

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Tavern Talk:

Literature, Politics & Conviviality

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in English

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Doctor of Philosophy in English

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Professor Saree Makdisi, Chair

In this dissertation I argue that the tavern is the institution best suited to understanding the relationship between literature and politics in the years building up to and following the French Revolution, when new political and aesthetic identities were being configured. This is because the taverns of the period index – and thus in a historically concrete way embody – the period’s renegotiations of public and private space, self and community, seriousness and pleasure. As material manifestations of the ideologies that shaped physical assembly, taverns reveal the most important social dynamics underlying the transformation of literature from the Enlightenment narratives of the eighteenth century to the transcendental aesthetic premises of Romanticism.

This study traces a revolution in metropolitan sociability, from an age when men could gather in taverns to cultivate an image of themselves as the leading figures of a masculine literary

culture, to a time when this fantasy had been exposed as thoroughly unsustainable. I examine the increasingly suspect reputation of tavern talk from the literary clubs of the 1760s, through the convivial poetry of Captain Morris, to the song and supper clubs of the 1820s and 1830s. The shift in literature's association with the tavern produces, and is produced by the tavern's uneasy relationship with politics, and in particular with the tavern's association with seditious practices in the debates surrounding the French Revolution. In the years following the Fall of the Bastille, the once celebrated spaces of public and patriotic convivial assembly became associated with the conspiratorial whisperings of a radical community who were agitating for political reform.

Once literary tavern conviviality had been exposed as debased, misogynistic, and potentially seditious, a new concept of literature emerged that transcended sites of assembly and located inspiration in the mind of the poet. My examination of the tavern provides a new account of the development of the aesthetic premises of canonical Romanticism, while also arguing for the continued relevance of convivial assembly, and a poetry of physical presence that fell outside the new definitions of literature.

The dissertation of Ian David Newman is approved.

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For Kate

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Tavern Talk

Introduction

London taverns of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were central to the operation of literary culture, and to the way that writers of the period understood what literature was, and what it could do. While much scholarly attention has been lavished on the coffeehouse, the institution most frequently associated with the rise of the “public sphere,” the tavern is the institution best suited to understanding the relationship between literature and politics in the years building up to, and following the French Revolution, when new political and aesthetic identities were being configured. This is because the taverns of the period index – and thus in a historically concrete way embody – the period’s renegotiations of public and private space, self and community, seriousness and pleasure. As material manifestations of the ideologies that shaped physical assembly, taverns reveal the most important social dynamics underlying the transformation of literature from the Enlightenment narratives of the eighteenth century to the transcendental aesthetic premises of Romanticism. No other institution speaks to the relationship between literature and politics in the same direct way.

With this in mind it should come as no surprise that taverns are ubiquitous in the literature of the period. In the journals of James Boswell, the anacreontic poetry of Captain Charles Morris, the political writings of Edmund Burke, the society novels of Elizabeth Inchbald, and the poetry of William Wordsworth, taverns frequently appear as opportunities to reflect on the morality and efficaciousness of public gathering, and to consider the continuities and disjunctions between the publicness of tavern meetings and the publicness of the literary

marketplace. Across the roughly eighty years covered by this dissertation, from 1762 to 1840, writers assume a dazzling variety of positions on literary tavern culture. In the convivial meetings of the 1780s, tavern gatherings were understood to provide a spur to the fancy with wine providing a stimulant to provoke the lyrical muse. In John Keats's "Lines on a Mermaid Tavern," the tavern is idealized as a divine Elysium that provided vinous sustenance to "poets dead and gone" while inscribing their souls into myth – though in the "Ode On A Nightingale" Keats rejects the myths of "Bacchus and his pards" as inadequate to the poetic project to which he is committed. By the 1820s and 30s, when buckish cads and university blades gathered in tavern song and supper clubs to toast the lyrical muse, literary-convivial drinking practices were unequivocally regarded as subversive, and gentlemen convivialists were acutely aware that they were engaging in sociable practices that fell outside of the dominant ideologies of the modern metropolis. Together, these literary taverns provide evidence of a fundamental reimagining of the relationship between the tavern and literature from the late eighteenth century – when taverns were often seen as one of the primary institutions through which aspiring writers could develop a literary subjectivity – to the end of the Romantic period, when authors increasingly attempted to distance themselves from the myths of tavern, which no longer conformed to the modern vision of London as a model of propriety and productivity.

