England]  
Jane Bibi  
Judith, Queen of Abyssinia [Bruce's Travels]  
Ketavane  
Margaret, queen of Scotland [n.s.]  
Margaret, queen of Scandinavia [Modern History]  
Maria Theresa, Queen of Hungary  
Marie Antoinette, Queen of France  
Matilda, wife of William I  
The Empress Matilda [History of England]  
Mher-ul-Nissa [History of Hindostan]  
Nitocris  
Nitocris, Queen of Egypt  
Ogina  
Panthea [Female Worthies]  
Catherine Parr [History of England-Female Worthies]

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the annotations for the entries in the Chawton House Library Edition because of the constraints of editorial requirements and space. Inspired by what we had learned from Hays and about her ‘female biographies,’ we continue the work of feminist historical recovery she initiated in Project Continua ([www.projectcontinua.org](http://www.projectcontinua.org)), an interactive website in development, dedicated to the female intellectual tradition, that will host the biographies of a multitude of women, many of them still forgotten, others now being restored, who have contributed to the advance of civilization.

The New School University  
New York

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Preface to *Female biography***

To give an account, however concise of general, of every woman who, either by her virtues, her talents, or the peculiarities of her fortune, has rendered herself illustrious or distinguished, would, notwithstanding the disadvantages civil and moral under which the sex has laboured, embrace an extent, and require sources of information, which few individuals, however patient in labour or indefatigable in research, could compass or command. Yet no character of eminence will, in the following work, I trust, be found omitted, except among those who have come nearer to our own times; of whom, for reasons unnecessary to be detailed, but few have been brought forward.

My pen has been taken up in the cause, and for the benefit, of my own sex. For their improvement, and to their entertainment, my labours have been devoted. Women, unsophisticated by the pedantry of the schools, read not for dry information, to load their memories with uninteresting facts, or to make a display of a vain erudition. A skeleton biography would afford to them but little gratification: they require pleasure to be mingled with instruction, lively images, the graces of sentiment, and the polish of language.

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Their understandings are principally accessible through their affections: they delight in minute delineation of character; nor must the truths which impress them be either cold or unadorned. I have at heart the happiness of my sex, and their advancement in the grand scale of rational and social existence. I perceive, with mingled concern and indignation, the follies and vices by which they suffer themselves to be degraded. If, through prudence or policy, the generous contention between the sexes for intellectual equality must be waived, be not, my amiable country-women, poorly content with the destination of the slaves of an Eastern harem, with whom the season of youth forms the whole of life! A woman who, to the graces and gentleness of her own sex, adds the knowledge and fortitude of the other, exhibits the most perfect combination of human excellence. Let not the cold sarcasms of the pedant stifle your generous ardour in the pursuit of what is praise-worthy: substitute, as they fade, for the evanescent graces of youth, the more durable attractions of a cultivated mind; that, to the intoxicating homage of admiration and love, may succeed the calmer and not less gratifying tribute of friendship and esteem. To her who, sacrificing at the shrine of fashion, wastes her bloom in frivolity; who, trained but for the purposes of vanity and voluptuousness, and contemning the characteristic delicacy of her sex, dauntless obtrudes her charms on the public eye, the jest of the licentious, and the contempt of the severe; dreadful must be the approach of age, that season of collected thought and of repose to the passions, that will rob her of her only claim to distinction and regard.

To excite a worthier emulation, the following memorial of those women, whose endowments, or whose conduct, have reflected lustre upon the sex, is presented more especially to the rising generation, who have not grown old in folly, whose hearts have not been seared by fashion, and whose minds prejudice has not yet warped.

Unconnected with any party, and disdaining every species of bigotry, I have endeavoured in general, to serve the cause of truth and of virtue. Every character has been judged upon its own

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principles; the reflections, sparingly interwoven, have been such as naturally arose out of the subject; nor have I ever gone out of my way in favour of sects or systems.

For the life of Catherine II. some apology, on account of its disproportionate length, is probably due. The interesting nature of the subjects it embraced, and the copiousness of the materials, insensibly led me beyond the purposed limits. The lives of our own Elizabeth, of whom English-women may justly boast, and of the unfortunate Mary of Scotland, her rival and sister queen, are also of considerable length. But let it be remembered, that the reign of an absolute monarch is strictly biographical, and that the character of the sovereign is read in the history of his times. The life of madame de Maintenon, so full of amusing anecdote, secures me the indulgence of my readers. In that of madame Roland, the progress and delineation of a most extraordinary and admirable mind, placed in circumstances wholly unparalleled, abounds in so much instruction, and excites so lively an interest, that further to have abridged it would have been almost a crime.

By the well-informed critic, it may be alleged, that but little new is brought forward in this work. Yet that novelty is more rare than the vulgar imagine, it is unnecessary to hint to the learned. Suffice it to observe, that my book is intended for women, and not for scholars; that my design has been not to surprise by fiction, or to astonish by profound research, but to collect and concentrate, in one interesting point of view, those engaging pictures, instructive narrations, and striking circumstances, that may answer a better purpose than the gratification of a vain curiosity.

In the progress of my work, I have had occasion to feel the truth of an observation made by Bayle, That to abridge with judgment, is of literary labours one of the most difficult. And this task is rendered still more arduous to a writer who, disdaining mere compilation, is solicitous for uniformity of language and sentiment. If, in aiming at a clear, correct and even harmonious style, I have failed of attaining my purpose, I shall receive with patience, nay more, with

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thankfulness, the corrections of the candid and experienced critic, whose art I equally reverence and esteem. From such critics, who know how to compute the labours of the mind, and the weariness of a voluminous work, pursued and completed wholly without assistance, I need not demand allowances for those smaller defects and errors which, in papers passing again and again through the same hands, it would be scarcely possible wholly to avoid.

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**APPENDIX 2**

***Female biography: Bibliographic citations***

prepared by Koren Whipp (July 2013)

\*Hays listed some citations by various names. These are listed as bullet points beneath the main heading.

\*Citations in **BOLD** are additional sources Hays may have used.

-**Alexander, William.** *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity, to the Present Time; Giving some Account of almost every interesting Particular concerning that Sex, among all Nations, ancient and modern.* 1779

- **Amory, Thomas.** *Memoirs: Containing the Lives of Several Ladies of Great Britain. A History of Antiquities, Productions of Nature and Monuments of Art. Observations on the Christian Religion, as professed by the Established Church, and Dissenters of every Denomination. Remarks on the Writings of the Greatest English Divines: and a Variety of Disquisitions and Opinions relative to Criticisms and Manners; and many extraordinary Actions.* 1755.

- Anecdotes of Distinguished Persons

*Gina Luria Walker*

- Anecdotes of the Founders of the French Republic
- Ann Thicnesse's Sketches of the Lives and Writings of the Ladies of France
  - A. Thicnesse's Sketches
  - Sketches of the Lives and Writings of the Ladies of France by Anne Thicnesse
- **Anecdotes of the Queens of France**

Dreux du Radier, M. Jean-François) Mémoires historiques, critiques, et anecdotes des reines et régentes de France, Amsterdam: M. Rey. 1782
- **Anonymous. *History of Female Favourites. Of Mary de Padilla under Peter the Cruel, King of Castile; Livia, under the Emperor Augustus; Julia Farnesa, under Pope Alexander the Sixth; Agnes Soureau, under Charles VII, King of France; and Nantilda, under Dagobert, King of France.* 1772.**
- Anquetil's Memoirs of the Court of Lewis XIV
  - Memoirs of the Court of France M. Anquetil's Memoirs of Lewis XIV
- Ballard's British Ladies
  - Ballard
  - Ballard's Ladies of Great Britain
  - Ballard's Lives of British Ladies
  - Ballard's Lives of Illustrious British Ladies
  - Ballard's Memoirs of British Ladies
- Bayle's Historical Dictionary



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- Bayle
- Dictionnaire Historique
  - **Bayle** *Lettres... a sa famille* 1736. Found in Volume 1 of: *Oeuvres diverses de Mr. Pierre Bayle. : contenant tout ce que auteur a publié sur des matieres de theologie, de philosophie, de critique, d'histoire & de litterature; excepté son Dictionnaire historique et critique.* Pierre Bayle; Pierre Desmaizeaux La Haye : par la Compagnie des librairies, 1737.
  - Berrington's Heloise and Abelard
  - Biographia Britannica
  - Biographia Dramatica
  - ***Biographia Gallica**: or, the lives of the most eminent French writers of both sexes, in divinity, philosophy, mathematics, history, poetry &c. from the restoration of learning under Francis I. to the present time.* 1752.
  - Biographical Dictionary
  - Biographical Magazine
  - Biographium Faemineum
    - Biographium Faemineum. Dictionnaire Historique des Femmes
    - Biographium Faemineum, or The Female Worthies (KW added 7/21/10)
    - Female Worthies
    - The Female Worthies

Gina Luria Walker

- The Female Worthies, or Memoirs of the most illustrious Ladies of all Ages, Nations

- **Birch, Thomas.** *Illustrious Persons of Great Britain.* 1752.

- Brantome

- **Brantôme**, Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de. *Vies des dames galantes.* 1665-1666.

- **Brantôme**, Pierre de Bourdeille, seigneur de. *Vie des Dames Illustres françoises et étrangères.*

- Champagneux's Preliminary Discourse, prefixed to the Posthumous Works of Madame Roland

- **Chaudon, L. M. (Louis Mayeul),** *The Nouveau dictionnaire historique portatif, ou Histoire abregee de tous les hommes qui se sont fait un nom par des talents, des vertus, &c &c.* 1770.

