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**“A reformer’s wife ought to be an heroine”: gender, family and English radicals imprisoned under the Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act of 1817**

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Abstract:	<p>In 1817, the British government reacted to the rise of popular agitation for parliamentary reform by passing the Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act and arresting the leaders of the new working-class radical societies. The imprisonment of these men was a severe blow to the democratic movement. Despite the recent revival of scholarly interest in early nineteenth-century popular politics, historians have treated the events of 1817 as a brief interlude before the better-known Peterloo Massacre of 1819. This article argues that the development of the post-war democratic movement cannot be understood without examining the impact of the imprisonments on the radical leaders and their families. It analyses a previously un-studied series of letters confiscated from the radical prisoners and kept in the Home Office files. The correspondence demonstrates the essential role of letter-writing within radical culture, and how radical thought and self-expression was mediated through the pressures of both government surveillance and financial difficulty. This article secondly offers new evidence about the gender politics of radicalism in this period. It shows how women’s experience of separation from their husbands, and male attitudes towards their role in 1817-18 crucially shaped the emergence of female radicalism in public for the first time in 1819.</p>

**‘A reformer’s wife ought to be an heroine’: gender, family and English radicals imprisoned under the Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act of 1817<sup>1</sup>**

In March 1817, Lord Liverpool’s Tory government reacted to the apparently revolutionary potential of new societies that emerged towards the end of the Napoleonic war to campaign for universal manhood suffrage. Parliament passed the Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act, thereby removing the right to be tried before one’s peers. Radicals could now be imprisoned for a seemingly indefinite period. Forty-four leaders of radical societies and printers were detained for up to a year under warrants issued by the Home Secretary before they were released without trial.<sup>2</sup> Unlike metropolitan ‘gentlemen leaders’ like Sir Francis Burdett, imprisoned in relative comfort in 1810, the prisoners of 1817 were predominantly drawn from the artisanal and manufacturing classes of industrial North and Midland England.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the Home Office attempted to prevent the re-creation of a ‘radical counter-culture’ that wealthy Romantics imprisoned in Newgate gaol enjoyed during the 1790s by ensuring that the working-class leaders were deliberately separated in different gaols across the country, where they often endured harsh conditions and solitary confinement.<sup>4</sup>

The recent revival of scholarly interest in post-war popular politics has emphasised the importance of this period in the history of democracy, including Robert Poole’s studies of the ‘March of the Blanketeers’ that preceded the arrests in 1817 and the ‘Peterloo’ mass reform meeting in Manchester on 16 August 1819. Malcolm Chase and Gordon Pentland have examined the revolutionary potential of the popular ‘risings’ of 1820 in England and Scotland.<sup>5</sup> Historical geographers have also re-interpreted the forms and meanings of popular protest, notably Carl Griffin in his work on rural agitation and the Captain Swing riots of the early 1830s.<sup>6</sup> The imprisonment of the radical leaders by contrast has received limited attention by historians, and is often regarded as a brief interlude of inactivity before the

reform campaign culminated at Peterloo. Studies of social and democratic movements focus on instances of collective action rather than inactivity, understandably because events produce more evidence than periods of stasis.<sup>7</sup>

This article uncovers new evidence of how the radicals and their families sustained themselves politically, emotionally and financially during the period of enforced inactivity in 1817. It examines a collection of twenty-five letters to and from the prisoners that were confiscated by the Home Office and which, because of the previously poorly-catalogued papers now in the National Archives, have escaped the attention of historians of popular politics. It reveals unheard voices of the radicals and their families from an archive that political historians usually only mine to find insights into the threat of revolution or the government's actions.<sup>8</sup> The letters expressed the radicals' personal concerns about their families' livelihoods, the effects of separation and – in more coded forms - their political opinions. They show how radical politics was mediated through practices of writing and reading under circumstances of surveillance, financial distress, tensions between self-expression, rhetoric and performance, and different expectations of gender roles.

One such letter was by Samuel Bamford, leader of the Hampden club in Middleton, Lancashire. Immediately upon his arrival at Coldbath Fields house of correction in London, Bamford wrote home to his wife, Jemima. He reassured her, 'you have nothing to regret on my account save my absence', and told her 'give not way to ungrounded fears' because 'a Reformers Wife ought to be an heroine'.<sup>9</sup> Bamford later became better known as one of the radicals arrested for his role at Peterloo, and published an autobiographical account of his activism, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, in 1849. The Home Office papers of 1817 provide much earlier and direct evidence of Bamford's views, but even more significantly, also those of Jemima and her fellow female compatriots. The women persisted in sending letters to their husbands even when it became obvious that some of the correspondence was

confiscated by the gaolers who sent it on to the Home Secretary. Indeed, Jemima never received Samuel's instruction for her to be a 'heroine', as the letter was retained by the Home Office, like the others in the collection.

The women's letters are particularly important for understanding the gendered popular politics of this period. Historians have emphasised the significance of the sudden development in the democratic movement when women formed their own radical societies in industrial Lancashire from June 1819. Michael Bush's study of the prominence of the 'women at Peterloo' argued that working-class women in northern England took this bold step out of impatience at the men's slow progress in achieving their political goals.<sup>10</sup> We know much less however, about how they got to this stage or their political views before 1819. Gender historians focus on misogynist representations of the women in loyalist cartoons, and how the women represented themselves in addresses and speeches published in the newspapers on the eve of Peterloo. The female radicals' language and demands to be heard were mediated through the conventions of print and moderated in anticipation of a largely hostile public audience and the authorities.<sup>11</sup> But how did Jemima Bamford and her female compatriots present themselves when speaking to the converted, notably their husbands, especially before 1819? The 'tale of Samuel and Jemima' has been told before by Catherine Hall, who employed the couple as a lens through which to view the intersection of gender and class in the postwar radical movement. She relied on Samuel's memoir of 1849, to which Jemima contributed a short account. Hall importantly argued that men and women experienced popular politics in different ways because of their increasingly distinct positions within both the family economy and in forms of political organisation. She supported Anna Clark's argument that working-class women in industrialising England acceded to a role of political 'domesticity' which accepted the patriarchal authority of their husbands within the family and in politics. In their brief involvement in the radical movement, the women

appealed to their identities as mothers and supporters of their husbands rather than independent political actors, and were confined to live this role in practice.<sup>12</sup> Paul Custer and Michael Bush have challenged this interpretation. They suggest rather that the female radicals' self-portrayal of modest subservience to their husbands was a deliberate rhetorical strategy to achieve acceptance among in the face of widespread criticism that they had received for transgressing the boundaries of 'separate spheres'. Custer points to 'a plural, composite gender culture and to the anxiety attending it', whereby women played an integral part in working-class political life. The retrospective speechifying about domesticity by radical orators and committee members served to hide this plurality of gender cultures in 1819.<sup>13</sup>