This shift in literature's association with the tavern produces, and is produced by the tavern's uneasy relationship with politics, and in particular with the tavern's association with seditious practices in the debates surrounding the French Revolution. In the years following the Fall of the Bastille, the once celebrated spaces of public and patriotic convivial assembly became associated with the conspiratorial whisperings of a radical community who were agitating for political reform. The tavern became widely associated with the dangerous imaginings of

republican sympathizers who were bent on undermining the constitution and the stability of the nation. And while this crude caricature of the tavern's seditious intentions was never remotely accurate, (violent seditionists were much more likely to meet in alehouses than taverns, which held meetings of loyalist groups just as often as radicals) even after the war with France had ended, the tavern's association with loose imaginings and impious behaviors remained intact. This increasing preoccupation with the morality of convivial gathering sets the tavern apart from the coffeehouse, which, while never entirely conforming to the ideals of bourgeois rational-critical debate, was always more soberly respectable than the tavern, a point the trial of John Frost for seditious words makes abundantly clear.

Politics

On 6 November 1792, John Frost, a founding member of the Society for Constitutional Information, attended the annual dinner of a society for agricultural improvement at the tavern above the Percy Coffeehouse, on Rathbone Place, just off Oxford Street. Frost had recently returned from Paris where he had accompanied Thomas Paine in his flight from prosecution after the publication of his *Rights of Man*. After dinner, between nine and ten in the evening, Frost descended into the Percy's coffee room on his way out of the building. Here, he was accosted by an acquaintance, Matthew Yatman, who asked him about events in France. Frost responded, loudly enough for a number of people to hear him, "I am for equality; I can see no reason why man should not be upon a footing with another; it is every man's birthright" (*Trial of John Frost* 210). When challenged by others present in the coffeehouse to explain what he meant by equality, Frost responded, "why I mean no king, the constitution of the country is a bad one."

The ensuing argument grew so heated that Frost was “handled” by one of the gentlemen present and left the Percy “under the execrations and hisses of all present” (219).

Frost’s attack on the constitution so scandalized several of the coffeehouse patrons that a formal complaint was lodged against Frost and on 27 May 1793 he was brought to trial for sedition. The indictment described Frost as “a person of a depraved, impious, and disquiet mind, and of a seditious disposition, and contriving and practicing and maliciously turbulently and seditiously intending the peace and common tranquility of the our Lord the King, and of his kingdom, to disquiet, molest and disturb.” Arguing for Frost’s defense, Thomas Erskine made the point that Frost could in no way have intended to disturb the tranquility of the kingdom, as his intention was merely to leave the building after dining upstairs. Frost had, Erskine suggested, been provoked into his exclamations by an acquaintance who intended to aggravate him. The newly appointed Attorney General, Sir John Scott, arguing for the prosecution, insisted that the volume of Frost’s comments effectively made his views known in a public space. The trial consequently became a debate over the degree to which the Percy’s coffee room should be considered “public,” a debate that was itself dependent on the spatial configuration of the coffeehouse.

As John Barrell has shown, the downstairs room of the Percy, like many coffeehouses of the time, had a large central table with a row of individual booths – known as “boxes” – arranged along the wall (*Spirit of Despotism* 76). Customers could choose between the relative intimacy of the box, or the common table where they might engage in more public conversation with friends or strangers. Yatman had first accosted Frost at the bottom of the stairs at the back of the coffee room. During the conversation, however, Frost – presumably on his way to the front door – had walked further down the central aisle of the coffee room, towards the private boxes.

John Taitt, an Oxford Street upholsterer, testified that he was sitting in one of the boxes when he heard Frost, who was standing two or three boxes away, declare that he was for equality and no king. His privacy in the box had been disturbed by Frost's voluble declaration, Taitt claimed, and he felt compelled to stand up to declare himself insulted. The occupant of another box, Paul Savignac, also claimed to be so offended by Frost's loud remarks that he stepped from his partitioned booth to demand Frost to explain "how dare he to hold a doctrine of that kind in a public coffee room" (219). The result of the trial hinged, then, not only on the understanding of what were the appropriate topics of conversation for a coffee room, but on precisely where within the coffee room Frost and his antagonists were positioned as Frost spoke.

This episode has attracted attention in recent years from commentators who have discussed the way Frost's trial complicates understandings of the coffeehouse, which, since the publication of Richard Sennett's *Fall of Public Man* and Jürgen Habermas's *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, has become the space most frequently associated with the development of bourgeois public opinion.¹ For James Epstein, the trial complicates the idea of the consensual nature of eighteenth-century coffeehouse discussion and the participants' commitment to civic virtue, displayed through politeness and manners. "By the late eighteenth century," Epstein writes, "the ideals of civility associated with coffee-house culture had become at best tenuous... in the wake of the American and French Revolutions consensual norms of 'bourgeois' conduct, of politeness and sociability, could not withstand the disruptions of revolutionary politics" (45).

