MODEL INSTITUTIONS AND THE GEOGRAPHY OF SOCIAL REFORM IN EARLY VICTORIAN BRITAIN[*]

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This article reconsiders the nature and novelty of social reform in Britain during the early Victorian period. Historians have long ceased to debate the period in terms of a 'revolution in government', or the beginnings of a welfare state. Instead, the current consensus presents a picture of only modest, fitful change. Neither the state, nor the overall ideological landscape, was radically transformed. This article seeks to reinject a sense of transformative change back into these decades. It does so by examining a neglected facet of this otherwise richly served period of social reform: the formation and functioning of a series of self-styled 'model' institutions that spanned the fields of education, prisons, housing and sanitation. In particular, what the use of these model institutions brings into sharp focus are the radical changes that occurred in the geography of social reform, which at this point began to develop according to multiple spatial relations, extending at once within and beyond Britain. Between them, they helped to engineer a truly cosmopolitan culture of social policymaking, which was both multi-directional – policies flowed outwards and inwards – and composed of multiple relations, national, imperial, and transnational.

Historians of British statecraft and social reform no longer reckon with the early Victorian period in the same momentous terms as they did in the immediate post-war

era. The broad contours of the shift are well known. Gone are the debates about whether the period witnessed the start of a 'revolution in government', or the birth of a proto-collectivist, welfare state.[1] Instead, the new 'scholarly consensus', as Philip Harling has suggested, presents a picture of enormous complexity, characterized by multiple combinations of reforming currents, old and new, statist and anti-statist.[2] Although the state did indeed assume new powers during this time, these powers were rooted in – and constrained by – a highly pluralist, patrician culture of authority that was also committed to free trade, local self-government, voluntary service and philanthropy.[3] To be sure, few dispute that a more urgent moralizing imperative was unleashed at this time, as national and civic elites grappled with the social unrest that accompanied industrialization and rapid urbanization. Foucauldian-inspired histories in particular have stressed these disciplinary dimensions.[4] Yet, as historians now caution, the springs were many, from the character-building pastoralism of evangelical Christianity to more secular forms of utilitarian individualism. Understood in an expansive sense, it is the term 'liberal' that is seen to best capture this rich mix of reforming ideologies, which was at most only mindful, and often quite sceptical, of the utility of the state.

This article seeks to challenge the new orthodoxy and the diminished sense of change it offers, which in some accounts has pushed back any substantive transformation as far as the 1880s.[5] It does so not by reasserting the importance of the state, which was clearly limited at this juncture; nor by denying the abundance of ideals that animated the work of improving (and disciplining) the lot of the poor. Rather, it does so by arguing that a radical change took place in the geography of social reform, which henceforth developed according to multiple spatial relations, extending at once within and beyond Britain. Little of this was subject to explicit reflection or theorization

at the time. It was not a matter of discrete ideas or principles, so much as the broad assumptions underpinning the spatial horizons of 'reform' – which was now understood in recognizably modern ways[6] – and the degree to which novel policy innovations and standards might be disembedded from particular localities and then replicated in others. It occurred during the first half of a long period of Whiggish-liberal parliamentary dominance, but it is not a transformation with any specific party-political or denominational origins.

The circulation of social reforms within and beyond national borders is now the subject of a vast literature in the political sciences, where studies of 'policy transfer' abound; but historians have long pursued the subject in the context of the nineteenth century.[7] A key feature of the old historiography noted above was the emergence of more formalized, interactive and often inspectorial relations between central and local authorities during the early Victorian period; and it remains a core component of revisionist accounts, save that the emphasis is now on the local as the preeminent site of agency.[8] Attention, too, has been paid to relations beyond Britain. Historians have examined the empire as a site for the export of new systems of policing and schooling.[9] More recently, an emerging body of transnational historiography has begun excavating what Pierre-Yves Saunier has dubbed the 'circulatory regimes' of social policy exchange that developed within and between Europe and the US in the early nineteenth century.[10] Between them these accounts capture crucial aspects of the spatial ambitions and relations that distinguished social reform as it developed during the nineteenth century. The problem, however, is that they do so only in a fragmented fashion, and in the case of transnational histories it is the period after roughly 1880 that has received by far the most attention.[11] None have sought to examine these relations *together*, still less

to pinpoint when and how they began to combine and inform one another. Yet, as will be argued here, we might reappraise the early Victorian period in precisely this fashion: as the moment when social reform in Britain was placed on a radically more 'connected', multilateral footing, whereby these various relations – national, imperial and transnational – intensified together, as part of the same transformation in the geography of policy formation.

To develop this argument the article examines a neglected facet of early Victorian social reform: the formation and functioning of a series of self-styled 'model' institutions that spanned the fields of education, prisons, housing and sanitation.[12] In brief, beginning in the 1830s, a growing body of voluntary societies either recast existing institutions as 'model schools', or built them from scratch, the last of which appeared in the 1850s. Meanwhile, in 1842, a model prison opened in Pentonville, north London. From the mid-1840s, housing reformers began building model dwellings; and in 1847, a model public baths and washhouses establishment opened in Whitechapel, east London. In all cases they aimed to set new standards and to encourage others to follow their lead; and their principal audience in this respect was kindred British reformers and local elites. Yet, as we shall see, the connections they drew on and helped to establish extended much beyond the domestic sphere. It is not just that they were enormously influential in their respective areas of reform, reaching out across Britain, the empire, Europe and the US. Their very operative assumption was that social reforms were inherently mobile and capable of replication and refinement in multiple locations. It was precisely this that was registered in their designation as models, which in fact was normally capitalized in the more definitive form of 'Model' (e.g. Model Prison). The product was an unprecedented and hugely complex traffic of policy ideas and

systems, wherein the promotion of home-grown model institutions (houses and baths and washhouses) occurred alongside the promotion of those that owed varying debts to foreign innovations (prisons and elementary schools).