- **Cibber**, Theophilus. *Lives of the Poets.* 1753.

- Coxe's Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden, and Denmark

- Daniel's History of France

- History of France

- - Dictionnaire Historique des Femmes Celebres

- Des Femmes Celebres

- Dictionnaire des Femmes Celebres

- Dictionnaire Historique des les Femmes Celebres

- Dictionnaire Historique, les Femmes Celebres

- Dictionnaire Historique Portatif des Femmes Célèbres

- La Dictionnaire Historique des Femmes Celebres

- Les Femmes Celebres

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- Bayle
- Dictionnaire Historique
  - Encyclopediana
  - **Evelyn, John.** Numismata. 1697.
  - Fox's Acts and Monuments of the Church
  - From the Life of Petrarch, translated by Mrs. Dobson
  - From the translation of a letter to F. Douce, esq. F. A. S. Archaeologia, or Miscellaneous Tracts relating to Antiquity; vol. XIII
- General Biographical Dictionary
- Gibbon's Decline of the Roman Empire
- Gibbon's Memoirs of Pious Women
  - Gibbon's Pious Ladies
  - Gibbon's Pious Women
  - Memoirs of Pious Women
- Gilpin's Account of a manuscript life of Mr. Sedgewick (written by himself), secretary to the countess of Pembroke
- Granger's Biographical History of England
- **Hayward, Thomas.** *The British Muse.* 1738.
- **Heywood, Thomas.** *Exemplary Lives and Memorable acts of nine of the most worthy women of the world, three Jewes, three Gentiles, three Christians.* 1640.
- **Heywood, Thomas.** *General History of Women.* 1657.
- Historical Memoirs on The Reigns of Queen Elizabeth and King James, by Francis Osborne

Gina Luria Walker

- Historical Notes to Madame de Genlis' *Knights of the Swan*
- History of England
- **History of Female Rebels.** 'By a misogynist'. 1747.
- History of France from the Establishment of the Monarchy to the Revolution
  - History of France
  - Holcroft's Family Picture
  - Hume's History of England
  - **Jacob, Giles.** *Poetical Register.* 1724.
  - **James, George.** *The Lives and amours of the Empresses, consorts to the first twelve Ceasars of Rome.* 1723.
  - Josephus
  - Journal of the Learned, Nov. 1696
  - **Juncker.** *Catalogue of Learned Women.* 1692
  - La Gallerie des Femmes Fortes
  - Letters from the Marchioness de Sevigne to her Daughter
    - Letters of madame de Sevigné
    - - Letters of Ditto
    - - Letters of Rachel, Lady Russel, from the MS in the Library at Wooburn Abbey
  - Letters published by Mr. Duncombe
  - Life of Bianco Capello, wife to Francesco de Medici, Grand-duke of Tuscany; from the German of T. P. Siebenkees, translated by C. Ludger
  - Life of Catherine II.

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- Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia, by Sarah Fielding

- Lives of Cleopatra and Octavia, by the author of David

Simple

- Lives of French writers

- Lives of Heloise and Abelard, by John Hughes, Esq

- Lives of the Roman Empresses

- Lives of the Roman empresses, by Monsieur de Serviez
- Lives of the Roman Empresses, Consorts to the first twelve

Caesars of Rome

- The Lives and Amours of the Empresses
- The Lives of the Roman Empresses, by Monsieur de Serviez

- Mairte Buoncompagno

- Marchioness de Sevigne's Letters

- Memoirs of madame de Maintenon

- Memoires of Madame Roland, written by herself

- Memoirs of Anne of Austria

- Memoirs of Madame de Stahl

- Memoirs of Mrs. Rowe

-*New and General Biographical Dictionary*. (1761)

- New Biographical Dictionary

- Oeuvres du Seigneur de Brantome

- Plutarch's Lives

- Plutarch

- Plutarch's Morals

- Plutarch

Gina Luria Walker

- Preface to the Principes Mathematique
- Robertson's History of Ancient Greece
- Robertson's History of Charles V
- Robertson's History of Scotland
- Rollin's Ancient History
- Roman History
- **Rowe, Mrs. Elizabeth.** *Friendship in death: in twenty letters from the dead to the living, with an "account of the life of the author,"* extracted from Cibber's Lives of the Poets. 1762.
- Secret Memoirs of the Court of Petersburg
- **Shirley, John.** *Illustrious History of Women.* 1686.
- Sketches of the History, Genius, &c. of Woman
- Smith's History of Virginia
- **Steele, Richard.** *Bibliothèque des dames, contenant des règles générales pour leur conduite, dans toutes les circonstances de la vie / écrite par une dame, & publiée par M. le Chev. R. Steele. Traduite de l'anglois.*
- Southey's Joan of Arc
- Stuart's Life of Mary, Queen of Scots
- Tacitus
- Tacitus, Suetonius
- Tanner
- **Tanner, Thomas.** *Bibliotheca Britannico-Hibernica: sine, de scriptoribus, qui in Anglia, Scotia, et Hibernia ad seculi xvii initium floruerunt... commentaries.* 1748.

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- The Life of Mrs. Susanna Perwich, written in Prose and Verse, by John Batchiler, London, 1661, and dedicated to "all the young Ladies of the several Schools in and about London, more particularly to those of Mrs. Perwich's School at Hackney"

- The Works of Francis Osborn Esq: Divine, Moral, Historical, Political. In four several tracts, by Francis Osborne

- Toland's Life of Hypatia

- Vie de Voltaire

- Voltaire

- Walpole's Anecdotes of Painting in England

- Whitaker's Mary Queen of Scots Vindicated

- Wraxall's History of the House of Valois

- Wraxall's Memoirs of the House of Valois (KW added 8/24/10)

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**APPENDIX 3**

**Bayle's Female Figures Crosslisted in *Female Biography***

Artemisia (6<sup>th</sup> century – 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE)

Artemisia, wife of Mausolus (4<sup>th</sup> century BCE)

Aspasia (5<sup>th</sup> century BCE)

Aspasia, or Milto (Unknown)

Leonora Baroni (1611-1670)

Basine, or Bazine (5<sup>th</sup> century)

Berenice (28 – 81)

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Juliana Berners, or Barnes (Unknown)  
Maria Catherina le Jumel de Berneuille, Countess d'Aulnoi (Unknown – 1705)  
Anne Boleyn (1500-1536)  
Antoinette Bourignon (1616 – 1680)  
Countess of Brégy (1619 – 1693)  
Mary des Loges Bruneau (1585 – 1641)  
Blanche of Castile (1188- 1253)  
Marchioness de Chatelet (1706 – 1749)  
Chelonis (Unknown)  
Christina, Queen of Sweden (1626 – 1689)  
Cynisca (Unknown)  
Madame Dacier (1647 – 1720)  
Theodora Dante (1498 – 1573)  
Eleanora, wife of Lewis VII of France, and Henry II of England (1124 – 1204)  
Elizabeth, Queen of England (1533 – 1603)  
Emma, Queen of England ( - d. 1052)  
Eurydice (407 BCE)  
Cassandra Fidele (1465 – 1558)  
Fannia Fidele (Unknown)  
Fulvia, wife of Marc Antony (c. 83 – 40 BCE)  
Leonora Galligai (Unknown – 1617)  
Cecilia de Gonzaga (1426 – 51)  
Eleonora Gonzaga (1493 – 1570)  
Isabella de Gonzaga (1471 – 1526)



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Julia Gonzaga (1512 – 1566)  
Lucretia Gonzaga (1522 – 1576)  
Madame Guyon (1648 – 1717)  
Hipparchia (Unknown)  
Hortensia (Unknown)  
Antonietta de la Garde des Houlieres (1638 – 1694)  
Mary De Jars, Lady of Gournay (1565 – 1645)  
Louise Labe (Unknown)  
Catherine Landa (1500 – Unknown)  
Leontium (300 BCE)  
Jaquiline de Longvie, Duchess of Montpensier (Unknown – 1561)  
Lucretia Marinelli (1571 – 1653)  
Mary, Queen of Hungary (1505 – 1558)  
Tarquinia Molsa (1489 – 1544)  
Octavia, Wife to Nero (Unknown)  
Catherine de Parthenai (1554–1631)  
Octavia, Wife to Marc Antony (69–11 BCE)  
Anne De Parthenai century)  
Phila (c. 340–287 BCE)  
Diana de Poitiers (1499-1566)  
Porcia (70-43 BCE)  
Modesto Pozzo (1555-1592)  
Renata, Duchess of Ferrara (1510-1574)  
Anne de Rohan (1628-1681)

Gina Luria Walker

Magdelene de St Nectaire (Unknown)

Margaret de Valois, Queen of Navarre (1492 – 1549)

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#### APPENDIX 4

#### **Hays's sources for her 'female biography' of Catherine the Great of Russia**

Hays had the good fortune to compile her collection of biographies right after Catherine's death in 1796, which was followed by the publication of three French biographies that were extremely critical of Catherine, by Claude Carloman de Rulhière (1797), Jean-Henri Castéra (1797), and Charles François Philibert Masson (1800). Hays's decision to include a substantial biography of Catherine most likely reflects the popularity of the numerous biographies of Catherine at the time, upon which Hays probably wanted to capitalize for her own publication. Rulhière's and Masson's texts were translated immediately and published in London the same year as they were published in Paris. As her primary text, Hays, however, chose the most authoritative biography, *Vie de Catherine II, Impératrice de Russie*, by Castéra, who made extensive use of newly published materials about Catherine's reign by diplomats and others. It was translated and substantially augmented by historical and geographic information about Russia by the Rev. William Tooke (1744-1820), who softened the Frenchman's criticism of Catherine. Hays knew Tooke, who had resided in Russia from 1771 until 1792, first as Minister of the English Church at Kronstadt and then as the Chaplain to the English Factory. Throughout his life he wrote, translated, and published literary and historical works, and he had a substantial library from which Hays borrowed books. In a letter to his son, William Tooke (1777-1863), perhaps dated May 1799?, she writes, 'I return a part of your father's books by this opportunity,

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with thanks'.<sup>86</sup> Tooke's translation had five editions, two in 1798, one in 1799, and two in 1800, in London and in Dublin; in 1802, it was published in Philadelphia by William Fry, who in 1807 would publish *Female biography*. In 1800, Castéra translated Tooke's translation into French and published *Histoire de Catherine II, Impératrice de Russie*. Thus this biography, in its editions after 1797, is usually referred to by the names of both author and translator, as Castéra-Tooke. A second translation of Castéra was done by Henry Hunter (1800).