For John Barrell, meanwhile, arguing against the common misconception of the decline of the coffeehouse in the second half of the eighteenth century, the trial demonstrates the continued importance of coffeehouse sociability, while simultaneously acknowledging that the coffeehouse ideal was put under considerable pressure in the specific context of the 1790s:

What happened at the Percy was of course an effect of the widespread alarm that the newly declared republic in France was attracting a dangerous degree of support in Britain. Suddenly, to those participating in that alarm, the duty to divulge what was spoken in coffeehouses must have seemed greater than the duty to respect the private terms of conversation. (*Spirit of Despotism*, 82)

For Barrell, the Frost trial was “a debate between Erskine and Sir John Scott... on exactly what kind of a space the coffeehouse was” (83).

This sustained focus on nature of the coffeehouse has, however, obscured the importance of the tavern to the trial. As Erskine stated in his summing up, Frost had dined at the “*tavern* above the Percy coffee-house” (235, my emphasis), and had consumed a healthy amount of wine – about two bottles of port, Erskine suggested (224). Central to the defense’s strategy at the trial was to insist that Frost was drunk. In his cross-examinations of the witnesses Erskine asked whether or not Frost and his companions who had been at the upstairs meeting were sober. The question met with interestingly mixed results. John Taitt claimed that he could not say whether Frost was sober, and when asked whether his companions who had dined upstairs were drunk replied, “they might be, I don’t know.” When Erskine asked Matthew Yatman whether Frost was sober, Yatman replied, “Certainly he was not drunk.” The point was further pressed by Erskine, who asked Yatman to “stake your character and your *honour* before the Jury, by saying he was as sober as if you had seen him before dinner.” Yatman replied, “I don’t say he was sober.” This was evidently a point of some importance to Erskine’s defense, as he pursued the point still further:

Q: I ask you whether you mean to stake your *character* and your honour before the Jury, by saying he was as sober as at 12 o’ clock at day?

A: I should not have known that he was not by his conversation and his walk, whether he was in his right sense when he used those words is another thing.

Q: Do you mean to say he spoke in the manner, and the pitch of voice like a sober man?

A: He was stimulated.

Q: He extended his arm?

A: Yes.

Q: You think that a mark of sobriety do you?

A. I don't think it a mark of good sense. (222)

The final witness was Mr. Bullock, who was also asked, this time by the prosecution, whether or not Frost was sober. Bullock answered that he had “never seen Frost before that time but he did not appear to me to be a man in liquor, not in the least so.” (222). And when Bullock was asked “whether [Frost] was sober or not when you saw him at Percy-street Coffee-house?” Bullock answered, “he was what you may call a sober man.” When Erskine then interrupted to ask “Was he like a man who had been drinking?” Bullock answered “drinking moderately,” going on to say “I thought he was sober by his manner” (224).

Erskine's point was to suggest that Frost could have not intended to spread sedition when he arrived at the coffeehouse, because his main purpose in being there was convivial. He had gone to a meeting of an agricultural society to eat dinner, drink wine, and indulge in the usual rites of masculine tavern sociability. The evasive answers given by the witnesses, suggest that they too recognized that any acknowledgment of Frost's intoxication might diminish Frost's culpability in the eyes of the jury.

According to the legal authorities this was a misapprehension. In his *Institutes of the Laws of England* Edward Coke had argued that, unlike madness, drunkenness or intoxication was a voluntary condition, so a drunkard “hath no privilege thereby; but what hurt or ill soever he doth, his drunkenness doth aggravate it” (qtd in Blackstone). Blackstone had agreed that drunkenness enhanced rather than diminished the culpability of a crime and should be understood as an aggravation of the offence. He had further added that unlike the Roman law

which made great allowances for drunkenness, the English demonstrated the good sense of their legal system by not “suffer[ing] any man thus to privilege one crime by another” (Bk. 4, Ch. 2). I’ll return to this marking out of national characteristics based on attitudes to drink in my next chapter, but at this stage in my argument I want to register that the legal ground that Erskine was treading in arguing that Frost was intoxicated was remarkably tenuous, but it indicates a rather different attitude towards drink than Blackstone had expressed in the 1760s.

It is possible, of course, that Erskine was trying to justify the volume of Frost’s declarations. The case hinged on whether Frost’s words had been intended to disturb the peace, so the volume at which they were uttered was crucial to the verdict, as a quiet articulation of a political belief could be regarded as a private conversation whereas a loud declaration suggested a more public avowal. Erskine’s attempt to establish Frost’s drunkenness was in part an attempt to insinuate that Frost’s words were only loud because his intoxicated state made him speak more volubly than he realized. Coke and Blackstone’s commentaries then, which clearly had in mind the criminality of actions rather than words, were less applicable to the trial, which rested on a question of degree – the volume at which Frost spoke – rather than whether an action had or had not been performed.