The prison correspondence of 1817 provides the immediate back-story to these developments, showing how this anxiety about roles was reflected in the epistolary conversations between radical prisoners and their wives. It suggests that male and female working-class reformers developed differing conceptions of what it meant to be a 'heroine', and thus the imprisonments exacerbated gendered tensions within the reform movement. Whereas Hall and Clark point to a unified ideal of patriarchy, the correspondence reveals tensions between interpretations and performances of gender roles and identities. The first part of the article examines the factors which sustained or conversely damaged the movement in 1817: epistolary communication, financial aid and emotional support. The second part explores the political expressions by the women and their repositioning on the eve of their emergence on the mass platform in 1819.

### **Epistolary communication within the radical movement**

Samuel Bamford warned his wife in his first letter of 11 April 1817 that he was ‘not permitted to write much’ to her.<sup>14</sup> The first complaint that the radical prisoners raised with the Home Secretary, Lord Sidmouth, concerned restrictions on their ability to send letters. The situation arose from a general uncertainty among the gaol-keepers about which class of prisoners the radicals fell under. State prisoners should have been placed in the debtors’ wing where they had more autonomy, but as the gaols became dangerously overcrowded after the end of the Napoleonic wars, they were often classed with the felons and crammed two or three into cells meant for solitary confinement.<sup>15</sup> Their extraordinary position was also exacerbated by overt anti-radical loyalism. The gaoler of Lancaster Castle, John Higgins, was an ardent Tory and loyalist who had already treated imprisoned Luddites and radicals harshly in 1812.<sup>16</sup> The governor of Coldbath Fields had dealt with individuals accused of producing ‘seditious writings’ in the 1790s, and was therefore particularly strict in prohibiting the radicals from corresponding freely both with other prisoners and with their families.<sup>17</sup> William Benbow wrote directly to Sidmouth on 24 October. His language played between the performance of political rhetoric and expression of genuine anger and frustration about his situation. After listing numerous complaints about government corruption and taxes, Benbow lamented,

Was it not enough, My Lord, that you should cause my Wife to live in Widowhood, but you must had [sic] another stretch to your Monstrous power by preventing me from writing freely to her, whoes virtues stand (deservedly) high in my estimation? ... Was it not enough My Lord to prevent as much as in your power, my Corresponding with my family by obligating Mrs Benbow (whom you had already deprived of the means) to pay the Postage of Letters from me?<sup>18</sup>

Upon his release Benbow petitioned parliament about his treatment in prison. He complained that during his eight months in Coldbath Fields, he was 'not permitted to correspond freely even with his wife', and that his letters were 'detained by Lord Sidmouth, and those of his wife to the petitioner by the gaoler of the House of Correction, as if it were necessary to add all the pain to the petitioner's miserable situation'.<sup>19</sup> William Ogden of Manchester also attempted to write to his wife from Coldbath Fields but the letters were, as was written on them by the Home Office, 'detained on account of their contents'. These 'contents' included defiant pronouncements against his treatment, such as 'though I am in Irons, I will face my enemies like the Great Caractacus when in the same situation but [,] when in Manchester, [I] will make the Nobs [the authorities] cut a pretty figure'.<sup>20</sup> The censorship involved a financial as well as emotional blow, as Ogden noted to his wife that he could not write often as the letters cost a shilling and ten pence each to send. It was only when the position of the state prisoners was clarified after a couple of months that correspondence was allowed to flow. There are only a few letters existing in the Home Office papers for summer and autumn. Even so, the correspondence was monitored and usually had to be sent through the Home Office rather than directly. By winter, Benbow was informed 'that no more correspondence could be franked for state prisoners' as the gaoler hardened his treatment of the radicals.<sup>21</sup>

The Manchester radicals were the most active writers, reflecting how the heartland of the cotton industry had also become the centre of the popular democratic movement during the end of the Napoleonic wars. Benbow was an eighteen year-old apprentice turner and firey orator; Bamford was a more moderate handloom weaver aged twenty-nine. But others were radical 'veterans', including Ogden, a seventy-four year old printer, and John Knight, a small cotton manufacturer aged fifty-four.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, the most revealing correspondence comes from Knight and his wife Elizabeth. Knight was arrested on 2 April 1817, but had previously been imprisoned for high treason for two years from 1794 for involvement in the first working-



class democratic society in Manchester. He emerged again in 1801 standing on the county executive of the republican United Englishmen, and in 1812 led the 'Thirty Eight' radicals arrested for illegal oath-making during the Luddite agitation. Acquitted after ten weeks, Knight then led the revival of democratic agitation, editing the *Manchester Political Register* and speaking at Hampden club meetings in 1816. Confined first in Coldbath Fields, Knight was moved around various gaols until his release in December 1817.<sup>23</sup>

John Knight's prior experiences of imprisonment must have shaped his and his wife's opinions about the political and penal system in 1817. Elizabeth was clearly cognisant of the restrictions placed on them, and this shaped the purpose and content of their correspondence. She wrote on 9 July 1817, 'I have endeavoured to collect the needful information on the subject of Habeas Corpus Suspension – but as I apprehend that if many particulars on political subjects be adverted to, the letter will be detained; I shall merely state the Suspension Bill received the Royal Assent on Monday the 30<sup>th</sup> June'. She noted that 'the delivery of letters is very irregular but as this negligence only concerns me of the swinish multitude it is mere folly to complain'.<sup>24</sup> Her letter of 17 August again referred to the self-censorship that she and her husband were forced to conduct: 'I was surprised not to find an intimation in your last [letter] of a visit to your Gaol of an exalted personage, but since you have thought proper to be silent, I dare not be more explicit'.<sup>25</sup> On the same day, John wrote to Elizabeth asking her to send her letters to the Home Office directly for forwarding to him, in order to lessen the delay experienced when her letters to the gaol were sent to London and back before he got to read them.<sup>26</sup> In December Elizabeth again exercised caution in what information she included, remarking, 'You appear to have expected that the answers to your two questions to the Rev Mr Grundy should have been given in my last – They were purposely suppressed and whether properly so or not you will determine when you hear them'.<sup>27</sup> At least the couple surmised what was happening. Elizabeth Mitchell of Liverpool

was confused and then angered when she did not realise that her letters to her husband John were not getting through to him at Coldbath Fields. She concluded that he was neglecting her and her children; in July, she complained in exasperation:

I cannot imagine what can be the reason you do not write me neither in answer to the receipt of the postmaster or a letter, I sent it by the Sarisonhead Coach which I hope you have received before this it is a month since I sent it and 5 weeks since I herd anything of you, it is out of my power to account for this Delay but did you see the suffrings me and my dear Children as to undergo you whould not be so like the whorld forget us in such a time of Trouble.<sup>28</sup>

John Mitchell's letters may have been confiscated because the government were concerned about revealing anything else about their informant, 'Oliver the spy', who had accompanied Mitchell on a tour of towns across England before his arrest and the scandal of corrupt surveillance was aired in public.<sup>29</sup>

Epistolary communication was vital to maintaining personal bonds, disseminating information and keeping up spirits. The standards of literacy of most of the correspondents were high. Judging from the consistency of their handwriting and responses, it is unlikely that the men needed to rely upon turnkeys or other inmates to compose their letters. Samuel Bamford had attended several Sunday schools of varying quality until he became 'the lowest scholar in the lowest class of the Free Grammar School in Manchester'.<sup>30</sup> The other men had similarly acquired more than just the basics of reading and writing – and some were printers, whose literacy was their trade. Yet as David Vincent argued in reference to the Spencean republican Thomas Preston, 'the application of the tools of literacy to politics was fraught with difficulty'. The nineteenth-century radical press was double-edged: it gave both its

readers and producers liberty in being able to learn and disseminate political beliefs, while simultaneously risking their liberty through state surveillance and arrest for producing 'seditious writings'.<sup>31</sup>

The women's ability ranged from the fluent outpourings of political thought by Elizabeth Knight, the more phonetical and less eloquent remarks about politics by Elizabeth Mitchell, to the less literate and the least openly political of the correspondents, Amelia Roberts and Charlotte Johnston. In her study of Victorian female prisoners, Rosalind Crone found that literacy was similarly varied, although historians of female education have indicated that working-class girls had more opportunities to schooling than previously thought. The state prisoners and their wives, coming mainly from artisanal and small trading ranks and a selective group who prized auto-didacticism, came at a high point of working-class access to more effective forms of learning that then fell into decline in the next couple of decades as mass industrialisation took hold in England.<sup>32</sup> Catherine Hall however claimed that women had much less opportunity to be educated, based on the impression given by Samuel Bamford's account of his attendance at self-improvement societies and Hampden club reading sessions, which were exclusively male. The experience of women, who were excluded from such groups and spent their non-working time looking after their family, indicated 'it was hard for women in these circumstances to have the same kind of commitment to intellectual inquiry'.<sup>33</sup> Although these factors undoubtedly were true, the letters in the Home Office collection – even from the more phonetic spellers – indicate that the female radicals had an adequate or good grasp of written self-expression and knowledge.

Historians now recognise the wide range of both public and private writing practices and genres used by the working classes. Studies of Romanticism focus on the outpouring of published gallows literature, ballads and autobiographies by known writers in this period.<sup>34</sup> The poor were also well versed in written forms of appeal to the authorities through the

medium of letters and petitions. A recent wave of studies of ‘pauper agency’ in such letters demonstrate how paupers were not helpless victims of the poor law system, but rather were able to exploit it in many cases, using sophisticated rhetorical tropes to manipulate the response of the authorities and maximise their chance of obtaining relief.<sup>35</sup> Deidre Palk and Elizabeth Foyster have found similar strategies employed by felons and debtors in this period. Yet not all working-class writing was so coded. Palk and Foyster show how, though prisoners drew from more practised phrases common in pauper letters, personal feeling also came through in the letters about their situations and families.<sup>36</sup> Emma Griffin has demonstrated the variety of more private self-expression in both published autobiographies and unpublished diaries by working-class men and women.<sup>37</sup> Studies of convict letters also indicate how correspondence played an important part in shaping the prisoners’ self-reflection on their separation and isolation from their families.<sup>38</sup>

The radical prisoners’ letters offer a unique insight into epistolary practices in early nineteenth-century popular politics. Historians have shown the importance of reading pamphlets and newspapers aloud in groups, especially in radical libraries held in pubs, or more informally by small cohorts of textile and metalworkers in their workshops.<sup>39</sup> The correspondence was by no means private. It is clear from the Home Office collection that the letters were read out in the radical circles left behind. Yet it is also evident that the state prisoners were divided about whether correspondence should be read aloud and collectively. James Wolstenholme of Sheffield, one of the leaders of the ‘Yorkshire rising’ of June 1817, apparently complained about the fact that his personal letters to his wife had been read among the radicals. Hannah Wolstenholme wrote a defiant reply on 6 December:

I think I told you in my last that your letters should never be withheld but be always open to the Inspection of all our Friends at their request can assure you that so far

from your letters being kept secret they always exerts interest and curiosity enough throughout the whole kinds of your acquaintance to make them public enough all are anxious to hear from you and none are forbidden access.<sup>40</sup>

The Sheffield radicals relied on the act of reading his letters among them to sustain them in his absence, using a practice that was familiar to the tight-knit small workshops of the metal industry.<sup>41</sup> The wives also regarded sharing the correspondence as essential to gain both emotional and financial support among radical networks.

These internal debates about the practice of reading indicate different perceptions about male and female roles within the radical movement, and again a tension between performance and self-expression of feeling. The women's idea about the purpose of the letters seems to have clashed with the imprisoned men's sense of their own masculinity, which shied away from public dissemination of the more personal sentiments expressed towards their wives in the letters. Elizabeth Knight apologised to John on 17 August 1817 for her 'act of indiscretion' in sharing his letters: 'I thought the horrid picture that was there exhibited of your situation would have been sufficient to soften the most obdurate heart: and more especially the hearts of those who had been the cause of that unmeritted suffering of both Body and Mind which it was quite plain you were induring'. She soon realised, however, that her intentions were not reciprocated among the surviving Manchester radicals who presumably wished to keep their heads down and avoid being arrested for aiding him. She nevertheless defended the reluctance of the radicals to engage with her:

However you may disapprove of this act, I am bound in justice to say, that none of your friends come in for a share of your displeasure. They certainly did not advise such a step, you must therefore ascribe it to the overflowing of a disconsolate Wife's

zeal and affection, whose eagerness to restore you to herself and family out stripped her prudence and discretion.<sup>42</sup>