Of course, these institutions hardly exhaust the multiple initiatives that have been gathered under the term 'social reform' for this period, which also encompassed the reform of the poor law, factory conditions and policing; and sanitary reform concerned much more than baths and washhouses. Nonetheless, they afford a suitably specific case study by which to examine how this spatially expansive culture of social policymaking functioned in practice. Certainly they captured a new standard-setting ambition and rigour. One of the key functions of model institutions was to serve as examples and to set new and improved standards, fit for replication elsewhere. Yet the culture of policymaking that emerged was a great deal more subtle than this. For one thing, there was widespread recognition of the need for adaptation, which was judged essential if these same (general, mobile) standards were to be realized in peculiar circumstances, far removed from their original site of refinement. More importantly, this culture was also experimental, and model institutions were concerned just as much with pioneering and testing novel methods and technical forms, as they were with their exhibition and replication. Put another way, as a means of policy formation, the use of model institutions was about managing processes of innovation and emulation, rather than strict standardization or exact copying.

In sum, if it is difficult to locate any revolutionary changes in the size of the state during the early Victorian period, or in the overall ideological landscape, as the revisionist scholarship insists, this should not preclude speaking of a profound transformation in other aspects of governing: namely, as the case of model institutions

suggests, in the geography of social reform, and the mechanics and networks through which social policies were formed and exchanged. The article begins with a brief discussion of some of the roots and precursors of what would develop fully in the early Victorian period. It then turns to the establishment of model institutions (section II), before examining their influence and reach, and how they were promoted and publicized (sections III–V).

I

The model institutions that emerged from the 1830s fit neatly the revisionist picture of a pluralistic, morally ambitious, liberal order of governing. All sought to foster more respectable, self-regarding subjects, doing so in various ways. Crudely, whereas prisons and schools were animated by disciplinary ideals, housing reform and the provision of baths and washhouses were conceived in softer, more civilizing terms, seeking to amplify, rather than create, a capacity for self-government (which indeed they relied upon in an ability to afford rental charges and entrance fees). They were also the product of a mixed array of agents. Pentonville model prison was administered by the state and was only the third of its kind to be financed from central revenues.[13] The rest of Britain's prisons remained in the hands of county and borough authorities. Voluntary school societies relied principally on private donations and subscriptions, coupled, after 1833, with annual grants from the state in most cases. Model dwellings and their imitators relied on philanthropic and entrepreneurial efforts; and though the model baths and washhouses establishment opened in 1847 was funded by a London-based

committee of elite patrons and sanitary enthusiasts, most were built by municipal boroughs and parishes. And these differences mattered. Most of all, the involvement of the state in the case of prisons, and to a lesser extent in elementary schools, meant that central officials were able to exercise leverage over the course of reform.

This is also, however, where their significance partly lies: simply that the use of model institutions cut across these otherwise diverse forms of patronage, however they might be styled, state or non-state, public or private. Its origins are similarly diffuse and stretch back much before the early nineteenth century. The word itself was long-established and by the eighteenth century it had already accrued the range of meanings it would possess in the Victorian period. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755) outlined four principal senses, and other dictionaries would follow suit in the nineteenth century.[14] These were 'model' as a simplified or miniature representation of a structure or process; a copy to be imitated; a standard by which something is measured or judged; and a particular type or design of any given thing. With the exception of the first, all of these meanings were evident in the functioning of model institutions, which were variously concerned to set exemplary standards; to exhibit and showcase such standards; and to afford opportunities to test and refine these standards as they related to a particular type of institution.

But though the word had long been current, there is no neat line of evolution leading up to what would flourish after 1830, when model institutions began to emerge as a key technology of social reform. Rather, they brought together what seem to have been a series of quite discrete developments that began roundabout the mid-eighteenth century. On the one hand, the technical use of physical models became more refined and plural, presaging the multiple functions they came perform in the context of social

reform. Whereas previously models had been used principally as a means of pedagogic exhibition (e.g. wax anatomical models), this was now joined by two other functions. In particular, the reform of Britain's weights and measures entailed the promotion of models as a means of strict standardization. Starting in the 1750s and 1760s, a mounting succession of select committees and parliamentary bills began insisting on the maintenance of uniform 'models' and 'copies' of a much reduced number of units, eventually resulting in the 1824 Weights and Measures Act, which introduced the imperial system based around the pound, yard and gallon.[15] Conversely, the experimental use of models was pioneered from the 1750s, when the engineer John Smeaton first conducted trials using miniature waterwheels and windmills. By the early nineteenth century the use of small-scale 'working models' had emerged as a recognized technique for determining basic principles of mechanical design in fields such as shipbuilding and bridge-building.[16]

On the other hand, the expansive field of geographic reference in which model institutions were embedded was clearly prefigured in some of the first efforts to survey reforming initiatives at home and abroad. Parliament played a role here, principally by collating information gathered elsewhere, especially in relation to matters of domestic administration;[17] but in terms of conducting specific research, emerging networks of enlightened philanthropy and officialdom, forged through personal correspondence and travel, were of much more significance. It was by no means one-way traffic, for foreigners visited Britain just as British reformers ventured aboard: in 1787, the physician Jacques Tenon visited no fewer than fifty-two English prisons, hospitals and workhouses, doing so on behalf of the French Academy of Science.[18] British surveys born of this early form of policy-based 'tourism' are by no means abundant; yet the

information that was published was unprecedented in its detail and scope, and there was clearly a concern to identify exemplary practices. The best instance is the work of the Bedfordshire sheriff John Howard, who toured Britain and Europe in search of lessons regarding the care and confinement of the sick and the criminal, reaching as far as St Petersburg. The research he undertook formed the basis of two major surveys of prisons, hospitals and kindred institutions, the first published in 1777, the second in 1789. Besides providing a wealth of information on matters of architectural design and management, particular institutions were compared and contrasted; and in a handful of instances, Howard even paused to consider whether or not they might be considered 'models', fit for promotion and emulation.[19]