In its entirety, Hays's biography is a translation of Castéra based on Tooke's (but not Hunter's) translation, from either 1798 or 1799, but not 1800 (because of an anecdote in volume 3, on pages 175-77, which was moved in the 1800 edition to its correct place chronologically, towards the end; see footnote). Hays often uses similar words as Tooke, but always varies the sentence. Hays knew French and worked as a translator because in a letter to Tooke's son (May 1803), she asks for work, proposing to translate French light poetry or a travelogue by Madame Godin des Odonais (*The Correspondence*). Hays cut many historical digressions that were not directly about Catherine, preserving a line here or there, and occasionally summarizing. Hays borrows from the English translation of Masson's text for Catherine's death and the conclusion, but again, selectively, for Masson is even more biased than Castéra. The tone of Hays's biography is like that of Tooke's translation, respectful of Catherine's accomplishments, but she cannot resist moralizing at times. She occasionally adds a sentence or phrase to pass judgment on Catherine and the footnotes mark all these places; she often does not translate Castéra's relentlessly biased comments.

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<sup>86</sup> Marilyn L Brooks ed., *The correspondence (1779-1843) of Mary Hays, British novelist* (Lewiston, NY, 2004).

## REVIEWS

**Scott Mandelbrote and Michael Ledger-Lomas eds., *Dissent and the Bible in Britain, c. 1650-1950*.** Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. xi + 323 pp. Hbk. ISBN 978-0-19-960841-6.

The Bible provided the justification for the existence of Protestant Dissent. The Church of England, the religious agency of default for the bulk of the population of England and Wales, constituted, according to Dissenters, an ecclesiastical organisation that was too Roman Catholic, too state-dominated or both. Its fatal flaws of sacerdotalism and erastianism could be identified from scripture. Consequently, again in accordance with the Bible, conscientious Christians had the duty to separate from what was religiously debased and so to withdraw from the parish churches. The outcome was Dissent. Hence exploration of the relationship between the Dissenting tradition and the Bible is a particularly fruitful exercise. A conference held under the auspices of the Dr Williams's Centre for Dissenting Studies broached the theme and some of the ten essays assembled in this volume were delivered there. But the collection is much more substantial, extending from the mid-seventeenth century to the mid-twentieth and embracing many strands of Protestantism outside the established churches of the British Isles. The volume, edited by Scott Mandelbrote of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and Michael Ledger-Lomas of King's College, London, proffers a wealth of insights into the place of scripture among Dissenters.

One use of the Bible was for personal devotion. That dimension, as one of the contributors points out, was much more significant for most Christians than critical readings of scripture, and yet scholars have often concentrated on the development of academic approaches to the neglect of engagement with the Bible to nourish spirituality. The balance is redressed here by several essays. Scott Mandelbrote shows how family piety in the seventeenth-century home of Philip Henry shaped the expositions by his son Matthew in the enormously influential biblical commentary that he published from 1706 onwards. Phyllis Mack and David Wilson examine the role of Mary Fletcher, one of the ablest women in the early Wesleyan movement, revealing her work as preacher (she vindicated female preaching) and life-guide (she often used maternal imagery and displayed an empathetic religiosity). And

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Timothy Larsen reviews the devotional attitude to the Bible of Elizabeth Fry (a Quaker), Mary Carpenter (a Unitarian) and Catherine Booth (the mother of the Salvation Army). We learn something of the variety of their interpretations, but also the common esteem in which they held the Bible. Those two points are also apparent in the studies of three eighteenth-century Socinians by Simon Mills and of five early nineteenth-century high Calvinists by Ian Shaw. The former adhered to their conviction that Jesus was no more than human from the text of scripture; the latter allowed their stance to be moulded by biblical injunctions, so that, contrary to what one might expect of theological conservatives, they engaged in many schemes for human betterment. Biblical understandings in Wales, Scotland and Ireland find their place in the volume too. Eryn White demonstrates the tight connection between Bible, language, print culture and the growth of Nonconformity in Wales. Colin Kidd and Valerie Wallace dissect the debates in the late nineteenth-century Free Church of Scotland over the higher criticism of the Bible to show that the issue was bound up with questions of adherence to the Westminster Confession and moves towards Presbyterian reunion. And Andrew Holmes examines attitudes to biblical criticism among Irish Presbyterians, particularly in the writings of Samuel Davidson, who was to become the stormy petrel at the centre of a fracas over the subject in English Congregationalism. The book ends on a very English note with a study by Simon Green of the significance of Seebohm Rowntree's finding in 1951 that Bible reading had suffered a sharp decline: that presaged, the author suggests, the passing of Protestant England.

The achievement of this volume is considerable. It documents a main theme not just of church history but of national history on the basis of detailed research. Wise and accurate judgements abound. It is refreshing, for example, to see in the editors' substantial introduction the distinction between Socinians, Arians and Unitarians, so often muddled in the secondary literature, carefully and succinctly expressed (p.21). Nevertheless (a sound Dissenting principle) the book is not infallible. Sandemanians were not descendants of the Covenanters but originated in a reaction against Covenanting principles (p.14); Brethren were not 'congregational' because they were not governed by congregations but by elders (p.

19); and nineteenth-century Quakers were not 'initially' dominated by evangelicals because the evangelicals in their ranks long had to struggle for acceptance against a quietist majority (p.25). A point about Scotland is especially worth making. The chapter on the Free Church rightly points out that its existence was not based on Dissenting principles, for it acknowledged the rightness of a church establishment. Yet the chapter's claim that after the abolition of patronage in the Church of Scotland the Free Church moved in 1875 to voluntarism, that is the principle that churches should never be allied to the state, is mistaken (p.244). The Free Church was scrupulous to insist that its demand for disestablishment was based only on the circumstances of contemporary Scotland, that is the unfairness of giving established status to one Presbyterian body among several. The members of the Free Church were not suddenly transformed into voluntaries, though the distinction between practical disestablishmentarianism and theoretical voluntarism was eroded over subsequent decades. And there is another claim, this time in the introduction, that the 'lively biblical culture of Dissenters' is now 'nearly invisible', which ought to be questioned (p.33). During the last fifty years there has been a marked growth of fresh congregations, some independent, some in translocal denominations, with a strong devotion to the Bible. In York, for instance, it has been shown that this 'new Nonconformity' is now larger than the older Free Churches of Methodists, Baptists and the United Reformed Church put together (David Goodhew, 'Evangelical, but not "Fundamentalist": A Case Study of the New Churches in York, 1980-2011', in David Bebbington and David Ceri Jones eds., *Evangelicalism and Fundamentalism in the United Kingdom during the Twentieth Century* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013], pp.230-50 at p.236). So the tradition of Dissenting biblicism has been vigorously reprinted in recent years.

The main message of the book nevertheless stands. The Bible has been the cultural taproot of Dissent. What is more, the collection of essays shows that attitudes to the Bible have commonly been associated with the legacy of the Enlightenment. It is well known that the advance of biblical criticism under Enlightenment influences was a spur to the erosion of traditional orthodoxy. That contention is at the heart of Simon Mills's essay here on 'Scripture and Heresy in the Biblical Studies of Nathaniel

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Lardner, Joseph Priestley, and Thomas Belsham'. Yet there is much in the other essays that reveals a point about the Enlightenment that equally needs to be made. Orthodox approaches to scripture were also deeply swayed by enlightened thought. 'Don't be afraid of philosophy', wrote Adam Clarke, the leading Methodist intellectual in the years after the death of Wesley (p.65). Likewise a Dublin Presbyterian appealed in 1837 to 'facts...observation...science... evidence' (p.185). In interpreting the Bible the intellectual apparatus constructed during the eighteenth century was applied by the Dissenters of the nineteenth. The fine essay by Michael Ledger-Lomas on Congregationalists' views of the oriental element in the Bible, not hitherto mentioned, illustrates the point at length. Josiah Conder and John Pye Smith, leading Congregational thinkers, were resolute in resisting the premillennial tendencies of prophetic writers because of their own adherence to the canons of reason. So this book shows not only that the Bible and Dissent were intimately associated, but also that orthodox Dissenters were deeply affected by Enlightenment values. For many years the link between Enlightenment and Dissent extended to virtually the whole of the Dissenting community.

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**W A Speck, *A Political Biography of Thomas Paine***, London: Pickering and Chatto, 2013, pp.xv + 258, ISBN 9781848930957, £60.00.