By contrast, William Ogden made the opposite complaint, instructing his wife to conduct a propaganda campaign almost as soon as he was imprisoned: 'I have to observe you did not print my letter as I requested, which you ought to have done, especially as so many wanted to see it; you might have made some pounds'.<sup>43</sup> He was clearly anxious to keep the connection going perhaps also wishing not to lose his position within the radical movement, requesting his wife, 'Tell any friends, who call on you, I am the same consistent man I always was, tho' suffering in a wrong cause'.<sup>44</sup>

### **Radical masculinities**

The impact of indefinite imprisonment upon the family and household economy was another key theme of the correspondence. The letters indicate the importance that the male radicals placed on their position as heads of household, and how they amalgamated their roles of provider and father. All the prisoners wrote profusely about financial worries. Francis Ward wrote to the Home Secretary from Oxford Castle in July 1817, requesting that he be permitted to send and receive letters from his wife, 'for when I was taken I was brought from my home without being permitted to make the least arrangement for my Wife and family and my Labiour was the only means they had for support'.<sup>45</sup> He was a Nottingham lacemaker, aged twenty-eight, with four children and a dependent mother aged ninety.<sup>46</sup> He wrote again more desperately on 1 August: 'when I was taken from my home I had a respectable business that imployed nine frames but the last account I received from Wife informes me that she as not recev'd any work since I was taken'. He paid nearly twenty

pounds a year in taxes, and requested that his wife not have to pay them while he was imprisoned.<sup>47</sup> Fellow Nottingham artisan William Cliff gave a similar story: ‘when I was taken from my home I was in full Work and was inabled to live with my family in credit and help to soport others. But Alas how is the case altred: insted of being at home with them I Love Dearer than life itself, I ham banished from my Wife and Children and they are left to moan’.<sup>48</sup> The handloom weavers of the Manchester region, the lacemakers and stocking knitters of the East Midlands and the metalworkers of Sheffield shared in a world of solidarity forged in defending their declining trades, political and religious radicalism and suspicion of government spies employed by loyalist manufacturer-magistrates. This solidarity manifested itself in Luddite machine-breaking and ‘risings’ from 1812 onwards.<sup>49</sup> The tightrope of credit and debt was difficult to walk in a period of postwar economic instability. John Lancashire of Manchester, confined in Chelmsford gaol, pleaded with Lord Sidmouth on 13 May 1817 that ‘his wife and child who are now in great distress since I left them my Small stock of goods that Cost About twenty-pounds has Been sould for £6-0s-2d and the[y] have now nowere to Put there heads only under the Roof of Charity’.<sup>50</sup> Though the wives and children contributed to the family economy in various ways, the men were keen to demonstrate how they were the main breadwinners, whose loss was financially devastating.

The radicals regarded their position within the family as integral to their sense of respectability and, ultimately, their fitness to be involved in political activity and campaign for the vote. The portrayal of labouring men as responsible and bread-winning husbands and fathers was a crucial theme in pamphlets and petitions to parliament in order to justify their right to representation.<sup>51</sup> Joseph Mitchell, a journeyman printer, made a direct appeal to Lord Sidmouth on 11 July, outlining the desperation of his family:

The very distressed state of my Family consisting of a Wife and six young children, who has no other support than that which a woman, with such a charge, by her own hard labour, can provide – and who is not only deprived of the necessaries of life, but as she informs me, threatened with distress for payment of taxes, which she cannot Provide for – Impels me to Intreat that your lordship will take the suffering state of our Inocent families into consideration – convinced that it is not your lordship[‘s] Intention that they should suffer more than their unhappy father which is the case, now they are deprived of our assistance.

Mitchell indicated here that although his wife was an economic contributor to the family, his role and identity as a father was one of provider. He tactically used directed language to stress this responsibility to convince the Home Secretary to aid the family situation, if not to secure his release. He requested that his nine-year old son join him in prison ‘to ease the charge of his Mother and enable me to give him Part of that Edication [sic] he is by my confinement deprived of’. Under-secretary of state Henry Hobhouse wrote on the letter: ‘Note – let the keeper inform the Prisoner that his request can not be complied with’.<sup>52</sup>

Studies of labouring men in early modern England have established an ideal of a common patriarchal form of manhood, which evinced a strong sense of economic and occupational independence and financial responsibility for dependents.<sup>53</sup> By contrast, labouring men’s masculine identity in this transitional period of mass industrialisation in the early nineteenth century was more uncertain. Anna Clark suggested that there was no strict gender divide in Lancashire handloom weaving, and that ‘therefore they found their chief strength in the autonomy of the family-based workshop and wider community solidarity’.<sup>54</sup> Though Hall similarly subscribed to this view of artisanal families, she noted the male breadwinner model increasingly became the norm as family economies strained as



industrialisation progressed.<sup>55</sup> The requests for financial redress in the prisoners' letters reflected this sense of threatened masculinity in a period of crisis. Other common forms of demotic writing used in protest were even more assertive of particular male identities, and indeed, certain types were deliberately exclusionary of women. Studies of the Luddite and Captain Swing machine-breaking movements of 1812 and the 1830s respectively have argued that threatening letters asserted labouring masculinities during periods of economic depression when men felt their role as breadwinner was challenged by new technology.<sup>56</sup> Yet the radical prisoners employed the strategy not of threat but of appeal, similar to pauper letters. The language of pauper letters from the southern counties were designed to emphasise the male breadwinner because authorities concentrated their resources on men. By contrast, Steven King found that in the northern industrial counties, the poor law 'continued to prioritise women, creating links between the female labour market and communal welfare'.<sup>57</sup> Joanne Bailey has shown that pauper letters by married men were 'frequently constructed around their inability to find employment and its impact on their ability to support their children' in the early nineteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Asking for relief did not necessarily undermine a sense of masculine identity, but reflected their acceptance of the range of economic and emotional roles within the family.