It was only in the early nineteenth century, however, when some of these early efforts to *identify* model institutions began to combine with initiatives to *build* model institutions, or at least something analogous. A plan formed in 1801 – and shelved a year later – to reorganize Newcastle Infirmary so that it might act 'as a model for the improvement of similar institutions' seems to be the first instance of such ambitions; but it was in the realms of penal and educational reform where the most striking developments occurred.[20] Founded in 1816, for instance, the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and for the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders (SIPD) exploited its links to the Quaker movement and evangelical Anglicanism to develop an extensive network of domestic and foreign contacts: by the early 1820s it was able to publish information on prison reform in Ireland, France, America, Prussia, Russia and Norway. The Society also sought to promote its own standard-setting, exemplary plans, culminating in the publication of its *Remarks on the form and*

construction of prisons in 1826, where it lamented that the number of existing prisons 'worthy of imitation' was negligible.[21]

Still more far-reaching were the initiatives that occurred in the field of elementary education. At the heart of these developments was the so-called monitorial system, which involved the use of older students (or monitors) to teach the lessons taught to them by a master or mistress, thereby enabling the instruction of large groups of pupils in an efficient fashion. Pioneered by Andrew Bell in British India – and in particular Madras – and by Joseph Lancaster in London during the 1790s, it was not until the formation of two voluntary societies that it was promoted with any rigour: the nonconformist Royal Lancasterian Society founded in 1808, which in 1814 became the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS), and the Anglican National Education Society (NES) founded in 1811. Both established 'central schools' in London, one for boys and one for girls in each case. The NES was the first, doing so in 1812, when it converted a building at Baldwin's Gardens, Camden. The BFSS followed in 1817, opening a brand new complex in Borough Road, Southwark. Each was similarly multifunctional, acting as a school for local children; as a home for the administration of their respective societies; as places where trainee masters and mistresses received moral and pedagogic instruction; and finally, as sites for the demonstration of exemplary monitorial practices.

The absence of the designation 'model' is not entirely insignificant, as we shall see, but they were clearly designed to exhibit novel standards and forms of instruction. Indeed, they were sometimes referred to as 'models', and it is no coincidence that the same period witnessed the appearance of the first self-described 'model school', which was opened in Dublin in 1819 by the Kildare Place Society, earlier founded in 1811 to

promote elementary education on non-sectarian lines (like the BFSS, it eschewed any specific denominational teachings).[22] Its model school, however, performed the same repertoire of functions as the central schools of the NES and BFSS, just as all three societies adopted the same repertoire of promotional and regulatory tactics. These included the publication of manuals on 'fitting-up' schools and delivering lessons; the distribution of funds to 'local committees' seeking financial help; and on-site inspections by those based at the central schools. By the mid-1820s, the number of schools associated with the NES and BFSS was roughly 2,000 and 600 respectively.[23] At the same time, the two societies also developed contacts abroad, establishing relations with like-minded reformers in Europe and the US, and with missionary groups in India, Africa and the West Indies. Foreign visits, too, occasionally took place. In 1819, the 400 or so people that visited the NES's complex in Camden included a handful of dignitaries from abroad, among them Prince Esterházy of Austria and ambassadors from the US and Prussia.[24]

II

The immediate origins of the use of exemplary institutions clearly lie in the field of elementary education, where the monitorial system in particular was upheld as an innovation that might be applied throughout the world. What developed in the decades after 1830, however, was of a different order of intensity and ambition, marked as it was by the emergence of designated 'model' institutions across a number of domains of social policy. It would be difficult to isolate one key causal ingredient or even many;

but it was certainly facilitated by the advent of more expansive postal and news networks, as well as the proliferation of organizations for gathering and sharing policymaking knowledge within and beyond Britain. The most striking manifestation of the latter is the staging of the first international congresses on prison reform (1846), public health (1852), statistics (1853) and philanthropy (1856). Meanwhile, local efforts within Britain were scrutinized more precisely within a national frame of reference, whether through the work of novel central offices, such as those for the poor law (1834) and public health (1848), or countless nationwide voluntary bodies, culminating in the formation of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (NAPSS) in 1857. It is notable that the very distinction between 'local' and 'central' tiers of government gained currency from the 1830s, having been first deployed by voluntary societies such as the NES and BFSS.25

The result was the entrenchment of what had only been glimpsed in patches prior to 1830: the development of a culture of policy formation that was both hugely varied in terms of the agents it encompassed, and radically expansive and eclectic in terms of its geography. Otherwise put, it was at this moment when the assumption that policy innovations were intrinsically mobile and might be derived from and/or replicated in diverse localities – British, imperial or foreign – became operative across multiple fields of social reform, state-sponsored or not. This openness and eclecticism is amply apparent in the promotion of model institutions, which we turn to next; but it is also evident in their formation and the way they were variously inspired by foreign and domestic initiatives. It was penal reform that owed the greatest debts to innovations abroad, in particular from the US. Since its inception the SIPD had sought information on American practices, and in 1833 one of its secretaries, William Crawford, was

dispatched across the Atlantic by the Home Office to see what might be learned. Crawford visited prisons in thirteen states and was especially struck by two systems: the 'silent system', pioneered in Auburn prison, New York (opened in 1819), which allowed associated labour and dining but prevented communication by strictly enforced silence; and the 'separate system', pioneered in the Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia (1829), which combined prolonged cellular confinement with occasional visits and sermons from a chaplain.[26]

Of the two, Crawford recommended the latter and it was the system that was promoted by the new prison inspectorate formed in 1835 – of which Crawford was a member – leading to another report published in 1838, which recommended the building of a 'Model Prison upon the Separate System'.[27] Also styled as an 'experiment', the scheme that eventually resulted in the opening of Pentonville model prison in 1842 was partly conceived as a means of convincing parliament and magistrates of the merits of separation. As the Home Secretary Lord John Russell suggested before the Commons in 1840, although he himself was in favour of the separate system, it was only right that local authorities should form a judgement 'once the results of an experiment never tried in England had been ascertained'.[28] The design was overseen by the royal engineer Joshua Jebb, who in 1844 became Britain's first Surveyor-General of Prisons. Some aspects had been seen before, such as the use of internal galleries, which dated from the 1780s. The crucial architectural innovation was the construction of the prison's 520 cells, where no detail escaped attention in terms of securing an unprecedented degree of salubrious isolation, from the plumbing and ventilation to the door locks.[29] The other key innovations concerned the intensity of

Christian instruction and pastoral engagement, which included the provision of daily sermons in a chapel furnished with stalls of cubicles.