But there are moments in the trial that suggest that there was more at stake in establishing Frost’s drunken state than mere volume. The evasive answers of the witnesses indicate that, however dubious the legal grounds of his argument, Erskine was appealing to an idea that had much wider currency: that drunkenness mitigated the culpability of the offense. Or to put that another way, a certain latitude of propriety was applicable to the tavern, that did not pertain to the coffeehouse.

Shortly after Paul Savignac testified that he had demanded that Frost explain how he dared to hold his doctrine “in a public coffee-house,” Mr. Bearcroft, one of Sir John Scott’s legal team, asked Savignac, “did you see him when he first came down into the public coffee room?” (219). Bearcroft, like Savignac, assumed that the coffee room was an unambiguously public space, but his question also implies that Frost was moving into a public room from a space that was not public. The upstairs room of the coffeehouse, the tavern room in which Frost had been dining was, if not explicitly private, then certainly not as public as the coffee room downstairs. Certain protections were guaranteed to Frost’s conversation in the more private space of the tavern room, a point that suggests the contingent nature of eighteenth century understanding of public and private space.

In John Brewer’s account of the distinction between public and private spheres in the eighteenth century, the private is constructed through its opposition to the public, thus as the definition of the public changes, the private makes a corresponding shift:

the most common usage of private is one in which the term is contrasted with some larger (more public) body: private tuition is contrasted with schools, private devotions and private Christians with the church, private beneficence with public charity, and private individuals with the family. As these examples indicate, the boundary of the private is constantly shifting. When contrasted with the state the, the private realm is coextensive with civil society, but it can also be confined to families. (“This, That, and the Other” 9)

Brewer consequently concludes that there is a remarkable “interpenetration of public and private in this period” (17). A study of the tavern confirms Brewer’s claim that there is a remarkable fluidity in the definition of public and private. Indeed one of the points of departure for this project is Brewer’s recognition of the importance of “paying particular attention not to those spaces at polar ends of the public and private but to the spaces in between – those areas, borders

or boundaries which repeatedly shift and which are repeatedly crossed.” The tavern is located precisely in the area straddling public and private.

This intermediary zone is the domain of sociability, a category that Deena Goodman understands as operating both in the Habermasian public sphere, and the private domain discussed by Ariès and Chartier. “The convergence of public sphere theory and the history of private life,” Goodman argues, “lies in two complimentary strains in the historiography of the Old Regime and Revolution: one that talks primarily of political culture and public opinion, and a second that looks at *sociabilité*. Often however, they are talking about the same thing” (12). Brewer’s important essay takes up Goodman’s challenge to “get away from rigidly oppositional thinking that assumes two spheres and two discourses” (14). But while his model of interpenetrating public and private zones and actions is certainly more fluid than the “rigidly oppositional thinking” that Goodman identifies, it nevertheless proceeds by constructing oppositions.

I want to advance another possibility, that in the eighteenth century the relationship between public and private was not conceived as an opposition, but as a spectrum. Though this possibility is hinted at in his references to the “spaces in between” the public and private, most often Brewer’s essay speaks of boundaries and borders – lines which move and can be crossed, to be sure, but lines nevertheless. Even as he points out that the distinction between private and public is a matter of spatial and political perspective and a matter for persistent adjustment and dispute, Brewer is nevertheless committed to the notion that there is a “line between the public and private,” however contingently constituted (7). The notion of the spectrum is helpful I think, because it doesn’t depend on crossing lines, lines that ultimately end up reinscribing the oppositional thinking Brewer is trying to avoid. In practice, what this means is that the zones of

experience Goodman describes as the domain of “sociability” are simultaneously both public and private – sometimes more of one, sometimes more of the other, but always both things together.

This helps to make sense of how, in the Frost trial, the same space can be interpreted as public or private without any apparent challenge from either legal team or intervention from the judge. It also helps to make sense of a term like “public house,” which draws attention to both its public and domestic character but is in no way oxymoronic. Of course, the point that Brewer makes clear is that the “public” which means open and accessible to all, is of a different kind to the “public” which is the opposed to a domestic structure. Nevertheless the term suggests some of the difficulties with assuming that the relationship between the public and the private is always oppositional, separated by a line.