Thomas Paine wrote three of the most widely read radical works in the late eighteenth century: *Common sense*, *Rights of man*, and the *Age of reason*, and he was also politically active in supporting the American War of Independence, promoting popular radicalism in Britain in the early 1790s, contributing to political debates in France during the French Revolution, and involving himself in disputes between Republicans and Federalists in America in the early nineteenth century. Despite, or perhaps because, of his trenchant writings and his vigorous efforts to promote political liberty and religious enlightenment, he made more enemies than admirers and supporters during his lifetime. His support for American independence led to him being accused of betraying the

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country of his birth. His firm commitment to radical reform in Britain led to him having to flee the country to avoid imprisonment and to him being burned in effigy in a great many places across England. It was his relative moderation, however, which led to him being imprisoned by the Jacobins during the Terror in France and only narrowly escaping execution. His personal attacks on the sincerity and abilities of George Washington and especially his attacks on the Bible and the Christian religion seriously undermined his reputation in America in his last years and led to him dying neglected and largely unmourned. Although now famous and indeed admired by a great many people for his radical writings, he was bitterly attacked during his lifetime in both his native and his adopted country: see, for example, my own essay on 'Thomas Paine and his British Critics' in *Enlightenment and Dissent*, 27 (2011), pp.19-82 and *Thomas Paine and America, 1776-1809*, ed. Kenneth W Burchell (6 vols., London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009).

It was not until the late nineteenth century that Paine's reputation as a political writer and as a political activist began to be restored and not until the later twentieth century that his writings and activities were widely admired and given serious attention by major historians in America, Britain, and France: see, for example, my review essay in *History*, 81 (1996), pp.228-237. There is now a wealth of excellent modern studies of Paine the political theorist and Paine the political activist that have been written by leading scholars in all three countries where he supported the cause of liberty. Professor Speck, a distinguished historian well versed in British and American history in particular and an experienced biographer, has added to this substantial body of scholarly monographs and biographies. His contribution to an impressive body of work on Paine deserves a very warm welcome by scholars, students and general readers because of its substantial virtues.

Professor Speck's book is rightly entitled *A political biography* because he has produced a chronological narrative of Paine's life, a life very largely devoted to political writings and political engagements, from his subject's birth to his death. He does undoubtedly provide clear and judicious summaries of the arguments, which Paine deployed in all his writings, both his major works and the very large number of shorter essays that he wrote for the newspaper and periodical press on both sides of the Atlantic.



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He does not subject Paine's arguments or his prose style to deep analysis, but he does provide his readers with a very clear sense of what Paine was attempting to convey in his writings and how he tried, with considerable success to reach as many readers as possible. His book is a very clear guide, embellished with apt quotations, to the complete body of Paine's works. This is in itself a major accomplishment as many scholars have found it difficult to establish exactly which anonymous newspaper and periodical essays can be attributed to Paine; see, for example, *Thomas Paine: A collection of unknown writings*, ed. Hazel Burgess (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), which has attributed some essays to Paine which he almost certainly did not write.

Any scholar attempting to write a reliable political biography of Paine is faced with some major difficulties. He did not leave behind a large body of correspondence and, as indicated above, it is hard to be certain which essays in the newspaper and periodical press can be safely attributed to him. Professor Speck handles these difficulties with very considerable success. For Paine's early life in England and his last years in America scholars have to cope with the detailed hostile accounts provided by George Chalmers and James Cheetham, respectively, who sought to destroy Paine's reputation with his contemporaries. Professor Speck treats their writings with great care, dismissing some of their entirely unsubstantiated criticisms of Paine, but accepting that on some issues their accounts deserve credit. Indeed, he breaks entirely new ground in his account of Paine's early years, particularly of his two marriages and his two periods as an excise officer, and he is a sure guide on his subject's last years in America. Paine never had a fixed place of abode and he moved his accommodation from place to place in America, Britain and France. Professor Speck has worked very hard and with considerable success to identify where Paine was living at every stage of his long career. He is also very well informed about what Paine wrote and for what purpose. Throughout his study Professor Speck is very fair-minded, acknowledging where appropriate when Paine's arguments were weak or unsubstantiated, when he was inconsistent or contradicted himself, and in accepting what personal and intellectual flaws he possessed. He is particularly good on Paine's repeated health

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problems and his drinking habits, which have usually been exaggerated.

As a political biography this book is quite admirable. The scholarship is exemplary, the organization is clear, and the prose is vigorous and attractive. The book has been handsomely produced. It will serve admirably as an account of what Paine wrote, the context in which he wrote it, and the efforts he made to promote the cause of political and religious liberty in the three countries where he spent many years of his life. I am not convinced of all of Professor Speck's comments on the context in which Paine operated, but his views may be as persuasive as mine. I do have more serious reservations about how widely Paine's *Common sense* and *Rights of man* were sold or disseminated. His estimates are considerably greater than those suggested by Trish Loghran in 'Disseminating *Common Sense*: Thomas Paine and the Problem of the Early National Bestseller', *American Literature*, 78 (2006), pp. 1-28 and, on the *Rights of man*, by William St Clair, in *The reading nation in the Romantic period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.256-57 and 623-26. Professor Speck may have read these sources, but it is not clear that he has done so since his substantial biography lists only those works cited in his numerous and helpful endnotes. Professor Speck ends his biography rather abruptly with the death of Paine. He might have detailed Paine's funeral, when he was buried in unconsecrated ground on his own small New York estate, with but a handful of mourners to mark his interment. He has also only briefly mentioned what subsequently happened to his remains in an endnote rather than offering more details in the text. There is an inadvertent slip at the very bottom of page 114: Part Two of *Rights of man* was published in 1792 not 1793.

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**H B Nisbet, *Gottfried Ephraim Lessing: His Life, Works & Thought*, Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. xii + 734; 46 Illustrations. ISBN: 978-0-19-967947-8; £85.00.**

Lessing contributed to the German Enlightenment as a 'poet, dramatist and journalist, a literary theorist and critic, a historian of

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literature, art and religion, a classical and medieval philologist, a palaeographer, librarian and archivist, a lay expert in theology and patristics, a philosopher and aesthetician, a translator from several languages and a prolific reviewer and editor' (p.1). Every facet of this mercurial and enigmatic figure receives detailed analysis in Nisbet's magisterial biography. Originally published to critical acclaim (having won the Hamann Research Prize of the University and City of Münster and Einhard Prize for Biography) in German in 2008, this revised English edition explores Lessing's life, works and thought, with each aspect interwoven and apprising the other. Lessing rarely expressed his inner thoughts and feelings in either his correspondence or works; previous studies have either missed key biographical details, or failed to appreciate his voluminous output in its entirety. But Nisbet's total immersion in Lessing's oeuvre and his consummate knowledge of his subject's habits, attitudes, writing style, humour and moods, has yielded intricate biographical insights. His contextualization of Lessing's diverse intellectual pursuits is just as impressive – the background of each discipline Lessing tackled, his impact and lasting legacy all receive masterful consideration.

Lessing's earliest ambition was to become a 'German Molière' (p.43). He completed twelve plays (and drafted another sixty, including one on Faust), which inaugurated Germany's literary revival. Nisbet expertly assesses their dynamics and moral purport and also identifies their flaws, such as the hastily written finale for *Emilia Galotti* or the florid Sentimentalism of *Miss Sarah Sampson*, which dated it during Lessing's lifetime. His aesthetics are analysed in tandem with the plays. His early comedies mocked prejudices and vindicated repressed groups, such as Jews, women and atheists. His tragedies, consistent with his dictum that the '*most compassionate human being is the best human being*' (p.212), evoked pity as an agent of moral enlightenment. Despite taking Molière as his model, Lessing considered Gottsched's attempts to raise German drama to the stature of French Classicism to be 'misguided, bungling and abortive' (p.255); instead, he imitated Italian and English drama. He sought to overthrow France's cultural domination and cultivate German literature. But, as Nisbet asserts, he was no Francophobe: Lessing praised Diderot's plays and the *Encyclopédie*, and proudly declared himself a *Weltbürger*.

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His mission was to make the German voice heard in a cosmopolitan chorus.

Nisbet states that his political sentiments were ‘liberal, progressive and implicitly democratic’ (p.106). But the author is referring to the democratization of knowledge, thought and opinion in the public sphere, not to representative democracy. Lessing avoided princely courts and detested arbitrary government, particularly regarding censorship; privately, he supported a revival of the territorial estates. The heroine of *Emilia Galotti* consents to be murdered by her father to save herself from the sexual advances of their absolute ruler. Nisbet comments that ‘the very fact that justice is denied...underlines the inadequacy of a system which permits such grave abuses’ (p.501). Audiences instantly identified its anti-absolutist criticism. But it should not be forgotten that *Emilia Galotti* had been commissioned for the sister of his patron – the Duke of Brunswick. Lessing also dedicated his vision for renovating Freemasonry into a model utopian society (*Ernst und Falk*) to the Duke – a text that later inspired Adam Weishaupt to found the Illuminati. A friend said that he ‘had no more idea of political constitutions, than the apostles had of aesthetics’ (p.594). Nisbet concurs, and portrays Lessing as a candid, libertarian critic of the Old Regime, whose works were read by moderate reformers and radicals alike, but who himself was neither proscriptive, nor revolutionary.

