

HARRIET MARTINEAU'S POLITICAL ECONOMY

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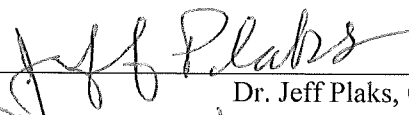
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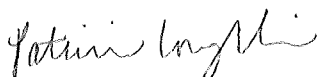
A THESIS

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

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INTRODUCTION

The year is 1834, in the wake of Industrial Revolution England. With the sudden influx of industrial boomtowns and the burgeoning demands of the newly rising industrial middle class, economic and social tides had shifted dramatically. Indeed, political change was manifest. While the bourgeois class rose in financial prosperity and social mobility, the deplorable conditions of the working class and the poor were exacerbated. In an effort to explain and justify the rampant economic inequality extending from industrialization, several theorists from the capitalist class sought to develop and establish a branch of science known as political economy. These theorists, such as Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, and Thomas R. Malthus, would come to influence political and socioeconomic discourse well into the nineteenth century.

While each of these three political economists differed in their particular explanation of the science of wealth, they each acknowledged the view that financial independence was the only means to achieve true individual liberation. For instance, Smith argued that economic individuality achieved through labor was the ultimate evidence of progress, but certain members of society were destined to remain poor. Meanwhile, Bentham supported the idea that the poor could receive relief through work, but professed a theory of utility, through which an action should take place only so long as it served the majority. In Malthus' mind however, the condition of the poor resulted from the impropriety and lack of industry undertaken by the impoverished citizens of England. The staunchest opponent against poor relief, Malthus argued for the total abolition of state-sponsored financial support in his political economy. Indeed, Malthus' hotly debated theories would come to influence poor law reform through the efforts of the writer Harriet Martineau (1802-1876).

Martineau served as a key intellectual figure in the formulation and promotion of mid-nineteenth century Whig ideology. Having made her name as a prominent popularizer of political economy with her *Illustrations of Political Economy* series, published between 1832 and 1834, she quickly attracted the attention of the Whig statesman and High Chancellor, Henry, Lord Brougham, who promptly set her to work promoting his political agenda of amending the poor laws. Using the personal legislative drafts of Lord Brougham, Martineau published *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* throughout 1833 and 1834 under condition of anonymity. In these pamphlets, Martineau not only popularized Malthusian political economy, but in fact reformulated it, effectively turning it on its head.

While Malthus had staunchly argued that the conditions of nature meant the human progress that Enlightenment thinkers like William Godwin aspired to was impossible, Martineau, the most vocal of the philosophical radicals, argued that it was the very conditions that Malthus had pointed to that would actually facilitate human improvement. Furthermore, where Malthus saw limited resources leading to misery and vice, Martineau argued that scarcity promoted industry, responsibility, and independence. Indeed, even Malthus had admitted that moral restraint might ameliorate the worst of his own fears. And, finally, while her mentor had hoped for the total eradication of poor law relief, Martineau expressed an attraction to the idea of the workhouse as a means to relieve the plight of the English poor.

In *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*, Martineau delineated the crucial components of a moral and progressive society with her political economy. These components were industry, thrift, responsibility, and individual liberty through economic independence. Advanced by Whigs like Brougham, these exact ideas came to comprise the legislation behind the New Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. Grounding her arguments in the work of

Jeremy Smith and Adam Bentham, Martineau thus reformulated the moral meaning of Malthus to justify not only poor law reform, but to set a new moral basis for liberal governance of the English nation.

In the first chapter, I develop an introduction into the vast and complex historiography of Harriet Martineau. Although scholars and historians interested in her latter career dominated most of the Martineau literature, a new wave of historians have come to focus on her pre-1840s career and her association with the New Poor Law legislation of 1834. In identifying myself with this school of Martineau historians, I hope to enhance the established narrative and generate further interest in the early Victorian political economist.

Starting with an understanding of the political and social conditions within which Martineau acted, the second chapter seeks to place her in the context of nineteenth century English science, politics and society. Unwinding the multifarious ideas ruminating at the time, this chapter looks at the theories of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, and Thomas Malthus, but also expands upon the crux of these debates, the poor laws and workhouses, using contemporary pamphlets and the plans of the first workhouse institution to do so. These primary sources, retrieved from the British Library, serve to showcase the ideology behind the developing legislation and to contextualize the ideas that Martineau put forth.

Using a thorough analysis of her correspondence in her early career as the foundation for chapter three, this section assesses Martineau's shifting attitudes throughout a period marked initially by desperation and uncertainty before moving toward the assured "Martineau." Most significantly, chapter three unfolds the early relationship between Parliament's Lord High Chancellor Henry Brougham and the young Martineau. Impressed by Martineau's capable political economy, as testified by her overwhelming and sudden success,

Lord Brougham would call on Martineau to collaborate on a project to achieve their shared goal of abolishing poor rates.

In the fourth chapter, I examine the response to Martineau's writings in order to gauge her influence. Sampling from various dominions of intellectual society, this chapter relies on the political pamphlets, religious sermons, and reactions throughout the periodical press to substantiate the claim Martineau's influence transcended multiple domains.

Although largely criticized, just as other leading political theorists of her day, Harriet Martineau's popularization of political economy was more than just that.

In fact, as the multiple contemporary sources throughout these chapters demonstrate, Martineau's political ideology stood alone in the minds of many. Along with Smith, Bentham, Malthus, and others, Martineau successfully developed her own unique brand of political economy. Significantly, however, it was Martineau's specific brand of political economy that met with the express approval of Lord Brougham. This marriage of ideology and authority bundled together to produce and encourage the eventual passage of the 1834 New Poor Laws. A crucial component to the nineteenth century political revolution, the ideology behind these amendments would forever change the tides of social, political, and economic relations in industrialized nations. Part and parcel to this development, for better or worse, stood Harriet Martineau and her political economy.

CHAPTER ONE

“Historiography”

And the Social Science,—not a “gay science,” but a rueful,—which finds the secrets of this Universe in “supply and demand,” and reduces the duty of human governors to that of letting man alone...no, a dreary, desolate, and indeed quite abject and distressing one; what we may call, by way of eminence, the *dismal science*.

-Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, 1857¹

The influence of the economist and clergyman Thomas R. Malthus’ 1798 work, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* permeated Victorian England, revolutionizing the way in which society viewed both nature and human nature.² Writing in the wake of the Enlightenment, Malthus held an atypical view of humanity, especially considering that his father held an acquaintance with Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose ideas had become influential in the French Revolution, and the Scottish philosopher David Hume.³ Malthus made the force and permanency of natural laws central to his political economy and argued that in light of his observations humans had to give up the illusions of perfected grandeur.⁴ Indeed, Malthus’ essay was a direct attack against the philosophical radicals William Godwin and the Marquis de Condorcet, both of whom argued for the perfectibility, or perpetual improvement,

1. Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1857), 353-4.

2. J.M. Pullen, s.v. “Malthus, (Thomas) Robert (1766-1834),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Born in 1766 to a wealthy landowner, Malthus was raised in an environment conducive to political debate and dissension. His father, a radical child of the Enlightenment and friend of the philosopher Rousseau, encouraged Malthus’ publication of opposing views. Educated in a Dissenting school, Malthus eventually entered into the service of the orthodox Church of England. He gained an appointment with the East India Company in 1805, where he preached and subsequently taught both history and political economy at East India College.

3. H.J. Habakkuk, “Thomas Robert Malthus, F.R.S. (1766-1834),” in *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 14 (1959): 99.

4. Thomas R. Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (London: J. Johnson, in St. Paul’s Churchyard, 1798), 21; R.K. Webb, *Harriet Martineau: A Radical Victorian* (Michigan: Columbia University Press, 1960), 100. “In the form we know now as classical economics, political economy stood as orthodoxy throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.”

of humanity through the utilization of the Enlightenment principles science and reason.⁵ To Malthus' mind, both Godwin and Condorcet had ignored the basic facts of nature that circumscribed human existence, and thus had arrived at erroneous conclusions. Both ignored the apparent and incontrovertible problems emanating from exponential population growth in relation to subsistence.⁶ Malthus thought that without the practice of moral restraint, the resultant exponential increase in population would eventually reduce the available resources to such a low level that the inevitable outcome would be a struggle to exist.⁷ For Malthus, nature held a remedy for the infectious malady of human growth. Natural disasters, war, famine, and other catastrophes would serve as "checks" to the population, keeping it commensurate to the level of subsistence.⁸ This seemingly simple idea set off a wave of reaction amongst intellectuals living in Georgian England. Malthus' *Principle of Population* went through five subsequent editions, each serving as a response to, and accommodation of, the various criticisms made by early nineteenth-century intellectuals against his principles.⁹

In the second edition, published in 1803, Malthus both expanded upon and developed his theory on population. Most significantly, the injection of "moral restraint" as a check on excess population found its way into his essay. Moral restraint, or the idea that delaying marriage and adhering to "strictly moral pre-marital behavior" helped prevent misery and vice, served as a major point of contention for many. Claiming that the check of moral

5. Andrew Pyle, ed., *Population: Contemporary Responses to Thomas Malthus* (Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press, 1994), x; Habakkuk, "Malthus," 100. Habakkuk remarked on "Malthus' explicit use of the principle of population to refute Utopian schemes for human improvement."

6. Malthus, *Principles of Population*, 10.

7. Malthus, *Principles of Population*, 13

8. Malthus, *Principles of Population*, 4.

9. Malthus, *Principles of Population*, 4.

restraint, though admittedly difficult, would lead to individual happiness, Malthus emphasized the consequences of bringing additional lives into the world without the means to provide for their subsistence.

Malthus coupled his argument about the consequences of an exponential population increase in the face of only arithmetical food production with his opposition to the poor laws of England. Since the time of Elizabeth I, these laws had assisted with the needs of the poor, placing a tax upon local communities to assist with those unable to provide for their own subsistence. Malthus extended his view on the immorality of reproduction without the means of provisions to his belief that ratepayers should not be responsible for supporting the poor. In Malthus' mind, the continual reliance of the poor on government aid led directly to excess population growth and societal degradation. Malthus asserted that the political economy behind his population principle not only secured the liberty of the people from burdensome taxation but that it also increased the liberty of the poor. He maintained that the poor laws, in their current form, served to undermine the freedom of the poor, as well as spurring the rise in food costs and improvident marriages. Indeed, Malthus ultimately hoped for the total abolition of relief for the poor.

These controversial claims about nature, human nature, and the care of the poor would come to frame a significant part of nineteenth-century political discourse. While Malthus could list Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey, Charles Dickens, and William Cobbett among his harshest critics, he also had his admirers. Most notable among these was the social reformer and radical writer Harriet Martineau, who, writing for a later generation, would base a series of stories that explained her version of socioeconomics to ordinary readers developed from her own understanding of Malthus. It was through her work that

most Victorians became best acquainted with Malthusian concepts, socioeconomics, *laissez-faire* capitalism, and her own utilitarian ideas.¹⁰ Indeed, the literary attacks against Martineau's work were often either coupled with, or appeared eerily similar to, the criticism against her mentor, despite the marked differences in both of their respective political economies.

Many historians have recognized Martineau's importance, and have offered various accounts of how she influenced Victorian society. These depictions range from Martineau as the feminist, the abolitionist, the moralist, the didactic fictioneer. Other historians place their academic focus on Martineau as the first sociologist, the brilliant woman who spent her time in the graces of the Darwins, Malthuses, Broughams, and other important radicals, literary geniuses, and statesmen of the time. For most Martineau scholars, the interest rests in her later career, in which she appeared a veritable saint in true, Whig fashion. The actions of her late political career, particularly in the women's rights movement, suited historians on the quest for evidence of progress quite well. In fact, an entire organization dedicated to her study, and comprised of the world's leading Martineau historians and scholars, have made it their mission to "highlight the principles of freedom of conscience advocated by Harriet Martineau."¹¹ This group of individuals, save for Claudia Orazem, virtually ignores Martineau's role in the New Poor Law legislation, labor issues, and the factory debates. The focus on Martineau's latter career, found in the works of R.K. Webb, Caroline Roberts, Deborah Logan, Linda Peterson, Valerie Sanders, and Elizabeth Arbuckle Sanders, have all but dominated the historical treatment of Martineau. At the point I shall outline the main

10. Pullen, "Malthus," *DNB*.

11. "The Martineau Society," accessed 20 February 2012, <http://www.martineau.society.co.uk/>.

thrust of their various works in order to place my own account in relation to the existing literature.

Ella Dzelzainis and Cora Kaplan's 2010 work *Harriet Martineau: Authorship, Society, and Empire*, is a collection of essays written by various scholars who explore Martineau's often-controversial views.¹² Notable contributors to this dialogue include leading Martineau scholars Isobel Armstrong, Lauren Goodlad, Deborah Logan, and Linda Peterson. Demonstrating how Martineau overcame prejudice against her gender during a period of separate spheres, in addition to her hearing disability, the authors also revealed how Martineau utilized the pen to make contemporary issues accessible to the general population, even influencing the male-dominated political sphere. Particularly with Peterson's essay, "Harriet Martineau, Woman of Letters," the connection between Martineau and authorship became most clear through an exposition of the rising professional writing class. As Peterson argued, along with the rise of the "man of letters" in the 1820s as a result of the burgeoning periodical press came the rise of the "woman of letters." Peterson used Martineau's career as a case study through the three distinct and crucial phases in the history of authorship, the 1820s, 1830s, and 1840s. Calling her a reluctant participant in the first phase, Peterson maintained that Martineau nonetheless held an essential role in each, becoming an important model for political power in a time when men of letters could only hope to exert such influence.

Lending support to the larger argument that Martineau's use of innovative popular culture through journalism, travel literature, didactic fiction, and novels, enabled her to publicize her controversial viewpoints, and consequently, influence the political atmosphere

12. Ella Dzelzainis and Cora Kaplan, *Harriet Martineau: Authorship, Society, and Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010).

of Victorian England, Peterson accentuated Martineau's sway over powerful statesmen. "Further, she was doing the important work of providing those statesmen with the facts and interpretations by which their opinions might be *better* informed...she was not only conveying but also shaping public opinion."¹³ Reaching her career goals by her thirties, as Peterson represented, Martineau successfully gained fame and fortune by breaking her way into the newly risen and male dominated class of professional writers.

In her 2010 work, *Harriet Martineau, Victorian Imperialism, and the Civilizing Mission*, Deborah Logan raised the larger question of Harriet Martineau's opinion concerning the expansion of the British Empire and the resultant shift in social ideology. Through an in-depth analysis of Martineau's non-fiction work, Logan provided a framework within which historians can make sense of Martineau's views concerning politics, economy, and culture in relation to Empire. Looking at Martineau's writings on Ireland, India, "the Far East," and Africa, Logan attempted to develop a balanced perspective of the complex and radical Victorian reformer by exploring a variety of her works, ranging from the topic of slavery to international trade. In her brief discussion of Martineau's "career-launching *Illustrations of Political Economy*," Logan explained the liberating motive behind this work, the idea that "political economy promised to liberate all levels of society from economic tyranny and social inequities."¹⁴ Pushing for individuals to adapt to the market, "rather than being victimized by market fluctuations," Martineau believed that the universal application of political economy led directly to the general improvement of civilization.¹⁵

13. Linda H. Peterson, "Harriet Martineau: Woman of Letters," in *Harriet Martineau: Authorship, Society, and Empire*, 25.

14. Deborah A. Logan, *Harriet Martineau, Victorian Imperialism, and the Civilizing Mission* (United Kingdom: Ashgate, 2010), 12.

While Logan mistakenly projected a desire for socioeconomic equality on Martineau, her brief discussion on class issues served well for this project. Explaining the newly rising Victorian middle class, or what Martineau referred to as the “Golden Mean,” Logan acknowledged the multifarious factors contributing to this restructuring of society, all of which she attributed to first world countries. These elements include: “industrialization and urbanization; a corrupt and decaying aristocracy or other ruling class; the rise in trade, manufactures, and literacy; the phenomenon of ‘new money’ and the political power it purchased; the spread of social justice and democratic ideas; and the increasing mobilization of the lower classes on their own behalf.”¹⁶ It was within this environment of complex and sudden change that the ways through which Martineau responded become clearer. Admitting that it is easy to judge Martineau “as a shamelessly unapologetic capitalist imperialist,” Logan contextualized her subject by countering that Martineau believed “the true measure of human endeavor is the opportunity to cultivate one’s persona; best; but so long as the struggle for basic subsistence remains desperate throughout the world, comparatively few, indeed, ever get such an opportunity.”¹⁷

Taking a different approach to Martineau, in her 2002 *The Woman and the Hour: Harriet Martineau and Victorian Ideologies*, Caroline Roberts examined several of Martineau’s prominent texts, including *Illustrations of Political Economy* and *Letters on the Laws of Man’s Nature and Development*. Arguing that Martineau’s writings were

15. Logan, *Harriet Martineau*, 12-13. Logan did an excellent job of pointing out the political economist’s “ethnocentrism,” which assumed “that western individual society is unquestionably superior to pre-industrial cultures, and that the benefits of modern technology, political economy, and enlightened social philosophy must be desired by, and bestowed upon, those cultures as the ethical realization of the Civilizing Mission.”

16. Logan *Harriet Martineau*, 15.

17. Logan, *Harriet Martineau*, 15.

characteristic of Victorian society, Roberts also demonstrated how Martineau overcame obstacles stemming from gender prejudice, which would ultimately catalyze debate on gender rights and issues in the public forum. According to Roberts, Martineau's active role in the male-dominated political and social spheres would eventually come to dismantle the rampant sexism upheld throughout the Victorian era. Roberts' well-researched analysis provided insight into one interpretation of Martineau's political intentions, as well as the context of the prudent and class-conscious time in which she lived. Taking Roberts' understanding of the relationship between negative popular reception and debate within Parliament, the implication that Martineau's image was directly correlated to legislation and politics exemplified her influence in the high realms of Victorian social and political discourse.¹⁸

Deborah Logan's 2002 book, *The Hour and the Woman: Harriet Martineau's "Somewhat Remarkable" Life* also provided an illustration of Martineau's pivotal role in the reform efforts of Victorian politics.¹⁹ Bringing attention to the obstacles Martineau overcame, namely gender, disability, and non-conformity to Victorian marital strictures, Logan celebrated Martineau's impressive success as a paid writer. Demonstrating how Martineau's popular economic writings elicited a wave of reaction from Americans and Britons alike, which in turn sparked debate on the controversial issues she chose to raise, such as population concerns and her views on the poor, Logan painted her subject as a pugnacious character who broke the mold of the standard Victorian woman. In Logan's opinion, Martineau's consistency, resiliency, and ability to stand by her beliefs ensured that

18. Caroline Roberts, *The Woman and the Hour: Harriet Martineau and Victorian Ideologies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

19. Deborah A. Logan, *The Hour and the Woman: Harriet Martineau's "Somewhat Remarkable" Life* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2002).

the causes she supported were strengthened not only in character and reputation, but also in success.

While Logan's depiction meant to highlight Martineau's latter career, she failed to acknowledge Martineau's early political career, which makes her conclusions somewhat problematic. In particular, Martineau's defense of the rights of the American slave is in stark contrast to her support of the workhouse, which many contemporaries viewed as enforcing slave-like conditions upon its inmates. Martineau may have been confident in reconciling these views, but Logan's focus prevents her from showing us explicitly if and how Martineau did so.

While these works tend to cast Martineau in a largely positive light, other authors take a more critical stance. Claudia Orazem, Brian Cooper, Gregory Vargo, and James P. Huzel have pointed out that Martineau's career was also marked by a suspect period, in which her influence directly affected the working and pauper classes. This new historiographical narrative, which took off in 1999, directed its attention toward Martineau's early career, taking a new historical path than that developed by the first wave of Martineau scholarship. While individuals like Deborah Logan outright rejected Martineau's intimate relationship with Whig polemic, Orazem, Cooper, Vargo, and Huzel have acknowledged and embraced her relationship with high politics, opening the way for a nuanced picture of the Victorian writer to emerge.²⁰

By exploring her early literary career and relationship with the Whiggish Parliament through a methodology of literary analysis, Orazem calls Martineau's writings "propaganda"

20. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, 30 September 1832, 151-2. In Deborah Logan's edited version of Martineau correspondence, she had this to say about her subject in a footnote: "Her desire to avoid political partisanship in her professional life is consistent throughout her career, which is not to say that she did not have strong political opinions and express them often."

in her 1999 publication, *Political Economy and Fiction in the Early Works of Harriet Martineau*. In this work, Orazem explained how Martineau published her influential works in several volumes ranging throughout 1832 to 1834, and leading up to the passage of the New Poor Laws in 1834. Orazem developed the argument that this series, the result of Martineau's desire to popularize Malthusian economics, proved essential to the implementation of political economy during the nineteenth century. Orazem considered both Martineau's *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* (1833-4) and *Illustrations of Taxation* (1834), through which Martineau further developed her ideology concerning political economy and criticism against those failing to adhere to *laissez-faire* capitalism. Orazem also acknowledged Martineau's earliest didactic works, *The Rioters* (1827) and *The Turn-Out* (1829), by showing Martineau's evolution of thought and analytical development throughout the course of her writing. Orazem's scholarship is essential to understanding Martineau's ability to successfully popularize the political and economic theories of Adam Smith, Thomas R. Malthus, and David Ricardo.²¹

Brian P. Cooper's 2007 publication, *Family Fictions and Family Facts: Harriet Martineau, Adolphe Quetelet, and the Population Question in England, 1798-1859*, which sought to analyze how Martineau's conception of family in the context of Malthusian population principles played out in her didactic fiction, also associated her relationship with high politics.²² While particularly concerned with her *Illustrations of Political Economy* series, Cooper explained how the popularity of Martineau's series elicited Brougham to request the author's services "in the poor law reform movement." Indeed, as Cooper pointed

21. Claudia Orazem, *Political Economy and Fiction in the Early Works of Harriet Martineau* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999).

22. Brian C. Cooper, *Family Fictions and Family Facts: Harriet Martineau, Adolphe Quetelet, and the Population Question in England, 1798-1859* (London: Routledge, 2007).

out, the Chancellor provided Martineau with several key documents on the impending poor law reform, “including an advance copy of the extracts” for the author’s commissioned series, *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*, which “was funded by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK).”²³ While Cooper failed to draw the connection between Brougham’s position in Parliament and his willingness to share potentially damning reports and drafts with Martineau to her place in political economy, he still provided necessary components for this argument.

In an article published in a 2007 edition of the journal *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, Gregory Vargo briefly described the implications of Martineau's ideology on society. Discussing the workhouse, Vargo recounted how the Poor Law Commission's creation elicited bureaucratic changes “that were used to carry out a program of social austerity, contracting the ability of the poor to access relief.”²⁴ Vargo pointed out that Martineau translated the “naturalistic” politics of Malthus into the cultural sphere of Victorian society.²⁵ In Vargo's opinion, this happened as a result of Martineau's ideological perception of the poor laws. Martineau considered poor relief “misguided and fundamentally meaningless, because scarce natural resources circumscribe any social effort to ameliorate pauperism.”²⁶ For Martineau, and others favoring her political stance, the cycle of the poor relying on society in the same way that a child would rely upon its mother was anathema. In any event,

23. Cooper, *Family Fictions and Family Facts*, 3.

24. Gregory Vargo, “Contested Authority: Reform and Local Pressure in Harriet Martineau’s Poor Law Stories,” in *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies* 3 (2007): 1-15. The issue of workhouses will be discussed in chapter two, “The Social and Political Conditions of pre-Victorian England.”