By calling the relationship between the public and private a spectrum, I also want to make it clear that I am not referring to an undifferentiated zone of sociability that is located at the intersection of the public and private. The spectrum is very markedly and importantly differentiated, with the degree of privacy rising in proportion to the decrease in publicity and vice versa. As the Frost trial demonstrates, even within the same building there are zones that can be considered more or less private, more or less public. The tavern room upstairs in the Percy is more private than the coffee room downstairs, and within the coffee room there are more private booths, more public common tables, and the ambiguous central aisle between. Any of these spaces could be described as either public or private at a given moment, but it was understood that they were not uniform. Nor should we assume that this is simply a feature of the discourse of the courtroom, in which the legal teams battled over the spaces in which it was appropriate to articulate political opinion. Buildings were designed with a mind to the kinds of activities that they would house, with an explicit zoning of interior space, to accommodate sliding scales of

public and private activities. In the case of public houses, parlours were understood as more private than bars; dining rooms, more private than taprooms. As understandings of the public and private changed, and the ideologies attending physical assembly shifted, so a building's interior would be remodeled to accommodate these changes in understanding and taste.

Here I want to make the case that architecture, and specifically interior floor plans (more than external elevations) can help us to make sense of phenomena that are more obscure in text when a term like “public” or “private” might be used to describe a space without detailing against what its privacy or publicity is being measured. Wherever possible in what follows I show floor plans of the taverns I discuss, not because I believe that the space determines the interpretation of activities performed or words spoken, but because the subdivisions of interior space can help to remind us of the relative and contingent nature of the public and private, and demonstrate that even seemingly solid material structures are subject to the shifting ideas about publicity and privacy.

In his closing statement of the trial Erskine asked the gentlemen of the jury to consider the consequences of finding Frost guilty:

Is the time come when obedience to the law and correctness of conduct are not a sufficient protection to the subject, but that he must measure his steps, select his expressions, and adjust his very looks in the most common and private intercourses of life? Must an English gentleman in future fill his wine by a measure, lest in the openness of his soul, and whilst believing his neighbours are joining with him in that happy relaxation and freedom of thought, which is the prime blessing of life, he should find his character blasted, and his person in a prison?” (236)

For Erskine the tavern was an explicitly private space in which “the most common and private intercourses of life” could be conducted, guaranteed if not by the letter of the law, then by an consensual understanding that the tavern offered a form of protection not guaranteed in other,

more public spaces. From this perspective the events of 6 November, and their ensuing trial represented less a debate over what kind of space the coffeehouse was, than a clash between two different models of sociability, the polite mannered world of eighteenth-century coffeehouse sociability on the one hand, and liberal tavern sociability – or what I will be calling *conviviality* – on the other. The problem at the Percy was the entry of convivial tavern freedoms into the more mannered world of the coffeehouse. Frost’s words were deemed a rude intrusion of rowdy tavern conviviality into a regulated, polite space where gentlemen were reading their newspapers. Frost was found guilty and sentenced to six months imprisonment in Newgate and an hour in the pillory, a verdict that suggests the incompatibility of coffeehouse and tavern talk.

Conviviality

My contention, that there was a distinct and distinctive mode of homosocial masculine interaction centered on the tavern that was not only unlike coffeehouse sociability, but in fact opposed to it, should come as no surprise given the amount of specifically tavern-based literary practices (toasting, drinking songs, speeches) with which we are familiar. Nevertheless, the tavern has been consistently linked to the coffeehouse in accounts of eighteenth-century sociability, as if one was a mere outgrowth of the other. Consider, for example, John Brewer’s contention in *Pleasures of the Imagination* that “Coffee houses (like taverns) were centers of political opposition to the crown” (37). Indeed Brewer’s discussion of eighteenth-century sociability tacks back and forth between coffeehouses and taverns, between Boswell’s experiences in the St Paul’s coffeehouse and his meetings with Johnson in the Mitre Tavern, as if their functions and meanings are entirely interchangeable (39-40). Taverns have become associated with the coffeehouse as just another of the architectural formations which enabled the development of the public sphere.

But as the John Frost trial indicates, there were ideas associated with tavern conviviality that were entirely independent of the coffeehouse. When, in his closing statements Erskine described taverns as spaces in which certain freedoms were guaranteed, where an English gentleman might let his guard down and engage in conversation without fear of repercussions, Erskine was articulating an older idea about the tavern that had held currency for much of the second half of the eighteenth century. “As soon as I enter the door of a tavern,” Hawkins recorded Samuel Johnson saying, “I experience an oblivion of care and a freedom from solicitude... wine there exhilarates my spirits, and prompts me to free conversation and an interchange of discourse with those who I most love” (87). For Erskine, as for Johnson, the tavern represented a secure space, a space in which thoughts, ideas, and opinions, stimulated by wine and urged on by affectionate company could be given free reign and tested out without fear of repercussion. This security was guaranteed precisely by its privacy.