By contrast, model establishments for the promotion of housing reform and public baths and washhouses owed nothing to foreign examples, instead building on home-grown initiatives. The pioneers of model dwellings were two voluntary organizations formed in the 1840s: the Metropolitan Association for Improving the Dwellings of the Industrious Classes (MAIDIC) founded in 1841, and the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes (SICLC) in 1844. Both evolved out of the first stirrings of Chadwickian sanitary reform in the late 1830s and were supported by a host of eminent Whig and Tory MPs and ministers. They were inspired by a handful of schemes sponsored by paternalist landowners in the preceding decades to improve the cottage dwellings of agricultural labourers. Their own aims were more ambitious and in each case they sought to galvanize kindred reforming efforts by showcasing state-of-the-art dwellings, fit for emulation throughout the country, and not least in urban areas: or as the SICLC put it, to build houses 'upon sound principles', and to promote them thereafter so as to make 'them available as Models for more extended adoption'.[30] Between them the two societies were responsible for more than ten model developments in London prior to the mid-1850s, principally houses and flats for families, but including lodging houses for single men and women.

These, too, were conceived as experiments and one concern was to develop ways of combining three variables: high standards of domestic sanitation; architectural forms that maximized privacy; and finally, economies of space and construction materials, so that the dwellings would not prove too expensive in terms of rental charges for the working poor – the principal group whose moral and physical health was

targeted in these schemes. All manner of technical novelties emerged in the process. Henry Roberts, for instance, the SICLC's chief architect, was the first to design a multi-storey tenement block that incorporated external stairways and open galleries, doing so at the society's Streatham Street Buildings, Bloomsbury, which opened in 1850.[31] The other key concern was to demonstrate the viability of a novel mode of financing that combined a sense of patrician obligation with a desire for profit. In practice, this meant setting limits on investors' dividends to 4 or 5 per cent per annum. Any profits above these limits had to be reinvested or used to fund future dividends. As historians have suggested, the SICLC and MAIDIC were also pioneers of an early form of 'philanthropic capitalism'.[32]

Britain's first model public baths and washhouses establishment was also a product of metropolitan philanthropy, in particular the Committee for Promoting the Establishment of Baths and Washhouses for the Labouring Classes formed in 1844, which counted Queen Victoria among its benefactors. The inspiration was furnished by Liverpool's corporation, which in 1842 had opened Britain's first combined establishment, comprising ten private slipper baths and a small washhouse. Designed by the engineer Price Prichard Baly, the model establishment that opened in 1847 in Whitechapel was of a different scale, providing ninety-four slipper baths and eighty-four laundry compartments. In keeping with its model status, it was charged with setting standards and the constraints it had to negotiate were much the same as for model housing initiatives: that is, building facilities that were at once state-of-the-art, financially self-supporting, and accessible in terms of their prices. As Baly explained, 'the Committee were working, not for Whitechapel alone, but for the whole country'. It

seems that securing fuel-efficient drying apparatus for the wash-house proved the most troublesome element; but as Baly went on:

If they had not gone through that course of experimental works which resulted in as near an approach to a satisfactory solution of the various difficulties as is often attained by new apparatus, those who can now safely adopt or borrow from their plans would have been beset by difficulties which might have proved too much for the perseverance of municipal and parochial authorities, or the patience of ratepayers. [33]

It was with the same eye on enhancing their financial feasibility that the 'Model Establishment' also pioneered the provision of two classes of bathing facilities, whereby the more expensive first-class cubicles would subsidize the cheaper and more functional second-class.

In contrast again, model elementary schools drew on both domestic and foreign innovations. They did so amid another burst of voluntary activism and as the state first entered the field in a regulatory capacity. Established in 1839 to administer the parliamentary grant begun in 1833, the Committee of Council on Education (CCE) and an attached inspectorate provided a degree of central oversight. Schools associated with the BFSS and the Anglican Church would remain the most numerous; but they were joined by more than a thousand affiliated to a raft of new bodies, among them the Home and Colonial School Society (1836) and the Catholic Poor School Committee (1847). Unlike in prison reform, no single, state-sponsored model institution emerged, though this was part of the initial vision. The original remit of the CCE stipulated the establishment of a 'Model School which might serve for the example of those societies … which anxiously seek to improve their own methods of teaching'. [34] The plan came to naught, however, amid fierce disputes over the nature of the inspection regime.

Instead, there emerged a variety of model schools, each serving a particular voluntary society, or in the case of the Anglican Church, the NES and multiple regional dioceses and districts. Their growth was remarkable with almost all of them receiving a central grant. In 1839, there were four training complexes containing model schools; by the late 1850s, some thirty-six had emerged, of which twenty-four were linked to the Church of England.[35]

The very status of model schools was indebted to continental innovations, in particular their disaggregation from training colleges, or 'normal schools', which became a standard feature of all the facilities provided by British voluntary societies. Pioneered in Prussia in the early 1800s, the provision of normal schools meant that a specific function could be accorded to what had been called 'central schools', or what were now established as model schools from the start. Crudely, whereas the latter were charged with developing and demonstrating exemplary teaching practices, normal schools specialized in the moral and intellectual formation of masters and mistresses. In 1834, the BFSS's Borough Road complex began operating two normal schools in conjunction with its two central schools, which were now relabelled 'models'.[36] The first complex to be built from scratch along continental lines began life in 1837 in Glasgow. Funded by the city's Educational Society and led by David Stow, it comprised one normal school, plus separate model schools for infants, juniors, and boys and girls above ten-years-of-age.[37] Stow's establishment furnished one point of reference for British societies; but as historians have detailed, the crucial work of promoting the merits of training colleges was undertaken by James Philips Kay, also the first secretary of the CCE. Between 1837 and 1839, he visited schools in France, Belgium, Holland, Prussia and Switzerland, as well as Stow's establishment.[38] It was during these visits

when Kay gathered ideas that he first put into practice at a pauper school in Norwood, south London, and then more fully at Battersea Normal School, which he founded in 1840 before it was taken over by the NES in 1843.