25. Vargo, “Contested Authority,” 7.

26. Vargo, “Contested Authority,” 8.

as Vargo explained, Martineau and her proponents would argue that a mother chose to have a child, whereas society did not choose to help alleviate the burden of the pauper.

James P. Huzel deserves attention for his concise dissection of Harriet Martineau's early literature and its relationship with the periodical press in his excellent literary analyses in *The Popularization of Malthus in Early Nineteenth Century England: Martineau, Cobbett, and the Pauper Press* (1833-4). Beginning with an excellent biography and summary of Malthus' intellectual career, Huzel moved on to discuss Martineau's interpretation of the economist throughout each phase of her writings. Significantly, Huzel's attention to the points of divergence in the political economy of Malthus and in Martineau's economic tales provides the platform on which I base my argument.²⁷

According to Huzel, Martineau's ideology deviated from Malthus' in four specific regions: "her changing views on the Old Poor Law, her assessment of the role of emigration in counteracting population increase, her rejection of the Corn Laws and her overall optimism concerning the future improvement of society."²⁸ Huzel's suggestion that Martineau freely accepted these above-listed ideas while writing her *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* is wholly consistent with her letters from the time. Indeed, as I will show through an investigation of her correspondence, Martineau's collaboration with Brougham on their shared project, the New Poor Laws, reflects the legitimacy that important political figures found in her distinct brand of political economy.

27. James P. Huzel, *The Popularization of Malthus in Early Nineteenth Century England: Martineau, Cobbett, and the Pauper Press* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006). Huzel does not consider Martineau's variegated and internalized version of socioeconomics a unique and distinct brand of political economy.

28. Huzel, *The Popularization of Malthus*, 66.

Huzel's in-depth analysis of Martineau's literature also deserves recognition for his elucidation of the most "Malthusian" aspects of her published writings. Providing a snapshot of Martineau's critics, particularly William Cobbett, Huzel ably demonstrated how many made the connection between Martineau and the "evils" of political economy. Indeed, it was Huzel's work that first prompted me to write this essay. As he put it, "historians have given sufficient emphasis to the positive reaction to Martineau. The diverse, abundant, often cruel critique of her work however...has been severely underestimated."²⁹ In this vein, I argue that the popular rejection of Martineau's work serves as proof that Martineau was not only "the most widely read popularizer of [Malthusian] ideas on population and the Poor Laws," as Huzel suggested, but that she in fact established her own genre of political economy.

As Huzel pointed out, Martineau's connection to the New Poor Laws caused many to realize her influence on Lord Brougham and the role her interpretation of not only Malthusian tenets, but also those of Adam Smith and other influential intellectuals, played in the legislation's passage. Quoting from a Tory review of Martineau's 'Cousin Marshall,' Huzel recounted *Fraser's Magazine's* castigation of Martineau's desire to abolish the poor laws and her connection to Malthusian, Smithian, and Benthamite ideas. On the problematic evils Martineau saw in society, "the growth of pauperism, the decline of the wealth of the nation, the gradual absorption of property in the support of the poor, ending, of course, in universal poverty and distress at last" were most apparent to her political opponents.³⁰ Indeed, Huzel's excellent interpretation of Martineau's early writings make it unnecessary for me to focus on her literature. Instead, a detailed examination of her personal correspondence during her early career and the critical response to her literature from several

29. Huzel, *The Popularization of Malthus*, 71.

30. Huzel, *The Popularization of Malthus*, 72.

domains in society will both enhance and reinforce the historiographical narrative established by Orazem, Roberts, Vargo, and Huzel, while offering a marked point of departure.

And, finally, what of the claim that Martineau's influence reached well into the realm of science during the Victorian era? Unfortunately, historians of science have traditionally had little to say regarding Martineau's role in anything beyond politics and economics. Save for Robert J. Richards' 1989 work, which acknowledged Martineau's influence on Darwin through her latter work *How to Observe: Morals and Manners*, and a paragraph found in the monumental work produced by Adrian J. Desmond and James Moore in 1994, the scientific narrative has largely ignored Martineau's special place in the thinking of Victorian scientists, most notably of course, regarding the naturalist and fellow radical, Charles R. Darwin.³¹

Given the tremendous response, both contemporary and current, to Harriet Martineau's publications throughout the periodical press, the mere availability of her work, and, especially, her eminent role in high politics, it would be absurd to suggest the widely-read naturalist did not digest her writings at some point in his literary career. Indeed, as evidenced in letters, and as Adrian and Desmond recounted, Darwin was busy reading Martineau's *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* while aboard the Galapagos voyage of the H.M.S. *Beagle*.³² In an 1833 letter to Darwin, his sister stated,

I have sent you a few little books which are talked about by every body at present—written by Miss Martineau who I think had been hardly heard of before you left England. She is now a great Lion in London, much patronized by L^d. Brougham who has set her to write stories on the poor Laws.³³

31. Robert J. Richards, *Darwin and the Emergence of Evolutionary Theories of Mind and Behavior* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 111-7; Adrian J. Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1994).

32. Desmond and Moore, *Darwin*, 153.

33. Darwin Correspondence Database, <http://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry224> (accessed on Thu Feb 2 2012).

Significantly, and testament to Martineau's influence, this dates years before his 1838 reading of Thomas Malthus' revised essay, which contained ideas and theories he had already been prepared to receive.

This point lends itself to the supposition that Darwin's interpretation of Malthusian theory, which ultimately translated into the concept of natural selection, was conceived through the lens of Martineau's political economy. Extending the path first paved by historians of science Adrian and Desmond, Harriet Martineau will gain more than a simple paragraph in the Darwinian narrative. Indeed, the intersection between biology and politics, as taught by Martineau, came to full fruition in the evolutionist's work. The familial and ideological affinity shared by Martineau with the naturalist, along with the mere influence of her ideas on multiple dominions of society, further substantiate the plausibility of Martineau's direct and crucial role in Victorian political economy.

Before proceeding, it will be useful to have an understanding of who Martineau was and the context in which she wrote. Born 12 June 1802 to Thomas and Elizabeth Martineau in Norwich, England, Martineau was the sixth of her parents' eight children. Her father had a particularly interesting family history, with his Huguenot ancestral predecessors escaping France during the French Wars of Religion. Coming from a long line of medical doctors, Thomas Martineau altered his destiny, and indirectly, his daughter's as well, by becoming a cloth manufacturer and running a manufacturing mill in Birmingham. Her mother, Elizabeth, by all accounts, and as evidenced in her correspondence, was a particularly formidable character, a dominant force in Martineau's thoughts throughout the early phase of her career.

Her radicalized views on the role of women and politics had been well nourished in a family of Unitarian religious dissenters, encompassed by a tight-knit community of political

radicals and other religious deviants like the Malthuses and Darwins. Martineau's education was somewhat unique in a period adhering to traditional, gender-segregated spheres that completely dismissed the notion that women could gain from education too. Between the years 1813 and 1815, Martineau attended a Unitarian schoolmaster's meetings, and between 1818 and 1819, her aunt's school in Bristol. Going against the ideas of the Church of England, Unitarian dissenters in this period rejected the Trinity and looked toward materialism and reason as their guide to spirituality. Martineau was also taught at home, and almost certainly extrapolated the content of the ideas promulgated by leading Whigs, who, in the nineteenth century, advocated individual liberty and freedom through reforms in Parliament, and the Unitarian religious dissenters her familial association brought her into contact with. Unfortunately, while at a young age, Martineau began to develop both a progressive deafness and deficiency in her senses of olfactory and taste. As a result of her deafness, after 1830 Martineau used an ear trumpet in her conversations.

Martineau's jump into the newly-developing world of literature, in which authors were for the first time making a living off of their work, was the consequence of a series of serendipitous, yet unfortunate, events. In 1824, her older brother Thomas died of tuberculosis. The next year, her father's manufacturing business suffered tremendously at the hands of the 1825 economic collapse. To make matters worse, he died the following year. In 1827, her fiancé died, but as R.K. Webb pointed out in his biographical article on Martineau, her letters from the time reflect a nearly relieved individual, who found the prospect of freedom far more inviting than the strict social and intellectual boundaries that would result from wedlock. Finally, two years later in 1829, Martineau was forced to survive by her own means as a result of the failure of the family firm.

While her sisters found respectable occupations as governesses, a role typical for young women of the newly emerging middle class, Martineau's hearing impairment prevented her from participating in this arena of respectable society. Determined to make a living through her writing, and eventually coming to see it as her only means to engage in politics, Martineau set out on a literary quest to gain not only recognition and impress her influence, but also to gain a living wage, which might secure her economic and social independence.

Her earliest works were dogmatic and religious in nature, reflecting the dissenting ideas of her Unitarian upbringing. Eventually, Martineau began to take on a more radical and political agenda, tackling, for instance, workers' strikes, machine breaking, and the issue of wages in her written work. After these works gained notoriety in the dissenting and radical presses of the time, a publisher by the name of William J. Fox agreed to produce her writings. Under Fox, Martineau published *Illustrations of Political Economy* beginning in 1831. In this work, comprised of many volumes, Martineau espoused the complex socioeconomic theories of leading political economists, Malthus, most especially. Finally, entering into the world of high politics, the Whig politician and philosophic radical Lord Chancellor Brougham caught wind of Martineau's overwhelming influence and commissioned her to serve as a Parliamentary propagandist.³⁴ This group of intellectuals hailed from the newly formed middle class and was widely influenced by Bentham, James Mill, and other radicals who sought parliamentary reform.³⁵ Providing her with personal draft copies of the legislation years before it came to a vote, Brougham knew Martineau was

34. H.S. Jones, s.v. "Philosophic radicals (act. 1830-1841)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

35. Jones, "Philosophic radicals," *DNB*.

capable of explaining and popularizing the tenets of the recently proposed New Poor Law Amendment Act. Martineau produced this work, known as *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*, between the years 1833 and 1834.³⁶

Outlining the views on population put forth by Malthus in his 1798 disquisition *An Essay on the Principles of Population*, Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy*, first published in pamphlet form in 1832, continued in monthly installments throughout 1834. The popularity of this series inspired Martineau to publish subsequent series on the same topic, namely *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* (1833-1834) and *Illustrations of Taxation* (1834). Indeed, while many others involved in the literary world, like Dickens, advocated the advancement of social advocacy and reform through alleviating the plight of the poor, Martineau did so in another way by helping propel the New Poor Law to the forefront of Victorian political debate.

Living and writing at a time when gender determined every aspect of an individual's life, Martineau overcame many impediments, such as the loss of her hearing at a very young age. Despite these obstacles, the well-educated Martineau successfully synthesized economic and political theory in a series of pamphlets and news articles throughout the periodical press; these works remained extraordinarily popular among the middle class well into the late Victorian Period. Indeed, her synthesis not only highlighted eminent economic theories, it also took on a character of its own. In this way, Harriet Martineau's political economy, through mere mass exposure to the public, reached more pillars of society than any other specific brand of socioeconomics.

Negative and positive criticism, both past and present, reflected the broad influence of her theories. While it is true that Martineau drew largely from Malthusian political economy,

36. R.K. Webb, s.v. "Martineau, Harriet (1802-1876)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

she likewise paid tribute to the works of Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, and other radicals. Given the Victorians' mass exposure to Martineau's fiction in the periodical press, it is valid to consider the degree to which her fiction drew from other political economies and the degree to which it took on an ideological form of its own. While there is still much room for further exploration, the task of my project is to fill the gap in the literature regarding the role of both Martineau and her ideas in the science of political economy in early nineteenth-century England. By tracing the evolution of her early writing career through her personal correspondence and sampling the critical responses to her work and the legislation she influenced, Martineau's crucial role in the New Poor Laws of 1834 and her legitimacy as a political economist will finally gain its rightful place in the historiography.

CHAPTER TWO

“The Social and Political Conditions of pre-Victorian England”

“[People] make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past.”

-Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, 1852.³⁷

The early nineteenth century in England was a period of abrupt change. The onslaught of the Industrial Revolution and the end of the French Revolution simultaneously raised a series of economic, social, and moral concerns about how to deal with a drastically new world. Influencing nearly every realm of society, industrialization shifted the economic system of agriculture and craftsmanship to one of manufacturers and capitalists. While some English experienced social mobility for the first time through their industry, many more suffered from unemployment, underemployment, and social dislocation as the advent of technology soon made their labor inefficient and unnecessary. According to E.P. Thompson, the half-century in which the Industrial Revolution took shape worsened the conditions of the poor, while simultaneously improving those of the new middle class.³⁸ Writing in 1844, Frederick Engels would remark,

Sixty, eighty years ago, England was a country like every other, with small towns, few and simple industries, and a thin but proportionally large agricultural population. To-day it is a country like no other, with a capital of two and a half million inhabitants; with vast manufacturing cities; with an industry that supplies the world, and produces almost everything by means of the most complex machinery; with an industrious, intelligent, dense

37. Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Maryland: Wildside Press LLC, 2008), 15.

38. E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 318.

population, of which two-thirds are employed in trade and commerce, and composed of classes wholly different; forming, in fact, with other customs and other needs, a different nation from the England of those days.³⁹

Though a small portion of society played a large role in the creation of wealth and the development of the newly risen middle class, industrial capitalism forced the vast majority into abject poverty. Indeed, the typical laborer “remained very close to subsistence level at a time when he was surrounded by the evidence of the increase of national wealth, much of it transparently the product of his own labour, and passing, by equally transparent means, into the hands of his employers.”⁴⁰ Because of these conditions, many of England’s poor necessarily relied on government relief through the Elizabethan poor laws, which were funded by the country’s rate-payers. However, with population explosion, the move from rural to urban centers, extended life expectancies, and severe job displacement from industrialization, more and more of England’s poor began relying on the poor rates.

At the same time, the rising industrial class sought the means to alleviate themselves from the burden of supporting others. The proposed remedy for the unaffected was the institution of the workhouse, what Engels called “the favourite child of the bourgeoisie,” which enabled the poor to receive financial relief in exchange for labor.⁴¹ Others sought the total eradication of the poor laws. In any case, the issue of the poor, and especially who should be responsible for their management, soon entered into the sphere of public debate. Many important political figures throughout the Industrial Revolution, such as Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Malthus, and eventually, Harriet Martineau, would tackle the

39. Frederick Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1892), 16.

40. Thompson, *English Working Class*, 318.

41. Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 233.

question of poor law reform. Indeed, it was within the context of the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and the resulting ideologies that the political revolution of the nineteenth century took place, with Martineau playing a key role through her collaboration on the New Poor Laws of 1834.

Established as the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601, English poor relief took many forms throughout the years. One type of relief, known as outdoor relief, enabled individuals needing assistance to remain in their homes. Poor houses, hospitals, almshouses, and orphanages also served the poor and those unable to provide for themselves. While there was not an overarching system of standardized poor relief, all assistance was provided through individual parishes, with the amount varying from parish to parish. The major advantage of the small, localized parish system insofar as poor relief was concerned, was that it perpetuated the sense of communal familiarity, thus it was in the best interest of all that the poor received aid. However, the major disadvantage to this system, and the point of contention for reformers like Smith, Bentham and Malthus, was that the same small group of individuals within a parish paid for all of the rates, including the poor rates. The outbreak of war in the final decade of the eighteenth century caused these rates to expand noticeably, with the effect of intensifying calls for reform.⁴²

Well into the eve of the eighteenth century, poverty was considered a preordained misfortune that necessitated temporary remedy through financial help. When Malthus published his essay, attitudes toward the poor began to shift as a result of increased poor rates and the supposed increase of individuals relying on them. During the outbreak of the French Wars, which took place between 1793 and 1815, the cost of bread increased beyond the

42. Christopher Harvie and H.C.G. Matthew, *Nineteenth-Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

amount of working wages, which had remained stagnant. Along with rapid unemployment and increasingly draconian legislation, the numbers of individuals seeking poor assistance rose dramatically. The calls for poor-law reform began in the 1770s, in an effort to correct the social malady of poverty. Reacting to pamphlets that exposed the many abuses prevalent in the current system and the publication of reliable statistics concerning the poor, authors like Smith, Malthus, Bentham, and others framed the issue of poverty in the context of industrial economics. While each of these respective political economies would ultimately serve to defend the newly risen capitalist class, each of the theorists would take different avenues in doing so.

In his 1776 *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith developed the metaphor, “the *great body of the people*,” a term replacing the phrase “body politic.”⁴³ Since world relations were shifting away from agricultural and mercantile economic systems, Smith “advanced a ‘system of natural liberty’ capable of supporting a branch of the ‘science of a legislator or statesman’ which had grown in significance in all modern societies” where industrial capitalism was beginning to control economic tides.⁴⁴ To Smith, political economy was meant to serve as a guide for legislators’ “actions and inactions.” Smith separated society into two naturally occurring classes, the prosperous and the working poor, the latter of whom he believed were “essential to national prosperity and security.”⁴⁵ The seminal espousal of laissez-faire capitalism, individualism, and political economy, Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*

43. Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7.

44. Donald Winch, s.v. “Smith, Adam (bap. 1723, d. 1790),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

45. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 8.

would come to shape the theories of subsequent political economists well into the Victorian era.

Along with laissez-faire and individualism, Smith also asserted the necessity of regulation in the case of the poor, since they “required the kind of oversight that others did not need.”⁴⁶ The theory of functional equivalence repudiated the idea of God-given stations, and with Smith’s interpretation, defended the equality of subjects through trade.⁴⁷ Functional equivalence, “the theoretical underpinning of Adam Smith’s *homo economicus*” and “a cornerstone of political economy, the new eighteenth-century science of wealth,” underwrote the new economic relations set up under industrialism.⁴⁸ During the eighteenth century, industrious individuals finally gained social mobility and the ability to accumulate capital. Another point of Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, and an important contribution to liberal governance, was his “explanation of why (some) individuals naturally benefited society” as well as “an acknowledgement that the prosperity that strengthened the state also debased some segments of the population.”⁴⁹

Much of Smith’s work dealt explicitly with social inequality, a necessary concomitant of civilization. Indeed, he titled the first book of *Wealth of Nations*, “On the Causes of Improvement in the Productive Powers. On Labour, and on the Order According to Which

46. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 26.

47. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 26.

48. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 26.

49. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 32. “Smith’s work also helps explain the relationship between liberal government and visibility... The importance that Smith attributed to seeing, in fact, led him to acknowledge that modern society prohibited some individuals from realizing the state of natural virtue even as it facilitated this for others.”

its' Produce is Naturally Distributed Among the Different Ranks of the People.”⁵⁰ Smith reasoned that since industrialization was required for modernity and “the prosperity of modern society depended upon the proliferation of large towns,” certain individuals were simply destined to “disappear from the moralizing gaze of others.”⁵¹ Here Smith reasoned that the plights of a group unengaged in the machinery of industry would be ignored by the English laborers who had moved from rural areas to the bustling centers of industry in search of employment, and by English capitalists concerned with economics, politics, and investments.

Smith attributed economic inequality to his famous principle, the division of labor, which he dealt with throughout his first chapter. Here Smith argued that the division of labor spurred the “greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is anywhere directed, or applied.”⁵² Along with dexterity and saving time, “the invention of a great number of machines which facilitate and abridge labour, and enable one man to do the work of many” enhanced efficiency.⁵³ Under this system, the laborer is tasked with learning one particular skill that is but a component of the larger product in development. The necessarily simple skill demands the complete attention of the laborer, who, according to Smith, may “soon find out easier and readier methods of performing their own particular work, wherever the nature of it admits of

50. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2005), 4.

51. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 33.

52. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 4.

53. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 6.

such improvement.”⁵⁴ Inventors, too, discovered ways to improve machinery, which, as Smith argued, ultimately saved the laboring time of the poor.

This principle suggested that labor specialization, or compartmentalizing jobs, was essential for economic growth and national prosperity. Unfortunately, at the same time, Smith admitted that while the division of labor made certain portions of the population wealthy and by extension, the nation in general, it also turned the majority of poor laborers into automatons. For Smith, the notion of individualism, or perhaps more precisely, differentiation, developed out of the division of labor. In Smith’s view, the path to self-governance and individualism was work. However, in practice, this theory only served to perpetuate the impoverished conditions of the poor and the wealth of the bourgeoisie.”⁵⁵ Thus, for Smith, economic individuality would prove the ultimate goal of progress. “Smith thought he was creating a science of wealth, after all, and he argued that this science had both descriptive and predictive validity. The fact that this ‘science’ (political economy) offered a new explanation for existing social inequities seemed to be an inevitable aspect of national progress.”⁵⁶ Indeed, the principle of the division of labor “seemed to draw the working poor into the emergent community of the nation at the same time that it set them apart.”⁵⁷ Perhaps most important for the course of Victorian society and legislation was in fact the “Whig interpretation of Smithian political economy: that restrictions on trade inhibit profits, wages, education, and social progress; that government poor relief accelerates population growth;

54. Smith, *Wealth of Nations*, 6.

55. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 34.

56. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 35.

57. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 35.

and that some form of government interference in the social domain is necessary to counteract the pauperism of the poor.”⁵⁸

Presenting a point of departure from the positive depiction of industrial capitalism painted by Smith, Frederick Engels described his interpretation of the history of English industrialization in his 1844 *The Conditions of the Working Class in England*. Marking the move to capitalism with the invention of the steam engine, the factory system, and the spinning jenny, Engels recalled the past condition of the now displaced workers. Under the previous conditions, workers lived comfortably with little competition, worked out of their home, had time for leisure, “did not need to overwork; they did no more than they chose to do, and yet earned what they needed.”⁵⁹ However, the Industrial Revolution quickly changed this by carrying out the condition of the laborer “to its logical end by making the workers machines pure and simple.”⁶⁰ With industrial capitalism,

the victory of machine-work over hand-work in the chief branches of English industry was won; and the history of the latter from that time forward simply relates how the hand-workers have been driven by machinery from one position after another. The consequences of this were, on the one hand, a rapid fall in price of all manufactured commodities, prosperity of commerce and manufacture, the conquest of nearly all the unprotected foreign markets, the sudden multiplication of capital and national wealth; on the other hand, a still more rapid multiplication of the proletariat, the destruction of all property-holding and of all security of employment for the working-class, demoralisation, political excitement, and all those facts so highly repugnant to Englishmen in comfortable circumstances, which we shall have to consider in the following pages. Having already seen what a transformation in the social condition of the lower classes a single such clumsy machine as the jenny had wrought, there is no cause for surprise as to that which a complete and

58. Poovey, *Making a Social Body*, 84. It is no understatement that the political revolution Poovey alluded to in her work was both ushered in and perpetuated by the Whig party and its sympathizers, particularly, as I argue, through Harriet Martineau and Lord Brougham’s New Poor Law collaboration.

59. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 3.

60. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 5.

interdependent system of finely adjusted machinery has brought about, machinery which receives raw material and turns out woven goods.⁶¹

Returning to Smith's division of labor, which he considered one of "the three great levers with which manufacture...has been busy putting the world out of joint," along with steampower and machinery, Engels depicted the tumultuous split and social restructuring that followed.⁶²

Manufacture, on a small scale, created the middle-class; on a large scale, it created the working-class, and raised the elect of the middle-class to the throne...Meanwhile, it is an undenied and easily explained fact that the numerous, petty middle-class of the 'good old times' has been annihilated by manufacture, and resolved into rich capitalists on the one hand and poor workers on the other.⁶³

The disadvantages of the poor laborer who must now rely on capital, "the direct or indirect control of the means of subsistence and production" were evident to Engels, who believed the bourgeoisie used capital as "the weapon with which this social warfare is carried on."⁶⁴ Indeed, Engels asserted that Smith's theory only worked to degrade the working-man while perpetuating the wealth of the new middle class.⁶⁵ Smith's commoditization of human labor struck a particular chord with Engels, who summed up his view by arguing the "division of labour has multiplied the brutalising influences of forced work. In most branches the worker's activity is reduced to some paltry, purely mechanical manipulation, repeated

61. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 7-8.

62. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 20.

63. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 20.

64. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 26.

65. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 43.

minute after minute, unchanged year after year.”⁶⁶ Reducing humanity to machinery, Smith’s division of labor, for Engels, made work simpler yes, but

The work itself becomes unmeaning and monotonous to the last degree. It offers no field for mental activity, and claims just enough of his attention to keep him from thinking of anything else...leaving him scarcely time to eat and sleep, none for physical exercise in the open air, or the enjoyment of Nature, much less for mental activity, how can such a sentence help degrading a human being to the level of a brute? Once more the worker must choose, must either surrender himself to his fate, become a ‘good’ workman, heed ‘faithfully’ the interest of the bourgeoisie, in which case he most certainly becomes a brute, or else he must rebel.⁶⁷

The prospect of wage-paying labor, too, seemed problematic to Engels. Nodding toward Malthus’ population theory, Engels agreed with the economist’s view “that there are always more people on hand than can be maintained from the available means of subsistence.”⁶⁸

However, Engels took Malthus’ assertion in a different direction, by arguing that the resulting competition for labor among the surplus population forced “each separate worker to labour as much each day as his strength can possibly admit,” thus benefitting only the capitalist class.⁶⁹

Thomas Malthus’ highly influential 1798 *Principle of Population* affected Victorian society in a variety of ways. Essentially a response to the ideas of the Enlightenment, Malthus’ work developed the theory that perfectibility was impossible, given the rapid rate of population increase versus food supply.⁷⁰ According to Malthus, unchecked populations

66. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 119.

67. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 120.

68. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 80.

69. Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class*, 81.

70. J.M. Pullen, s.v. “Malthus, (Thomas) Robert (1766-1834),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

increased geometrically while the subsistence necessary to maintain them increased arithmetically. This inequality “implies a strong and constantly operating check on population from the difficulty of subsistence.”⁷¹ The difficulties arising from the pressure of population growth would thus affect the greater portion of society, “necessarily.”⁷² These facts appeared central to Malthus’ argument against perfectibility, as he stated, “I see no way by which man can escape from the weight of this law which pervades all animated nature. No fancied equality, no agrarian regulations in their utmost extent, could remove the pressure of it even for a single century.”⁷³

Launching into his discussion on the population checks for man, Malthus began by maintaining that human increase “can only be kept commensurate to the increase of the means of subsistence by the constant operation of the strong law of necessity acting as a check upon the greater power.”⁷⁴ If human reason could overpower instinct, Malthus thought that additional considerations to the question of reproduction would further prevent early marriages and large families. According to Malthus, early marriages would cause one to “lower his rank in life...subject himself to greater difficulties than he at present feels...be obliged to labour harder.”⁷⁵ Such pressure on the family would ultimately cause the children of such marriages to live “in rags and misery, and clamouring for bread that he cannot give them.”⁷⁶ The man of the house, in order to remedy this problem, would thus be “reduced to

71. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 5.

72. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 5.

73. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 5.

74. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 8.

75. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 9.

76. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 9.

the grating necessity of forfeiting his independence, and of being obliged to the sparing hand of charity” for his family’s subsistence.⁷⁷

For Malthus, when a population increases before subsistence reaches a commensurate level, the pressure placed upon that particular population reaches a point that the “poor consequently must live much worse, and many of them be reduced to severe distress.”⁷⁸

Malthus goes on to suggest that if all humans were equal, everyone would suffer, but since inequality existed, only “a great part of mankind” would undergo severe distress.⁷⁹

Admitting that the working class was indeed the group largely affected, Malthus used the example of child mortality to substantiate his claim that “of the number of children who die annually, much too great a proportion belongs to those who may be supposed unable to give their offspring proper food and attention, exposed as they are occasionally to severe distress and confined, perhaps, to unwholesome habitations and hard labour.”⁸⁰ The many distresses experienced by this part of the population brought Malthus to his most passionate issue, the poor laws.

Developed in order to “remedy the frequent distresses of the common people,” the poor laws, in Malthus’ mind, actually did little more than perpetuate dependency.⁸¹

Accordingly, although they helped the case of individual poverty, “they have spread the general evil over a much larger surface.”⁸² Listing issues in bureaucracy among the

77. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 5.

78. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 9.

79. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 11.

80. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 23.

81. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 24.

distresses, Malthus expressed astonishment over “the fact that nearly three millions are collected annually for the poor and yet that their distresses are not removed.”⁸³ Malthus believed that no amount of outside money would eradicate the “recurrence of distress among the lower members of society.”⁸⁴ In fact, for Malthus, the English poor laws served “to depress the general condition of the poor” in two ways.⁸⁵ The first of these was the “obvious tendency...to increase population without increasing the food for its support.”⁸⁶ The second being “the quantity of provisions consumed in workhouses upon a part of the society that cannot in general be considered as the most valuable part diminishes the shares that would otherwise belong to more industrious and more worthy members, and thus in the same manner forces more to become dependent.”⁸⁷ Thus, not only do appealing workhouse conditions perpetuate dependency, they also reduce the condition of those not resorting to the aid of the workhouse.

The issue of economic independence played a central theme in Malthus’ attack against the poor laws, which he saw as the main cause of financial dependency. Malthus further contended that when English poor laws enabled men who relied on parish support to undergo matrimony, “with little or no chance of maintaining their families in independence,” the resulting unhappiness from financial distress passed on to their children, and by

82. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 24.

83. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 24.

84. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 25.

85. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 25.

86. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 26.

87. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

extension, injured “all in the same class with themselves.”⁸⁸ Indeed, Malthus felt so strongly about the issue of improvident marriages that he argued a “labourer who marries without being able to support a family may in some respects be considered as an enemy to all his fellow-labourers.”⁸⁹

The poor laws also perpetuated the poverty of the working class by cheapening the cost of labor and raising the price of provision, which “contributed to impoverish that class of people whose only possession is their labour.”⁹⁰ Remarking on his observation of the general condition of the poor, Malthus explained that the “labouring poor...seem always to live from hand to mouth. Their present wants employ their whole attention, and they seldom think of the future.”⁹¹ In the rare instances that the poor have money “beyond their present necessities,” according to Malthus, they generally spend it on alcohol at the pubs.⁹² Thus, as Malthus concluded, English poor laws only served to “diminish both the power and the will to save among the common people, and thus to weaken one of the strongest incentives to sobriety and industry, and consequently to happiness.”⁹³

While acknowledging the benevolent intent behind the poor laws, Malthus contended that instead of helping the condition of the poor, they instead subjected “the whole class of the common people of England...to a set of grating, inconvenient, and tyrannical laws,

88. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

89. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

90. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

91. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

92. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

93. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 27.

totally inconsistent with the genuine spirit of the constitution.”⁹⁴ For Malthus, interfering in the lives of the poor “is a species of tyranny” exercised by each of the bureaucratic levels responsible for the distribution of poor relief.⁹⁵ From this perspective, in which the poor laws caused more harm than good, Malthus justified his argument for the total abolition of the poor laws. In his reasoning, “the total abolition of all the present parish-laws...would at any rate give liberty and freedom of action to the peasantry of England, which they can hardly be said to possess at present.”⁹⁶ Releasing the poor from the clutches of parish relief would also enable social mobility and the freedom to find more job opportunities with better pay. This, in accord with Malthus’ theory, would mean the “market of labour would then be free.”⁹⁷

Although Malthus fought against most of the components in the poor laws, he conceded to the need for county workhouses in “cases of extreme distress.”⁹⁸ Malthus asserted that the “fare should be hard, and those that were able obliged to work” in his workhouse.⁹⁹ Serving as a last resort for those suffering from poverty, Malthus intended for his workhouses to “not be considered as comfortable asylums in all difficulties, but merely as places where severe distress might find some alleviation.”¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Malthus’ disdain for the poor laws largely resulted from his belief that one could achieve true liberty only through

94. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 29.

95. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 29.

96. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 30.

97. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 30.

98. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 30.

99. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 30.

100. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 30.

engaging in trade and commerce, activities that the poor laws, particularly the workhouse, largely impeded.

Returning to the benevolence behind the poor laws, Malthus applauded the value of the principle, being “one of the noblest and most godlike qualities of the human heart, generated, perhaps, slowly and gradually from self-love, and afterwards intended to act as a general law,” yet working only to “soften the partial deformities, to correct the asperities, and to smooth the wrinkles of its parent.”¹⁰¹ While working to “soften the partial evils arising from self-love,” benevolence “can never be substituted in its place.”¹⁰² Touching on the utility principle, Malthus continued by contending that if individuals were forced to consider each action in terms of whether it “was more conducive than any other to the general good,” no one would contribute to the care of the needy, “and the unenlightened would be continually committing the grossest mistakes.”¹⁰³ Malthus asserted that the pressure on population would force a great portion of society into poverty. In response to Adam Smith, Malthus maintained that the “increasing wealth of the nation has had little or no tendency to better the condition of the labouring poor.”¹⁰⁴ Indeed, the only point Malthus outwardly diverged from Smith on was the latter’s view that “every increase of the revenue or stock of a society as an increase of the funds for the maintenance of labour, and consequently as tending always to ameliorate the condition of the poor.”¹⁰⁵

101. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 93.

102. Malthus, *Principle of Population*, 93.

103. Malthus, *Principles of Population*, 94.

104. Malthus, *Principles of Population*, 99.

105. Malthus, *Principles of Population*, 103.

After the anonymous publication of the 1798 first edition, Malthus expanded and reiterated his views on population throughout several subsequent editions. In 1803, the second edition of Malthus' *Principle of Population* did not substantially change his original thesis, but it did include the important addition of the significant role for moral restraint. Including statistics on "population checks" that took place throughout many different regions and across many different time periods, the second edition also included a preface acknowledging the influence of individuals such as David Hume, Robert Wallace, Adam Smith, and Richard Price.¹⁰⁶ While conceding that many before him had written on the topic of population, as J.M. Pullen notes, Malthus thought, "that even more remained to be done, especially in describing the means by which populations are checked and in drawing out the practical implications of the principle of population."¹⁰⁷

Most significantly, the second edition elucidated the idea of "moral restraint," that is, "delayed marriage accompanied by strictly moral pre-marital behaviour" in order to avoid excessive population growth.¹⁰⁸ Admitting the difficulty of this action, Malthus maintained that moral restraint would elevate the happiness of the individual, "if supported by an education emphasizing the immorality of bringing children into the world without the means of supporting them."¹⁰⁹ Malthus also omitted the theologically based chapters that had argued excessive population and inadequate food supplies were "consistent with the notion of divine benevolence" as a means to human development through the providential ordainment of

106. Pullen, "Malthus, Thomas," *DNB*.

107. Pullen, "Malthus, Thomas," *DNB*.

108. Pullen, "Malthus, Thomas," *DNB*.

109. Pullen, "Malthus, Thomas," *DNB*.

God.¹¹⁰ The remaining four editions, printed in 1806, 1807, 1817, and 1826, primarily served as a response to the many critics Malthus acquired with his brazen suppositions.

The reason Malthus' work proved so controversial to many was his argument against the poor laws. Malthus did not believe the poor had a natural right to relief for many reasons. For example, Malthus saw the poor laws tending to cause the price of food to increase, to cause severe dependency in people, to elicit abrupt and improvident marriages, "and thus to create the poor they sought to maintain."¹¹¹

In 1807, Malthus published a letter addressed to MP Samuel Whitbread, on the subject of amending the poor laws.¹¹² Serving as a retort to Whitbread's response to Malthus' population principle, this letter sought to expose the inherent inefficiencies in the current legislative system. Suggesting that the poor relief system was inherently flawed, Malthus explained how legislators had repeatedly failed in their efforts to establish "a satisfactory provision for the poor."¹¹³ Reminding Whitbread that "the cause of these reiterated failures is to be found in those principles" developed throughout his essay, Malthus asserted that poverty was "denounced from divine authority" until overcome with "perfect virtue."¹¹⁴ Continuing to reassert several points from his *Population* essay, Malthus suggested abolishing the poor law system altogether, in a stride toward individual liberation.

110. Pullen, "Malthus, Thomas," *DNB*.

111. Pullen, "Malthus, Thomas," *DNB*.

112. T.R. Malthus, *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread, Esq. M.P. on his Proposed Bill for the Amendment of the Poor Laws* (London: Printed for J. Johnson, St. Paul's Churchyard, and J. Hatchard, Piccadilly, By Wood and Innes, Poppin's Court, Fleet-Street, 1807); D.R. Fisher, s.v. "Whitbread, Samuel (1764-1815)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

113. Malthus, *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread*, 2.

114. Malthus, *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread*, 2-3.

And I still think that if we weigh on the one hand the great quantity of subjection and dependence which the poor laws create, together with the kind of relief which they afford, against the greater degree of freedom and the higher wages which would be the necessary consequence of their abolition, it will be difficult to believe that the mass of comfort and happiness would not be greater on the latter supposition, although the few that were then in distress would have no other resource than voluntary charity.¹¹⁵

For Malthus, like Smith and other political economists, the amassing of individual capital paved the true road toward individual liberty and economic freedom.

Admitting that such a jarring transition from dependence to complete independence on poor relief “would be so strongly felt,” Malthus thought that perhaps it would be better to develop legislative regulations on his plan, “till the higher and middle classes of society were generally convinced of its necessity, and till the poor themselves could be made to understand that they had purchased their right to a provision by law, by too great and extensive a sacrifice of their liberty and happiness.”¹¹⁶

Malthus’ brand of political economy drew heavily from both Smith and Bentham, among others. An example of each is represented in an 1822 work, in which Malthus defined various terms in political economy, such as “wealth” and “utility.” According to Malthus, “Wealth” meant “The material objects necessary, useful or agreeable to man, which have required some portion of human exertion to appropriate or produce.”¹¹⁷ Likewise, Malthus defined “Utility” to mean “The quality of being serviceable or beneficial to mankind. The

115. Malthus, *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread*, 6.

116. Malthus, *A Letter to Samuel Whitbread*, 6-7. However, directly afterward, Malthus told Whitbread, “I cannot however think that it is either just or wise to dwell particularly on these difficulties, or to characterise as harsh and severe any propositions which may leave them to be provided for by voluntary charity.”

117. T.R. Malthus, *Definitions in Political Economy Preceded by an Inquiry into the Rules which Ought to Guide Political Economists in the Definition and use of their Terms; with Remarks on the Deviation from these Rules in their Writings* (London: John Murray, Albemarle-street, 1822), 234.

utility of an object has generally been considered as proportioned to the necessity and real importance of these services and benefits. All wealth is necessarily useful; but all that is useful is not necessarily wealth.”¹¹⁸ Packed with Smith’s and Bentham’s respective ideologies and synthesized with his own, Malthus’ doctrine of political economy proved especially alarming for those sympathetic to the plight of the poor and those unprepared to accept such a grim and seemingly determined fate based on an unattainable moral perfection.

William Godwin and other Radicals had argued exactly the opposite in their theories on human perfectibility. For example, Godwin’s 1793 *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* suggested that through the progression of intellectual enlightenment, institutions like government would become unnecessary and, by extension, control over the mind would lead to control over the body, and thus the prevention of death.¹¹⁹ Nineteenth century “Radicalism” involved “very diverse tendencies,” unlike the Jacobins of the previous generation, who “were clearly identified by their allegiance to the *Rights of Man* and to certain forms of open organisation.”¹²⁰ For Thompson, this involved “intransigent opposition to the Government; contempt for the weakness of the Whigs; opposition to restrictions upon political liberties; open exposure of corruption and the ‘Pitt system’; and general support for parliamentary reform.”¹²¹ While the many strands of Radicalism rarely came together on social issues and economics, the movement “was broad enough to take in at times the unrest of manufacturers or small gentry.”¹²² The incoherency and lack of organization of the

118. Malthus, *Definitions in Political Economy*, 234.

119. Mark Philip, s.v. “Godwin, William (1756-1836), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

120. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 466.

121. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 466.

reformers in conjunction with the laws that outlawed corresponding societies “and open political meetings had atomised the movement, so that the individualistic and quarrelsome behaviour of its leaders was a function of their situation as ‘voices’ rather than as organisers.”¹²³ In any event, Radicalism, in Thompson’s view, served England as a defensive movement, “an articulate movement of protest, supported by widespread popular disaffection...not yet an offensive force.”¹²⁴

“The heroic age of popular Radicalism,” highlighted the first two decades of the nineteenth century, in which the claims made by Paine in his *Rights of Man* “were now *assumed*” unlike the Jacobins of the previous generation, who proffered “a minority propaganda, identified with a few organisations and writers.”¹²⁵ Accordingly, the rhetoric of this generation of Radicals included concerns about “the abuses of the ‘borough-mongering’ or ‘fund-holding’ system—taxes, fiscal abuses, corruption, sinecures, clerical pluralism...which were seen as stemming from a venal, self-interested clique of landowners, courtiers, and placemen.”¹²⁶ The various radicalisms of individual communities “had a London following—Cobbett, Burdett, Carlile, Thistlewood, the Benthamites, Henry Hunt” and others helped develop a rhetoric of total parliamentary reform, which ultimately culminated in the passage of the 1832 Reform Bill.¹²⁷

122. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 466.

123. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 469.

124. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 469.

125. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 603.

126. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 603.

127. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 611.

The multifarious “radicalisms” of the day took shape in different ways according to region. For instance, in London, “the channels between middle-class and working-class reformers remained open; the characteristic form of organisation was the committee, in which a few professional men worked alongside self-educated artisans who tended to despise the political backwardness of the labourers and the demoralized and criminal poor.”¹²⁸ In this vein, Jeremy Bentham, the father of utilitarianism, was another influential theorist writing to solve the question of the poor. Impacting the ideas of Martineau and others interested in parliamentary reform, he espoused his theory of utility in his 1789 work, *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*.¹²⁹ In this work, Bentham maintained that an action was “right” so long as it was useful, promoted happiness, or else somehow benefitted a majority, relied heavily on the notion of the “greatest good for the greatest number” as its general guiding principle. Influenced by the Enlightenment, and such thinkers as David Hume, Joseph Priestley, John Locke, and the baron de Montesquieu, Bentham perceived “the idea of utility as the foundation of morals from Hume” while providing the principle of utility with a “more prescriptive dimension,” connecting “it more closely with pleasure and pain” than his intellectual forebear.¹³⁰

Spearheading the movement of the philosophic radicals, the group of journalists and Radical politicians who were influenced by his utilitarianism and active in politics throughout the 1830s, Bentham thought utility served as the objective method for both guiding and developing morality, legislation, and society.¹³¹ Indeed, Bentham considered

128. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 471.

129. F. Rosen, s.v. “Bentham, Jeremy (1748-1832),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

130. Rosen, “Bentham,” *DNB*.

utility above “moral sense, common sense, understanding, rule of right, fitness of things, law of nature, law of reason, right reason, natural justice, natural equity, good order, truth, and the doctrine of election.”¹³² The principles that comprised utilitarianism, namely “security and equality, which indirectly advanced the greatest happiness; and the emphasis on equal distribution,” were expanded upon in later works written by him and John Stuart Mill.¹³³

Building upon his utility principle, Bentham also wrote about a number of other topics, including economics and the poor laws. Beginning in 1796, Bentham wrote profusely on the issue of poor relief as a result of “the scarcity and increasing expense of food and the growing debate about the treatment of the poor in England.”¹³⁴ Unlike many political economists, who sought abolishment of poor relief in general, Bentham opposed such proposals that suggested replacing the current relief system with private charitable giving. In Bentham’s view, relying on private charity would simply mean the death of many impoverished individuals. While he did support public provisionary relief, he maintained the caveat that those members of a society who were either unable or unwilling to earn their subsistence through work “should not be better off than those who did.”¹³⁵ Extending from his concerns of overspending and a diminished labor force, Bentham proposed a system of “industry houses” that would “house the indigent and make provision for them to labour and through labour to acquire the virtues of frugality, sobriety, and industry.”¹³⁶ In addition to

131. H.S. Jones, s.v. “Philosophic radicals (*act.* 1830-41),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

132. Rosen, “Bentham,” *DNB*.

133. Rosen, “Bentham,” *DNB*.

134. Rosen, “Bentham,” *DNB*.

135. Rosen, “Bentham,” *DNB*.

serving the poor as a means to gain employment and moral education, Bentham intended the “industry houses” to also provide a variety of welfare services for the laboring poor.¹³⁷

The answer to Smith’s regulatory system for the poor was bundled within the New Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which forced discipline upon the poor, “so that they could rise from an impoverished and dehumanized aggregate to a state of free—that is, self-disciplined—market agency.”¹³⁸ While imposing agency on these individuals, “the New Poor Law also *relieved* the well-to-do of the necessity to act as autonomous agents.”¹³⁹ In fact, the irrationality of the New Poor Laws limited the rights of the poor to such a degree that even the “ability to act as the market agents they supposedly now were” disappeared.¹⁴⁰ The false premise behind the amended legislation was to create and implement an impartial system based on reason that would ensure fair treatment among the poor. In practice, however, “these instances of irrationality appeared because both the framers and the enforcers of the law retained vestiges of traditional attitudes toward charity, morality, and justice, even as they superimposed a new rationality upon them.”¹⁴¹ Thus, the subjectivity of the framers and implementers did not dissipate, despite the legislation’s claim that ideas such as “character”

136. Rosen, “Bentham,” *DNB*. Bentham’s “industry houses” were an extension of his earlier work on panopticons, which are circular prisons with cells arranged around a well that enabled complete observation of the prisoners at all times.

137. Rosen, “Bentham,” *DNB*. Many classical economists were considered followers of Bentham. Individuals like James Mill, David Ricardo, and particularly John Stuart Mill, worked to expand and develop Bentham’s ideas.

138. Poovey, *Making of a Social Body*, 107.

139. Poovey, *Making of a Social Body*, 107.

140. Poovey, *Making of a Social Body*, 107.

141. Poovey, *Making of a Social Body*, 107. Poovey goes on to explain how the framers staggered the New Poor Law’s implementation throughout England, and, “in order to curtail old habits of dispensing relief as charity, they declared that outdoor relief should only be given as bread not money. Since bread was not a counter of exchange in a money economy, this tactic undermined the professed aim of the law to integrate the poor into the market economy.”

would not serve as qualifiers for receiving relief. Drawing on testimonials of several local officials, Poovey demonstrated “the extent to which character, which the New Poor Law eliminated as a criterion for receiving relief, was being reimported as a criterion for receiving employment.”¹⁴²

Here we see how middle-class convictions concerning character shifted into “a valuable commodity in the labor market,” producing “these values *as* self-evident and universal by elevating to abstractions the social arrangements that facilitated market productivity.”¹⁴³ Under the New Poor Law, pauperism meant the total loss of liberty through institutions like the workhouse. Indeed, “the New Poor Law succeeded because it incited in the poor the fear that all freedoms would be abrogated if one acknowledged the need for relief.”¹⁴⁴

In what ways did the workhouse strip liberty from the poor? In 1828, the Reverend John Thomas Becher published a pamphlet on the “Antipauper System” that included his plans for implementing workhouses based on his existing project in Southwell, which were ultimately adapted in the 1834 legislation.¹⁴⁵ Becher, a member of the Church of England’s clergy and an avid poor law reformer, Becher concerned himself with county administration,

142. Poovey, *Making of a Social Body*, 108.

143. Poovey, *Making of a Social Body*, 109. “Thus Marriage, Property, Order, and Science were produced as universally desirable virtues, even though Chadwick presented them as being valuable because their contribution to society could be quantified and assigned a monetary value.”