For Nisbet, the collapse of the Hamburg National Theatre in 1770 (Lessing had been its in-house critic) marked the most important turning-point in his career. It was intended to promote German drama, but performed twice as many French plays, and suffered from financial mismanagement and a lack of public support. Henceforth, he no longer promoted German literature to an apathetic public, nor did he endorse the nascent Storm and Stress movement. Nisbet notes that his attention turned from the present to the future, and to religion. Lessing criticized the narrow dogmatism of Lutheran orthodoxy, but he loathed the (apparent) hypocrisy and rational Socinianism of the neologists. The attack on biblical Christianity in the papers of the deceased scholar Reimarus gave Lessing the means to bring the tensions within Lutheranism to the surface. By publishing the *Fragments*, Lessing sparked a major controversy, but his hopes of remaining an impartial observer were

quickly dashed. Instead of exhaustively assessing these polemics (for which monographs are extant), Nisbet focuses on Lessing's style of writing: his sparkling prose, caricature and satire, especially in his retorts to that humourless standard-bearer of orthodoxy – Pastor Goeze. Nisbet remarks that Lessing's influence on contemporary Lutheranism remains to be fully researched, but he convincingly contends that he foreshadowed Schleiermacher via distinguishing Christian faith from scriptural literalism.

Jacobi claimed that Lessing, shortly before his death, had affirmed: 'There is no other philosophy than that of Spinoza' (p.634). Jonathan Israel, always keen to draw links between Spinoza and the late Radical Enlightenment, accepts this statement at face value; Nisbet, who appreciates Lessing's irony, does not. In the 1760s, Lessing had studied Spinoza intensively, but his papers, so Nisbet maintains, explored the disparities between Spinoza and Leibnitz, whose optimistic philosophy had a long-lasting and much more profound impact on his thought. Nisbet asserts that Lessing's advocacy of Spinoza reflects his habit of playing devil's advocate in debate and it was intended to bait Jacobi's Christian Fideism. In fact, Nisbet argues that any attempt to define Lessing's religious beliefs is doomed to failure, as they 'shift from one work to another and even within the same work' (p.565). His relativism and love of contradictions are transformed into an art in his account of progressive revelation – *The education of the human race*. Nisbet perfectly captures the complex and open-ended essence of Lessing's religious and philosophical thought by describing this late work as simultaneously prophesying a revitalized Christianity and a post-Christian secular age.

The sheer breadth and analytical depth of this biography signify a stupendous scholarly achievement. Its penetrating analysis of the content, context and historiography of Lessing's works will make it the starting point for all future Lessing scholars, and it will become essential reading for anyone working on the German Enlightenment. It is precisely by *not* trying to harmonize the inconsistencies in his life and thought, but by depicting the variable, un-dogmatic and relativistic Lessing that this definitive biography surpasses all others. Readers must concur with Nisbet that Lessing not only deserves a more prominent position in Enlightenment studies than is usually accorded him, but that by

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anticipating (and criticizing) modernity *and* post-modernity, he represents a uniquely relevant voice for our age. This voice knows no clearer exponent than Nisbet, whose discerning and beautifully written study is intellectual biography at its very best.

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**Lisa Curtis-Wendlandt, Paul Gibbard and Karen Green eds.,** *Political Ideas of Enlightenment Women*, Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2013, xi + 251pp.; £70.00, hb. (website price £63.00) ISBN 978-1-4724-0953-9.

This volume of essays on the political writings and discussions of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European and British women is a collection that is strikingly consistent in the high quality of its parts. All of the essays are informative, thoughtful and stimulating pieces of work, exemplary in their clarity, and together they make an important and persuasive case.

The editors introduce the book by arguing that, because we have too limited a knowledge of the extent of women's political writing in the age of the Enlightenment, we have a distorted understanding of intellectual developments in that era. They insist that, 'when women write, it cannot plausibly be claimed that the political subject is exclusively male' (p.5). The chapters that follow support this contention by presenting, in the first Part, seven individual European female political writers who have until recently been more or less ignored, as well as evidence for women's intellectual political agency in their management of salons in Italy and France; and, in the second Part, new explorations of the political ideologies of more familiar British writers (Catharine Macaulay, Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Mary Wollstonecraft), as well as those of two less familiar scholars, Catharine Trotter and Charlotte Brooke.

The contributors are, often necessarily, perceptive and skilful in drawing out the political ideology inherent in texts where the writers were less bold than men might have been in proposing political ideas. As Erica J Mannucci argues, the writings of women such as the French novelist Marie-Armande Gacon-Dufour (1753-1835) need to be read in context in order to discern their political boldness and originality amidst primary preoccupations with home

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and education (p.80). Paul Gibbard shows that Octavie Belot (1719-1805) *both* defended the *status quo* and proposed changes to the social structure of eighteenth-century France, while Judith P. Zinsser suggests that the philosopher Emilie du Châtelet (1706-49) may not even herself have been wholly conscious of the radical implications of her political convictions (p.31). Calogero Alberton Petix and Karen Green add depth to the book's presentation of women's political voices by introducing polemic between liberal women writers, in their chapter discussing Etta Palm d'Aelders (1743-99) and Louise Keralio-Robert (1758-1821), while Lisa Curtis-Wendlandt deftly examines the parallels between the thought of Elise Reimarus (1735-1805) and that of Immanuel Kant. Elizabeth M K A Sund compares the account of citizenship in the dramatic work of Catharine Trotter (1674-1749) with her later philosophical writings on virtue and draws out a gender-inclusive vision of citizenship from the combination. Karen Green points out the striking parallels in the lives of Catharine Macaulay (1731-91) and Anna Laetitia Barbault (1743-1825), and compares their contributions to republican discourse, noting their significance in eighteenth-century radical circles which has often been under-rated by posterity. Mary Caputi and Jeanette Ehrmann shed light, respectively, on Mary Wollstonecraft's views on female education and on slavery. Lesa Ni Mhunghaile presents a fascinating political analysis of the literary scholarship of the Irish poet, Charlotte Brooke (1740-93). Marianna D'Ezio and Steven Kale unpick the evidence for the important intellectual influence wielded by the salonnieres in Enlightenment Italy and France – that they had ideas of their own, not just that they encouraged the careers of male thinkers. Felicia Gordon's chapter on Marie-Madeleine Jodin (1741-90) perhaps has required the least reading between the lines of all those in this volume in pursuit of political philosophy, in presenting the author of 'the first signed feminist treatise by a woman', Jodin's *Vues législatives pour les femmes* (1789-90). Her location of Jodin in the 'radical Enlightenment' rather than the 'moderate Enlightenment' is nonetheless an important contribution to the ongoing expansion of work on the Enlightenment to take in women's voices – as is this volume as a whole.

It is a tightly written collection – perhaps almost *too* tightly written, in places. While all of the essays are admirably lucid in

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explaining and making their cases, some support their arguments better than others, and the impression is that the loosening of the publisher's corset for another couple of pages in some of these chapters might have allowed the argument to 'breathe' more easily. (I would not want to have lost any of these chapters for the sake of making the rest slightly longer.) For instance, Manucci's claim in closing, that Gacon's later writings show her to have become a much bolder political thinker than her earlier, more 'acceptably feminine' (p.90) writings suggested, would have been strengthened by a greater balance of space given to the later writings. Green's otherwise excellent chapter on the republican thought of Macaulay and Barbauld seems to end with a rather terse assessment of Barbauld, which does not quite answer the opening question of why Horace Walpole had changed his mind about her admirability by the 1790s. And Marianna D'Ezio's and Steven Kale's rich pieces on Italian and French salonnières represent the limitation of brevity at its best, simply leaving the reader wishing for more detail. The Introduction would have benefited from offering a more substantial acknowledgement and survey of existing work on Enlightenment women – there is no mention of the work of scholars such as Karen O'Brien, Sylvana Tomaselli, Jane Rendall, and many others engaged on a similar enterprise.

In the end, however, this collection is absolutely convincing in its case that 'it is important to acknowledge that, already in the eighteenth century, the political subject comes in two sexes' and that this book presents a 'study of serious women thinkers, whose eloquence and power of argument commends them as full members of any balanced polity' (p.13). It ought to be clear by now that women writers can no longer be ignored in studies of eighteenth-century political thought because they are not known to have existed; equally, they can no longer be reduced to a mere handful of rare specimens. We are only beginning to recognise the extent of feminist writing and activity in this era, as Arianne Chernock's *Men and the making of modern British Feminism* (2010) has also pointed out; and yet it can no longer be claimed that we do not know about it. It is splendid to have these nine European female writers discussed here individually and integrated into a discussion with three more familiar British female writers, as well as with the broader discussions of women's intellectual activities in European



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salons. The editors' closing contention, however, that they have demonstrated that these writers' texts 'can no longer be excluded when the history of political philosophy is taught' (p.13) is a rather bolder claim, and it remains to be seen whether the writers and texts discussed here will eventually make it into the canon of major political thinkers of the Enlightenment era.

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**Jon Parkin and Timothy Stanton, eds., *Natural Law and Toleration in the Early Enlightenment***, Oxford: OUP for The British Academy, *Proceedings of The British Academy*, 186 (2013), pp.xxi + 231. ISBN 978-0-19-726540-6. £60.00.

This collection of papers, originally prepared for a conference on 'Natural Law and Toleration in the Early Enlightenment' held at the British Academy in London on 13 April 2007, is informative, stimulating and very welcome. Following Jon Parkin's scene-setting 'Preface', we find two papers on Pufendorf (Simone Zurbuchen and Thomas Ahnert); three on Locke, of which the last compares him with Christian Thomasius (Timothy Stanton, Ian Harris and Ian Hunter); and one each on Leibniz (Maria Rosa Antognazza), Jean Barbeyrac (PetterKorkman), and Hutcheson (KnudHaakonssen). John Dunn contributes a 'Postface'.