The radical state prisoners went one step further than using common pauper rhetoric and presented political justifications of why they felt their imprisonment was not only unconstitutional but also detrimental to the British economy. Mitchell opened a long letter to the Privy Council on 3 September by presenting his position as father and provider: 'I am no visionary enthusiast or speculator ... – I am a man who has ever made it my study to support my family'.<sup>59</sup> He then applied critiques of luxury and high taxation common in William Cobbett's *Political Register*, a major influence on radical language:

To the complicated effects of this sistom [sic] has been sacrificed all my fond hope – my labours totally lost – and myself reduced from the station of a creditable tradesman possessing a small capital of my own – to the degraded and wretched situation of an insolvent debtor ... his Friends perish from the same course and himself and Wife in the bloom of years with six young children left without any other prospect to look forward to for support, than that of an already overburthened Parish!!!<sup>60</sup>

Pleas of financial distress were directed towards the family as well as the authorities. As Elizabeth Foyster noted in relation to debtors' petitions, prisoners lamented their own financial situation both to appeal to the mercy of the justice system but also as 'a powerful mechanism' to remind family members of their obligations to their imprisoned relatives.<sup>61</sup> The language of distress in terms of feeling was rooted in concepts of sensibility, which, as Bailey argued transcended its eighteenth-century middle-class origins to be used widely by the early nineteenth-century working classes.<sup>62</sup> As soon as he got to Coldbath Fields, Bamford requested Jemima to send him clothing, 'as I wish to be decent', a term that Peter Jones found was a key rhetorical strategy in pauper letters. But it also reflected the radicals' concern to appear respectable at all times, as Bamford later testified about the 'Sunday best' worn by the working classes to Peterloo.<sup>63</sup> The wives appealed reciprocally to their husbands for relief, emphasising their husband's role as economic provider for the family. Elizabeth Mitchell wrote in desperation to her husband John in July:

If you was to see the Clamring around me when sharing thare scanty meal and hear the Cry for more and when I have not any to give them it whould make your heart bleed and your Eyes start ... when I think of the Cold winter which is approaching

what is those trials to them which is to Come far I have not any work worth  
mentoning now what must be my lot in winter, this I answer myself speedy relief or  
daith for my Heart will answer suffer me to hear my Children Cry.<sup>64</sup>

As the months passed and hopes about eventual release faded, the letters betray a growing separation between the men, having lost their role as the visible breadwinner, and the wives left to cope on their own. Sarah Hartle of Sheffield wrote to her husband Rowland in December 1817, evoking a sense of resignation that their situation without him had become the norm: 'Our son is in Work at present ... You desire to know how we got a living[,] it [is] by strict Industry and the blessing of God'.<sup>65</sup> The next section suggests that this experience of separation and survival shaped the women's entry into the political public sphere after their husbands' release.

### **Radical women**

Whereas the men portrayed themselves as heads of households and therefore of political responsibility, the women's reflections indicate an alternative side to the integration of politics with family and home life. The families in the Manchester radical circle knew and supported each other. After John Bagguley was transferred to Lancaster Castle in December, his cellmate John Roberts instructed his wife Amelia to visit Bagguley's dying mother, noting, 'Mr Bargerley his [sic] gone to Lancaster and has took your shirts with him'.<sup>66</sup> When fellow Blanketeer Samuel Drummond was released soon afterwards, he visited Charlotte Johnston, who then wrote forlornly to her husband: 'Mr Drummond called on me and told me he thought it was very likely you might be home in a few weeks but alas that time is gone and all my hopes have been in vain as I do not expect to see you till march'.<sup>67</sup> The wives kept

their husbands informed about local and national politics, and the state of the economy, usually gleaned from the newspapers. The Blanketeer Elijah Dixon's letter to the woman he called his 'girl', however, has the patriarchal tone of educating her about his plight, though again the language seems also to have been deliberately phrased in the knowledge that the Home Office would also read it:

As I apprehend, I am detained more from motives of state policy than from any solid evidence that can be brought against me in support of high treason, I am sorry that ministers should think it necessary to keep so poor and obscure an individual as I am either a terror to others or on account of any weight that I have given to the legal opposition which the people have made to their measures.<sup>68</sup>

We do not have his wife's response, but some of the other women expressed political views in their letters. Elizabeth Knight's long letter of 9 July professed confidence in her husband's political beliefs in an admittedly deferential way: 'knowing as I do the purity of your motives, the extreme moderation of your public speeches and unwearied attempts to procure a Reform in the Commons House of Parliament it does indeed add greatly to the misery of my condition'. Her defence of John Knight's innocence was clearly aimed at Lord Sidmouth, whom she knew was 'intercepting' her letters. Yet on the other hand, Elizabeth's own bolder political views broke through this earlier staid language when she complained about the effects of the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act: 'This infernal Bill is to continue till the 1<sup>st</sup> March next, and all the punishment I could wish to see the advocates of this measure to suffer is, that they might be compelled to crawl in an existence (for it can't be called being) with the same food and clothing that Hundreds of thousands of wretched are

now daily perishing under'.<sup>69</sup> She connected the injustice of the bill with high poor rates and 'old corruption', in a tone that mirrored Cobbett's *Political Register*.

Unlike the other women, who appear to have bowed at least in writing to the political views of their husbands or said nothing, Elizabeth Knight clearly was prepared to express her own political mind. She did not always agree with her husband, who spent his isolation in prison drawing up political schemes and ideas for pamphlets. On 9 July, she complained, 'Your new plan of taxation must be absurd you know well enough we have taxes enough and too many; we want a new plan for the lessening of taxes – this only can do us any good at Manchester'.<sup>70</sup> On 28 December, she again commented on the 'taxation scheme' that he had been formulating during his imprisonment, and advised him to avoid another arrest warrant:

On this subject however I should like to forward a hint – It is not to be doubted but your compositions will be examined on your leaving prison, and as some cautiousness will probably be exercised on the occasion, it will be proper to attend to the expression of your thoughts on any subject that you may write upon; otherwise, both you and your friends may be painfully disappointed.<sup>71</sup>

Again perhaps Elizabeth was so forthright - seemingly disregarding any risk posed by the Home Secretary reading these political pronouncements - because she and John had been through the same experience before five years previously. As committed radical veterans, they were less anxious about expressing political views in letters than those going through the uncertainty of imprisonment and separation for the first time in 1817.