At the same time, model schools began experimenting with new methods of teaching. Much of this was designed to enhance the British-imperial monitorial system, but not to the exclusion of borrowing further innovations from abroad. Chief among these was the so-called simultaneous method, which entailed the direct instruction of small groups of children, either in a special section of a large classroom or before a 'gallery' of stepped seating. Originating in Prussian schools, it was Stow who did most to popularize the method in Britain, which he refined at his model schools in Glasgow. The other crucial innovation was the instruction of infants as a distinct branch of elementary pedagogy, which built on earlier efforts by the Infant School Society in London during the 1820s.[39] This, too, was something pioneered by Stow, who was the first in Britain to showcase the use of infant playgrounds; and further innovations were undertaken by the Home and Colonial School Society at its model school in London, which besides drawing on British precedents was especially keen to advance the work of the Swiss reformer Johann Pestalozzi.

III

The same expansive, multi-relational geography of reform is still more evident in the concerted promotional efforts that accompanied the development of model institutions. Parliament played a modest role in this respect, passing statutes that encouraged model

arrangements. The 1839 Prisons Act, for instance, permitted the construction of cells according to the separate system. An act passed in 1846 which empowered local authorities to build baths and washhouses also prescribed – as then modelled at Whitechapel – that two classes of bathing facilities should be provided. The real burden of promotional work was borne by the reformers themselves, who continued to mobilize a mixed economy of agents and resources, public and private, official and voluntary, central and local. This work comprised much the same medley of informational and regulatory activities earlier developed by the BFSS and NES, such as inspection and the circulation of plans. The difference lies in the complexity and variety of the networks through which model institutions and their work were promoted, and the scale and reach of the publicity they were afforded.

Official channels were especially pronounced in the case of prisons. The role of Jebb and the prison inspectorate in encouraging local authorities to adopt arrangements modelled at Pentonville in the 1840s and 1850s is well known.[40] Amid an unprecedented burst of prison building, Jebb variously checked plans for new builds and for the conversion of the old; liaised with magistrates in person and correspondence; and even designed some himself, including Mountjoy Prison in Dublin for the Irish Board of Works, which opened in 1850. Meanwhile, the separate system made its way across the empire thanks to officials located in Whitehall. In particular, the Home Office and the War and Colonial Office distributed Jebb's Pentonville plans to the Australian colonies, where they provided the inspiration for a handful of prisons built at mid-century; and Jebb himself occasionally acted as a consultant, reviewing designs for new prisons in the West Indies in the mid-1840s, and for Western Australia's monumental Fremantle Prison constructed between 1851 and 1859.[41]

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The most extensive imperial networks, however, were forged by voluntary education societies seeking to export their own brand of pedagogy to missionary groups. Although British-based training facilities and model schools might be in receipt of central grants from the CCE – thus exposing them to official inspection, much as with grant-funded practising schools – imperial contacts were fostered by the societies themselves. By the late 1840s, for instance, the BFSS had dispatched teachers, teaching materials and funds to schools in India, Jamaica, New Zealand, Nova Scotia, China and West Africa, many of which were in regular correspondence. New societies did the same. In 1837, the Glasgow Educational Society dispatched twenty newly trained teachers to work for the Lady Mico Charity based in the West Indies; another seventeen travelled to Australia in the company of a local Presbyterian minister.[42] Similarly in 1838, the Home and Colonial School Society supplied teachers and resources to missionary groups in China and the West Indies; by the late 1840s, they were being dispatched to Malta, Mauritius and the Cape of Good Hope.[43]

Transnational connections were also forged by the voluntary societies, notably by the BFSS, which maintained a long-standing relation with France's Society for Elementary Education, plus countless more intermittent ties with schools in cities such as St Petersburg, Turin and Philadelphia. The most prestigious transnational audiences for British-based models, however, were secured via the international congresses noted above, where we find a different mixture again of official and voluntary agency. Although organized beyond the level of the state, they were prestigious precisely because they attracted the attendance of central officials and ministers from their respective countries, alongside leading philanthropists and professionals. The bulk of attendees came from Britain, France, Prussia and Belgium, with smaller delegations

coming from countries such as Sweden, Spain and the US.44 In 1847, Jebb provided an extensive account of the separate system practised at Pentonville at the second International Congress on Prison Reform hosted in Brussels.45 It seems model housing received the most exposure at these events. The work of the SICLC and MAIDIC was first publicized by a French delegate, Emile Muller, at the International Congress of Public Health in 1852, before Henry Roberts of the SICLC spoke on the subject at three consecutive meetings of the International Philanthropic Congress in 1856 (Brussels), 1857 (Frankfurt), and 1862 (London).46

Domestically, the meetings of the NAPSS provided a similar kind of platform, both in their desire to place social reform on a more scientific basis and in terms of their prestigious array of delegates, which was further supplemented by local activists and councillors. The Whitechapel baths and washhouses establishment was discussed at the first meeting in 1857, while model housing initiatives featured on numerous occasions, at least until the late 1860s.47 For all its prestige, however, the NAPSS was a relative latecomer in terms of promoting model institutions at home, and in any case it met only annually. Of more importance in this respect were the networks that brought together agents that were local and voluntary, rather than official and ministerial, though not precluding the patronage of the latter. Model housing is one instance. The MAIDIC was especially active in mobilizing civic elites beyond London, and by the mid-1850s similar associations had been established in a number of towns and cities, among them Liverpool, Newcastle, Torquay, Brighton and Southampton.48 The most expansive networks were developed by the voluntary education societies, and most of all the NES and associated diocesan and district boards. Continuing to deploy the same tactics that date from its inception, the NES distributed grants and teaching materials; inspected and

advised schools; and published the details of its work in bulky annual reports. By the mid-1850s, over 10,000 schools were part the NES's 'union' – decidedly more than the 1,000 or so schools that were associated with the BFSS, which was the NES's nearest rival in terms of size.49