The volume as a whole constitutes an efficient purgative of that intellectual anachronism which would denude the authors here discussed of their socio-religious contexts with a view to presenting them as proto-liberal secularists. Thus, for example, Harris cautions us against an a-historical alchemy which would transmogrify Locke into John Stuart Mill, for 'metaphysical individuation and care for one's soul' are not 'the same in character as the individualism of modern thought' (p.87). Thus, Locke did not write his *Epistola* with reference to 'the individual', in terms of secular self-development', but to '*societates*, jurisdictions, and their relations' (p.88).

These papers are so tightly-written and replete with information that to summarize them would almost certainly be to misrepresent their authors. I shall therefore attempt to whet the appetite of

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potential readers by indicating something of the breadth of views regarding natural law and toleration which are to be found here.

First, as to natural law: Pufendorf maintained that the natural law concerns the regulation of 'the outward actions of men', and that 'the science of natural law, which derives from human reason alone, is addressed to all men', whatever their religious or other commitments (p.7). He also thought that while the almost universally accepted truths of natural religion supported natural law (pp.7, 21), Christian religious orthodoxy provided the firmest basis for politics and morality (pp.18, 28, 30, 170). However, Pufendorf did not think that most human beings were capable of discerning the norms upon which society depended; rather, they learned what these were through the experience of seeing persons variously praised and punished: 'It is thus tradition and authority that together bring morality and natural law to ordinary men' (p.175). With this position, which was also that of Hugo Grotius, Barbeyrac, whose Huguenot father had been forced to leave his family on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685), disagreed. He contended that the persecuted needed to be able to perceive their right to resist the sovereign 'even when tradition and authority deny it' (p.175). If the simplest were not able to discover the maxims of natural law for themselves they could, by the light of reason, grasp them when they are presented to them (p.176).

What is the basis of natural law? Pufendorf held that 'the duty to act sociably stems from God's will', but that 'the contents of natural law are defined by secular logic' (p.169). As compared with this, Locke's account of natural law had a more overtly theological cast. In his *Essays on the law of nature* Locke understood natural law as comprising 'divinely ordained moral rules disclosed by sense data and reason' (p.46). He thus held together God's will, human experience and reason and, as I have elsewhere suggested, he could do so because for him the will of God and the rational order were in complete accord. Indeed, to Locke, natural law presupposed God and the immortality of souls, with a person's eternal happiness being conditional upon obedience to God (pp.65, 71, 105). By contrast, with the passage of time and under the influence of Shaftesbury, Barbeyrac's thought moved still further away from that of Pufendorf, and his moral epistemology took a turn towards the idea of 'innate moral sentiments [importantly, the

inclination towards benevolence] and a natural moral rectitude' (p.177). From his earliest work, Hutcheson had articulated his conviction that the human mind is naturally constituted and possessed of a moral sense. This would provide "the more elementary form of moral insight, and to get any further we do need to go via the divinity" (p.187). With this he coupled a teleological view of 'the moral life as an ongoing project' (p.188).

Where in all of this is conscience *vis à vis* toleration? Locke turned from the widely current views that conscience was guided by the natural law which itself made known God's will; and that owing to the baleful effects of the Fall (that is, the noetic effects of sin) persons required authoritative ecclesial instruction as to what they should do, to the view that churches were voluntary associations and that people were free to join them for worship (conceived by Locke as a natural duty, [p.50]) and fellowship –that is to say, for objectives distinct from those of civil society (p.36). Indeed, freedom of worship 'was not in any straightforward sense a civil right, for it had no connection to the ends of civil society and it was not borne by the individual qua political subject' (p.52). Such a position could not but give toleration priority over religious comprehension, whereas 'In the English context, natural law writers typically preferred comprehension to toleration' (p.xv). (I observe that Dissenters, on the reading lists of whose academies Pufendorf regularly appeared, were divided on this issue, with John Owen advocating toleration, Richard Baxter, comprehension). With the passage of time, Locke more decidedly pursued the implication that the civil magistrate was authorised to secure the objectives of civil society, but had no right to interfere with those of the churches, provided that the latter did not become disruptive of civil society.

Leibniz emerges as the most eirenic of all the thinkers discussed in this book. He placed great weight upon sincerity of conscience as the ground of salvation, insincerity as leading to condemnation. His case for toleration turned upon the 'distinction between the objectivity of truth and the subjectivity of salvation' (p.151). Those who held erroneous beliefs required to be taught, not punished (pp.145, 154-5). Moreover, persecution 'is futile and counter-productive' (p.160). Leibniz devoted himself to ecumenical activity designed to heal the division in Europe between Lutherans,

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Calvinists and Roman Catholics, and Antognazza does not overlook the irony of the fact that 'Locke – unlike Leibniz – won his reputation as an apostle of religious toleration despite excluding from toleration by far the largest single confessional community in Europe: the Roman Catholic church' (p.164), (an exclusion prompted by Locke's conviction that Roman Catholics were subservient to a foreign power, Rome, and hence that they were to that extent untrustworthy).

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes prompted Pufendorf to inveigh against the coercion which led to false conversions, and this led him to a defence of religious toleration 'based centrally on arguments from revelation, not from natural religion' (p.23). Although he denied that religious freedom was a natural right, it was nevertheless the duty of the sovereign to respect it (p.8). Whereas Pufendorf held that since 'religion originates in the relation between man and God, it *need* not be exercised in community with others' (p.8, my italics), Thomasius, influenced by a pietistic spirituality, argued that the true church is invisible, its members are known only to God, and hence the faithful cannot 'be brought together in a "visible assembly"' (p.123). The prince or state alone has the political right of toleration, which is to be exercised against intolerant religious groups, and this only in order to maintain peace, and 'without regard to religious truth' (p.128). In Barbeyrac's opinion, the limit to freedom of conscience came at the point at which another person's conscientious right was injured (p.174). He held that both Roman Catholic persecutors, whose Church should not be tolerated (p.171), and strict Protestant confessionalists, in violating the consciences of others were violating natural law – 'a secular-rational theory of morality which was, he insisted, also the core of true Christian belief' (p.168). For his part, Hutcheson sometimes identified conscience with the moral sense, on occasion adding to this the power of conscience to judge the 'motives and consequences of actions, and...the relationship between actions and moral rules (meaning the natural law issuing from God)' (p.189). Importantly, to have a conscience presupposed 'pious dispositions towards God, a firm persuasion of his goodness, and of his providence governing the world, and administering justice in a future state' (p.196).

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I offer three points in conclusion. First, on the evidence supplied by this book, John Dunn is justified in remarking that ‘the spiritual and political struggle to sustain or refashion [the elusive dispositional contours of toleration and intolerance] goes on competitively virtually everywhere almost all the time’ (p.202).

Secondly, in this scamper through a selection of the varied views discussed in this collection, I have not so far mentioned the atheists. I do so now, because in a way they bring us full circle to the stance adopted by all of the writers in this book. To Pufendorf atheists had false ideas regarding God, and were therefore incapable of morality and sociability (p.9). To Locke the atheist was deficient in not perceiving that if there were no God there could be ‘no natural law, and neither civil nor ecclesiastical society’(p.97). Barbeyrac thought that atheism was not a punishable crime so long as atheists kept their views to themselves, and said or did nothing to injure civil order (though he sometimes wrote as if ‘freedom of conscience’ were based on a duty to serve God) (pp.170, 173). Hutcheson was somewhat dismissive of atheists, because they lacked that knowledge of divine providence and its laws on which the moral life depended (pp.188-9). These samples indicate that differences of emphasis notwithstanding, God was not far away from any of the authors here discussed. When we then recall that until well into the nineteenth century it was popularly questioned whether an atheist could be a morally upstanding person, the case would seem to be made against any scholar who thinks that we have really understood these earlier authors if God and religion are removed from the equation in the interests of modern liberalism and secularism (cf.p.xi).

Thirdly, the contributors to this volume have presented rich, in some ways corrective, accounts of those on whom they have written. They have all assumed that, given integrity and scholarly care, we can determine what writers from the past intended to convey. To put it otherwise, they have not succumbed to the ‘postmodernist’ notion that ‘authorial intention’ will for ever elude us. How unfashionable! And what a blessed relief!

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**Alan P F Sell, *The Theological Education of the Ministry: Soundings in the British Reformed and Dissenting Traditions*, Pickwick Publications, 2013, xiv + 314 pp.**

The scope of this book is the provision of Nonconformist theological education from the seventeenth century onwards, in a variety of contexts ranging from dissenting academies, theological colleges devoted exclusively to ministerial education, free-standing university faculties, and situations which were a combination of confessional colleges taking advantage of the facilities of a nearby university.

The focus is not, however, on the institutions, but on the their staffs: Caleb Ashworth at Daventry Academy; John Oman at Westminser College, Cambridge; N G H Robinson at the University of St Andrews; Geoffrey Nuttall at New College, London; T W Manson as Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism at the University of Manchester; and a group of scholars who combined their responsibilities at Hartley Victoria Methodist College and Lancashire Independent College, with teaching in the university's Faculty of Theology.

It is the earlier part of the timeline, dealing with Caleb Ashworth's tenure at Daventry, the successor of Northampton Academy that is mostly likely to appeal to readers of this journal, whilst the end has much to offer for those who, like Sell, had the privilege of studying for the ministry in Manchester in the late-1950s. Taken together, these teachers cover what Sell defines as the core disciplines of a theological education: biblical studies, ecclesiastical history, philosophy, doctrine, and systematic theology.