144. Poovey, *Making of a Social Body*, 110. On the following page, Poovey explained, “the law’s provisions were inadequate to conditions that already existed in 1834... which meant that the law could not reduce pauperism simply by forcing the poor to seek employment.”

145. John Thomas Becher, *The Antipauper System; Exemplifying the Positive and Practical Good, Realized by the Relievers and the Relieved, Under the Frugal, Beneficial, and Lawful, Administration of the Poor Laws, Prevailing at Southwell, and in the Neighbouring District; with Plans of the Southwell Workhouse, and of the Thurgarton Hundred Workhouse; and with Instructions for Book-Keeping* (London: Printed for W. Simpkin and R. Marshall, Stationers’-Hall Court, 1828).

but rejected the idea that poor relief should be completely abolished. In 1808, Becher first proposed a way to “regulate the Poor at Southwell” as a result of certain abuses within the system.¹⁴⁶ Becher premised these institutions upon “a principle of Inspection, Classification, and Seclusion” for the “Management of the Poor, and for the Reduction of the Parochial Expenditure.”¹⁴⁷ Meant to house “84 Paupers,” Becher’s workhouse consisted of a central area with a wing extending from each side to separate males and females.¹⁴⁸ With approval and funding in the amount of £1970, the first of these workhouses was completed and occupied December 1824.¹⁴⁹

Explaining that the antipauper system was “conducted upon the Principles of salutary Restraint and strict Discipline,” Becher went on to describe the conditions within which those seeking financial relief would face.¹⁵⁰ Again, men, women, and children would be separated from each other, however, “if specially requested,” husbands and wives could associate “during the hours of rest, except under very peculiar circumstances.”¹⁵¹ And, since there were distinctions among the degrees of poverty, Becher divided them “into distinct Wards, according to the Character and Conduct of the Paupers.”¹⁵² Such segregation would not only

146. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 1; M.J.D. Roberts, s.v. “Becher, John Thomas (1770-1848),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

147. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 1.

148. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 1. “The Governor, Matron, and Children, occupy the Centre, the Males are placed in one Wing, and the Females in the other. A court is assigned to each sex.”

149. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 1.

150. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 8-9.

151. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 9-10.

152. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 10.

ensure subordination, but it would also enable the administrators to “discriminate between the innocent and the culpable Poor.”¹⁵³

The workhouse diet, “which has always proved sufficient both for Health and Sustenance,” was, in actuality, quite meager.¹⁵⁴ The weekly menu consisted of the following:

Breakfast, every Morning, Milk and Bread; or Gruel and Bread.
 Supper, every Evening, Milk and Bread; or Gruel and Bread; or Bread and Cheese.
 Dinner, on Sunday and Thursday, Beef and Potatoes,
 on Monday and Friday, Broth and Bread; or Milk and Bread.
 on Tuesday, Peas-soup, with Beef-broth and Potatoes.
 on Wednesday, Rice Milk.
 on Saturday, Hasty Pudding; or Dumplings.¹⁵⁵

Alcohol was not allowed, unless prescribed by a surgeon. “The aged, infirm, and guiltless Poor,” were allowed “other little indulgences,” such as tea and “a small quantity of Butter.”¹⁵⁶ The only other exceptions to the dietary strictures were the “Sick and Infirm,” who could follow the dietary directions of the in-house surgeon.¹⁵⁷

Moving on to discuss the financial maintenance of the workhouse inhabitants, Becher divided the paupers into three distinct classes. The first class consisted of males and females ten years of age and younger, “rated at two Parts, each Part being equal to one Fourth part of the Sum charged for the Maintenance of the adult Male Pauper. The present cost of their Maintenance is 1s.3d. Weekly for each Person in this Class.”¹⁵⁸ The second class included

153. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 10.

154. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 10.

155. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 10. In another pamphlet, titled, “Rules and Regulations for the Government of the Workhouse of the Parish of St. Martin in the Fields, and of the Infant Poor-House at Highwood-Hill,” written in 1828, a similar diet was instated.

156. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 10.

157. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

males between ten and fifteen years and females over the age of nineteen, “rated at three Parts. The present cost of their Maintenance is 1s.10½d. Weekly for each Person in this Class.”¹⁵⁹ The third class was made up of “Males above the Age of 15 Years, rated at four Parts. The present cost of their Maintenance is 2s.6d. Weekly for each Person in this Class.”¹⁶⁰

Along with strict dietary regulations, the paupers in Becher’s workhouse were also required to adhere to a specific dress code upon entrance. “The Apparel of the Poor is purified, ticketed, and deposited in the care of the Governor on their Admission. They are then dressed in the Clothing of the Workhouse until their discharge, when they resume their own Clothes.”¹⁶¹ The allowances for clothing were also dependent upon the pauper’s “class,” with the weekly allocations divided accordingly: “First Class 2d.—Second Class 3d.—Third Class 4d.”¹⁶² While Becher’s workhouse scheme did allow for individual parishes to purchase clothing for its poor in the beginning, such an arrangement “has been discontinued; as the System of Weekly Payments for each Pauper’s Clothing has been found far more economical and convenient: for it exonerates the Guardians from any responsibility concerning the future Application of the Clothing on the discharge of the Pauper from the Workhouse.”¹⁶³ Instead of shoes, “all Paupers, except the very Aged and infirm, wear Clogs

158. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

159. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

160. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

161. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

162. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

163. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

with wooden Soles.”¹⁶⁴ This was because, as Becher reasoned, clogs were more economical, “they are of little use if carried away; and if tendered for sale, excite suspicion.”¹⁶⁵ Although cost efficient, Becher assured his audience that this factor did not subtract from their comfort, as they did “not injure even the tender feet of Children.”¹⁶⁶

While the paupers labored to earn their place in the workhouse, they were not allowed to keep any of their monetary earnings. Men performed hard labor, while women cooked, cleaned, and completed other traditionally feminine tasks. Children were to attend the workhouse school daily. If any of these conditions went unmet, the pauper was eligible for automatic discharge. This point brought Becher back to his original intention for the workhouses, that is, to make requesting poor relief so undesirable that, eventually, the poor would no longer seek financial aid.

Our object is not to provide a permanent receptacle for able-bodied Adults, but a refuge for those who are rendered incapable of labour... These are treated with all that tenderness to which they are entitled by their Misfortunes. But the Idle, the Improvident, the Profligate, and the Sturdy Poor, are subjected to a System of secluded restraint and salutary discipline, which, together with our simple yet sufficient Dietary, prove so repugnant to their dissolute habits, that they very soon apply for their discharge, and devise means of self-support, which nothing short of compulsion could urge them to explore.¹⁶⁷

Finally, Becher ended his workhouse pamphlet by summarizing his “Advice for the Management of the Poor.”¹⁶⁸

164. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

165. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

166. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 11.

167. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 17-8.

168. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 17-8.

In the Antipauper System, all our Arrangement should be strictly conformable to the Laws of the realm. We do not profess to amend the Provisions of the Legislature, but to enforce them. The Rights of the Poor are few, therefore they should be scrupulously respected; for the retrenchment of their imaginary claims will naturally inspire them with a disposition to resist any such innovation. But, when they become convinced that their Privileges are preserved without violation, and that our measures are founded upon legal and equitable principles, any opposition created by the impulse of the moment, will gradually subside into patient and good-tempered acquiescence.¹⁶⁹

Becher's workhouses served as the major point of contention in the debate on the New Poor Law Amendments, as critics quickly realized they were more indicative of prisons than anything resembling charity. Indeed, as recounted in a subsequent political pamphlet, the workhouse produced "an amount of evil of terrific magnitude to the labouring population, tending directly to reduce them to a state, little, if at all, short of *slavery*, and re-acting with equal violence on society at large, more especially on the real interests of the owners and occupiers of land, from whose funds they must by law be supported."¹⁷⁰ Accordingly, the "Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834," seen by its architects as "the basis of a systematic and economical reconstruction of English local government" became "as much hated by the people as were its symbols, the gaunt Union workhouses, or 'bastilles'."¹⁷¹ As Walter Arnstein reinforced, this system ensured that the "poorer members of early Victorian society were discouraged by law and by custom from applying for Poor Law relief except when their situation was truly desperate."¹⁷²

169. Becher, *The Antipauper System*, 17-8.

170. G. Poulette Scrope, *Plea for the Abolition of Slavery in England, as Produced by an Illegal Abuse of the Poor Law, Common in the Southern Counties* (London: J. Ridgway, 169, Piccadilly, 1829), 8.

171. Christopher Harvie and H.C.G. Matthew, *Nineteenth-Century Britain: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 68-9.

172. Walter Arnstein, *Queen Victoria* (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 87.

Two other significant debates were also taking place in government during the 1820s and 1830s. The issue of child and female labor in factories and the efforts to extend the vote to all male landowners compounded the state's problem of the poor. By the 1820s, the strategy for the "best-organised group" of London Radicals "was to...attach a working-class following to a new parliamentary leadership whose rising stars were Hume, Hobhouse and Brougham."¹⁷³ As Thompson maintained, "the prominence in the agitation of Brougham, Wood and Hobhouse was a portent of the shape of the new movements on the 1820s, under the guidance of the middle-class Utilitarians and younger Whigs."¹⁷⁴ Along with the transformation of Radicalism came a "mildly prosperous plateau of social peace" in the second decade of the nineteenth century.¹⁷⁵ Part of this atmosphere involved many seeking to rectify the experiences of the Industrial Revolution with "popular Radicalism insurgent and in defeat."¹⁷⁶ The quiet of the 1820s would soon evaporate at the end of the decade, however, "when there came the climactic contest between Old Corruption and Reform."¹⁷⁷

The latter overcame the former through the enactment of the Reform Bill of 1832, which, according to Engels, "legally sanctioned the distinction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, and made the bourgeoisie the ruling class."¹⁷⁸ Elicited by the rising middle class, the great settlement of 1832 found individuals like the middle-class Radical Brougham

173. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 613.

174. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 709.

175. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 711.

176. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 711.

177. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 711.

178. Engels, *Condition of the Working Class*, 214.

voicing the rhetoric “of property, security, interest.”¹⁷⁹ With the crisis of parliamentary reform, Brougham and other philosophic radicals shifted their focus from education to politics, which H.S. Jones argued “is what gave them a group identity in the 1830s.”¹⁸⁰

Indeed,

the years between the French Revolution and the Reform Bill had seen the formation of a middle-class ‘class consciousness’, more conservative, more wary of the large idealist causes (except, perhaps, those of other nations), more narrowly self-interested than in any other industrialised nation. Henceforward, in Victorian England, the middle-class Radical and the idealist intellectual were forced to take sides.¹⁸¹

For Jones, the Radical movement after the Reform Bill split into three distinct radicalisms. “Whereas Paineite radicals argued for manhood suffrage on the basis of natural right, and ‘historical radicals’ in the tradition of Cobbett invoked an ‘ancient constitution,’ philosophic radicals distinctively demanded suffrage reform as a necessary security for good government.”¹⁸² Following the great settlement of 1832, and the consequential rise of the middle class, philosophic radicals in the utilitarian tradition of Bentham and Mill sought further parliamentary reform. Indeed, it was out of the newly risen middle class that a rethinking of philosophic radicalism took place, in which Martineau played a major part. The struggle to adjust to the effects of the Industrial Revolution and the new economic system of capitalism would come to define the social and political relations throughout the nineteenth century. Shifting from agriculture to industry caused many unforeseen consequences that Victorian politicians endeavored to solve throughout the century. The

179. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 819.

180. Jones, “Philosophic radicals,” *DNB*.

181. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 820.

182. Jones, “Philosophic radicals,” *DNB*.

major issue the new middle class faced was the question of the condition of the poor. After gaining an essential role in the act of governance following the 1832 Reform Bill, the middle class paradigm, which was created by bourgeois thinkers like Smith, Bentham, Malthus, and later, Martineau, quickly dominated political discourse. Offering the workhouse and industry as solutions to the problem of the poor, the new middle class shifted the political tides in their favor through calls for reform. As Poovey explained, “the events typified by the nineteenth-century revolution in government constituted a redefinition *of* agency, which was the necessary counterpart to the redefinition of administration that *was* the Victorian revolution in government.”¹⁸³ Indeed, working directly within the ties of governance, Martineau would emerge as a political economist and as a crucial component to the nineteenth century political revolution in England. It was within the context of utilitarianism, Radicalism, and Malthusian ideas, as well as engagement with these major political debates, that Martineau made it so.

183. Poovey, *Making of a Social Body*, 113.

CHAPTER THREE

“Harriet Martineau: Popularizer, Propagandist, and Political Economist”

Becoming an independent author with the success of *Illustrations of Political Economy*, Martineau soon established an important relationship with the High Chancellor in Parliament, Lord Henry Brougham. A vital part of the rising industrial middle class, Brougham, like Martineau, sought radical parliamentary reform in the 1830s. While initially a popularizer of Malthusian economics, Martineau would come to develop her own distinct brand of political economy through her commissioned series *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*. This series, written in collaboration with Brougham, served to both ease and educate the public on the ideas behind the proposed poor law amendments while simultaneously serving as the theoretical underpinning behind the New Poor Laws of 1834. Through an exploration of her personal correspondence and her fictional tales, this chapter unfolds the evolution of Martineau’s early political career from mere popularizer to political economist in her own right.

Martineau published “Life in the Wilds,” the first tale of her *Illustrations of Political Economy* series in 1832 with great success.¹⁸⁴ Writing an additional twenty-five tales to complete this series, a total of seven of these “dealt explicitly with Malthusian themes,” as Huzel pointed out.¹⁸⁵ Of these seven, the most talked about was a story called “Cousin Marshall,” in which Martineau argued against the poor law and consistently advocated Malthus’ preventive check through moral restraint. Reflecting on what she saw as the

184. Huzel, *Popularization of Malthus*, 55.

185. Huzel, *Popularization of Malthus*, 57.

common attitude of the poor through her narration, Martineau described the inefficiency of the current poor laws, which, in her mind, perpetuated the cycle of poverty by inspiring the poor into improvident marriages and early reproduction without the resources necessary to subsist.¹⁸⁶ As one of her characters remarked, “Thus is our pauper list swelled, year by year...Paupers multiply their own numbers as fast as they can, and rate-payers sink down into rate-receivers.”¹⁸⁷

The solution Martineau proposed to the problem of the poor in “Cousin Marshall” was much in line with the thinking of other Radicals who believed total abolishment of the poor laws was the only means to complete liberty and economic freedom.¹⁸⁸ Proposing a gradual end to poor relief by weaning paupers off parish assistance, Martineau’s character suggested that the government “enact that no child born from any marriage taking place within a year from the date of the law, and no illegitimate child born within two years from the same date, shall ever be entitled to parish assistance.”¹⁸⁹ Instead of compulsory assistance like under the current system, Martineau suggested private charity as an alternative means for financial aid. Summing up her views on the question of the poor at the end of “Cousin Marshall,” Martineau ended by asserting,

In a society composed of a natural gradation of ranks, some must be poor; i.e. have nothing more than the means of present subsistence. Any suspension of these means of subsistence, whether through disaster, sickness or decrepitude, converts the poor into the Indigent. Since indigence occasions misery, and disposes to vice, the welfare of society requires the greatest possible reduction of the number of the indigent. Charity, public and private, or an arbitrary

186. Harriet Martineau, “Cousin Marshall,” in *Illustrations of Political Economy*, 9 vols (London: Charles Fox Publishing, 1832), 96.

187. Martineau, “Cousin Marshall,” 111.

188. Huzel, *Popularization of Malthus*, 63. Here I differ from Huzel’s claim that her stance on the poor laws in this story was “totally Malthusian.”

189. Martineau, “Cousin Marshall,” 119.

distribution of the subsistence-fund, has hitherto failed to effect this object; the proportion of the indigent to the rest of the population having increased from age to age...since charity does not tend to the increase of numbers; but, with this exception, all arbitrary distribution of the necessaries of life is injurious to society, whether in the form of private almsgiving, public charitable institutions, or a legal pauper-system.¹⁹⁰

Thus, Martineau had reaffirmed her stance that the abolishment of the poor laws was necessary for the progression of society.

While her *Illustrations of Political Economy* tales reflect the influences of other philosophic radicals and political economists, it is in *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* that Martineau transformed her ideas into a distinct brand of political economy. As Huzel had pointed out in his literary analysis of *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*, Martineau modified her belief that the government should eradicate the entire poor relief system in favor of reform.¹⁹¹ Indeed, her political economy, as demonstrated in *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*, was the culmination of her internalization of Malthus, Bentham, Smith and others as well as her own approach to the question of poverty.

Published in a series of four volumes between 1833 and 1834, Martineau's *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* "treated issues surrounding pauperism and its solutions."¹⁹² In these stories Martineau's suggestions for reforming the poor laws included the suggestion that workhouses replace compulsory parish relief, that the poor who rely on workhouses "are to have whatever comes below...what is enjoyed by the independent labourers who help support them," and the development of an oversight body that would regulate the proposed

190. Martineau, "Cousin Marshall," 130.

191. Huzel, *Popularization of Malthus*, 63.

192. Huzel, *Popularization of Malthus*, 57.

system.¹⁹³ For example, in “The Town,” Martineau discussed the role of the overseer, who should earn a wage from the parish and “make themselves acquainted with the characters and circumstances of paupers, so as to supply the vestry with full information, and superintend the labour of paupers employed by the parish.”¹⁹⁴ In “The Land’s End,” Martineau discussed her plans for the workhouse in her narrative.

It will be a great point to have a common subscription for a workhouse to put these poor into, and an overseer to take care of them, and land, if need be, to employ them upon. It would be worth while, if only to make the mode of assessment the same in a pretty wide district, instead of having nine different plans in ten different parishes. I should like to see the whole line of our north coast;—the whole mining district...made one parish, in respect of all concerns in which they can act most efficiently as one, keeping their separate accounts of matters in which they can act separately without injury to each other.¹⁹⁵

Her *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* not only revealed Martineau’s shift away from Malthus in her solutions to the poor, but more importantly, it marked the shift from Martineau as a popularizer of political economy to Martineau the political economist. Here is the story of this transition.

In 1821, Harriet Martineau sent off her first publication and thus, began her literary career within the pages of the Unitarian publication, *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature*, also known as *The Monthly Repository*.¹⁹⁶ Founded in 1806 by Unitarian minister Robert Aspland, *The Monthly Repository*’s first run largely reflected Aspland’s connection to utilitarianism through discussion of radical politics and controversies within

193. Harriet Martineau, “The Hamlets” in *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* 4 vols (London: Charles Fox Publishing, 1833-4), 63.

194. Harriet Martineau, “The Town” in *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* 4 vols (London: Charles Fox Publishing, 1833-4), 13.

195. Martineau, “The Town,” 171.

196. Deborah Anna Logan, ed., *The Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau, vol. I: 1819-37* (London: Pickering & Chatto Limited, 2007), xx.

theology. These subject matters held the effect of establishing the Unitarians as the most intellectually driven group within the dissenting communities of religion.¹⁹⁷ Aspland remained in his post for two subsequent decades, until 1826, when the British and Foreign Unitarian Association purchased the periodical.¹⁹⁸ After a year of working by committee, the Association reassigned the editorship to William Johnson Fox, who purchased the *Repository* in 1831 with the promise to retain the journal's previously established objectives.¹⁹⁹ The periodical soon took on a more comprehensive and general nature, when in the same year as Fox's purchase he added "review" to its title and began including analyses of popular literature and published articles more appealing to a wider audience.²⁰⁰ The *Repository's* focus soon shifted from a religious to political one, as Fox began supporting certain measures such as the 1832 Reform Bill.²⁰¹ This change in emphasis led to a drastic decrease in subscriptions, inspiring Fox to sell the publication to R.H. Horne in 1836; the *Repository's* final run occurred in 1837.²⁰²

Martineau's affiliation with *The Monthly Repository*, more specifically her relationship with Fox, paved the way for her later publications. Indeed, in many ways, Fox's shift from religious to political matters directly correlated with Martineau's own literary development. In any respect, Martineau's radicalism started early, when in 1821 she pronounced, "every woman ought to know the principles of Government of her own

197. Isobel Armstrong, "Monthly Repository," <http://www.ncse.ac.uk/headnotes/mrp.html>

198. Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (Academia Press, 2009), 424.

199. Brake, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, 424.

200. Brake and Demoor, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, 424-5.

201. Brake and Demoor, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, 425.

202. Brake and Demoor, *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, 425.

country.”²⁰³ In 1822, Martineau revealed the first indication of her moral philosophy when she wrote “Female Writers on Practical Divinity.”²⁰⁴ In this work she discussed Unitarianism, which she argued was the religion that “purified from the degrading superstitions of the Romish Church.”²⁰⁵ The article elicited several responses from thinkers on the topics of “morality and divinity.”²⁰⁶ A year later, in 1823, she published another article, “Devotional Exercises for the Use of Young Persons,” which, although designed to serve as a guide to Unitarian doctrine, focused much on the same subject.²⁰⁷ By all measures, it appeared that Martineau felt confident enough to write authoritatively, even in her earliest works.

These publications met with relative success within the Unitarian community, an achievement Martineau initiated through her correspondence with other Dissenting members interested in reinforcing their ideology, such as the Reverend William Turner, who helped in the distribution efforts of her earliest publications.²⁰⁸ Letters written in the following year found Martineau largely preoccupied with matters of religiosity within the Dissenting community, which revealed the excitement elicited by the prospect of earning her own income. A letter written in January 1824 to her brother Thomas Martineau and his wife, Helen, saw Martineau relaying the sudden success of her work and the wealth she believed

203. Harriet Martineau to Helen Bourne Martineau, Norwich, 28 June 1821, in *The Collected Letters of Harriet Martineau*, 2-3.

204. Harriet Martineau, “Female Writers on Practical Divinity,” *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* 17 (Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1822), 593; Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography* edited by Linda H. Peterson (Broadview Press, 2007), 23.

205. Martineau, “Female Writers on Practical Divinity,” 593.

206. Martineau, “Female Writers on Practical Divinity,” 593.

207. Harriet Martineau, *Autobiography*, 23.

208. Harriet Martineau to [Reverend William Turner], Norwich, 4 December 1823, 8.

would soon accompany it.²⁰⁹ This letter also unearthed the young writer's desire to establish "a kind of Unitarian Review, the word Unitarian not to appear in the title page," possibly within the *Repository*, whose pages "are worth so little, and we know of so many who would probably write for it, and so many who wish for such a thing, that we might hope it might answer."²¹⁰ Although Martineau eventually came to disregard religious notions for natural ones, the internalization of Unitarianism would remain with her always.

During this early period of writing, Martineau also exhibited interest in social issues that occupied the minds of many Radicals, such as prison reform, education, and employment for women. Very much a product of her industrial environment, Martineau believed the resolution to these problems rested within "the art of industry."²¹¹ In 1825, Martineau considered labor "the best preventive and the best cure for all evil: as long as it is on the right principle," echoing many of the concerns within Benthamite ideology.²¹² Martineau expanded upon the matter of industry and authority in her 1827 publication, *The Rioters: a Tale*. As Linda Peterson suggested, in this work Martineau's subject matter shifted from morality to political economy as seen through utilitarian lenses.²¹³ Although Peterson was wrong to separate the ideas of morality from political economy and utility, she ably demonstrated how these two particular works precipitated Martineau's *Illustrations of*

209. Harriet Martineau to Thomas and Helen Martineau, Norwich, 3 January 1824, 8-12.

210. Harriet Martineau to Thomas and Helen Martineau, Norwich, 3 January 1824, 8-12.

211. Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, Norwich, 12 May 1825, 30-3.