Crucially, these varied networks were at once sustained by and productive of a great mass of publicity. All model institutions attracted coverage in the national and provincial press, as well as in more specialist publications such as *The Builder* (1842–). A further layer of publicity emerged as part of efforts to advance the areas of reform served by model institutions. Founded in 1834 as a means of publicizing the plight of agricultural workers, the *Labourers' Friend* became the official organ of the SICLC, championing its work until the mid-1850s. In the case of education, the CCE emerged as a significant repository of information. Its annual reports in particular provided exhaustive commentary on the latest pedagogic innovations and new and existing schools, much of it derived from the reports of inspectors. Meanwhile, more tailored publicity was secured by the agents responsible for managing model institutions. All were served by some kind of central office that handled correspondence and circulated plans and advisory texts. The resources of the state – and more especially the Home Office – supported the administration of Pentonville prison: Jebb's first detailed exposition of its construction was published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1844 and addressed to the then Home Secretary, Sir James Graham.50 The Committee behind the Whitechapel establishment hired a room in Exeter Hall on London's Strand to act as its administrative hub. Between 1850 and 1853 it published three manuals offering guidance on the financing, 'fitting-up' and management of municipal and parochial baths and washhouses. As with other model institutions, inquiries from abroad were

dealt with alongside domestic correspondence, which in this case entailed dispatching promotional literature to the governments of Belgium and Norway; the civic authorities of Hamburg, Munich, Amsterdam, Venice and Lisbon; and New York's People's Bathing and Washing Establishment.[51]

Model institutions thus led an abundant life on paper. Clearly, much of this portable, print-based publicity was successfully targeted at groups of like-minded reformers eager to learn more, supplementing the connections generated by the networks noted above. Indeed, in terms of reaching a foreign audience, translations also played a part. Having earlier translated Crawford's research on the US in 1837, the Prussian philanthropist, Nikolaus Heinrich Julius, went on to translate Jebb's official report on Pentonville prison.[52] The SICLC's first accounts of its model houses were rendered into German and French, the latter in 1851, apparently at the behest of the then President of the Republic, Louis-Napoléon.[53] Ultimately, however, the sheer density and reach of news and communication systems at mid-century meant that accounts of model institutions pursued a somewhat indeterminate course, much beyond the control of their sponsors – and as was sometimes noted, this was no bad thing. In 1859, Henry Roberts boasted that the SICLC's promotional activities had 'been fruitful to a degree not easily estimated'. Its publications, he suggested, 'are not limited in their circulation to Great Britain, but are now scattered in various parts of the world, either in their original text, in whole, or in part, or in translations, like seed carried by the wind, even across the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean'.[54] He went on to note how his publications on the model houses he had designed for the SICLC had fallen into the hands of reformers in the US, Australia, India, Prussia, Sweden and Russia; and this was but a sample of those known only to him.

IV

Not all of the public scrutiny that attended model institutions was favourable. School inspectors were often critical of grant-funded model schools, and only a handful escaped their scrutiny on account of being entirely self-funded (e.g. the model school opened in 1849 by the Congregational Board of Education, which was fiercely opposed to any kind of state intervention). By far the most controversial model institution was Pentonville prison, which attracted hostility throughout the 1840s. Some preferred the silent system; some thought the regime too lenient; others again judged it too severe – it was quickly dubbed the Whigs' 'New Model Bastille' by radicals.[55] None of the criticism they faced, however, necessarily disturbed their status as model institutions. As noted above, they partly performed an experimental function, providing sites where new standards and systems could be refined and worked upon; and in this respect, they were, at least to some degree, self-critical. None were considered the finished article. At the same time, their provisional, experimental status also doubled as the source of their authority and reformist rigour: as their sponsors liked to emphasize, they were actual, working institutions, 'tested by experience', as it was sometimes put, rather than theoretical schemes of reform. They were promoted accordingly; and though critics and sceptics would remain, model institutions laid claim to an empirical, practice-based legitimacy of their own.

Two key tactics might be highlighted. One was making the case for their relative merits by pointing to the work that had been done and the progress made; or else might be made were they to be more widely adopted. Much of this again was performed on

paper, in the plans and manuals noted above, or in further reports that used model institutions as a point of comparison. The prison inspectorate was especially aggressive in this respect, notably Crawford and his fellow inspector Whitworth Russell, whose reports during the 1840s dwelled at gory length on the failings of local institutions that were not based on the Pentonville model.[56] The very process of arriving at the optimal arrangements model institutions comprised was commonly described. Options were recovered, experiments recalled. The elements that might be detailed in this way were many, extending from broad architectural and administrative principles to all manner of technological components (e.g. ventilation mechanisms and classroom desks). Numbers, too, were deployed. The financial viability of public baths and washhouses, for instance, was illustrated by the provision of detailed accounts of their running costs and customer receipts.[57] Likewise, the relatively low rates of mortality, or 'death rates', secured by Pentonville prison and the model dwellings of the SICLC and MAIDIC were quoted and commented upon, often with reference to those secured in alternative domestic and foreign institutions, or among the population at large.[58]

The second tactic was long established, dating back to the late eighteenth century, and related to the exhibitionary function of models: namely, inviting interested parties to inspect an institution for themselves. This offered what no paper-based account could: direct, first-hand experience. A striking, if exceptional, instance is the set of four model dwellings erected by the SICLC on Hyde Park as part of the 1851 Great Exhibition. Paid for by Prince Albert, they were purely for show and were an enormous success, attracting more than 250,000 visitors.[59] Nothing like the same traffic of people passed through working institutions. Nonetheless, the audiences they attracted were remarkably diverse and included not just a variety of visitors from all parts of Britain,

ranging from ministers and MPs to councillors and clergymen, but from the US and Europe as well. A succession of American educationalists, for instance, examined Stow's model schools in Glasgow and those set up in London by the BFSS, the NES and the Home and Colonial School Society: Henry Barnard of Connecticut in 1836 and 1848; Alexander Dallas Bache of Philadelphia in 1837; and Horace Mann of Boston in 1843, all doing so as part of broader surveys of Europe's leading teacher-training establishments.[60] Government engineers from France and Belgium were among the early visitors to the Whitechapel baths and washhouses establishment.[61] The model houses of the MAIDIC were inspected by delegations from French (Paris, Rennes), German (Berlin, Munich) and American (Cincinnati, Boston, New York) cities during the late 1840s and early 1850s. Charles Rogier, as the Belgian Prime Minister, paid a visit in 1851.[62] It was Pentonville prison, however, that attracted the most prestigious cast of overseas tourists, among them King Frederick William IV of Prussia and Grand Duke Michael of Russia, plus a stream of high-ranking officials from France, Austria, Holland, Denmark and Sweden.[63]