In the eighteenth century the tavern was often described not only as a private, but indeed as a *domestic* space, something that Johnson’s more famous biographer made clear. In his entry for 21 March 1776 in the *Life of Johnson*, James Boswell records Johnson describing at great length the felicities of a tavern:

There is no private house, (said he,) in which people can enjoy themselves so well as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so great plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that every body should be easy; in the nature of things it cannot be: there must be always some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him: and no man but a very impudent dog indeed can as freely command what is in another man’s house as if it were his own. Whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome: and the more noise you make, the more trouble you give, the more good things you call for, the welcomer you are. No servant will attend to you with the alacrity which waiters do, who are incited by the

prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, Sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man by which so much happiness has been produced as by a good tavern or inn. (697)

In this account, the tavern produces perfect happiness because of its ability to provide domestic comfort, which is itself a function of its participation in a financial economy, rather than an economy of hospitality. Whereas in a private household a guest cannot command absolute authority, in a commercial setting there is a financial incentive to the tavern owner and his waiters to attend to the guests' every whim. Moreover, the commercial nature of the arrangement relieves the patron of anxiety because he knows that no discomfort is caused when he relies on the generosity of the host. The result is a utopian vision of domestic happiness without the emotional obligations – the anxieties, embarrassments, and economy of gratitude – that attend the interaction rituals of domestic entertainment.

Behind Closed Doors, Amanda Vickery's study of domesticity – a nebulous category, she admits – is helpful on understanding the tavern as a domestic space. In a survey of journals kept by eighteenth-century bachelors, Vickery identifies taverns as participating in the “thriving service industry that catered to the needs of unattached urban men” (58). For Vickery, the chief function of taverns was to provide food to single men who had no domestic companions or servants to make their meals. Indeed, it is useful to remember that few of the lodgings available to London's moderately affluent, single men came with their own kitchen facilities, and while commercially serviced rooms could be found in which the landlady was responsible for cleaning and changing the linens, few had meals provided, and men either cooked food on the fire in their room, or were forced to look elsewhere for their victuals.

Conviviality – the etymology of which refers specifically to feasting – is a mode of sociability underpinned by eating, which can occur in many different venues, but which achieves

its idealized form in the tavern. But if providing food was the central pragmatic purpose of the tavern, its symbolic functions were much more diverse, and highly contested. Convivial feasting, of course, implies not merely eating, but celebratory eating, good fellowship, and jovial company (OED def. 1); it suggests a lively vigor and energy, often fuelled by wine or punch and accompanied by music; it is a form of sociability that is distinct from the more (though not entirely) sober world of the coffeehouse.² Conviviality is a form of sociability in which women can and do participate, but which is typically coded as masculine and associated with male, homosocial gathering. As such, it becomes a way of understanding gender difference and of patrolling the forms of behavior appropriate to men and women.

My use of the term “conviviality” is intended to mark a distinction between forms of behavior centered on the tavern, and other forms of sociability. As such this study is a response to Gillian Russell and Clara Tuite’s influential collection of essays *Romantic Sociability*. Though published just ten years ago at the time of writing, Russell and Tuite’s volume has transformed the way we think of the Romantic period. The fundamental premise of the collection – that for all its associations with solitude and rural retirement, the Romantic period was far more clubbable, conversable, and familiar than we often assume – has come to seem so self-evident as to require no further explanation. It does, however, require further refinement as the volume itself, and the innumerable subsequent studies that have followed in its wake, make clear that the term “sociability” can be understood in a myriad of different ways.³

James Boswell’s *London Journal* of 1762-3 is particularly illuminating on this point. Here we can see in magnificent detail the role that taverns, coffeehouses and chophouses played in the day-to-day life of a relatively wealthy bachelor who had recently moved to London and the ways they shaped sociable behavior. Shortly after arriving in London, Boswell, the son of a wealthy

Scottish Laird, calculated his expenses. He was on a tight budget of £25 every six weeks, or £200 for the year allowed to him by his father, and when he first moved to London he calculated that he would need to spend £157 per year as follows:

Lodging	£50
Dinner	18
Breakfast	9
Candles	6
Coals	7
Washing	6
Shoe-cleaning	1
Clothes	50
Stocking and shoes	10
In all,	<hr/> £157

This would leave him, he said, £43 for the year for “Coach hire, diversion, and the tavern” (335-6).⁴ Boswell prided himself on the amount that he ate at home with the landlord of his Downing Street lodgings, Mr. Terrie, with whom he had negotiated that he “should dine with the family whenever I pleased at a shilling a time” (50). The dinner typically consisted of “a good joint of veal and a pudding,” of which Boswell approved, but he considered Terrie to be rather too free with his conversation, and felt the need to “carry himself with some reserve” to compensate for Terrie’s over-familiarity (54). Nevertheless, Terrie was a jolly fellow who made Boswell comfortable. Sometimes too comfortable. On 19 December 1762 Boswell records that his landlord and landlady “insisted that I should eat a bit of supper. I complied. I also drank a glass of punch. I read some Pope. I sang a song. I let myself down too much...I went up to my room much disgusted. I thought myself a low being” (95). Three days later Boswell resolved not to dine with his landlord again in order to recover his “proper dignity and distance” (98).