212. Harriet Martineau to Helen Martineau, Norwich, 12 May 1825, 30-3.

213. Linda H. Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters: Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 81.

Political Economy series.²¹⁴ Indeed, Martineau's absorption of Benthamite and Malthusian morality formed the very premise she injected into her politics. Unfortunately, for many Victorians, these ideas would prove inimical, once converted from theory to law.

In November 1828, Martineau sent the first of many letters to the new editor of *The Monthly Repository*, William Johnson Fox. Martineau sent Fox several articles, hopeful that he would "think them worthy of insertion in the *Monthly Repository*."²¹⁵ In subsequent letters over the next several months, Martineau proved eager to involve herself further with the periodical. When the issue of compensation arose, and it became clear no money would be forthcoming for the articles she submitted, Martineau assured Fox she would continue to write as long as possible, in spite of the bleak financial conditions.²¹⁶ Martineau's belief in the necessity of educating the public in utilitarian and Unitarian tenets in order to reform society trumped her personal financial goals, at least for the time being.

Indeed, Martineau's nature in this respect shifted drastically between the 1820s and the 1830s, when her confidence appears to have risen in relation to the success of her work. While naturally brazen, Martineau's correspondence indicates she was still receptive to constructive criticism and, in fact, regularly sought the opinions of others. During her nascent years as a writer, Martineau also had one major objective,

an earnest desire to render some service, however slight, to a cause I have much at heart...and as I have no wealth, & must wait a few years before I can boast of much influence, the only aid I can afford is by doing what I can for the support of the *Repository*.²¹⁷

214. Peterson, *Becoming a Woman of Letters*, 82.

215. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, November 1828, 48-9.

216. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 13 December 1828, 50.

217. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 22 December 1828, 50-2.

This cause in question was Unitarianism, and although she later shifted the focus of her determination to educate the public, the sense of dedication to cause remained with Martineau throughout her career.

In 1829, Martineau's career took a new turn based on dire necessity. Three years after the death of her father, the Martineau family business fell into ruins, leaving them with virtually no income. This change of events required Martineau and her sisters to seek paid employment to support not only themselves but their mother.²¹⁸ Martineau quickly shifted her literary motivation from honing her writing skills to that of securing economic independence. In a letter written to Fox in July, 1829, Martineau expressed her sudden need for steady and paid work, but aligning with her views on the importance of industriousness, did not lament this new burden.²¹⁹ Martineau maintained "the best happiness in this world is found in strenuous exertion on a right principle, we are not disposed to think the necessity which now impels us to it a hardship."²²⁰ However she advised Fox that circumstances compelled her to abandon unprofitable literary pursuits, including *The Monthly Repository*, and that she could no longer contribute.²²¹ Recognizing the talent and initiative in her work, Fox responded by offering Martineau a writing position for £15 per year, which Martineau enthusiastically took.²²²

218. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 July 1829, 53.

219. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 July 1829, 53.

220. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 July 1829, 53. This statement also strongly reflects Martineau's Benthamite influence.

221. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 July 1829, 53.

222. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 July 1829, 53.; Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 September 1829, 54-7.

In the letter in which she accepted the position, Martineau also took the opportunity to reveal her association with the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) and hoped to “sometime trouble” Fox “with a copy of some little works in which those truths in Political Economy which it most concerns the working classes to know, are set forth in fiction.”²²³ The SDUK, founded by Lord Brougham, served to educate the public on a variety of topics, with the promise to avoid “party politics and religion,” however, its association with several known Radicals suggested otherwise.²²⁴ Martineau desired to turn these works into a larger production through the SDUK if successful, since she believed “they are more likely to be useful than any thing else I have ever done or I shall do.”²²⁵ By October 1829, she had effectively committed herself to the endeavor of disseminating her brand of political economy.

Fox agreed to support several stories explaining political economy to the general readership according to his and Martineau’s shared ideologies.²²⁶ When Fox brought up the suggestion she contribute such opinions to the *Westminster Review*, a utilitarian journal founded by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, Martineau expressed an affinity for the publication.²²⁷ However, her disdain for one of the co-editors, John Bowring, caused her to consider sending her “articles under a blank cover, without incurring the risk of a reply,” if she sent them at all.²²⁸ Another concern regarding the production of her political fictions was

223. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 September 1829, 54-7.

224. Ashton, “SDUK,” *DNB*.

225. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 September 1829, 54-7.

226. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 7 October 1829, 57-8.

227. Biancamaria Fontana, s.v. “Founders of the Edinburgh Review (act. 1802-1829),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

the issue of reproduction. Martineau's printer at this time, Houlston, held an affinity for "frontispieces & devices," which proved costly and "utterly useless in works of this kind."²²⁹ Indeed, Martineau preferred seeking out a means of cheap and mass production to spread her political economy, "for, as the field is boundless, & as they cost little time & no trouble, & are decidedly useful in a very important way."²³⁰

Although confident in the importance of her message, Martineau relied heavily upon Fox's mentorship during this early period in her career, particularly regarding her technique.²³¹ Fox also pressed her to venture into new genres of scholarship, and it was largely at Fox's suggestion that she expanded into the field of contemporary political and social topics.²³² Still interested in religious topics as late as the end of 1829, she and Fox contemplated the possibility of her writing religious fictions in prose form, depicting "the influences of a fervent manly piety on the mind of an active member of society."²³³ Though nothing came of this discussion, it was clear that Martineau had already gained the confidence of at least one publisher, who considered her able enough to tackle traditionally "masculine" subjects. On a visit to London at the beginning of the following year, Martineau began to lament the distance of her hometown of Norwich from the bustling center of literary production, where the apex of social and political life met. Fox bolstered her concerns,

228. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 7 October 1829, 57-8.; Gerald Stone, *s.v.* "Bowring, Sir John," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Bowring, a Unitarian, along with Thomas Perronet Thompson, served as co-editor to the *Westminster Review*, which was established in 1824 by Jeremy Bentham and James Mill. Martineau's contempt for the "charlatan" Bowring persisted throughout her career.

229. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 20 November 1829, 58-60.

230. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 20 November 1829, 58-60.

231. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 4 December 1829, 60-3.

232. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 4 December 1829, 60-3.

233. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 4 December 1829, 60-3.

explaining the difficulty in gaining literary employment so far from the city as she was. Fox's comments inspired Martineau to write to her mother revealing her concerns about a familial conundrum that persisted throughout her career.²³⁴

Martineau yearned for a more engaging social life while still feeling the ties of strict moral and domestic obligations. Fearful of her mother's chastisement, Martineau attempted to alleviate any feeling of desertion she may have evoked when she left Norwich for the big city. At the same time, Martineau tried to explain to her mother that their financial wellbeing relied upon her closer proximity to the British Museum and other libraries that housed important reference works, the various publication houses that provided the work, and the literary societies that enhanced the ideas various authors entertained.²³⁵ Martineau's explanations to her mother were not inaccurate, for she had already had to refuse jobs from both *The Westminster Review* and *The Monthly Repository* as a result of distance.²³⁶ Despite her concerns, Martineau did not move to London right away, although the fact that her continued attempts to please her mother and succeed in her chosen career remained a significant cause of stress.

Martineau's correspondence also reveals that it was in the midst of 1830 that Martineau also began to experience some religious misgivings. In her letters to Fox, she recounted the dissension prevalent within the Unitarian community of Norwich. Martineau disapproved of both sides of the reforming arguments within the church, however, she expressed an affinity with the "old members" briefly, and referred to the opposition as "the

234. Harriet Martineau to Elizabeth Rankin Martineau, Stanford Hill, 22 January 1830, 62-3.

235. Harriet Martineau to Elizabeth Rankin Martineau, Stanford Hill, 22 January 1830, 62-3.

236. Harriet Martineau to Elizabeth Rankin Martineau, Stanford Hill, 22 January 1830, 62-3.

seceders.”²³⁷ Indeed, her disdain for scandal and her fear of being associated with it may have eventually elicited Martineau’s religious estrangement and move toward naturalism, as she ended this letter by stating, “my altar is now in the shades of Bracondale: the birds are my choir, & my memory is my sermon book.”²³⁸ Whatever the case, this oscillation between believer and skeptic persisted until Martineau no longer held room in her political and societal discourse to ponder much upon the question of religion. Like many other intellectuals of the time, Martineau shifted her theoretical lens from religiosity to naturalism.

In an October 1830 letter, Martineau shifted her efforts towards promoting the work of another female writer, Caroline Bowles Southey, wife of Robert Southey, who published his critique of industrialization a year earlier in *Colloquies on the Progress and Prospects of Society*.²³⁹ In this same letter to Fox, Martineau ruminated upon the works of celebrated writers, gauging the public’s appeal and reception of authors such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Hazlitt and William Godwin.²⁴⁰ Martineau dispensed backhanded criticism in her musings, maintaining “C[oleridge]’s Biographia has much charm, in spite of trifling in metaphysics and profligacy in politics, & about his opinions generally. Hazlitt...is a shameless borrower.”²⁴¹ Her opposition to some of the most popular contemporary authors to her own work served as impetus for venturing into unfamiliar publishing territory, and

237. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, July 1830, 67-8.

238. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, July 1830, 67-8.

239. Virginia H. Blain, s.v. “Southey, Caroline Anne Bowles,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*; “Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859),” in *The Longman Anthology of British Literature: The Victorian Age* (New York: Pearson Longman, 2006), 1141.

240. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, October 1830, 73-4.

241. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, October 1830, 73-4.

thus Martineau sent portions of her *Illustrations of Political Economy* to the SDUK.²⁴² The SDUK rejected these initial submissions; however, Martineau did not walk away completely empty handed.²⁴³

It was through the SDUK that Martineau met Charles Knight, the society's printer and the person who would prove instrumental in her eventual success.²⁴⁴ Knight, whose relationship with the SDUK began in 1826, held Radical political views and later served as publisher for the Poor Law Commission in 1834.²⁴⁵ Martineau began corresponding with Knight in April of 1831.²⁴⁶ Her first letter to the Radical publisher contained a preface to the manuscript she had included in the parcel to the SDUK. The manuscript, "illustrative of such truths of Political Economy as it most concerns the working classes to know," formed one component of an eventual series of tales espousing such views.²⁴⁷ She established a mutually convenient arrangement with Knight when she conveyed her frustration with her "very slow" printer and guaranteed her writing's success in hopes of garnering his interest in the task.²⁴⁸ Knight agreed to publish Martineau's work independently from the SDUK.

Martineau had already reproduced two parts of this series through her previous copier, Houlston, but she detested the expensive procedure he stubbornly clung to, which she

242. Rosemary Ashton, s.v. "The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

243. Harriet Martineau to Charles Knight, April 1831, 84-5.

244. Harriet Martineau to Charles Knight, April 1831, 84-5.

245. Rosemary Mitchell, s.v. "Knight, Charles," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

246. Harriet Martineau to Charles Knight, April 1831, 84-5.

247. Harriet Martineau to Charles Knight, April 1831, 84-5.

248. Harriet Martineau to Charles Knight, April 1831, 84-5.

felt deterred the readership she hoped to acquire.²⁴⁹ Despite their differences, Martineau's test-piloted two-story series under Houlston proved successful in manufacturing districts, where "Machinery & Wages are subjects of prominent interest."²⁵⁰ In keeping with Martineau's desire to maintain her style and technique, Knight proposed only a few additions to the manuscript, but overall he was inclined to appreciate Martineau's views and her writing presentation.²⁵¹ Both Knight and Martineau intended the series to experience longevity since the conjectured profits would benefit each. And as always, Martineau's utilitarianism found her eager to serve the greater good through education. Indeed, Martineau insisted she "should be glad to have it published as a number of the Working Man's Companion... especially if... it would open the way for my publishing more on kindred subjects" such as the conditions of the poor.²⁵²

Writing to Fox from Dublin in August, 1831, Martineau discussed the potential of her series, expecting "they will be very useful little books, if I can but make them interesting."²⁵³ In another letter written to Fox the following month, Martineau frantically explained the ongoing strategy. "I have matured my plan for Polit:Econ:tales, & proposed it to Baldwin & Craddock, who jump at it, & ask me to go home by London & arrange about the publication."²⁵⁴ This being the same year Fox purchased *The Monthly Repository*, Martineau inquired into his intentions for the publication upon bestowing a "dose of *elixir vitae*" to the

249. Harriet Martineau to Charles Knight, April 1831, 84-5.

250. Harriet Martineau to Charles Knight, April 1831, 84-5.

251. Harriet Martineau to Charles Knight, 1 April 1831, 85.

252. Harriet Martineau to Charles Knight, 1 April 1831, 85.

253. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Dublin, 19 August 1831, 95-8.

254. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Dublin, 28 September 1831, 99-101.

struggling periodical.²⁵⁵ Packed with purpose and support, Martineau struck ahead with her mission to spread her knowledge of political economy for the benefit of society.

Martineau, writing to Eliza Flower, a like-minded Radical and Unitarian, revealed the nature of her subject, “labour, first individual & unassisted, then combined, & lastly concentrated in Machinery.”²⁵⁶ By virtue of her capacity and relationship to Martineau, Flower shared the Martineau’ position on radical politics and labor issues. Describing the difficulty she faced in constructing the scene for this particular narrative, Martineau lamented the fact “no such thing as pure labour” existed in her country to model from.²⁵⁷ This being the case, she imagined “a pretty settlement on the north frontier of the Cape territories, stripping them as preliminary, by means of an incursion of the Bushmen, of all but the clothes on their backs, houses, tools, flocks &c all gone.”²⁵⁸ Martineau’s opinion regarding the working class fell very much in line with Fox’s, who, as a member of the Benthamite and Unitarian circle, held views incredibly orthodox to this community.²⁵⁹ In this particular letter Martineau also communicated her preoccupation with the reception of her political economy series; even the matter of advertisement caused her anxiety.²⁶⁰

At this point in her career, Martineau believed spreading the tenets of political economy to the crudest classes of society was a divinely inspired yet uncertain occupation:

255. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Dublin, 28 September 1831, 99-101.

256. Harriet Martineau to Eliza Flower, November 1831, 103-5; Kathryn Gleadle, s.v. “Flower, Eliza,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Martineau began her friendship with Flower in 1820.

257. Harriet Martineau to Eliza Flower, November 1831, 103-5.

258. Harriet Martineau to Eliza Flower, November 1831, 103-5.

259. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 5 November 1831, 105-7. “You cannot be wrong about the working classes. ‘Tis high time; & I only wish other people had your eyes, as well as some few your tongue.”; R.K. Webb, s.v. “Fox, William Johnson,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

260. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 5 November 1831, 105-7.

“There is a thrilling delight in daily life in times like these, when Providence appoints work to be done & evil to be awaited, & draws a black veil over the immediate future.”²⁶¹ Around this time, Martineau also began to pen her “melancholy & yet charming” *Autobiography*, revealing her plans in a letter to Fox.²⁶² In addition to relating the recent church developments of the Unitarians, Martineau remarked upon the Baldwins, a local family, who “like[d] the Tales perfectly, & are evidently at their wits’ end abt [*sic*] whether to run the risk or let a good thing slip.”²⁶³ Although the family ultimately chose the latter, Martineau’s work was steadily garnering interest. However, her major setback would remain in finance.

Even as she candidly expressed her desperate need for funding for her *Illustrations of Political Economy*, Martineau continued to display a telling sort of self-assurance, relaying to Fox the fact everyone she knew held at least the same degree of confidence in the success of her “scheme.”²⁶⁴ Four of her friends had already invested in her endeavor, she wrote, and willingly contributed a total of £100, “subject to risk & free of interest.”²⁶⁵ Soliciting financial support from allies proved successful enough for Martineau that she soon called upon similar endowments from others who were friendly to her cause.²⁶⁶ In Martineau’s mind, her goal of economic independence was finally beginning to seem plausible. She implored Fox to help her find a suitable publisher with the assurance of a favorable outcome:

261. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 11 November 1831, 107-8. In this letter, Martineau also revealed a certain fear of death and the unknown: “How often it happens that those who are entering on long schemes are called away & the idle left! You have a long scheme & so have I. Shall one or both or neither finish?”

262. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 November 1831, 108-11.

263. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 November 1831, 108-11.

264. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 November 1831, 108-11.

265. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 November 1831, 108-11.

266. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 November 1831, 108-11.

“If this succeeds,—& surely it cannot quite fail—I shall be comparatively independent. This must be my great effort.”²⁶⁷

In a letter seeking further help in distribution, Martineau explained the terms she and Fox had agreed upon for her literary scheme.²⁶⁸ The two intended to “secure the publication of the whole series by obtaining private subscriptions, paid in advance, to the amount of 500 copies.”²⁶⁹ They also agreed upon twenty-four volumes for each number, with a cost of £1.16 for the entire series; subsequent stories published beyond this run “will not be charged for.”²⁷⁰ She ended her request with the reminder that “our hearts are [in] this plan, for the sake of the public as well as our own.”²⁷¹

The first weeks of 1832 found Martineau unabashedly basking in her sudden success. Writing to Fox on 14 January, Martineau was clearly excited about the increase in sales, and in turn, in profits, of her tale entitled ‘Life in the Wilds.’²⁷² She also displayed a keen interest in the workings of the *Monthly Repository*, wishing to “see how much of the untidiness of the present No [sic] is owing to haste” before agreeing upon further association with the periodical.²⁷³ On the flip side of Martineau’s rapid elevation came the inevitable criticism of the radical politics of her writing. Martineau bemoaned the influx of “objections to Polit:

267. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 19 November 1831, 108-11.

268. Harriet Martineau to Unknown Recipient, *Winter 1831-2*, 111.

269. Harriet Martineau to Unknown Recipient, *Winter 1831-2*, 111.

270. Harriet Martineau to Unknown Recipient, *Winter 1831-2*, 111.

271. Harriet Martineau to Unknown Recipient, *Winter 1831-2*, 111.

272. Harriet Martineau to Unknown Recipient, *Winter 1831-2*, 111.

273. Harriet Martineau to Unknown Recipient, *Winter 1831-2*, 111.

Econy [*sic*]” elicited by her publications in a letter to Fox.²⁷⁴ However, at this point in her career, Martineau’s confidence in her writing assuaged any literary assaults, given that she “sold the Copyright of twelve works, wh [*sic*] have all succeeded well” and published three tales “at my own risk.”²⁷⁵ In fact, her self-assurance became such that she believed

by this time, & have a right to feel, that my interest is so far established as to make this something different from the enterprise of a novice. I have never yet failed in a single literary undertaking, & when I consider, in conjunction with this fact, how my connexion has spread through my reviewing employments, & the spontaneous support offered by some of our leading periodicals at the mere mention of my series, I feel that the time is come for me to make trial of something more considerable than my separate publications have yet been.²⁷⁶

This self-assurance that bordered upon arrogance was not a solitary instance. Indeed, it would reach considerable heights within years, eradicating important relationships in the process.

Following the political debate of the day, Martineau developed an intense interest in the Reform Bill contemporarily debated in Parliament.²⁷⁷ The day before the first mention of the Bill in the House of Commons, Martineau wrote to the judge Edward Foss, contending “If we have the Bill, books will be bought as usual;--mine are now. If we have not the Bill, we shall have a Revolution.”²⁷⁸ Fearful of potential uprisings by the lower classes, Martineau worried whether or not her series would survive anything as abrupt as social upheaval.²⁷⁹ In a

274. Harriet Martineau to Unknown Recipient, *Winter 1831-2*, 111.

275. Harriet Martineau to Edward Foss, Norwich, 16 January 1832, 115-6.

276. Harriet Martineau to Edward Foss, Norwich, 16 January 1832, 115-6.

277. January 1832, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, vol. 9. The bill, also known as “The Representation of the People Act,” passed in 1832, extended the electorate, transferred representation from scarcely populated regions dominated by the aristocracy to the newly emerging industrial towns, which were becoming heavily populated. This act proved essentially a middle-class measure.

278. Harriet Martineau to Edward Foss, Norwich, 16 January 1832, 115-6.

letter penned to Fox in February, she again expressed her doubts about continued financial success. Less than a month later, however, Martineau's attention was diverted elsewhere.²⁸⁰

At the end of February, Martineau sought advice from Fox regarding an additional literary scheme on behalf of Alexander Hume, doubting "whether we had any or many elementary books fit for teaching science to the lower classes."²⁸¹ Hume, a radical politician, responded by bemoaning the lack of elementary texts written upon the subject of political economy, provoking Martineau to send a copy of the works she wrote on this topic for consideration through further business dealings.²⁸² Although nothing further came of this discussion, the confidence that major political players had in her capability to act as political economy's spokesperson had already become clear.

By 1832, more than anything, business dictated Martineau's motives. Her family's financial reserves were running desperately low, spurring Martineau to seek a means to bolster her scanty income. In her reply to a representative from the *Poor Man's Guardian*, Martineau expressed gratitude for the similar views of both parties and wrote of her thankfulness for a periodical appreciative of "the motives of my undertaking."²⁸³ Selling her pitch to the paper, Martineau wrote

Within a short time, and happily before the energy of youth in past, I have been awakened from a state of aristocratic prejudice, to a clear conviction of

279. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich 4 February 1832, 118-20. As Logan averred in her assessment of this letter, "One of the threats posed by the Reform Bill (1832) was that its passage in too diluted a form or its failure to pass at all might provoke a revolution (like the French) through uprisings of the discontented masses. Once passed, the Bill began the process of overturning the class system by extending the franchise and initiating democratic reforms."

280. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich 12 February 1832, 120-2.

281. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 25 January 1832, 122-3; V.E. Chancellor, s.v. "Hume, Alexander," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

282. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 25 January 1832, 122-3.

283. Harriet Martineau to G. Mandley, Norwich, [*late February*] 1832, 123-4.

the *Equality of Human Rights*, and of the paramount duty of society, to provide for the support, comfort, and enlightenment of every member born into it.²⁸⁴

This, she maintained, was her sole purpose, observing, “All that I write is now with a view to the illustration of these great truths; with the hope of pressing upon the rich a conviction of their obligations, and of inducing the poor to urge their claims with moderation and forbearance.”²⁸⁵ Appealing to her correspondent at the *Poor Man’s Guardian* to support the propagation of her volumes, Martineau communicated a firm belief that anyone agreeing “in these grand principles, must aid one another in their diffusion.”²⁸⁶ Lacking any incoming commissions at this point, Martineau realized the success of her series depended upon “the integrity of its principles, the merits of its execution, and the zeal of its friends.”²⁸⁷ Spending an average of three weeks total on each story, including research, drafting, and editing, Martineau zealously produced her tales. She accurately anticipated that extensive distribution throughout the periodical press and increased subscription fees via local subscriptions held the key to replenishing the depleted Martineau coffers.²⁸⁸

By the end of March 1832, with her writing career well established and reputation secured, Martineau began seeking source material for other political topics from individuals connected to high levels of government, such as the prominent Radical Francis Place.²⁸⁹

284. Harriet Martineau to G. Mandley, Norwich, [*late February*] 1832, 123-4.

285. Harriet Martineau to G. Mandley, Norwich, [*late February*] 1832, 123-4.

286. Harriet Martineau to G. Mandley, Norwich, [*late February*] 1832, 123-4.

287. Harriet Martineau to G. Mandley, Norwich, [*late February*] 1832, 123-4.

288. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 1832, 124-6.