The selection is drawn from the branch of Protestant Dissent that since the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972 has increasingly been referred to as the Reformed tradition. Previously, in England, it was usually designated as Evangelical Nonconformity, to distinguish it from the other branch of Dissent represented by those who were Non-Subscribers, Arians and eventually Unitarians. Yet in his choice of Caleb Ashworth, Sell bridges the divide, touching more than one might expect on Ashworth's students who did not share his Evangelical opinions.

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Daventry was one of a few academies receptive to new ideas, including the introduction of lectures in English, rather than Latin. Joseph Priestley, a student in the first three years, remarked that while Ashworth took ‘the orthodox side of every question’; the sub-tutor, Samuel Clark, ‘that of heresy’, thus carrying on Doddridge’s principle of referring to authors on all sides of the question, and requiring students to give an account of them, which promoted much independence of judgement. In later contexts this openness was rarely matched, when Nineteenth-century confessional colleges were restricted by the constraints of their sponsoring denominations.

Ashworth was brought up in the Particular Baptist community of the Rossendale Valley in Lancashire, the son of a lay preacher. His brothers both entered the Baptist ministry, Thomas as a Particular Baptist at Heckmondwike, and John as a General Baptist. Caleb himself seems to have had less sympathy with his father’s views and abandoned a tradition reliant on the leadership of ‘gifted brethren’, with a tendency toward Antinomianism, to train for the Independent Ministry under Philip Doddridge, who named him as his successor. Ashworth was not prepared to move to Northampton and conducted the relocated Academy in conjunction with his ministry at the Sheaf Street Chapel. But whilst the Academy was intended to produce scholarly ministers, in contrast to uneducated ‘gifted brethren’, its curriculum was wanting in some respects.

It by no means covered all the core disciplines. Priestley was critical of its defects in the teaching of languages, the absence of lectures on the Scriptures and Ecclesiastical history. Ashworth confined himself mainly to the philosophical and theological subjects. But in spite of these deficiencies ‘it was’, said Priestley, ‘in a state peculiarly favourable to the pursuit of truth, as the students were about equally divided upon every question of much importance...’.

Ecclesiastical historians, in particular, will be drawn to the two chapters on Geoffrey Nuttall, the distinguished historian of Puritanism and Dissent: one based on a series of conversations – interesting enough, but presenting a depressing view of the academic rivalries between Nuttall and Gordon Rupp, the Reformation scholar, as they competed for key academic positions; Nuttall always being the loser, and perhaps to his advantage

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remaining at New College, London, close to his sources at Dr. Williams's Library; the other discussing the church historian's role in engaging with theological issues, and its extent in Nuttall's own career. It is clear that Sell and Nuttall got on well together, in spite of Nuttall deploring the increasing 'Genevan' tendency in Congregationalism, of which Sell has been a keen advocate. Finally, the focus turns to a small group of New Testament scholars who were part of a context combining the advantages of denominational colleges with Manchester's free Faculty of Theology, founded in 1903/4. Here the recollections are of Sell's own teachers: T W Manson, Owen E Evans, W Gordon Robinson and J H Eric Hull, who tragically died suddenly at the end of his first term as Principal of Lancashire Independent College, the impressive seat of learning attractively portrayed on the book's cover. This was perhaps a time when the education of the ministry came closer than ever before, or since, to Sell's ideal of including a full range of five major disciplines, with even non-graduate students gaining a good grounding in a 'classical' theological education.

In Ashworth's day the dissenting academy model was deficient in being in the hands of too few tutors, and subject to the uncertainties of their peregrinations, as they moved from one pastorate to another. Today, combinations of theological colleges and university faculties have largely disappeared. Colleges have formed Federations and Partnerships, supposedly more beneficial for mission, but leaving university departments, as some lecturers no doubt preferred, to teach theology to potential RE teachers, or as a general subject, but without reference to ministry.

Changing times, including the limitations brought by an increasing number of mature late entrants to the ministry, with a consequent need to curtail the length of courses, together with expectations of more pastoral and administrative skills, not to mention a shortage of financial resources, make the possibility of such an extensive curriculum much less likely. Some may wonder whether the glory has departed.

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**David Sekers, *A Lady of Cotton. Hannah Greg, Mistress of Quarry Bank Mill*, Stroud, Glos.: The History Press in association with the National Trust, 2013, pp.1-280; ISBN: 978-0-7524-9008-3; £9.99**

A full length biography of Hannah Greg is very welcome. This book supersedes the useful 1982 pamphlet by Peter Spencer and builds on David Sekers' own excellently edited *The diary of Hannah Lightbody 1786-1790* published by *Enlightenment and Dissent* in 2008. Sekers' scholarship on Hannah Greg, stimulated by his time as museum director at Quarry Bank Mill, is now augmented by using the archive at Quarry Bank and a wealth of Lightbody and Greg family papers to produce a very readable, well-referenced and illustrated account of a remarkable woman largely ignored by historians.

A great strength of this book is the way it illuminates the family life, education and travels of a woman lucky enough to grow up in enlightened Dissenting circles in a period when even well-to-do women usually received, at best, a scanty intellectual education and were not expected to be independent in either body or mind. Hannah Lightbody, born into a prosperous family of textile merchants in Liverpool, was descended on her mother's side from the intellectual elite of Dissent. Her prolonged schooling among Rational Dissenting educators in north-west England and then in Stoke Newington, London, exemplified the advanced views on education for females held by her mother and teachers and was augmented by living amongst cultured relatives and meeting leading educators, radicals and reformers. Influenced by both Richard Price and Joseph Priestley, she staunchly adhered to the belief that humankind, including women, were capable of attaining perfection and this included the right to develop the mind. Like other Rational Dissenters, she is shown to have believed fervently that a proper education for all which enlarged understanding, inspired moral excellence, refined sensibilities and awoke a spirit of enquiry, was at the heart of social and moral progress.

The book shows how such an upbringing enabled Hannah to take an active part in the vibrant cultural life of Liverpool. Despite their marginalisation, she enjoyed being among the Rational Dissenters and shared their liberal and intellectual outlook, stress

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on unfettered enquiry, reason in the quest for truth, toleration of other viewpoints and educational ideals. Travelling among her relatives and friends in Lancashire, Derbyshire, London and Leicester she joined with alacrity in both the social round of assemblies, parties, visits to the theatre, concerts and exhibitions and in intellectual discussion with ministers, doctors, scientists, radicals, writers and reformers. Loving literature, art, music, natural scenery and landscape gardening, she received a very full education for a woman.

Sekers exemplifies with many apt quotes Hannah's interpretation of the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft and others and her ardent articulation of the mental equality of the sexes and women's need for an education on a par with the best offered to men in order to fulfil their domestic duties. In contrast to common arguments of the day, she opined that 'other advantages' being equal, women might even demonstrate 'superiority' because they are more often motivated by affection 'which, when strengthened by habit, often enables them to dare and to endure, more than mere manly wisdom and courage'. Such attitudes, quoted twice (p.61 and p.137), illustrated her views on her own education and that she intended for her daughters.

Yet Hannah's feminism was tempered by the reality of life for women even among progressive thinkers. According to Sekers, she was not able, for example, to vocalise her opposition to the slave trade once she married Samuel Greg, owner of a prospering cotton mill at Quarry Bank, Styal, who also inherited a slave plantation. Sekers portrays this marriage as one of mutual love, respect and admiration but at first challenging for Hannah who had to discover both how to retain her integrity without upsetting her husband and how to accept living in Manchester whose initial strangeness was not helped by the increasing anti-radicalism and economic dislocation of the 1790s and 1800s. On the other hand, she absorbed radical political views on Ireland from her new in-laws which she was not afraid to express; she became an active, if private, partner in her husband's business; shared his liberal values and bore thirteen children in nineteen years. Constantly ill, she, nevertheless, longed for more invigorating work. Apart from writing a rather unsuccessful book, she found her answer at her husband's mill.

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A fascinating part of this book, indeed, is how Sekers describes and analyses the way that Quarry Bank in Styal became the cornerstone of Hannah's life, providing a comfortable home in beautiful surroundings, an ideal place for bringing up children according to enlightened ideas on education and play, a retreat from smoky, restless Manchester, a civilised place for personal reflection and a convivial and cosmopolitan home where she brought together 'bright minds' (p.209) in all aspects of learning, culture, science, social change and politics to join in intelligent and open discussion. Hannah is shown to have found her vocation, however, in the care of the pauper apprentices on whose work much of the mill relied. She personally tended to their health and welfare, their education and their spiritual development, enlisting her children in turn to help teach them. As 'Mater familias' (p.161) of the community, its character was her achievement, (although Sekers points out the lack of evidence for some involvement). She did much to ensure a stability which was fragile elsewhere, yet Sekers rightly shows that this was enlightened self-interest, helping turn those at the bottom of society into a reliable, moral, respectable workforce. Hannah was not for changing the hierarchical structure of society (albeit the new industrialists were challenging its nature).

The portrayal of how Hannah's children exemplified different aspects of their mother's teaching is interesting. For example, Hannah's eldest daughter Bessy, who married William Rathbone V, became an influential public philanthropist in Liverpool, although, as a woman, she worked through committees and let men take the glory. Robert Hyde Greg was a brilliant polymath and businessman who promoted the liberal political reforms that Hannah supported but opposed trade unions. Samuel's more optimistic ideals for workers failed, exemplifying the limitations of paternalism in a vastly changing world. John excelled in business, William in writing.