This incident helps us to understand what the appeal of the tavern was to single men like Boswell whose domestic situations could cause a number of anxieties as they attempted to fashion themselves into men with the dignity they felt was appropriate to their social standing. Domestic discomfort could result not only from the desire to be respectful of the host as Johnson had implied, but also from the self-recrimination that might result from going along too much with the host's wishes and "letting oneself down" by behaving in a way that pleased the host, but was incommensurate with the image of the self that one wanted to project. Regardless of the reality of tavern life, the fantasy of a space that provided domestic comfort free from the care and anxiety attendant upon dining at a private residence must have held a great deal of appeal.

Boswell records that his motivations for ceasing to dine with Terrie and his family were only partly to do with the shame he felt after his evening of punch, Pope, and singing. Having recently lent Louisa Lewis, the actress he was intent on seducing, two guineas, his income was seriously depleted meaning that he could "not afford a shilling, nor near so much, for dinner" (98). For all his pride in the great bargain he had managed to negotiate with his landlord, a meal of veal and pudding at a shilling a time was a considerable expense. A meal at a tavern would have cost considerably more.⁵ Instead, Boswell is forced to buy bread, cheese, apples and relish and eat alone in his room (99). Frequently Boswell goes to eat at the houses of friends like Thomas Sheridan, Andrew Erskine and Lord Eglinton, but he is unwilling to do so when his resources are low and he will be "indebted" (99).

While Vickery's observation that taverns participated in a service industry catering to single men helpfully complicates our understanding of the kind of privacy that taverns provided, taverns were not the automatic choice of dining venue for eighteenth-century bachelors. If Boswell merely wanted something to eat, he would go to a beefsteak-house such as Dolly's

Chophouse in Paternoster Row, where for a shilling (the same price that he could eat for at home) he could get a beefsteak, bread, and beer. “A beefsteak-house is a most excellent place to dine at.” Boswell wrote. “You come in there to a warm, comfortable, large room, where a number of people are sitting at a table. You take whatever place you find empty; call for what you like, which you get well and cleverly dressed. You may either chat or not as you like. Nobody minds you, and you pay very reasonably” (86). In a beefsteak-house you could “either chat or not as you like” and “nobody minds you,” and it is clear that for Boswell part of the appeal of the beefsteak-house is the possibility of antisocial behavior. The same could not be said of a visit to the tavern, which was a much more expensive luxury, and required the patron to be agreeable, to demonstrate conversational wit, and to be prepared to cross verbal swords with companions.⁶

Boswell’s calculations of his expenses reveal that he understood tavern-going as a non-essential expense, a luxury to be enjoyed if he had money left over from the normal routines of daily life that were expected of a person of his rank. The extravagance of tavern dining is confirmed by Lady Northumberland who, in a discussion of Boswell’s financial situation comments, “a young man has no occasion for elegant lodgings, a great many clothes or being much in taverns” (112). And indeed Boswell is not much in taverns. After arriving in London on 19 November 1762, his first visit to a tavern is nearly four months later on 3 February 1763, when he eats at the Rose Tavern in Drury Lane before going to the theatre (176). His next visit to a tavern is three months later on 19 May when he goes to the Shakespeare’s Head in Covent Garden where he takes Miss Watts, “a sensible, quiet well-behaved” prostitute (256), and where he is shown into a “handsome room and had a bottle of choice sherry.” Boswell freely confesses that he has no money to give her, so Miss Watts makes her excuses and leaves. Boswell returns a few minutes later with two “very pretty girls” who he meets in the Covent Garden Piazza, who

are less particular about Boswell's impecuniosity, and with whom he is once again shown into a good room, provided with a bottle of sherry, and proceeds to "solace [his] existence with them one after the other, according to their seniority" (263-4). Shortly thereafter Boswell meets Samuel Johnson, and from 25 June 1763 Boswell starts regularly attending the Mitre Tavern in Fleet Street, always in the company of Johnson and his friends.