289. Harriet Martineau to Francis Place, Norwich, 29 March 1832, 129-30; William Thomas, *s.v.* “Francis Place,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. While never elected as a member of Parliament,

Other socially and politically influential men, such as Hume, had already recognized her potential to push forth their agenda, and as a result, had sent Martineau Parliamentary Reports and other important documents to assist in their communal mission.²⁹⁰ Her clear, narrow purpose correlated directly with her unwavering opinion, that “the readiest way to remove the largest proportion of crime & misery in this country is to inform the nation on the science of Political Economy.”²⁹¹

Faulting the epidemic of ignorance with this malady, Martineau thought a simple understanding of production, distribution and consumption would alleviate the heavy burden.²⁹² Martineau attributed the “crime & misery” to each social strata, thinking the

poor impede production by their prejudices respecting the application of labour & capital; the middling classes injure its distribution by perpetuating a purely arbitrary antagonism of interests; & the wealthy understand little of the difference between a healthy & a ruinous consumption.²⁹³

She found the slow acceptance of political economy, “a science as necessary in their vocation as that of mathematics to the astronomer,” on behalf of several politicians deplorable.²⁹⁴ In Martineau’s mind, these issues boiled down to one hindrance: the economists’ inability to make “their science popular or their benevolence so engaging as to be easily appreciated,”

Place served as a fulcrum for radical notions regarding the poor among the middle class. He belonged to the London Corresponding Society, a group that eventually became known to have supported sympathizers of the French bourgeoisie in their cause against the aristocracy. Place and Martineau, belonging to the same ideological circle, shared similar views on Malthusian theory.

290. Harriet Martineau to Francis Place, Norwich, 29 March 1832, 129-30.

291. Harriet Martineau to Ezra Stiles Gannett, Norwich, 30 April 1832, 132-4.

292. Harriet Martineau to Ezra Stiles Gannett, Norwich, 30 April 1832, 132-4.

293. Harriet Martineau to Ezra Stiles Gannett, Norwich, 30 April 1832, 132-4.

294. Harriet Martineau to Ezra Stiles Gannett, Norwich, 30 April 1832, 132-4. Logan contended, “HM refers to the study of Political Economy, initiated by Adam Smith, as a distinct discipline which casts economics as an objective science that can be studied and managed, rather than an enterprise at the mercy of random marketplace fluctuations.”

owing to the dull manner through which they wrote.²⁹⁵ Martineau sought to assuage this problem by working under these economists, learning from them and utilizing the materials they furnished her to publish additional tales.²⁹⁶ She learned the lexicon of economic studies, using a variety of materials provided by such experts to integrate the topic in her subsequent tales. Indeed, these men of science supported her in this endeavor to some extent, cognizant that her role would enable them to disseminate their economic tenets to “every rank of their countrymen.”²⁹⁷

Recognizing her influence was irrevocably intertwined with the written word, Martineau expressed her desire to “do something with the pen, since no other means of action in politics are in a woman’s power” in a letter to Place, written in May 1832.²⁹⁸ This aspiration evidently sat well with Place, a radical social reformer, who quickly supplied Martineau with materials that would have otherwise been inaccessible to her.²⁹⁹ The content of these documents revolved around the conditions of the workhouses and paupers, prompting Martineau to request more information on the opinion of the poor regarding “Emigration & transportation,—what are their notions & expectations & prejudices respecting settlement in...other colonies.”³⁰⁰ Several months later, in October 1832, Martineau began communicating with Lord Henry Peter Brougham, Lord High Chancellor in

295. Harriet Martineau to Ezra Stiles Gannett, Norwich, 30 April 1832, 132-4.

296. Harriet Martineau to Ezra Stiles Gannett, Norwich, 30 April 1832, 132-4.

297. Harriet Martineau to Ezra Stiles Gannett, Norwich, 30 April 1832, 132-4.

298. Harriet Martineau to Francis Place, Norwich, 12 May 1832, 138-9.

299. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 31 May 1832, 139-41.

300. Harriet Martineau to Francis Place, Norwich, 1 June 1832, 142.

Parliament, who proposed that she undertake “a few tales on Population & the Poor Laws, to be issued to” the SDUK.³⁰¹

Although very inclined to accept Lord Brougham’s commission, Martineau expressed unease as a result of her previous unsuccessful encounter with the SDUK. Replying to Brougham’s offer, Martineau put forth two conditions before she could agree to the scheme. “I must be secured against any repetition of the somewhat mortifying treatment which I have twice received from your Committee, & also from an alteration being made in my writings without my consent.”³⁰² In addition to the proposed stipulations, she promised to disengage herself from her stint in the periodicals contingent upon a contractual agreement with the Society and also “furnished by it with the materials...fruitful in the doctrine” she planned to illustrate.³⁰³ Inspired by the prospect of patronage by such a prominent social and political figure, Martineau wrote to Fox immediately. She recounted her conversation with Lord Brougham, who went out of his way to convince the SDUK to take a chance on Martineau, who along with the Society sought “the greatest good.”³⁰⁴ Indeed, in case the SDUK declined this offer, Brougham formulated an alternative, which eventually changed the course and nature of Martineau’s career, and, by extension, the subsequent development of English society.³⁰⁵

301. Harriet Martineau to Lord Brougham, Norwich, 10 October 1832, 153-4; Michael Lobban, s.v. “Brougham, Henry Peter,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

302. Harriet Martineau to Lord Brougham, Norwich, 10 October 1832, 153-4. As Logan averred, the SDUK had previously rejected the idea of publishing Martineau’s *IPE* series.

303. Harriet Martineau to Lord Brougham, Norwich, 10 October 1832, 153-4.

304. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 11 October 1832, 155-7.

305. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 11 October 1832, 155-7.

Working in concert with the Poor Law Commission, Brougham prepared “plans for making known universally the horrible state of things in some parishes contrasted with others.”³⁰⁶ Furthermore, he revealed his grand intention of effecting change through legislation, along with likeminded individuals such as Nassau William Senior, “tending to the abolition of pauperism.”³⁰⁷ Martineau’s *cum celebrity persona* lent itself to Brougham’s political agenda, who in appreciation, began supplying her with considerably more influential documents that would enable her to “write a dozen (tales) on each topic with great advantage to every body.”³⁰⁸ Brougham sought to appeal to the growing middle class of radical industrialists. Increasingly influential in politics as well as industry, this differed markedly from Martineau’s original target audience, but regardless of this issue, Martineau jumped at the chance.³⁰⁹ “I am to be (the C. says) the Justices’ school mistress: (A pretty set of bright pupils I shall have!) & Poor-Laws will be my sole subject for a long while to come,” she wrote.³¹⁰ It was an arrangement beneficial to both parties. Martineau accepted this position in order to gain financial independence, and, going back to her Benthamite convictions, to reach the largest number for the greatest good. She possessed full knowledge that a Parliamentary-sponsored circulation would prove more fruitful than her previous, independent endeavors.³¹¹

306. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 11 October 1832, 155-7.

307. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 11 October 1832, 155-7.; Phyllis Deane, *s.v.* “Nassau, Senior,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

308. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 11 October 1832, 155-7.

309. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 11 October 1832, 155-7.; Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 13 October 1832, 158-9.

310. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, Norwich, 13 October 1832, 158-9.

311. Harriet Martineau to Eliza Flower, Norwich, 20 October 1832, 160-2.

Writing to her publisher, Charles Fox, in November 1832, Martineau filled him in on this potential scheme:

Mr Fox [William Johnson Fox] had probably told you that the Chancellor wishes me to write as many tales as I have time for on the Poor Law system. These tales are to be of a different size & character from those I am now doing, & on a very different set of subjects, being mainly intended to expose the faults in the present administrations of the law, & the differences in the managemt [*sic*] in different parishes.—To enable me to do this to a sufficient extent, the C[hancellor] had furnished me with MS Govt [*sic*] papers of the greatest importance. The content of which are to be kept profoundly secret, & which cannot be got access to by any other means... It seems to me a positive sin...to refuse a work of great national importance, for which extraordinary materials are offered, without a possibility of risk, & with a certainty of an immense circulation & a large recompense.³¹²

Martineau followed this earnest assurance with a request that he continued serving in his role as her publisher, “certain that it is for the sake of the public good,” and promising, “we shall have all of the profit & none of the risk.”³¹³

The political significance and sensitivity of the materials that Brougham sent to Martineau astonished her, for she quickly realized the power she literally held in her hands.³¹⁴ When Fox cautioned her to be extremely careful in writing about, and retaining, such important documents, Martineau reassured him of her two burning intentions, namely to uphold Benthamite ideas and to obtain economic independence.³¹⁵ Reaching and maintaining these goals meant that Martineau had to abandon certain principles, mainly “the idea of rendering a particular service, under...individual sanction, & furnished...with peculiar

312. Harriet Martineau to Charles Fox, Norwich, 1 November 1832, 162-4.

313. Harriet Martineau to Charles Fox, Norwich, 1 November 1832, 162-4.

314. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, [4] November, 1832, 164-6. “They bear the C’s private marks, he tells me, as indications of their relative value.”

315. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, [4] November, 1832, 164-6.

materials,” however, she believed declining the offer had the capacity to render far worse consequences than a reduction in income.³¹⁶

In exchange for writing under the direction of Brougham, Martineau received the assurance of anonymity until 1834. The date, strategically designed to allow her to work as an unknown, ensured her writing in support of her MP would not interfere with the public opinion of her *Illustrations of Political Economy* series.³¹⁷ Martineau also stood firm regarding the manner through which she disseminated the information provided to her by the SDUK. In addition to clarifying tenets of political economy, Martineau’s chief aim for the *Illustrations of Political Economy* focused on teaching lessons of morality in a manner more suitable to her tastes, a method she sought to retain for Brougham’s series, in which she expected “to find scope for a tolerably complete display of the principle of social Morals.”³¹⁸ Finally, she urged Brougham to settle their contract immediately, owing to public rumors suggesting she sold her independence.³¹⁹

Writing to William Tait, bookseller, publisher, and owner of *Tait’s Magazine*, Martineau expressed the apparent shock she felt stemming from her newfound position.³²⁰ Remarking how the Commissioners welcomed the “radicalism of a woman,” Martineau seemed surprised the aristocratic bunch was seemingly in touch with the rest of society.³²¹

316. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, [4] November, 1832, 164-6.

317. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, [4] November, 1832, 164-6.

318. Harriet Martineau to Lord Brougham, November 1832, 166-8.

319. Harriet Martineau to Lord Brougham, November 1832, 166-8.

320. Pam Perkins, *s.v.* “William Tait,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

321. Harriet Martineau to [William Tait], London, November 1832, 168-9.

She deemed herself “the annalist of the Poor” and maintained her goal of “making known the moral character of the poor” through her writing.³²²

Once the plans received solidification on behalf of Lord Brougham, Martineau began discussing the financial end of the deal with her printer, the individual now responsible for settling the terms of profit for both the author and the SDUK.³²³ Martineau’s character shifted dramatically at this point in time, as she became increasingly brazen in dealing with finances and the direction of her career. Demanding a great portion of the potential gains, Martineau reminded her publisher of the importance her literary and social celebrity factored in these dealings, even going so far as to state “the whole scheme hangs upon me.”³²⁴ As bold as these types of statements seemed, especially coming from a woman dealing with high politics in the nineteenth century, they held a certain amount of verity, for Brougham proved so anxious to propagate his agenda regarding the New Poor Laws that he eventually gave Martineau permission to engage other writers for subsequent topics.³²⁵ The intellectual freedom extended to Martineau led the author to believe the Chancellor would allow her to retain artistic authority throughout the commissioned series, since he “has found an independent mind in me, & it shall have its own course; & this is his motive” in requesting her literary services.³²⁶ Working in collaboration, Brougham provided feedback every step of the way. Martineau, with her “great dependence...on the revision” of the Chancellor,

322. Harriet Martineau to [William Tait], London, November 1832, 168-9. Indeed, she went on to say, “It is, in truth, almost the primary object of my Series.”

323. Harriet Martineau to Charles Fox, 14 November 1832, 170-1.

324. Harriet Martineau to Charles Fox, 14 November 1832, 170-1.

325. Harriet Martineau to Charles Fox, 14 November 1832, 170-1.

326. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, 14 November 1832, 171-2.

considered this helpful, not intrusive, especially in comparison to the “sense of helpless ignorance under which” she wrote her *Illustrations of Political Economy*.³²⁷

Shifting her allegiance from her publisher to Parliament, Martineau began double-dealing with the former by traducing his capabilities behind his back and, uncharacteristically, taking herself out of the business dealings in alignment with Brougham’s suggestion.³²⁸ This action suited Martineau’s goal of financial independence quite well, with the Chancellor proposing a sum of £100 per volume, a drastic increase from her previous earnings.³²⁹ She believed the advantage of this new engagement would not only elevate herself, but perhaps even her publisher, in the eyes of the public.³³⁰ Martineau surprisingly exhibited no contempt for the fact Brougham, who “alone is to see the proofs, as all the evidence on which the tales are founded passes under his eye,” indeed held such a heavy hand in the financial dealings.³³¹ Finally, on 24 December 1832, Martineau officially accepted her commission with bounteous gratitude:

I accept with pleasure the proposals of the Committee of the Society for the diffusion of Useful Knowledge to prepare for them, on the terms explained in your letter, a series of works illustrative of the operation of the Poor Laws.

...

The attention of the Committee in offering the work to my present publisher is particularly gratifying to me.

It is scarcely necessary to add that I shall be thankful for the advantage of fair & enlightened criticism, & that the suggestions of the Committee shall always have my respectful consideration. I am, Sir, Yours faithfully.³³²

327. Harriet Martineau to Lord Brougham, December 1832, 173-4.

328. Harriet Martineau to Charles Fox, 10 December 1832, 174-5.

329. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, 10 December 1832, 175-6.

330. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, 10 December 1832, 175-6.

331. Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, 10 December 1832, 175-6. Logan insisted this willingness to acquiesce to Lord Brougham resulted from her belief that her fame was only momentary.

332. Harriet Martineau to Lord Brougham, 24 December 1832, 177.

Shortly after penning this letter, Martineau, emboldened by the support of Parliament, ended her engagements with the periodicals that opened their pages to the once young and unknown writer.³³³

Writing to her mother, Martineau reinforced her utilitarian beliefs in the seemingly predetermined purpose of her commission, writing, “Meantime I have chosen my lot. It is to teach *principles*, let what will come of it. Nothing but good can eventually come of it, and I have and shall have many helpers.”³³⁴ Powerful “helpers” indeed. The Chancellor and the Committee of the SDUK clutched the very reins of government, thus elevating Martineau to economic independence and clearing the path for her life-altering Parliamentary commission. Impressing none other than Lord Brougham, Harriet Martineau’s fictions framed the very ideas the New Poor Laws of 1834 were based on. Rising from the pages of obscurity to the highest level of government, Martineau’s brand of political economy finally reached legitimacy.³³⁵ As this chapter demonstrates, Martineau was more than a mere “popularizer” of political economy or propagandist for Parliament. Indeed, her commission with Brougham and the eventual passage of the New Poor Laws in 1834 evidence the larger claim that Martineau was in fact a political economist in her own right.

333. Harriet Martineau to William Tait, 28 December 1832, 177-8. “The circulation wh will be secured for these little vols: by the union of the public of the Diffusion Socy, that of the govt, & my own, will be so great that, even if the importance of the subject was not paramount, I shd feel it my duty to give up all minor engagements for the sake of this.”

334. Harriet Martineau to Elizabeth Rankin Martineau, [*Spring 1833*], 180-1.

335. Harriet Martineau to the Committee of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, March 1833, 187-8.

CHAPTER FOUR

“Harriet Martineau, ‘the Devil,’ and Political Economy”

The reviews are beginning to have a bad effect upon me, I am afraid. I am getting too careful & less free, I am afraid: but this is a necessary consequence, I suppose, of knowing how many look up to me, of seeing the tremendous importance of my topics, & of feeling the contemptibleness of the little books themselves.

-Harriet Martineau to William Johnson Fox, 2 May 1832

Given the nature of her topic and the application of her interpretation of Malthus to contemporary society, the literary criticism of Martineau’s work elicited swelled indubitably. Taking Huzel’s claim that few have focused on her negative criticism, this chapter demonstrates the span of Martineau’s reach by examining several contemporary pamphlets, journal reviews, and essays that responded to the theories she developed. In addition to illustrating the impact of her political economy, these criticisms also indicate the degree to which she represented the ideas of the small yet increasingly influential industrial middle class. These sources also substantiate Martineau’s role in the creation and passage of the New Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which was framed within the principles she circulated through her writing. Central to the ideology behind the rising capitalist class and impending legislation, Martineau’s fear of lionization did not persist without merit.

The initial critiques, naturally, occurred in the periodical press, where Martineau first began the controversial conversation on Malthusian principles, population, and particularly her radical solution to pauperism. Interpretations of her polemic found their way into political pamphlets, religious sermons, and Dickensian novels. Charles Darwin, the great naturalist, read her Broughamite literature aboard the HMS *Beagle* before conceptualizing his ideas on natural selection. William Cobbett repeatedly took her to task throughout his working-class

periodical. Even “the Devil” had something to say about her liberal politics. Although most of the responses were viciously negative, one could not deny the influence and reach Martineau achieved with her political economy. Indeed, it was irrepressible.³³⁶

Following the publication of *Illustrations of Taxation* in 1832, *The Bristol Mercury*'s 15 September edition sarcastically remarked upon “The new-found paradox” Martineau’s writings evoked.³³⁷ The editorial went on to describe this sudden societal shift, which determined

that charity is not charity—that the man who...subscribes liberally to the relief of the starving poor, is an enemy rather than a benefactor to the human race; while he who spends all his life in getting instead of giving...is the charitable man, and the only useful member of society.³³⁸

This opinion echoed vociferously throughout the working-class and Tory press, with opponents of Martineau chastising both her ideas and those who shared them.

One example of this type of action took place in the 9 January 1833 edition of the *Aberdeen Journal* through an article attacking another Scottish journal, *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine*, for its inclusion of one of Martineau’s works.³³⁹ Suggesting the piece in *Tait’s* was “full of unsound arguments,” the *Aberdeen* response went on to say,

Harriet Martineau is a clever sort of personage. She is one of the principal supporters of the Political Economy School: and, acting upon their theories, she is fond of meddling with subjects which, as a metaphysician, she cannot comprehend, and with which, as a woman, she ought to have no concern

336. Huzel, *Popularization of Malthus*, 55. In his discussion of Martineau’s *Illustrations of Political Economy*, Huzel remarked, “the 1500 copies of the first story, ‘Life in the Wilds’, sold out in ten days, astonishing her publisher Charles Fox who later estimated monthly sales of the tales at 10,000 copies reaching 144,000 immediate readers.”

337. *The Bristol Mercury* 2213 September 15, 1832

338. *The Bristol Mercury* 2213 September 15, 1832

339. *Aberdeen Journal* 4435 January 9, 1833

whatever. Her writings are plausibly concocted, but their information is not always correct.³⁴⁰

On 27 April 1833, *Figaro in London* expressed its disapproval of Martineau's endeavor in popularizing economics for the public. According to *Figaro*, this "certain lady" who "has given her attention to political economy" had "broached so many absurd doctrines that the old saying of 'All my eye and *Betty Martin oh!* has given place to the more modern one of 'All my eye and *Harriet Martineau.*'"³⁴¹ Indeed, satire ran rampant throughout the press, with no shortage of poetry, prose, and prodding on the subject of Martineau as a literary lion. On 10 May 1833, *The Essex Standard, and Colchester and County Advertiser* published a poem entitled "Ode to the Malthusian Miss Martineau," which considered Martineau worse than Napoleon and plague in regards to the destruction her fiction had caused for society:

'Miss Martineau! Miss Martineau!
In history you'll look so, so:
Who most destroys
Our loves and joys?
The plague, or Bonaparte? No!
The worst of plagues, Miss Martineau!'³⁴²

Reflecting the Victorian concern that the popularity and mass exposure to Martineau's work meant the possibility of such views receiving actualization, the venue that initially perpetuated her rise to literary fame and fortune also sought to hinder her "unchecked" and increasing power. The year 1834, the same year both her *Illustrations of Political Economy* and *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* series concluded, saw the most prolific output of Martineau criticism.

340. *Aberdeen Journal* 4435 January 9, 1833

341. *Figaro in London* 63 April 27, 1833

342. *The Standard* 1870 May 10, 1833

The stubborn writer, despite her initial desire to avert “lionization,” took these recriminations personally and responded accordingly. A letter to the editor of *The World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons* on the 1st of January made clear Martineau’s frustration with the popular opinion of her work.³⁴³ Championing against the impending publication of certain lesser-serious works in lieu of hers, Martineau complained that she had spent the last year “labouring to counteract the effects of all light literature, and by degrees infuse new facts and calculations” through her espousal of socioeconomics.³⁴⁴ Warning that the publication of the work in question would provoke its readership to run “wild about [the] Magazine,” instead of contemplating her “valuable expositions,” Martineau admonished the journal to “never joke on subjects where I wish to be serious.”³⁴⁵

These criticisms elicited a seemingly stronger desire on behalf of the writer to reinforce, and perhaps, intensify her views. For example, a few months later in March, *The Satirist, and the Censor of the Time* published a letter from Martineau, in which she plead for the allowance to partake in an endeavor to limit populations outside of England, particularly in Australia.³⁴⁶ She argued that populations enduring without checks, and thus, exponentially increasing in numbers, “will, from human circumstances alone, soon produce the overthrow of states, kingdoms, principalities, and other dependencies,” a realization elicited “from a thorough acquaintanceship with statistics and political economy.”³⁴⁷

Martineau’s fear of potential rioting and uprising as a result of the increase in poor

343. *The World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons* 20 January 1, 1834

344. *The World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons* 20 January 1, 1834

345. *The World of Fashion and Continental Feuilletons* 20 January 1, 1834

346. *The Satirist, and the Censor of the Time* 94 March 23, 1834

347. *The Satirist, and the Censor of the Time* 94 March 23, 1834

populations became the primary motive in her effort. Indeed, if given the opportunity to wear the title of the Australian “Population Guide and Director,” Martineau would ensure that if population increased “beyond MY *standard*, MY infallible population check shall be immediately called into use, and I engage to superintend every operation myself, and to report regularly to the committee the progress and success of MY specific.”³⁴⁸

Echoing her view of the apparently deplorable and lazy group of working-class strikers in a letter published by *The Bradford Observer* on 14 August 1834, Martineau remarked, “Jobbing is bad enough everywhere, and in every way; but the most detestable jobbing of all is that of the cunning and idle, to the injury of the simple-minded and industrious.”³⁴⁹

Bolstering the middle-class industrial ideology, which proved overwhelmingly concerned with the possibility of carrying the supposed insolent poor on their backs, Martineau insisted, “It makes one’s blood boil to think of four or five unprincipled fellows, flattering so many thousands about their interests and their liberties, while they are making slaves of them, and bringing them down to starvation, that they themselves may fatten on the substance they never tried to earn.”³⁵⁰ Assuming the poor remained poor because they would rather receive assistance from the Crown than earn their family’s income, Martineau sympathized with the industrious, who were, in her opinion the true sufferers.