V

Such were the multiple means and networks through which British-based model institutions were promoted during the early Victorian period. All articulated the same basic assumption, which was shared alike by state-based officials and voluntary agents, just as it informed all sorts of spatial relations, British, imperial and transnational: namely that model standards and systems were essentially mobile and might travel

anywhere. And travel they did. By mid-century the monitorial system first showcased by the central (later model) schools of the NES and BFSS was the dominant means of instruction in Britain; and though it was often restricted to pockets of educational endeavour elsewhere, it was nonetheless being practised throughout much of the world, making for what has been dubbed 'the first proper international movement of educational methods'.[64] It had even spread to Latin America and the Ottoman empire, besides multiple locations in Europe, the US and the British empire.

The work of the other model institutions was not nearly so widely diffused, but it pursued the same two-fold trajectory, moving at once within and beyond Britain. Pentonville prison had an especially immediate impact: by 1847, just five years after it had opened, some thirty-eight British prisons had been built or modified according to the separate system, and twenty more were in progress. It was no less influential abroad: as one historian has suggested, it quickly 'became one of the most copied prisons in the world', inspiring similar institutions across the empire and Europe, notably in Australia and Prussia.[65] The Whitechapel model provided the blueprint for combined baths and washhouses in Paris, Brussels, Hamburg and New York. Meanwhile, by the early 1850s, some seven establishments had emerged in London, as well as in Norwich, Plymouth, Bristol, Hull and Preston, many of which consulted Baly, engineer to the London Committee.[66] Finally, the work of the MAIDIC and SICLC spawned multiple provincial imitators in the 1850s. The civic network established by the MAIDIC has been noted above, but similar schemes were executed in towns such as Nottingham, Wolverhampton and Halifax. The example they offered also inspired housing enterprises abroad, notably in Germany and the US, but extending to France, Italy, Russia and Sweden.[67] One of the first was the *Berliner germeinnützige Baugesellschaft*,

a stock company founded in 1847 in direct imitation of the MAIDIC and SICLC, which one historian has described as 'the earliest attempt in German-speaking central Europe to tackle the housing problem of working-class families'.[68]

None of this entailed the production of exact copies, and it should certainly be distinguished from the kind of standardization that characterized the reform of Britain's system of weights and measures, which turned upon the promotion of precise replicas of physical models. To be sure, there are some remarkable instances of near duplication. The one institution most approaching an exact copy seems to have been the prison built in the Moabit district of Berlin in 1849, which was an almost exact replica of Pentonville, incorporating the same radial design and the same cellular dimensions and ventilation system.[69] Overwhelmingly, however, it was characterized by emulation and more or less minor variations of design and practice. There are good reasons for this. One is simply the absence of any coercive institutional leverage. Nothing of the sort could be applied to initiatives in foreign states; nor again to domestic ones that relied wholly on voluntary or local authority agency; but it is also true of British prisons and grant-funded elementary schools, where central officials and ministers, for all their regulatory powers, still had to work with the ambitions of those at the local level. The second reason is again straightforward: the need to adapt model arrangements to suit peculiar local circumstances and all manner of variables, chief among them the size of the population and the availability of resources such as land and finance.

It would be tedious to recover in full the multiple and often subtle variations of institutional design and management that developed (though they clearly mattered to contemporaries). Notable instances include Berkshire County Gaol (1844), which was the first separate prison to depart from the radial layout of Pentonville, opting instead

for a cruciform arrangement; and Liverpool's Cornwallis Street baths and washhouses establishment (1851), which contained three classes of facilities rather than the standard two. The crucial point is that variations of this sort were welcomed by proponents of model institutions, and were acknowledged as both an inevitable and a desirable part of the process of modelling. Quite explicitly, qualities of likeness were judged by the degree of adherence to what were commonly referred to as 'general principles' of practice, provision and design. In keeping with their experimental ethos, no model institution laid claim to an absolute monopoly of policy-making wisdom, including the practices employed by staff. This is true even of schools, where there was enormous sensitivity regarding the methods deployed in classrooms. In a new handbook published in 1834 the BFSS urged adherence to 'the System of the MODEL SCHOOL' among all those 'connected to the Society'. The 'advantages of uniformity are obvious', it remarked, not least as a means of ensuring continuity in the event of the departure of a master or mistress. Yet it took care to note that 'it is not expected that every regulation will be strictly followed', adding that 'the Committee in London are far from discouraging cautious experiment, and always feel obliged by the communication of successful results'.[70]

The other key manifestation was the widespread practice of outlining the multiple ways a given model institution might be adapted – the term was often used – to local circumstances while retaining its core elements. In 1840, the first annual report of the CCE synthesized arrangements modelled by the BFSS and NES and offered no less than fifteen exemplary plans of its own, as determined by considerations of school size and pedagogic system (monitorial, simultaneous, or a mix of the two), and the need for infant facilities.[71] Similarly, the promotional literature surrounding the Whitechapel

model included an account penned by Baly that offered three blueprints – Plan No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 – each with their own projected costings and each 'adapted to the wants of different locations:' one for a 'large town,' one for a town of roughly 30,000 people, and one for a 'small town.'[72] The need to adjust to demand-sided variables, and in particular what people could afford, was especially crucial in the case of model housing and was duly incorporated into the work of the SICLC and MAIDIC. After 1851, the SICLC published numerous tracts detailing how the model houses built for the Great Exhibition might be adapted to suit the budgets of agricultural labourers and 'the highest and the lowest paid of the working classes in towns.'[73] The same applied in the case prisons, where it was recognized that the Pentonville model might be faithfully imitated in a variety of ways. In his second report as Surveyor-General of Prisons published in 1847, Jebb provided the plans of two completed (Leeds and Aylesbury) and three planned prisons (Birmingham, Winchester and Kirkdale), plus a further anonymous plan of a small establishment of thirty-two cells. All served to demonstrate, he suggested, how the size and layout of an institution might be tailored to suit peculiar circumstances without violating the essential features of his London-based exemplar.[74]