A crucial activity that the wives performed during their husbands' incarceration was petitioning Lord Sidmouth and the Prince Regent. This was the only legal constitutional outlet of protest available to them, and provided an important precedent and training for their

collective action in female radical societies two years later. Elizabeth Mitchell asked Sidmouth to forward a petition to the Prince Regent in October 1817, 'praying for the trial or liberation of my unfortunate but I fully believe, innocent husband'.<sup>72</sup> The petition remained in the Home Office files, indicating that it was never presented to the Prince Regent. The fluency of the language suggests it was written for her by another person and it mirrored the rhetoric of distress and deference common in pauper letters. The petition began with the appropriate supplicatory tropes pleading for mercy, but then became bolder, defending her husband's political beliefs, albeit portraying them as moderate and patriotic to justify his position:

I am aware that amongst others my husband has fallen under suspicion, but I am confident that all the political object he wished, or endeavoured to promote, was an alteration in the mode of filling the seats of the House of Commons. ... Frequently has he been heard to declare both in public and in private ... that all our views must be centred and bounded in reform of the lower House of Parliament, to be peaceably and constitutionally obtained. This was ever his political creed, and I believe he never deviated one like from it.<sup>73</sup>

Elizabeth Mitchell's statement was perhaps representative of the supportive but deferent role played in Hall and Clark's interpretation of radical women. But it also suggests a directed use of the 'right' rhetoric that, while calculated to achieve redress, nevertheless betrayed a bolder position and agency while compensating for male passivity. Part of the reason for the male radicals' inaction after their release from prison in the winter of 1817-18 was no doubt due to sheer exhaustion, fear of re-arrest, and ultimately, the financial impact of imprisonment. Some of the men faced financial ruin because of their inability to work after

their release due to the collapse of their creditors or because the bailiffs had taken their tools. Elizabeth Knight wrote on 28 December 1817 about the plight of a recently released Joseph Sellers, a Manchester cutler who had been arrested along with Samuel Bamford:

He and Mrs Sellars have been at our house twice since his return, and he is suffering severely from want of employment for during his [absence] his House has been broken up and many of the most usefull implements of his business have been taken for debt – It may truly be said that he has been ruined, and for what? this question I cannot answer and shall therefore not attempt it.<sup>74</sup>

Yet Michael Bush also points out how the women's beliefs about male passivity were first expressed before the arrests, in anonymous broadsides issued after the failure of the Blanketeers' march on 10 March 1817. One broadside used the figure of Britannia to encourage the women to 'play the Man' to rouse the men 'from their stupid apathy'.<sup>75</sup> Bush does not place this evidence within the context of the imprisonments but it is clear from the prison correspondence that both this attitude about the men and the female conviction about their own agency had been strengthened by their experience in 1817-18. Despite the public rhetoric of their supportive role, similar sentiments were nevertheless expressed by individual female radical leaders at meetings before and after Peterloo.<sup>76</sup> Women suddenly formed their own radical societies in the early summer of 1819 because they were dissatisfied with their menfolk 'for their weakness in promoting political reform', coupled with 'the conviction that women had a great deal to offer in strengthening the male resolve to succeed'.<sup>77</sup> The Home Office papers also contain a pamphlet published in Manchester in October 1818 by Elizabeth Salt and four other women. Salt's brother had been shot by the military during the wave of strikes that swept the cotton industry that summer. They called for the establishment of 'an

Union on legal principles, for the purpose of supporting Innocent Mothers, Wives and Children' of men arrested for illegal combinations. The Home Office sent the pamphlet to the Solicitors General to determine if there was a legal case against the women, but they ruled there would be 'much difficulty in convincing a jury of its libellous nature'. Clark interprets the pamphlet as evidence that male 'trade unionists were learning to be more co-operative', but it could also be interpreted as the women standing up for themselves after decades of exclusion by the male trades' combinations.<sup>78</sup> The experience of collective action therefore emboldened a larger spectrum of women in the industrial regions and shaped their own view of what being a 'heroine' meant. They were far from subservient or passive in the radical movement, holding networks and indeed the momentum for action together under extremely difficult circumstances in 1817-18.

## Conclusions

When Samuel Bamford advised Jemima to be a 'heroine', he was not simply offering uplifting words of encouragement to his wife in his absence. His notion of the 'heroine' betrayed something of the 'earnest and patronising' tone towards women that Paul Custer found in *Passages in the Life of a Radical*. In his retrospective account of female participation in a reform meeting at Saddleworth in Yorkshire in 1818, for example, Bamford claimed the credit for 'insisting on the right and the propriety' of women being allowed to vote for resolutions alongside the men.<sup>79</sup> Therein lay the tension and contradiction among the male reformers' attitudes to female collective action. The experience of imprisonment had proven some of their wives' abilities in keeping the radical movement together and developing their own sense of political independence, which they then put into practice at Saddleworth and by forming their own reform societies throughout the industrial regions of



northern England. Bamford appeared torn, therefore, about the implications of this female independence: he knew Jemima was a 'heroine', but the women's actions did not fit the roles that the men had set beforehand for them to fill on the mass platform. Hence the other men at the Saddleworth meeting laughed at the sight of the women raising their hands to vote, regarding the action as a parody of the theatre of 'playing at parliament' that male radicals were enacting themselves.<sup>80</sup> The patriarchal portrayal of the women's entry into popular political life as comedic diminished its seriousness. John Bagguley, imprisoned again in June 1819, issued an 'address to the female reformers of Stockport' in which he advised that their main role was to be 'rational companions to their husbands', educating their children and soothing the heart 'in the day of trouble and the hour of anguish' (mirroring Bamford's conception of Jemima as a 'heroine' suffering at home rather than leading a political society).<sup>81</sup> He was still only twenty years old and unmarried, and his traditionalist attitudes had thus not been challenged by the bolder retorts that Bamford and Knight faced from their wives.

The gendering of family roles and their relationship to politics was complex and contradictory. The Blackburn Female Reformers' society published a public address about their intentions in June 1819, which politicised their domestic role, lamenting 'the feelings of a mother, when she beholds her naked children and hears their inoffensive cries of hunger and approaching death'.<sup>82</sup> Helen Rogers notes the 'conflation of melodrama and realism' in their language, but they also drew from the combination of rhetorical selectivity and genuine distress that the radical wives had used in 1817. The female reformers were making a deliberate choice to play up submissiveness in their rhetoric. The Blackburn reformers in particular were widely criticised in newspapers and caricatures for their boldness and consequent unfemininity in speaking out on the mass platform, so emphasis on domesticity attempted to counteract these impressions.<sup>83</sup>

We should be aware of the constraints and caveats and indeed silences posed by the sources as written records of emotions and beliefs, and the difficulties of interpreting the self-representation of the women in such sources. Though both male and female radicals expressed deep personal emotion in their correspondence, the letters were also public and performative in the knowledge that they would be read by the authorities. As Rogers argues, 'while women constructed themselves as authoritative figures through their own radical narratives, their ability to enact the historic roles they imagined for themselves was constrained by material and ideological obstacles', not just the lack of financial and societal resources that hindered the men, but also their own menfolk's attitudes towards their capabilities and beliefs.<sup>84</sup> The women were expected to be domestic 'heroines', but the tribulations of 1817 had shaped their own conceptions of radical action in public could entail. Women like Elizabeth Knight and Elizabeth Mitchell presented themselves as increasingly bold in their politics in 1817, much more than in the addresses and speeches they produced on the 'mass platform' in 1819, in which they retreated back to the expected tropes of deference.