Sekers is a little confusing on Hannah's faith. He explains she was a lifelong adherent of Priestleyan views and constantly places her with Rational Dissenters but argues that it 'seems clear that she did not become a Unitarian' (p.229) because she was a committed member of Mosley Street Chapel, approving the non-denominational approach of its minister J J Tayler. This does not seem to recognise the range of views within Unitarianism at the

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time which included both those of the old moderate Presbyterian tradition and those who wanted greater denominational definition, strands of Rational Dissent which continued, sometimes acerbically, throughout the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, this fascinating biography giving a rich picture of the social, cultural, economic and educative world of Rational Dissenters at the turn of the nineteenth century and of what one woman could achieve within it, should prove fascinating to a range of readers.

Ruth Watts  
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**SHORT NOTICE**

William Godwin, *Political Justice*, ed. with introduction by Mark Philp, Oxford World's Classics, October 2013, pp.560 pages, 978-0-19-964262-5, pbk, £12.99

Also available as: eBook

This new paperback edition of Godwin's *Political justice* is very much to be welcomed. Mark Philp has chosen the text of the first edition of 1793 for re-printing. Arguably this is the most powerful and coherent exposition of Godwin's philosophical anarchism. Certainly it is one which most reflects his Dissenting connections through his devotion to candour, private judgement and belief in the progressive development of truth –which he believes to be uniform. Philp is then able to explain the changes which the work undergoes in its second and third editions, and he provides a very helpful note on the sections in the work which have been altered. This makes the edition more helpful than the previous paperback edition, edited by Isaac Kramnick, in which the text chosen was that of the third edition. It is easier to move forward with Godwin's thoughts than backwards. Since the publication of Kramnick's edition there has been a huge expansion of Godwin studies, in which Philp has played a key role. He points students to the information available online and also to the valuable first volume of his letters edited by Pamela Clemit (with the second volume due out in October 2014). Philp takes his account of Godwin's life and thought beyond the publication of *PJ* and through to the end of his life and offers some final reflections on Godwin's significance both

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then and now. Godwin's emphasis was, unlike Paine's, not on rights, but on duties, and the questions he raises are especially pertinent in the political upheavals of today.

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## The Diary of Hannah Lightbody

David Sekers

I am grateful to readers who have pointed out a number of slips in the printed edition of this diary, and to the editors of the journal, for agreeing to publish this list of *errata*.

In the Introduction (p.9, last sentence) I describe Hannah as ‘no radical’. This judgement was premature. In *A lady of cotton* (History Press 2013, 197-205), I suggest that in her youth in London and Liverpool she developed and then retained throughout her adult life a range of views on social and political reform which she shared with intimate friends and passed on to her husband and children.

### Errata and addenda

#### Introduction

- p.2 n.1: *add*: ‘Hannah was the lady patroness of Liverpool Library for 1785.’
- p.5 line 14, ‘diary is first and foremost a personal document’; this needs qualifying as evidence has emerged that Hannah read excerpts to her niece; and after illness in 1817, contemplated that passages should be preserved as part of her literary legacy.

#### Main text

- p.5 n.15, Rev Joseph Smith b 1755, not 1775.
- p.11 n.37, Miss F Percival was known as Fanny, and should not be confused with her sister Ann, who later married Nathaniel Heywood.(see also n.259 below).
- p.18 n.67, Arthur Heywood (1753-1836) *add* ‘(who was born on 8 March)’.
- p.21 16<sup>th</sup> (April) *should be* 26<sup>th</sup>.
- p.36/7 n.125, *Add*: ‘this may refer to Richard Brashay, a

- Liverpool Excise officer and partner in the cotton mill at Malham. (Chris Aspin)’.  
 p.40 n.138, ... one of the great land-owning *families*.(not family)  
 p.44 n.144, *start with this addition*: Probably refers to the home of relations of Sarah, the daughter of the noted Nottingham textile manufacturer Samuel Unwin. She married James Heygate of Aldermanbury, who was the London partner in the Pares hosiery and later banking business. Hannah met her in Leicester on 7 Sept 1788 (see n.240).  
 p.57 n.183, line 4 : *replace* Thomas Wright *with* Joseph Wright  
 p.63. 12 Mar. *add note*: Charles Dibdin (1745-1814), composer and performer best known for patriotic ballads.  
 p.65 n.204, ‘Benjamin Arthur Heywood who with his brother Nathaniel’ (i.e.*not* Arthur),  
 p.69 n.214, lines 2 and 4: Brooks *should be spelt correctly as* Brooke.  
 p.74 19 June, *New footnote required for Bright’s.- as follows*: ‘Richard Bright was a prominent Bristol merchant and banker. His wife Sarah was the daughter of Benjamin Heywood. One son (Richard jnr.) became a famous physician, and is now recognised as the father of renal medicine; the other, B H Bright was a noted antiquary who became a good friend of Hannah and her son Robert.(see entry for 9 November 1789 where they are introduced)’.  
 p.86 n.254: *replace existing note with*: Smedley, a village, two miles north of Manchester. Smedley Hall was then the property of Edward Lloyd, a Manchester banker.  
 p.89 n.259, *Omit* (Fanny).  
 p.114 n.320, *To be amended thus*: The *F* could be read as a *T*. This entry and the reference to this pair of visitors the following day may therefore refer to Thomas Percival accompanied by Rachel Kennedy.

### **Appendix 1**

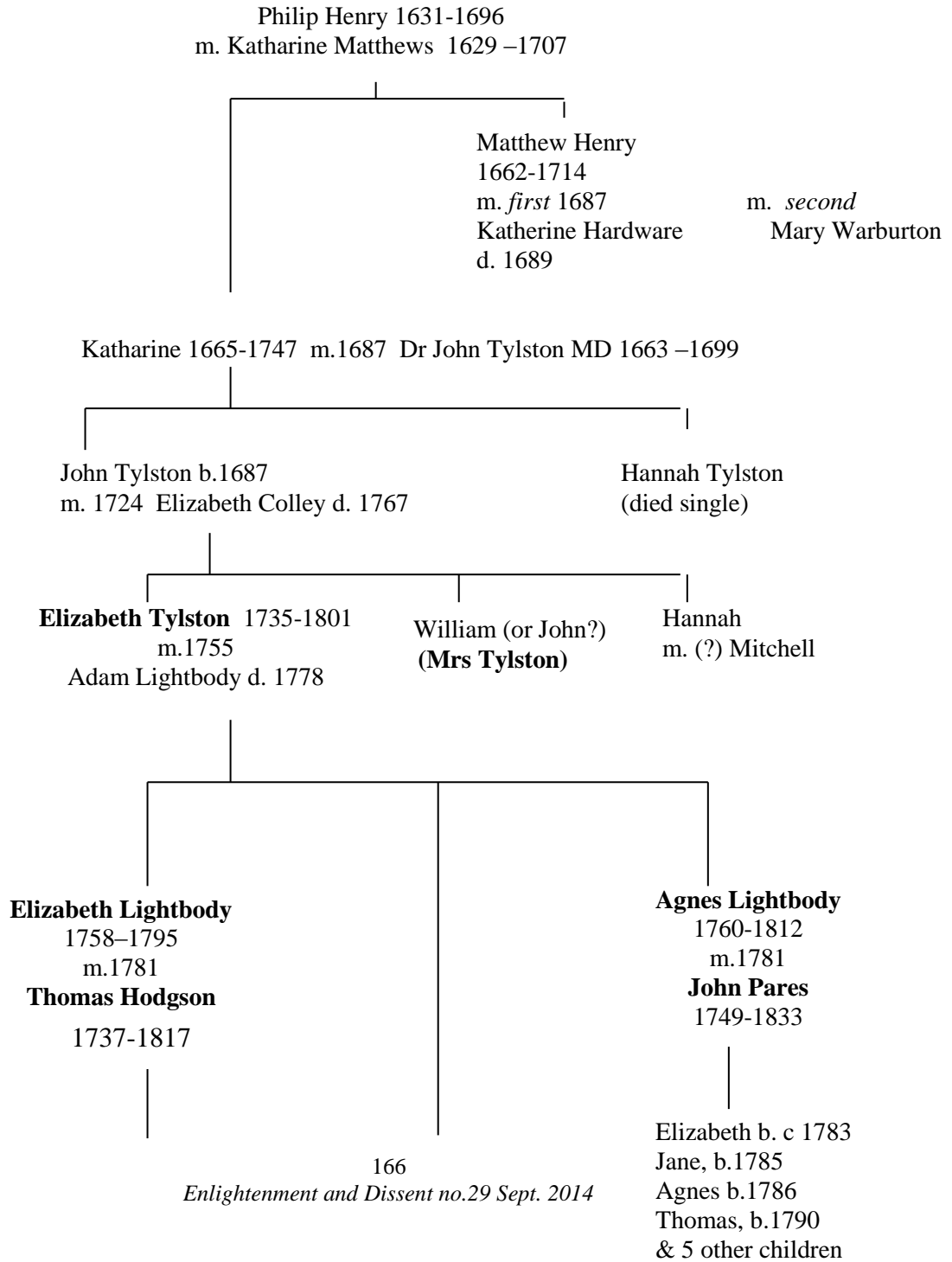
p.123, *the date when **Penrose's poems** were discussed was 9 February.*

### **Appendix 2**

p.142, *Henry and Tylston Families: a revised family tree is provided as a separate attachment.*



## Henry and Tylston Families



Elizabeth b.1782

**Isaac** 1783-1847

Agnes b. 1785

**Adam** 1789-1863

Anna b.1791 (m Rev Lister)

Thomas 1794 -1795

**Hannah Lightbody**

1766-1828

m.1789 **Samuel Greg**

11 surviving children