Discussing the issue of charity in his sermon delivered during 1833, the Reverend Charles Lawson rebuked Martineau’s concern for public giving, first explicitly presented in

348. *The Satirist, and the Censor of the Time* 94 March 23, 1834

349. *The Bradford Observer* 223 August 14, 1834

350. *The Bradford Observer* 223 August 14, 1834

her *Illustrations of Political Economy* series.³⁵¹ Believing her work went against the very “Word of God,” Lawson warned his audience “that the railing accusations which the enemies of true godliness bring against our most holy Faith,” had no “solid foundation as they pretend to believe.”³⁵² According to the Reverend, the “Divine Master” beckoned his disciples to “feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, comfort the captive, relieve the stranger,” unlike the view held by Martineau’s theoretical predecessors, Smith, Malthus and Bentham, who suggested such actions only served to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and lack of industry.³⁵³ Lawson, in his defense of public charity, went on to chastise Martineau, and her adherence to Malthusian economics by professing,

some persons, utterly ignorant of the real state of those institutions whose practice they reprobate, and whose usefulness they deny, are led to indulge in the indiscriminate censure of charities, whose effects they imagine to be opposed to their favourite theories; theories, by the adoption of which, they would persuade us, mankind are to be restored to a state of primaeval happiness. Alas for them, and for their remedies for human evils!³⁵⁴

Railing against Martineau’s desire to “grind the face of the poor” and to “shut up from the children of misfortune and want,” Lawson reminded his congregation that evil and vice have always existed, that they were not necessary byproducts of poverty.³⁵⁵ Of course, once Martineau's ideas graced the pages of the press, it would not be long before everyone had something to say.

351. Charles Lawson, *The Tendency of Charitable Institutions Considered, in a Sermon, Preached in the Chapel of the Foundling Hospital, London, on Sunday, May 19, 1833, When Several Young Persons, Foundlings, Having Served their Apprenticeships Faithfully, and Merited the Approbation of the Governors, Attended Divine Service, to Return Thanks to Almighty God for their Preservation and Education in the Hospital. With Notes, on the Tendency of Public Charities, as Stated in a Work, Entitled ‘Illustrations of Political Economy’* (London: John W. Parker, West Strand, 1833), 1-17.

352. Lawson, *The Tendency of Charitable Institutions*, 6.

353. Lawson, *The Tendency of Charitable Institutions*, 7.

354. Lawson, *The Tendency of Charitable Institutions*, 11.

355. Lawson, *The Tendency of Charitable Institutions*, 10.

Pamphlets of the time overwhelmingly spoke out against the efforts of the Whig sympathizer. Perhaps the most scathing of these pamphlets was one constructed in response to the passage of the New Poor Laws of 1834, evidence which also indicates her contemporaries recognized her influence in the political sphere as soon as she published. In this particular pamphlet, penned by "the Devil," Martineau, Lord Chancellor Brougham, and the economist Malthus are lumped together as minions. In the fifth letter of this pamphlet, addressed to Martineau, the Devil begins by considering how Lord Brougham could have possibly created such a cruel and insidious legislation like the New Poor Laws. Within the first few lines of the letter, the Devil made it clear that he blamed Martineau for inspiring the New Poor Laws with her popular writings.

I was for some time sorely perplexed to discover from whence your continent and pious chancellor had derived his new code of charity, till looking the other day over the shoulders of a young gentleman who was reading your story of 'Cousin Marshall,' the murder was out immediately. It struck me that you must be the keeper of the conscience of my Lord Brougham and Vaux—you must be the chancellor's chancellor.³⁵⁶

Not only did this powerful leader of Parliament compose legislation at Martineau's behest, Brougham served the indicted political economist as her "illustrious pupil," and, like his teacher, pressed "principles beyond the limits," overstepping "the province of legislation in their application."³⁵⁷ Calling the Chancellor a "hermaphrodite," for good measure, the Devil went on to reflect on the personal character of Lord Brougham.³⁵⁸ Arrogant from his "sudden elevation" in politics, the Devil likened the Chancellor to a "working lawyer," owing to "the wealth, patronage, and regular constitutional authority and influence of his high official

356. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage; the First Four on the Nature of His Character and Government; and the Last Two Addressed to Miss Martineau and Dr. Malthus on the Subject of the new Poor Laws* (London: J. Hatchard and Son, 187, Piccadilly, 1834), 30.

357. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 30.

358. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 30.

station, and, notwithstanding all pretensions to the contrary, the very coarse natural, technical, and therefore shallow views of all moral subjects.”³⁵⁹ These very characteristics, according to the Devil, made Brougham

the man whom I would have myself selected to overthrow all the ancient landmarks of social morality, and substitute as a rule of individual life and conduct, incomprehensible and impotent dogmas of political economy for those revealed principles of the *divine* will, of the wisdom and benevolence of which, the experience of most good men, if not the natural, unperverted, unsophisticated conscience of all men, affords the strongest confirmation, and of which the product of social happiness is proportionate to the *simplicity* of their *individual* obedience.³⁶⁰

Before continuing forth with an assessment of the implications of the New Poor Laws, the Devil offered thanks to the radical Martineau for making this selection easy for him.³⁶¹

The Devil’s critique of the New Poor Laws began by exposing the fallacious notion that all poor rates went directly to the poor. According to the Devil’s knowledge, “of the eight millions amount of poor rates... probably not more than five finds its way into the pockets, much less the stomachs, of the poor.”³⁶² Another squabble the Devil had with the New Poor Law Bill was its tendency to reduce the power of intervention to only a few officers of the Crown, who fundamentally held the ability to “suspend, modify, or wholly cut off, at their discretion” the amount of funding directed toward the poor.³⁶³ Nodding back to the Reform Bill of 1832, which extended the vote to the bourgeois English landowning class,

359. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 31.

360. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 31.

361. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 31. It is also worth noting here that “the Devil” continuously indicts Martineau for crafting the New Poor Laws by referring to the set of legislation as belonging to her: “You, madam, have made this selection for me, and I will now proceed to acquit myself of part of my obligations to you, by candidly exposing some of the probable effects of your Brougham and Vauxian legislation in the New Poor Laws.”

362. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 31. To evidence this claim, the Devil included a petition from the parish of Albury in this pamphlet.

363. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 32.

the Devil pointed out the irony in including “an additional half-million of subjects within the representative branch” of the government, while “extending *in spirit* the security of that character of government against capricious and arbitrary invaders of their rights to tell that portion of the people who were *antecedently* included in it only in *letter* and in *name*.”³⁶⁴ Had Brougham followed the exact recommendation of Malthus and Martineau in “Cousin Marshall,” in which children born two years after the act’s passage were denied government help, “this would have been less open to invective,” since these children would have no prior memory of poor relief.³⁶⁵ However, contended the Devil, “the present bill strikes me as having nothing in it but defiance of the laws of God, the rights of man, and the spirit of the British constitution, --nothing but illegality, injustice, and temerity, from beginning to end.”³⁶⁶

Commencing with his scathing assessment of Brougham and his instructor, Martineau, the Devil backhandedly urged the two to continue forth with their mission, “and should any interruption occur to the erection of your new prison workhouses, that you will grape-shot and sabre the interrupters, without a moment’s compunction or scruple.”³⁶⁷ In fact, the efforts of Martineau and other Malthusians to correct “the disorders of our state” by “reducing the supply of labour to a nearer correspondence with the demand” elicited a “broad” and “sardonic grin” from the Devil at their “mild and more merciful mode of administering the delicate nostrum.”³⁶⁸

364. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 32-3.

365. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 33.

366. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 33.

367. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 33.

368. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 33.

The author of this pamphlet stepped back for an instant to explain that the issue at hand was not the actual poor rate, but rather, the landowner. Accordingly, since “every estate in England has changed hands, perhaps at least twenty times,” the complaint against poor rates proved synonymous to those against tithes.³⁶⁹ Despite “the moral operation of either rates or tithes, upon those who now receive them, or their neglect and ill discharge of the trust implied in them, or their partial and unjust division amongst them,” the Devil maintained, “it is clear that the latter neither do or can belong to the landholders as contradistinguished from the titheholder.”³⁷⁰ The Devil went on to substantiate his claim by addressing the issues prevalent in agricultural districts, where the landowners in any particular district held the undeniable power “very much to reduce, if not altogether to extinguish, the rates, by letting land to the poor in lieu of them.”³⁷¹

After providing material evidence for his assessment of the New Poor Laws, the Devil questioned Martineau’s Unitarianism. Wondering what could possibly be gained “to the security or to the peace of mind and happiness of a Christian community, by abolishing all public provision of relief to the poor,” the Devil dismantled “the new charity theories of [Martineau’s] deistical or Unitarian chancellor.”³⁷² Counting on individual, private, and voluntary funding for charitable purposes would have one of two consequences in the mind of the author: “either it will *not* be relieved at all, in which case it will corrode and fester in the body politic till it destroys it, or, by some violent convulsion, overthrows the present fabric of society.” The second potential problem, according to the Devil, is that funding for

369. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 34.

370. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 34.

371. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 34.

372. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 35.

the poor would be “relieved at the expense of privations to the Christian and feeling part of the community, beyond their fair proportion, and infinitely greater than those imposed upon them by the present poor-rates.”³⁷³ This left the Devil’s cohorts, that is, “the Unitarians, Utilitarians, Perfectibiliarians, (uncured of their Utopian delusion and visionary humbug by the experience of six thousand years,) Nothingarians, and all sorts of Scoundrelarians,” free from such duties.³⁷⁴ Indeed, as the Devil remarked, these very people responsible for developing the New Poor Laws would

escape, if not scot free, at least with little or no scathe; to say nothing of the loss of repose of heart and conscience that would result to the *Christian* public, if the abolition of all legal public provision for distress were to leave its relief or mitigation to the exercise of individual compassion, by the disagreeable conflict of mind which would be always recurring between the fear of self-privation if they gave too much, and self-damnation if they gave too little.³⁷⁵

Blaming “the prodigious enlargement of the mercantile capital” and “the infinite varieties and multiplication of every other species of property” for the true cause of English land depression, the Devil found it ironic that individuals with stakes in “the large bank of British property” did not want to contribute proportionately “to the stability, order, capaciousness, and even beauty of the social edifice from which they derive shelter and protection.”³⁷⁶ Indeed, if the bourgeoisie *did* enter into such a system, the Devil argued, “the burden of the poor-rates would dwindle to a mere feather, for eight millions sterling.”³⁷⁷ In

373. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 35-6.

374. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 36.

375. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 36.

376. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 36-7.

377. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 37.

light of the capital held in England at the time, the Devil contended his suggestion was plausible.³⁷⁸

Departing from his observations on the “invasion of the *legal* rights of the poor by the new Poor Law Amendment Bill,” the Devil shifted his focus to “the pernicious moral influence upon the poor.”³⁷⁹ According to the Radical line of thought, and at the core of Martineau’s disapproval of assisting the poor, was the belief that parish relief encouraged “habits of improvidence and taking their dependence out of themselves.”³⁸⁰ For Martineau and other like-minded Radicals, this held the effect of perpetuating a cycle of poverty rather than curing it. However, according to the Devil, this circular reasoning held little logic.

All human property, madam! that of Dr. Malthus and his disciples, as well as every one else, has, in proportion to its amount and approach to a sufficiency to render them independent of personal exertions and circumspection for their enjoyments and security, a *tendency* to relax or destroy their circumspection and exertions; and before your pious pupil can dissociate these immoral *tendencies*, this leaven of Belial and Mammon, from the possession of any property, he must ask *my* leave, which I have no present intention of conceding; but if the moral elevation of his countrymen was his motive, it is surprising that he should overlook the property of the rich and great, where the moral danger is and will always be (as I shall take good care) exactly commensurate with its amount, and fasten upon the widow’s mite, and that of the poor in general, where the danger is comparatively and proportionately small.³⁸¹

Thus, the true threat to morality was not the actions of the poor, but, according to the Devil, those of the wealthy industrialists, who sought to perpetuate their individual capital and status rather than work toward the common good of all society. Poor rates did not encourage

378. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 37.

379. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 37.

380. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 37.

381. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 37-8.

improvidence, individual charity was “often misplaced and mistimed,” and the previous support offered by public charities was indeed “arranged and conducted upon definite, regulated, and generally well understood principles.”³⁸²

Finally, the Devil discussed the issue of illegitimate births in relation to the New Poor Law Bill, which he termed “the *illegitimate* offspring of yourself and my Lord Brougham.”³⁸³ Maintaining that the implications against this aspect of the legislation were “clearly subversive of all the natural, revealed, and hitherto generally received maxims of sexual morality,” the Devil expatiated on the several problems endemic to placing the blame of guilt on individuals involved in sexual impropriety.³⁸⁴ Particularly troublesome was the fact that women were often faulted with the seduction by male judges, who could not properly assess “the separate degrees of guilt of each party” since he did not “possess himself of a masculine and feminine nature, without which it is not possible to compare the separate workings of each.”³⁸⁵

Under the New Poor Laws, women who conceived outside of matrimony would be held solely responsible for the child, unlike the previous statutes, which dictated that the father would contribute to the care of the child. Thus, in the eyes of the Devil, “the only general rule of justice by which a human tribunal can be governed in such cases in inflicting *punishment*, --or if modern and Malthusian libertinism resents the idea of *punishment*, --I will say, in exacting from the parties the fulfilment of the natural responsibilities of their conduct,

382. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 38.

383. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 38.

384. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 39.

385. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 39.

is *equality*.³⁸⁶ Indicting the Whig party with passing the “new diabolical Poor Bill,” the Devil admonished Martineau for her espousal of “the diabolical Malthusian doctrines upon which it was concocted.”³⁸⁷ Here the author most passionately dissociates from his guise, the Devil:

the dissoluteness, the arts, the guile, the fraud, the perfidy, and subsequent heartless apathy and desertion, but even to the *violence*, of one sex, (for it is not necessary to constitute the moral guilt, although it is to the legal and capital offence of *violence*, that it should be unqualified *assault* from its approach to its consummation,—the *proof* of which, too, even where it has occurred, is often impossible, and always revolting to the victim of it,) and throw the whole penalty (O shame to manhood!) upon the party in every possible way least capable to bear it, and this by a *soi-disant* Whig chancellor; damn him, I am almost ashamed of him, and that is the truth; (for you know, madam! Dr. Johnson says, that I am the father of Whigs,)—indeed I feel almost tempted to disclaim him, for although he calls himself a Whig, I suppose, in a general way, the man’s self-idolatry is such that it is impossible to confine him within any bounds of party.³⁸⁸

The pamphleteer continued on to suggest the Bastardly Clauses were the most sinister part of the New Poor Laws, so sinister that they would inspire a “re-action in the minds of the Christian portion of the British public, which will eventually do my service more harm than good.”³⁸⁹ Contending that this particular amendment was based upon the “Malthusian principle...that either infanticide or wilful abortion is no crime,” the Devil went on to cite a specific example from “Cousin Marshall” that exemplified Martineau’s lack of couth and demeanor:

I would apologize, madam, for such plain speaking to you upon such a subject,—for inattention to manners is not my *cue*—on the contrary, no one studies grace and insinuation of address more than I do; but when a lady can

386. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 39.

387. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 39.

388. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 40.

389. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 40.

so far forget (even with her pen) the becoming limits of female discussion as to express such a sentiment as that contained in the fourth paragraph of the 121st page of the volume containing the story of ‘Cousin Marshall,’ she has, I think, no right to claim from her correspondents quite the same delicacy of language as the laws of social refinement and good breeding would otherwise her due.³⁹⁰

Stepping aside from his character attack, the Devil returned to his analysis of the Bastardy Clause. Although inciting the “extravagance, wickedness, injustice, and cruelty” of the New Poor Laws, the Devil maintained he did not defend the old.³⁹¹ “I admit they were open to some objections from the temptation and comparative impurity which they afforded to female depravity and especially female perjury, in the affiliation of the child,” the Devil remarked, “but even these objections were not without some salutary moral influences in deterring young men of decent morals from keeping company with women of notoriously bad character, and reciprocally upon these latter, by deterring them from contracting such a character.”³⁹² With such interference, “all but the drunken dregs, all but the most depraved, profligate, gallows-daring, trustless, slippery, and untenable of the other sex” would be driven away from having sex with them.³⁹³ The Devil ended his letter to Martineau by explaining his plans to address and share a similar letter to Malthus, as well as a copy of the petition from the parish of Albury.³⁹⁴

The letter written to Malthus unleashed an attack, religious in nature, against his population theory. The author began by associating liberalism with Malthusianism before

390. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 41.

391. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 41.

392. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 41.

393. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 41.

394. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 42.

suggesting the political economist expressed a particular disdain for the matrimonial state, thus standing in direct opposition to that “which the divine Wisdom has expressly appointed.”³⁹⁵ Presuming Malthusian political economy held two possibilities if followed to its logical conclusion, the Devil went on to state, “one of two consequences, equally agreeable to me, must be the result of your doctrines, viz. either great crime or great suffering.”³⁹⁶ Interestingly, the author did not hold a dispute with Malthus’ mathematical explanation of population, but rather with the ethical nature of his theory. Disagreeing with Malthus about the purpose of increased population, the Devil argued, “The progress of population was probably designed always to head a little the means of subsistence, to occasion, in the first place, a constant stimulus to exertion, and, ultimately, the obligation of *dispersion*, until all the unpeopled parts of the globe are fully occupied and cultivated.”³⁹⁷ Indeed, Malthus was so wrong that his “antisocial, antiprolific, and antisciptural invectives against marriage, and the multiplication of the human species” went completely against “the designs of the Creator.”³⁹⁸

Continuing his religious assault against Malthusians, the author proclaimed that all matters of human reproduction and coupling belonged only within the spiritual, not secular, sphere, “never meant by Him to be a subject of human legislation, or even individual calculation.”³⁹⁹ The issue of matrimony proved an overwhelming concern for the pamphleteer. Considering the state of marriage a “Christian duty,” the author wondered how

395. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 51.

396. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 51.

397. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 52.

398. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 52.

399. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 53.

Malthus and his followers could presume to know whether or not one was qualified for this role. The Devil went on to expose ambiguities in Malthusian theory:

How will you define provision ‘or prospect of *support*’ for a family? Do you mean prospect of food? –if so, of what food? –beef, bread, or potatoes; or that which every man’s parents have lived upon? In this case, the son of the man of three courses is not to marry till he has a *prospect* of providing three courses for his children. Again, what do you mean by *prospect*, doctor? –do you mean absolute security against reverses, that is, ample resources *in presenti*, and absolute security against their loss or diminution *in futuro*?—the condition of humanity does not afford such security to any one. Do you say that you only mean *reasonable* prospect?—and how will you define *reasonableness* in such cases?—how, doctor! will you draw the nice line between reasonable obedience to the express prohibition of Christ against anxiety about provision for the flesh, and the possession of reasonable *human* security for such provision, *i.e.* between a *reasonable trust* in Providence, and a *reasonable distrust*? I hope, my dear doctor, you will take in good part a little gentle banter from your old friend and patron.⁴⁰⁰

After chiding the economist on his lack of specificity, the pamphleteer made it clear that he blamed Malthusianism for the New Poor Laws of 1834: “your merciful theory has had now a pretty long reign of mischief; and this last crowning and *ne plus ultra* fruit of it (the New Poor Law) surpasses my utmost hopes, as I think it must your own.”⁴⁰¹

Before ending with a lengthy passage from Robert Southey’s *Essay on the State of the Poor*, the author described the “proper” role of marriage and procreation in the Christian religion.⁴⁰² Unlike the Liberal view regarding matrimonial and familial economic responsibility, the Devil maintained that in order to uphold “Christian consistency,” one only needs “a firm determination *to do his very utmost* to support a family.”⁴⁰³ As long as he does

400. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 53-4.

401. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 53-4.

402. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 56. Although this pamphlet did not explicitly reveal who actually authored it, several factors indicate that perhaps Robert Southey, poet laureate and social reviewer, had a hand in penning this work.

403. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 55.

so through “his own honest exertions,” the Christian husband “has a right to expect the compassion of his fellow Christians, according to their means, to help him in distress.”⁴⁰⁴

Concerning the topic of procreation, the Devil pointed out that Christian scriptures speak of children “as a gift, a heritage, a reward, a blessing from the Almighty.”⁴⁰⁵ In contrast, Malthusians “not only treat them as a curse, but would infallibly make them so, and cut off from mankind, at once, the most delightful field for the indulgence of Christian benevolence, and the exercise of Christian charity.”⁴⁰⁶ The Devil ended his commentary to Malthus by remarking, “that if at that future meeting I do not prove you either infidel or hypocrite, or both, I shall deserve to lose my place and reputation; and I hereby give you fair notice, that it will not be for want of my best endeavours so to do.”⁴⁰⁷

The petition from Albury parish, in Surrey, largely echoed the religious sentiment expressed by the author. Maintaining that the Church as an institution was responsible for instructing political leaders in “righteousness, and...the practice of justice and mercy,” the petition went on to describe familial roles and responsibilities in an effort to reaffirm the government’s intervening role for citizens incapable of subsisting.⁴⁰⁸ Creating the connection between the father and the government, the petition argued, “That as the first duty of the father of a family is to provide for those who by reason of any mental or bodily infirmity are least able to take care of themselves, so is it the first duty of every government to provide

404. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 55.

405. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 55.

406. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 55.

407. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 56.

408. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 43.

subsistence and all other necessities of life to the poorest citizens.”⁴⁰⁹ Citing the wisdom of Locke, Grotius, and Puffendorf, who, in some fashion, contended that rulers, “ordained of God,” were responsible for acting as “the channels of blessings to their brethren,” not to withhold such blessings.⁴¹⁰ Indeed, by withholding these “blessings,” the rich were, in effect, relegating the poor to the immoral practice of thievery.⁴¹¹

After the initial criticism, the petition reasoned that the issue of poverty and the needy should not be decided by foreigners but by native Englanders, “where charity is reduced to a system, and interwoven in our very constitution.”⁴¹² Segueing into an attack against the proposed Poor Law Amendment Bill, the petitioners of Albury claimed that it “is the right of the poor to be maintained by their richer neighbors,” a right that not even the powerful bourgeoisie could overthrow.⁴¹³ However, as the petitioners pointed out, the very crux of the New Poor Laws did just that by not only depriving “the poor of this right,” but also by repealing “all laws by which they are entitled to demand support in case of necessity.”⁴¹⁴

Comparing the proposed amendment with its legislative predecessor, the authors of this petition reminded the industrialist class that the former set of laws “compelled certain officers to support the poor,” whereas the current set of legislation “compels no one to support the poor.”⁴¹⁵ Indeed, in the eyes of those who would be directly affected by the Bill’s

409. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 43.

410. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 43-4.

411. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 47.

412. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 47.

413. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 48.

414. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 49.

415. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 49.

implementation, its passage would place all power for relief in negligent hands by providing individuals “the option of deciding whether, in case of famine, distress, or sickness, any necessitous person shall or shall not receive relief, and the terms on which that relief shall be granted; it gives to those individuals power to make what orders, rules, and regulations, they shall think fit.”⁴¹⁶

The petitioners issued a warning concerning the implications of the workhouse, which, under the New Poor Laws, would provide the only protection against destitution for England’s poor. These “necessitous poor,” according to the petition, would be “shut up...in workhouses,” serving only to “separate therein husbands from wives, and parents from children, contrary to the laws of God: which separation is not purely hypothetical, for it is recommended by the supporters of the measure.”⁴¹⁷ Moreover, pauper children would be treated as lesser than their bourgeois counterparts, since the New Poor Law Amendment “repeals the law which limits the distance from their parents, at which children shall be apprenticed.”⁴¹⁸ In fact, commissioners of the New Poor Law would not only have the power to “apprentice the children of the poor without their parents’ consent,” but also the authority to “compel that consent by any treatment they please, in consequence of refusal.”⁴¹⁹

Under the New Poor Law, coerced child labor would mean that a child with an apprenticeship could wind up as far away as the colonies, “and if the apprentice refuses to go,” the ramifications would prove perpetual, since commissioners would “have all support

416. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 49.

417. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 49.

418. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 49.

419. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 50.

at home for the future refused to” the pauper.⁴²⁰ Here, again, a particular disdain for the Bastardy Clause was expressed, with the petitioners questioning why “young girls may be removed to any distance from their parents,” but “the fathers of bastard children are exonerated from the burden of supporting them.”⁴²¹ Pointing out that the “burden is thus made to fall exclusively upon the mothers,” the petitioners saw the Bastardy Clause under the New Poor Laws as a perpetuator in the cycle of impropriety.⁴²² By forcing the unwed mother into the workhouse, separating her from her child, and removing protection “against any act of cruelty or oppression, which the commissioners may suffer or commit,” the bourgeois class violated “the first principles of divine justice, and of the rights of man.”⁴²³

Admonishing the authors of the Bill for outstepping “the purposes...of God” with their proposed legislation, the petitioners warned that God would not support politicians who presumed “that they can by mere brute force retain the people in subjection, while acting in defiance of his precepts.”⁴²⁴ Warning of the potential for uprising on behalf of God, who “will withdraw his fear from the people, and thereby hasten the rupture of every remaining link by which society is still feebly held together,” the petition of Albury ended by acknowledging “the spirit of the age,” which was responsible for inspiring the New Poor Laws of 1834.⁴²⁵

420. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 50.

421. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 50.

422. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 50.

423. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 50.

424. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 50.

425. The Devil, *Six Letters from a Very High Personage*, 50.

The year after the New Poor Laws were written into law, the publication of another pamphlet attacking the Malthusian roots of the legislation was published. In “The Malthusian Boon Unmasked,” anonymously penned by “A Friend to the Poor,” the issue of privilege and marriage prompted the author to point out perceived flaws in Malthus’ own writing.⁴²⁶ Tackling the political economist’s tendency to ascribe “*the most part of human misery to laws of nature,*” the pamphlet began with a scathing criticism of “the *no* less irrelevant than *ineffectual* remedy of ‘Moral Restraint.’”⁴²⁷ Pointing out that Malthus had only recently proposed moral restraint as a population check, the author recounted how previously “vice and misery had *alone* been insisted upon as the positive checks to an increasing or superabundant population.”⁴²⁸ Contending that moral restraint as a preventive measure was “altogether nugatory, nay, wholly inapplicable,” the pamphleteer sought to remove the “gossamer veil” that hid the truth.⁴²⁹ Before providing “a summary view of *our actual condition and circumstances,*” the writer warned that the “benevolent design of general laws,” inherent to the “Malthusian fallacy,” led “to misery and destruction.”⁴³⁰

The first truth expounded upon by the author, “the propensity to increase and multiply,” proved a specific point of contention.⁴³¹ Asserting the absurdity of Malthusian tenets regarding marriage, the pamphleteer countered such claims by maintaining that “the

426. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked with Remarks upon “The Poor Law Amendment Bill,” as Connected with it, and in Which the Real Cause of the Oppressive Burden of our Poor Rates is Fully Developed* (Maidstone: Printed by J. Smith. Sold by Whittaker and Co., Ave Maria Lane, London, and all Other Booksellers, 1835).

427. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 3.

428. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 3.

429. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 3.

430. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 3-4.

431. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 4.

common laws of our nature” make it so that every individual retains the capability “by the proper exertion of his faculties, to produce, and provide necessary subsistence for *eight* other persons exclusive of himself.”⁴³² According to the author’s logic, the average couple gave birth to between four and five children who, in effect, contributed to the surplus of labor and talent. This surplus made the possession of wealth, or “moral restraint,” necessary for a Malthusian marriage obsolete, since “every individual has a fund in his own power fully adequate to the purpose of providing necessary and convenient subsistence for himself and family.”⁴³³

Launching into his attack on the concept of “moral restraint,” the writer suggested such a “check” would be valid and acceptable only if it prevented excess indulgences instead of prohibiting the natural human desire—and right—to couple.⁴³⁴ This “anti-social” recommendation that no marriage can take place without financial surety would, in the mind of the author, lead directly to a decrease in matrimony and “the actual depopulation of the country.”⁴³⁵

Instead of transforming wedlock and reproduction into luxuries, which only the very wealthy could afford, the author suggested restraint be “practiced by the favoured few who previously having abundant means of providing for families, and also of gratifying every other inclination, might very well forbear in this particular, in favour of their less happy brethren who are virtually deprived of every other gratification.”⁴³⁶ The author then went on

432. *A Friend to the Poor, The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 4.

433. *A Friend to the Poor, The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 5.

434. *A Friend to the Poor, The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 5.

435. *A Friend to the Poor, The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 5.

436. *A Friend to the Poor, The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 5.

to offer an alternative by suggesting each individual capable of affording marriage agree to provide food and clothing to a child “of a less favoured and less happy brother” upon the birth of their first child and so forth.⁴³⁷ This would reduce the crisis of overpopulation and poor rates without Parliamentary interference.

The pamphleteer finished bashing the “unfitness and insufficiency of *moral restraint* as a preventive check” before moving on to comment on the essay written by Malthus.⁴³⁸ Concluding that the “anti-social scheme” would do nothing else “but to set man against his fellow-man, and also, man against his maker,” the author expressed concern for the individualism exemplified throughout Malthus’ paper and the seemingly impendent decline toward atheism if Malthusian tenets were accepted.⁴³⁹ “Such in a word is the God of the anti-socialists; to whom, neither love, regard, nor reverence, nor hope, nor confidence of any kind can possibly attach; but sheer HATE alone.”⁴⁴⁰

This conversation continued in the postscript, wherein the author reasserted the evil nature of the Poor Law Amendment by connecting it to “the merciless, the hateful philosophy” upheld by Malthusians.⁴⁴¹ With the enactment of the amendments, every able bodied individual, whether fully or only partially employed would, “upon application for parochial relief, are doomed with their families, either to starvation or imprisonment (to workhouse discipline which is no other than the entire loss of liberty); their labour earnings

437. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 5-6. That is, upon the birth of the affluent couple’s second child, they would provide these necessities to two children of less affluent parents.

438. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 6.

439. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 9.

440. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 10.

441. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 10.

to be taken from them, and all natural communion together denied.”⁴⁴² These punishments seemed too harsh in light of the author’s revelation that such individuals were not poor, simply “deprived of their birthright, in being denied a *just* remuneration for their labour.”⁴⁴³ This system forced the “misnamed poor” to submit to the workhouse, despite their “unremitting exertions in keeping out of the Poor House” through industry.⁴⁴⁴ Indeed, the author feared the proposed amendments would reach so far as to compel those currently paying poor rates to take “shelter in the only refuge, left for the destitute—the Grand *National Workhouse*.”⁴⁴⁵ Another problem endemic to the workhouse system, in the eyes of the pamphleteer, was the separation of children from their parents. By ripping families apart, the workhouse would prevent the natural and fundamental relationship between child and parent from developing. In effect, “the hated precepts of the Malthusian school” would essentially work “TO SEVER THE FRUIT FROM THE TREE WHILST YET UNRIPE.”⁴⁴⁶

Moving on the issue of poor law commissioners, the author of this pamphlet chided the method of choosing “*alien* commissioners...with whom we can have no other fellowship than as with intruders or spies.”⁴⁴⁷ These commissioners, who had little understanding of the conditions of the poor, would only serve to further their discomfort. For the author, this fact

442. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 10.

443. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 10-11.

444. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 11.

445. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 11.

446. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 12.

447. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 12.

was most apparent in the Bastardy Clause, “which, instead of being a boon to the female sex, would more properly be denominated A REPROACH TO CIVILIZED MAN.”⁴⁴⁸

Facetiously warning that the Malthusian “*delusion*” came about with potentially good intentions, the author attacked the lack of intelligence involved in creating the bill, claiming, “it was not a defect of the heart, but only of the *head*, that induced it.”⁴⁴⁹ Averring the theory may work well in theory, the author exposed the errors that made the proposal impractical. And although the new law would serve well to eliminate both recipient and functionary fraud, it would still “deteriorate the condition of all *honest* applicants for relief.”⁴⁵⁰

Launching into counter suggestions, the author explained that it was first necessary to understand the cause of an evil before offering a solution. Tracing the beginning of the poor rate issue to a “comparatively recent origin,” the pamphlet continued with a historical rendition of the social evolution of poor rates.⁴⁵¹ “Not half a century ago, THE ABLE-BODIED neither needed nor received parochial assistance; nor would they want it, but for the substitution of artificial powers in the place of *natural* ones, for almost every purpose.”⁴⁵² Instead of continuing down the socially destructive path shaped by the “*fancy* tribe of the Malthusian school,” laborers should simply receive financial reimbursement equivalent to their services.⁴⁵³ This would ensure workers would not only have the necessities of life, thus

448. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 12.

449. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 12.

450. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 12-13.

451. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 13.

452. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 13.

453. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 13.

making poor rates virtually obsolete, but it would also enable “reasonable comforts.”⁴⁵⁴ Malthusian preoccupations with overpopulation, “more hands to work, than work to give,” were unfounded; ascribing society’s problems to this persisted without merit.⁴⁵⁵ Finally, the author of “The Malthusian Boon Unmasked” attacked the belief that the proposed amendment would alleviate the financial burden of the rate-payer before exposing what he believed was the true “root of the evil.”⁴⁵⁶

The root, “*that the able-bodied, as well as the impotent or incapacitated, from whatever cause proceeding—need more or less extraneous relief,*” reverberated throughout society, seeing that the working class was indeed “the most numerous class.”⁴⁵⁷ Contending that the issue rested in the fact that laborers were not justly compensated for their efforts and contribution to industry, the author suggested that a simple correction to this conundrum would alleviate the financial burden for all levels in society, providing everyone “*with reasonable comforts*” and lessening the reluctance of rate-payers to contribute to aid.⁴⁵⁸ The postscript ended with a reaffirmation of the root cause before decrying the passage of the amendments:

Justly remunerate the able-bodied labourer, and you will meet the difficulty in its strong hold; --when the rate-payer will be immediately and *permanently* relieved. Depend upon it as long as enactments are grounded upon the principles of a reckless and a desolating philosophy, injustice and oppression must ever continue to the the *practical* result; --*a philosophy, happily*

454. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 13.

455. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 13-14.

456. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 14.

457. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 14.

458. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 14.

*however, ascertained to have no foundation in nature: a fungus, a mere excrescence!—the sooner extirpated, the better.*⁴⁵⁹

Three years after the passage of the New Poor Laws, a pamphlet titled, “The Poor Law Bill Exposed. Is it a Whig Measure? It Cannot be Introduced into these Districts” began circulating throughout the manufacturing district of Yorkshire.⁴⁶⁰ Addressed to “The Borough and the West-riding Electors, residing in Huddersfield, this correspondence was a direct response to another pamphlet supposedly distributed by the Whig faction titled, “The Poor Law Bill explained, —Is it applicable to the manufacturing districts?”⁴⁶¹ Setting out to expose the Whiggish connection to the New Poor Laws, the author began this work by pointing out how quickly the Whig party denied their participation in the creation and passage of the “atrocious” amendments.⁴⁶² Accordingly, the Whig party’s refusal to acknowledge their role in this legislation led the author to presume “they are well aware, that the statements contained in this little book are false.”⁴⁶³ Calling the New Poor Law “a law of cruelty,” the author of the pamphlet went on to maintain the malicious intent of the Whig party through both their development of the legislation itself and their subsequent denial of participation or responsibility.⁴⁶⁴

Blaming the Whigs for inventing the New Poor Laws in order to force “*the poor people of England to live on a coarser sort of food,*” the author went on to expose their many

459. A Friend to the Poor, *The Malthusian Boon Unmasked*, 14.

460. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed. Is it a Whig Measure? It Cannot be Introduced into these Districts* (Huddersfield: Printed at the Office of T, Kemp. New-Street, 1837).

461. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 3.

462. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 3.

463. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 3.

464. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 3.

connections to the legislation.⁴⁶⁵ Beginning with the assertion that the Whig party was responsible for the initial introduction of the bill into Parliament, the “Friend of the Manufacturers” pointed out that “the influence of the Whig government” supported and passed such legislation.⁴⁶⁶ In fact, according to the author, the only individuals in proponency of the law were Whigs, who “have endeavoured to deceive the electors, on the eve of an election, by such falsehood and such nonsense as is contained in ‘The Poor Law Bill explained.’”⁴⁶⁷ Warning the electors against believing Whigs who contend the New Poor Laws were not of their design, the author pointed out the insincerity in those politicians, like Lord Morpeth and Sir George Strickland, who maintained in public that these laws should not apply to manufacturing districts.⁴⁶⁸ However, these same individuals turned around in Parliament and “not only identified themselves with this despicable Law—but they have, by this document of theirs, *proved that they wish to introduce it*” in placed they had promised not to.⁴⁶⁹

Admonishing the audience to read the politicians’ words for themselves and contrast that image with the actions of the same politicians, the author began breaking apart the “Whig” argument. Railing against the claim made in “The Poor Law Bill Explained,” that the main goal of the amendment “is to *raise* and to *elevate* the moral and social conditions of the independent labourer,” the author reminded the reader to remember “the REAL object of

465. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 3.

466. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 3. The author did caution that “many Tories and many Radicals, in Parliament” supported it; however, outside of Parliament, these groups opposed the legislation. In fact, as the author contended, the Tory and Radical presses vehemently opposed the New Poor Laws after their passage.

467. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 4.

468. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 4.

469. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 4.

the Whig Government...expressed in their own printed instructions, viz.—‘To force the poor people of England, to live on a coarser sort of food.’”⁴⁷⁰ In the mind of the author, it was apparent that the Whig faction sought to deceive the English by saying one thing and doing the opposite.

Next, the author addressed the Whig confession that although it would take “a long time before the poor receive the full benefits designed for them...’we ought rather to anticipate its effects upon the *rising* generation.”⁴⁷¹ This admittance contrasted severely with the Whig assertion that the New Poor Laws had already begun to effect positive change in places like Berkshire, where, as the “Poor Law Bill Explained” suggested, “wages have risen considerably, whilst poor-rates have diminished fifty per cent.”⁴⁷² In Berkshire, according to the “Poor Law Bill Explained,” the “*deserving* poor, almost worship the Poor Law assistant Commissioner,—‘they take him by the hand, *and with tears in their eyes*, they thank him *and treat him as their greatest benefactor*.’”⁴⁷³ Believing this assertion to be false, the author of the “Poor Law Bill Exposed” could not help but recall the metaphorical Lamb, who “Licks the hand, just raised to shed its blood.”⁴⁷⁴

Moving on to the issue of outdoor relief, the “Friend of the Manufacturer” lashed out against the Whig denial that the main object of the New Poor Laws was to both prevent

470. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 4-5.

471. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 5.

472. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 5.

473. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 5.

474. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 5. As to the falsity of this statement, the author maintained, “If John Walter, the late Tory member for Berkshire, will sign this beautiful statement, I will believe it; and then I shall indeed pity these silly, but ‘*deserving*’ dupes.”

outdoor relief and to make “*in*-door relief as irksome as possible.”⁴⁷⁵ Although the author maintained that the Poor Law Commissioners have tried to put these desires into action previously, the refusal to acknowledge such developments proved especially difficult to swallow. Touching the issue of denial, the author of this pamphlet dared the author of “Poor Law Bill Explained” to attach his name to such claims so the “Friend of the Manufacturer” could “confront him with abundance of evidence, from Commissioners and the speeches of the supporters of this diabolical Law, and thus prove that such is the fact.”⁴⁷⁶ Indeed, according to the author, the Commissioners had already succeeded in preventing aid by making it so the New Poor Law’s Board of Guardians would be required to “pay that relief out of their own pockets” if they chose to help an individual without their explicit permission.⁴⁷⁷

The last major issue the “Friend of the Manufacturer” responded to in this pamphlet was the workhouse institution as explained in the Whig pamphlet. In the “Poor Law Bill Explained,” the authors described the workhouse as a place “intended for the idle, the vicious, and the dissolute.”⁴⁷⁸ Noting that this description sounded eerily similar to imprisonment, the “Friend of the Manufacturer” questioned why it was even necessary to build workhouses when there were plenty prisons already in existence. “This is the grand secret—the *Workhouse*, then, under this new law, not only *is*, but it *ought to be a Prison*—a BASTILE. But why build new

475. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 5.

476. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 3.

477. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 6.

478. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 6.

ones? Were there not prisons plenty before?’”⁴⁷⁹ For the manufacturer’s friend, the “test” of the workhouse only served as the first of many steps to eliminate aid for the poor.

Aye—there is the rub, ‘this TEST.’ No one will enter these TEST-holes—who can either beg or steal a living. The TEST of the Workhouse, and as soon as the Commissioners dare order it, the TEST of refusal of ‘out-door relief,’ will at once realize the object of this unnatural law. These two ‘TESTS’ will ‘force the poor people of England to live on a coarser sort of food,’ and will relieve the property of the rich from the burden of Poor Rates!⁴⁸⁰

The author proceeded to question the logic behind the necessity of “tests,” commenting in particular on the “Poor Law Bill Explained” author’s surprise that many manufacturing districts “have survived so many ages, unprotected by ‘the power of relaxasion (*sic*) or contraction’ with which these Commissioners are endowed!”⁴⁸¹

Finally, the “Manufacturer’s Friend” confronted “a few Whig fibs” presented in the latter’s pamphlet, the first of which concerned the county of Sheffield.⁴⁸² Here, much to the author’s disdain, the Whig’s would have their readers believe that a system very similar to that imposed by the New Poor Laws had “been adopted in Sheffield for some years.”⁴⁸³

Apparently privy to the goings on in Sheffield, the pamphleteer complained of the falsity in this “Whig” claim. Here, in Sheffield, “16,000...have just petitioned Parliament against the New Poor Law!”⁴⁸⁴ With such a prominent paradox, the author continued to unleash this

479. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 6.

480. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 6.

481. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 6.

482. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 6-7.

483. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 7.

484. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 7. “The truth is, that at a public meeting in Sheffield, very lately, it was resolved to petition the King or Privy Council, to prevent the introduction of the New Poor Law into that town!! Let any Whig deny this if he can.”

polemic against the Whigs. “One would think that no man would dare to publish so many fibs, so near home. But really, a drowning Whig, will catch even at the shadow of a Vote!”⁴⁸⁵

Next, and according to the author, the most absurd of the claims presented in the Whig pamphlet, was that of finance. Presenting an overly utopian picture of the New Poor Laws by suggesting that improving the condition of the poor, providing higher wages for the “industrious poor,” and increasing outdoor relief to the elderly and young widowed mothers, the Whig-authored pamphlet went on to claim that taxed individuals would not only feel inclined to give of their own volition, but would actually see the financial benefit of doing so.⁴⁸⁶

--after having paid all these, A GREATER AMOUNT of relief AT THEIR OWN homes, than they have hitherto HAD UNDER THE OLD LAW.’ After spending about 800,000 (pounds) in Building ‘Union Workhouses,’ and after having paid hundreds of thousands of pounds a-year for Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, Clerks, Relieving Officers, Doctors, Chaplains, Soldiers, Police, and I know not what beside. After all this, our author requires us to believe, that this New Poor Law, has already produced
‘A saving of Three Millions annually.’⁴⁸⁷

Finally, the pamphlet returned to the original argument by contending the authorship of the “Poor Law Bill Explained” belonged to the Whig party. The pamphleteer reestablished and maintained the connection between the New Poor Law and the Whig political faction by exposing the supposed propagandist intent behind the “Poor Law Bill Explained.”⁴⁸⁸ In this author’s mind, if all of the items expatiated on in the “Whig” pamphlet truly aligned with the

485. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 7.

486. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 7.

487. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 7.

488. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 7-8.. “They ought to be proud of it, if they are not attempting to deceive the Electors with this little tract; they should tempt the Electors to Vote for the Whigs, *because the Whigs are the authors of this blessed New Poor Law.*”

New Poor Law Amendments, then surely they would have stepped forth and claimed ownership of the work. “If thou wert the author of so much good, wouldst thou be ashamed of it? If that little book—written by a Whig—printed at the expense of the Whigs—and distributed by the Whigs, as it most assuredly is. If, I say, that little book be true, then why should the Whigs be ashamed of the New Poor Law?”⁴⁸⁹

In closing, the pamphlet warned the audience to be weary of Whig intentions after conceding to offer thanks to the party if the information in the “Poor Law Bill Explained” was in fact true. Because the Whigs refused to acknowledge the legislation as their own, at least in the mind of the pamphleteer, “when they shame to own the New Poor Law, as their own pet measure, they prove that they do not believe their own report!”⁴⁹⁰ Thus, in the eyes of countless English citizens, the New Poor Laws and the Whig party were inextricably intertwined.

Although it is true that Martineau had proponents for her brand of political economy and its impending influence in high politics, it is equally true that it met with an unparalleled amount of hostility from most Victorians. Indeed, Martineau was demonstrably associated with the hype behind the New Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, which, as many pointed out, was in fact a “Whig measure.” For many of her contemporaries, Martineau and Malthus’ political economies were in fact the major influence behind the New Poor Laws. Even more apparent in the minds of many was the connection between Harriet Martineau’s popularization of political economy, the primary ideas comprising the New Poor Laws, and the eventual 1834 passage of the New Poor Law Amendment acts. No longer did Harriet Martineau hide behind

489. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 7-8.

490. A Friend to the Manufacturers, *The Poor Law Bill Exposed*, 8.

the guise of a popularizer of political economy. Her ideas finally stood alone, coming into full fruition through the New Poor Laws of 1834.

CONCLUSION

The Industrial Revolution marks the turn toward modernity for many historians. Simultaneously eliciting the rise of both a wealthy capitalist middle class and impoverished working class, many individuals throughout nineteenth century England sought to address this socioeconomic inequality. One such individual was the author Harriet Martineau, who hoped to educate the public in the new science of wealth known as political economy through her fictional series, *Illustrations of Political Economy*. Although she relied largely on the political economy of Thomas R. Malthus, the works of Adam Smith, and Jeremy Bentham also influenced her economic philosophy. Becoming influential through the success of *Illustrations of Political Economy* in the 1830s, Martineau soon attracted the attention of other intellectuals and social critics who were interested in reconciling the question of the poor with the new economic system of capitalism.

The most important individual to take interest in the author was Lord Brougham, the High Chancellor in Parliament. Realizing the success and attention garnered by Martineau's work, Brougham employed the political economist with the task of popularizing and explaining the poor law reforms that would come to comprise the New Poor Law Amendment Acts of 1834. Using the personal legislation drafts of Brougham and her own political economy, Martineau did just that in her *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*. Indeed, it was through this commission that Martineau not only popularized political economy as historians have widely acknowledged, but went one step further by developing and disseminating her own distinct brand of the industrial science.

Enhancing the new wave of historiography that includes the work of Thomas Huzel and other critical authors like Claudia Orazem, Brian Cooper, Gregory Vargo, this work

aimed to rectify Martineau's role in Victorian high politics. As revealed through a detailed examination of her personal correspondence and through an investigation of the critical response to her literature from several domains of society, Martineau did more than popularize economics like Huzel and others maintained, or create Broughamite propaganda as Orazem had suggested. Indeed, she successfully marketed her own brand of political economy, which ultimately served as the frame behind the New Poor Laws of 1834.

Emphasizing the role of Harriet Martineau as a historical agent and developing the historiographical narrative, this work sought to uncover her essential role in nineteenth century English political reform by measuring the weight and significance of her political economy. While many scholars have envisioned Martineau as an economic popularizer or a propagandist, the idea that she was in fact a political economist not only instills agency to her historical character, but also offers a more nuanced view of an incredibly complex individual who responded to her environment. Synthesizing the ideas of Malthus, Smith, Bentham, and others in order to develop her own distinct brand of political economy, Harriet Martineau played a central role in the nineteenth-century political revolution in England, especially through the creation of the New Poor Laws of 1834.

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