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<sup>2</sup> The National Archives (hereafter TNA), HO 42/172/333-34, ‘list of prisoners imprisoned by warrant upon charges of high treason without having been brought to trial, 1817’; Rohan McWilliam, *Popular Politics in Nineteenth-Century England* (London, 1998), p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> TNA, HO 42/158/11, ‘characters of certain deputies’, March 1817; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1968), pp. 705-6; H. W. C. Davis, ‘Lancashire reformers, 1816-17’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 10/1 (1926).

<sup>4</sup> Margaret De Lacey, *Prison Reform in Lancashire, 1700-1850* (Manchester, 1986), pp. 133-4.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Poole, ‘By law or by the sword: Peterloo revisited’, *History*, 91/302 (2006), 254-76; Robert Poole, ‘French Revolution or Peasants’ Revolt? Petitioners and rebels in England from the Blanketeers to the Chartists’, *Labour History Review*, 74/1 (2009), 6-26; Malcolm Chase, *1820: Disorder and Stability in the United Kingdom* (Manchester, 2013); Gordon Pentland, *The Spirit of the Union: Popular Politics in Scotland, 1815-1820* (London, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Carl Griffin, *The Rural War: Captain Swing and the Politics of Protest* (Manchester, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Donald Read, *Peterloo: The Massacre and its Background* (Manchester, 1958), chapter 7; Jonathan Fulcher, ‘The English people and their constitution after Waterloo: parliamentary reform, 1815-1817’, in James Vernon (ed.), *Re-Reading the Constitution: New Narratives in the Political History of England’s Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 52-82, though Fulcher’s chapter ends with the radicals’ arrests in March-April 1817.

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Edward Royle, *Revolutionary Britannia? Reflections on the Threat of Revolution in Britain, 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 45-8.

<sup>9</sup> TNA, HO 42/163/365, Bamford to Bamford, 11 April 1817.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Bush, 'The women at Peterloo: the impact of female reform on the Manchester meeting of 16 August 1819', *History*, 89/294 (2004).

<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Rogers, *Crowds, Culture and Politics in Georgian Britain* (Oxford, 1998), chapter 7; Ruth Mather, "'These Lancashire women are witches in politics': Female reform societies and the theatre of radicalism, 1819-1820", *Manchester Region History Review*, 23 (2012/14).

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, vol I, (London, 1849); Catherine Hall, 'The Tale of Samuel and Jemima', in Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland (eds), *E. P. Thompson: Critical Perspectives* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 82, 99; Anna Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches: Gender and the Making of the British Working Class* (London, 1995), chapters 8 to 10. Jemima and other members of female radical societies are notably absent from *The Struggle for the Breeches*.

<sup>13</sup> Bush, 'Women at Peterloo', 215-16; Paul Custer, 'Refiguring Jemima: gender, work and politics in Lancashire, 1770-1820', *Past & Present*, 195 (2007), 157; Mather, 'These Lancashire women', 57.

<sup>14</sup> TNA, HO 42/163/365, Bamford to Bamford, 11 April 1817.

<sup>15</sup> The state prisoners' petitions for penal reform will be explored in more detail in a forthcoming article.

<sup>16</sup> De Lacey, *Prison Reform*, p. 133; TNA, HO 42/129/313, Knight to Knight, 18 August 1812.

<sup>17</sup> Christina Parolin, *Radical Spaces: Venues of Popular Politics in London, 1790-c.1845* (Canberra, 2010), chapter 1.

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<sup>18</sup> TNA, HO 42/200/400, Benbow to Sidmouth, 24 October 1817.

<sup>19</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 13 February 1818, vol. 37, cc. 399-416.

<sup>20</sup> TNA, HO 42/163/6-7, Ogden to Ogden, 1 April 1817.

<sup>21</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, 13 February 1818, vol. 37, cc. 399-416.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, HO 42/158/11, 'characters of certain deputies', March 1817.

<sup>23</sup> *Manchester Examiner*, 23 September 1856; TNA, HO 42/172/589, Knight to Knight, 28 December 1817. Knight was imprisoned again for playing a leading role at Peterloo in 1819. He headed radical agitation during the Reform bill agitation of 1831-2, and lived just long enough to become a Chartist in 1838: Read, *Peterloo*, p. 36.

<sup>24</sup> TNA, HO 42/168/41, Knight to Knight, 9 July 1817.

<sup>25</sup> TNA, HO 42/169/425, Knight to Knight, 17 August 1817.

<sup>26</sup> TNA, HO 42/169/427, Knight to Knight, 17 August 1817.

<sup>27</sup> TNA, HO 42/172/589, Knight to Knight, 28 December 1817.

<sup>28</sup> TNA, HO 42/168/176, Mitchell to Mitchell, July 1817.

<sup>29</sup> A. F. Freemantle, 'The truth about Oliver the Spy', *English Historical Review*, 47/188 (1932), 602-3.

<sup>30</sup> Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, chapter 8.

<sup>31</sup> David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 228-9. See Kelly J. Mays, 'When a 'speck' begins to read: literacy and the politics of self-improvement in nineteenth-century British working-class autobiography', in Patrocínio Schweickart and Elizabeth Flynn (eds), *Reading Sites: Gender, Race, Class, Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation* (New York, 2004), pp. 108-34.

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<sup>32</sup> Rosalind Crone, 'Reappraising Victorian literacy through prison records', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 15/1 (April 2010), 37; Helen Rogers, 'The way to Jerusalem: reading, writing and reform in an early Victorian gaol', *Past & Present*, 205 (2009); Kelly J. Mays, 'Domestic spaces, readerly acts: reading, gender and class in working-class autobiography', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 30/4 (2008).

<sup>33</sup> Hall, 'Tale of Samuel and Jemima', p. 87.