VI

Ultimately, the use of model institutions constitutes a brief, if also formative, moment in the history of British social reform. Clearly, as existing (if scattered) accounts suggest, the same mix of relations – national, transnational, imperial – would continue to inform the genesis and migration of social policies after the mid-century; but they would do so

without passing through designated 'model' institutions. In terms of their prestige and influence, model institutions were at their peak between the mid-1840s and mid-1850s. By the 1860s, their use as a means of pioneering and promoting novel social reforms and their institutional manifestations had all but petered out. The decline is stark. No self-styled model prisons, schools or baths and washhouses were established after this point; and though 'model dwellings' continued to be built, as a series of new housing companies emerged in imitation of the MAIDIC and SICLC, their status as sanitary exemplars diminished as the combined regulatory efforts of central and local authorities gradually improved the broader stock of working-class housing.[75]

There is no space here to detail the fate or legacy of the particular model institutions examined above. It seems, however, that the principal reason for their decline is simply because it became unnecessary to maintain specially designated model institutions. By the 1870s, if not before, the multiple networks and practices – of promotion, exhibition, refinement, scrutiny, and so on – through which they disseminated exemplary standards and practices had become so much part of the fabric of social reform that the kind of self-conscious modelling they undertook was neither novel nor required. It is notable that the term 'model' (in the lower case) continued to be applied to state-of-the art institutions, only now more provisionally and casually. Model status came and went, often quickly, and was not something inscribed in the identity of an institution to begin with.

But though they enjoyed only a relatively short life as a means of policymaking, they are no less significant for this, and allow for a fresh appraisal of the nature and novelty of early Victorian social reform. In particular, what the case of model institutions brings into sharp focus are the radical changes that occurred in the

geography of reform, and in the networks and spatial relations through which novel social policies and institutional initiatives were variously imported and exported, pioneered and publicized. This is not to challenge all aspects of the revisionist reappraisal of early Victorian social reform. In some respects, model institutions only add weight to the picture of a pluralistic, broadly liberal culture of reform. They were, after all, sponsored by a variety of agents, state and non-state, official and voluntary; and their use was not tied to any particular party-political or denominational formations. Rather, it is to suggest that we need to apply a richer, more expansive sense of governing, one that encompasses not just multiple forms of agency and reforming ideologies, but also the equally varied relations and practices through which policies are rendered mobile and mutable. It is in terms of these latter facets of governing that we might speak of a radical transformation in social reform at this juncture, which is by no means incompatible with affirming only limited or fitful change elsewhere. To be sure, the use of model institutions hardly emerged from nowhere: as has been suggested, its roots lie in a series of scattered developments that might be traced back to the mid-eighteenth century. But grasped as a whole, as it embraced different agents across various fields of social reform, what they helped to engineer after roughly 1830 was unprecedented: a truly cosmopolitan culture of policymaking, which was both multi-directional – policies flowed outwards and inwards – and composed of multiple relations, national, imperial and transnational.

Such has been the overall argument advanced here; but the case of model institutions also suggests we might reconsider two further, more particular aspects of this otherwise richly served period in British social reform. One is the status of elementary education reform. Gripped as it was by interdenominational rivalries and an

abiding suspicion of any state involvement – hence the convoluted regulatory settlement reached at the end of the 1830s – it is seldom, if ever, judged especially pioneering. Yet the account here suggests we might consider it in just this fashion, for it was here where, beginning in the 1810s, the first multi-relational networks were established, pivoting on what were styled as 'central institutions', and then later, during the 1830s, 'model schools'. The second concerns the technical dimensions of social reform. Much has been made, quite rightly, of the growing importance of practices of inspection at this juncture, which did indeed become a critical means of ensuring that novel standards were implemented as intended, at least within a national frame of reference. But this has served to obscure the way that processes of policy innovation, too, were now subject to regulation and quite self-conscious management. As has been suggested, though model institutions were designed to function as exemplars – and to this extent, like inspection, as a means of fostering uniformity – they were also designed to operate as sites of experimentation and exhibition: a medley of functions inscribed in the protean term 'model'. Simply put, we should recognize that regulation also extended to processes of innovation and experimentation. It is a signal mark of the novelty and ambition of social reform during this period that it was deemed possible to manage these multiple processes and functions together.

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2 Philip Harling, 'The powers of the Victorian State', in Mandler, ed., *Liberty and authority in Victorian Britain*, p. 26.

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[68] Thomas Adam, *Buying respectability: philanthropy and urban society in transnational perspective, 1840s to 1930s* (Bloomington, IN, 2009), p. 48.

[69] Johnston, *Forms of constraint*, pp. 102–103.

[70] *Manual of the system of primary instruction, pursued in the model schools of the British and Foreign School Society* (London, 1834), pp. vi–vii.

[71] *Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, with appendices and plans of school houses, Part II: 1839–1840*, HC 1840 (254), XL, appendix 1.

[72] Baly, *Statement of the proceedings of the committee*, pp. 15–40.

[73] E.g. Roberts, *The dwellings of the labouring classes, their arrangement and construction*; and Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes, *Plans and suggestions for dwellings adapted to the working classes*.

[74] *Second report of the Surveyor-General of Prisons*, pp. 12–15.

[75] Richard Rodger, *Housing in urban Britain, 1780–1914* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 44–51.