<sup>34</sup> Anne Schwan, *Convict Voices: Women, Class and Writing about Prison in Nineteenth-Century England* (Durham, NH, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> Andreas Gestrich, Elizabeth Hurren, and Steven King (eds), *Poverty and Sickness in Modern Europe: Narratives of the Sick Poor, 1780-1938* (London, 2012); Thomas Sokoll, *Essex Pauper Letters, 1731-1837* (Oxford, 2006); Tim Hitchcock, Peter King and Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Chronicling Poverty: the Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Foyster, 'Prisoners writing home: the functions of their letters, c.1680-1800', *Journal of Social History*, 47/4 (2014), 945-7; Deidre Palk, *Prisoners' Letters to the Bank of England, 1781-1827* (Martlesham, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Emma Griffin, *Liberty's Dawn: a People's History of the Industrial Revolution* (New Haven, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> Helen Herney, *Dear Fanny: Women's Letters to and from New South Wales, 1788-1857* (Canberra, 1985); Lucy Frost and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, *Chain Letters: Narrating Convict Lives* (Melbourne, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture*, p. 243; see Cowdroy's *Manchester Gazette*, 24 June 1797.

<sup>40</sup> TNA, HO 42/172/435, Wolstenholme to Wolstenholme, 6 December 1817.

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- <sup>41</sup> F. K. Donnelly and J. L. Baxter, 'Sheffield and the English revolutionary tradition, 1791-1820', *International Review of Social History*, 20/3 (1975), 398-423.
- <sup>42</sup> TNA, HO 42/169/425, Knight to Knight, 17 August 1817.
- <sup>43</sup> TNA, HO 42/163/6, Ogden to Ogden, 1 April 1817.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, also in TNA, HO 44/1, item 103, though the letter is dated 26 April 1817.
- <sup>45</sup> TNA, HO 42/168/257, Ward to Home Office, 12 July 1817.
- <sup>46</sup> *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 29 January 1818, vol. 37, c. 104.
- <sup>47</sup> TNA, HO 42/169/332, Ward to Sidmouth, 1 August 1817.
- <sup>48</sup> TNA, HO 42/169/84, Cliff to Sidmouth, 24 August 1817.
- <sup>49</sup> Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*.
- <sup>50</sup> TNA, HO 42/165/99, statement of John Lancashire to Sidmouth, 13 May 1817.
- <sup>51</sup> Matthew McCormack, 'Married men and the fathers of families: fatherhood and franchise reform in Britain', in Trev Broughton and Helen Rogers (eds), *Gender and Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 2007), pp. 43-54.
- <sup>52</sup> TNA, HO 42/168/296, Mitchell to Sidmouth, 11 July 1817.
- <sup>53</sup> Joanne Bailey, "'Think wot a mother must feel": parenting in English pauper letters, c. 1760-1834', *Family and Community History*, 13/1 (2010), 6; Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003).
- <sup>54</sup> Clark, *Struggle for the Breeches*, pp. 126, 131; Carol E. Morgan, *Women Workers and Gender Identities, 1835-1913: the Cotton and Metal Industries* (Abingdon, 2001), pp. 19-20.
- <sup>55</sup> Hall, 'Tale of Samuel and Jemima', p. 83.
- <sup>56</sup> Griffin, *The Rural War*, pp. 215-6; Kevin Binfield, *The Writings of the Luddites* (Baltimore, 2004); Carolyn Steedman, *An Everyday Life of the English Working Class: Work, Self and Sociability in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 234; E. P.

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Thompson, 'The crime of anonymity', in Douglas Hay et al (eds), *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1975), pp. 255-344.

<sup>57</sup> Steven King, 'Meer pennies for my baskitt will be enough: women, work and welfare, 1770-1830', in Penelope Lane, Neil Raven and K. D. M. Snell (eds), *Women, Work and Wages in England, 1600-1850* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 129.

<sup>58</sup> Bailey, 'Think wot a mother must feel', 7, 10; Joanne Bailey, *Parenting in England, 1760-1830: Emotion, Identity and Generation* (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>59</sup> TNA, HO 42/170/358, Mitchell to Privy Council, 3 September 1817.

<sup>60</sup> TNA, HO 42/170/358, Mitchell to Privy Council, 3 September 1817. See *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, vol. 30, no. 24, 14 September 1816.

<sup>61</sup> Foyster, 'Prisoners writing home', 952.

<sup>62</sup> Bailey, 'Think wot a mother must feel', 13-14.

<sup>63</sup> TNA, HO 42/163/365, Bamford to Bamford, 11 April 1817; Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, chapter 25; Peter Jones, 'I cannot keep my place without being deascent': pauper letters, parish clothing and pragmatism in the south of England, 1750-1830', *Rural History*, 20/1 (2009), 31-49.

<sup>64</sup> TNA, HO 42/168/176, Mitchell to Mitchell, July 1817. See also HO 42/172/453, Roberts to Roberts, 3 December 1817.

<sup>65</sup> TNA, HO 42/172/276, Hartle to Hartle, 3 December 1817; see also HO 42/172/435, Wolstenholme to Wolstenholme, 6 December 1817.

<sup>66</sup> TNA, HO 42/172/453, Roberts to Roberts, 3 December 1817.

<sup>67</sup> TNA, HO 42/172/585, Johnston to Johnston, 30 December 1817.

<sup>68</sup> TNA, HO 42/170/242, Dixon to 'my girl', 19 September 1817.

<sup>69</sup> TNA, HO 42/168/42, Knight to Knight, 9 July 1817.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*



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- <sup>71</sup> TNA, HO 42/172/589, Knight to Knight, 28 December 1817.
- <sup>72</sup> TNA, HO 42/170/43, Mitchell to Sidmouth, 28 October 1817.
- <sup>73</sup> TNA, HO 42/170/44, Mitchell to Prince Regent, 28 October 1817.
- <sup>74</sup> TNA, HO 42/172/590, Knight to Knight, 28 December 1817.
- <sup>75</sup> Bush, 'Women at Peterloo', 216.
- <sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 216-17.
- <sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.
- <sup>78</sup> TNA, HO 42/181/13-17, pamphlet by Elizabeth Salt, Elizabeth Powell, Elizabeth Kennedy, Elizabeth Walker and Mary Holden, enclosed in Bouchier to Home Office, 21 October 1818; Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, p. 160.
- <sup>79</sup> Custer, 'Refiguring Jemima', 149-50.
- <sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, Bamford, *Passages in the Life of a Radical*, chapter 24; Hall, 'Tale of Samuel and Jemima', p. 85.
- <sup>81</sup> Custer, 'Refiguring Jemima', 150; TNA, HO 42/188/138, 'Bagguley to the Female Reformers of Stockport, 19 June 1819'.
- <sup>82</sup> Clark, *The Struggle for the Breeches*, p. 163; *Manchester Observer*, 10 July 1819.
- <sup>83</sup> Helen Rogers, *Women and the People: Authority, Authorship and the Radical Tradition in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 2000), p. 9.
- <sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 21-2.