Boswell mentions four other taverns in the journal, each of which he visits only once: the Star and Garter, on 10 June, the Queen's Head on 8 July, the Robin Hood Tavern on 25 July, and the Kings Arms, on 26 July. In all then, between November 1762 and August 1763, Boswell visits seven taverns in total, each one only once with the exception of the Mitre in Fleet Street. And here, let me be clear, I am only including places that Boswell identified as "taverns," defined by Johnson's *Dictionary* as "a house where wine is sold and drinkers are entertained." I am not including inns, coffeehouses, chop-houses, eating houses, or Punch houses, all of which Boswell also visits with varying degrees of frequency. Nor indeed alehouses, which Boswell never once mentions in the whole of the journal, though at one point he does call for "bread, cheese and a pint of porter" at a "beerhouse" (119). There is, indisputably, a great deal of overlap between the functions of each of these places, as we have already seen in the John Frost trial where the Percy functions as both a coffeehouse and tavern. Nevertheless the nomenclature is important. Words matter. There was an idea about what the tavern was and what it meant to go there. And as the Frost trial powerfully demonstrates, the same building could be understood in different ways depending on the name by which it was described. Call something a tavern and particular freedoms are assumed and certain behaviors are deemed permissible that are not guaranteed in a coffeehouse, or an alehouse, or a chop house, which each have their own codes of behavior and horizons of expectation.

What is striking about the seven taverns that Boswell visits is the wide range of functions that they serve. At the Rose Boswell dines before going to the theatre; at the Shakespeare's Head he picks up prostitutes and drinks sherry; at the Mitre Boswell enjoys stimulating, improving conversation with Johnson and his circle; at the Robin Hood he attends the meeting of a debating society; at the King's arms he drinks white wine (evidently a novelty) in the afternoon; at the Queen's Head he meets with his printer and bookseller; and at the Star and Garter he has tea (meaning, I think, a light meal rather than the beverage) with a former prostitute, Sally Grant, and her chaperone.⁷ This is a fairly representative sample of the kinds of activities that went on in taverns in the 1760s. And all of them – with the possible exception of the Robin Hood debating Society, entry to which cost six pence – were activities that required a considerable quantity of money, and which were relatively elite pastimes.⁸

Even Boswell, the son of a Scottish lord (albeit one on a restricted allowance), could not afford to attend taverns regularly. And when he does start to visit the Mitre more frequently with Johnson he makes a telling observation:

Mr. Johnson was exceeding good company all this evening. We parted at one. I was very happy. I am now reaping the fruits of my economy during the winter; and I have got rid of the narrowness and love of money which my frugality made me contract. I am afraid I have a disposition to be a miser. But I will combat this by my benevolence, which I have much of. I find I can cure narrowness by practicing free liberality. I have certainly had more enjoyment of my money this evening that if I had spent it in one of your splendid Court-end taverns among a parcel of people that I did not care a farthing for and could receive no benefit from. This evening I have had much pleasure. That is being truly rich. And riches are only a good because men have a pleasure in spending them, or in hoarding them up. I have received this night both instruction and pleasure. (294-5)

Boswell's tavern-going is, he says, only made possible by his earlier frugality, a quality which he considers a problem that has to be overcome. By this account there is a moral dimension to

tavern-going because it encourages the liberality that forms the antidote to his naturally miserly disposition. Boswell sets up a series of binaries that reveal a great deal about the economic and social imperatives of the 1760s. On the one hand he has economy, narrowness, love of money, miserliness, frugality, and antisocial behavior; on the other he has happiness, benevolence, free liberality, pleasure, instruction and the tavern. To be frugal is to be antisocial, to be generous is to be sociable and hence rich. A great deal of pressure is being put on each of these terms as Boswell navigates between a financial economy and an economy of hospitality in order to justify the kind of pleasure that comes from extravagant tavern spending. Nevertheless, it is clear to Boswell that in order to become the benevolent, spiritually (if not financially) wealthy, and learned gentleman that he likes to imagine that he will someday become, he needs to spend time in the tavern.

Not all taverns are alike, however, and Boswell makes it clear that the kind of “instruction and pleasure” that he receives in the company of Johnson is made possible in part by the Mitre itself, and would not be possible in “court-end taverns.” Boswell is referring here to the taverns around Pall Mall and St James’ Street – the St Alban’s Tavern, the Star and Garter, and the Thatched House Tavern the best-known examples, each of which we will encounter again in later chapters – which were located close to St James’s Palace and Carlton House and known for their political connections and political jockeying. The Mitre in Fleet Street, being located away from the fashionable West End, is immune from such interested politicking. Here the conversation is improving, not sycophantic, and pleasure and instruction can be enjoyed in equal measure without being sullied by the machinations of the state. Indeed, the Mitre’s claim as the embodiment of the qualities that Johnson and Boswell most admired in London taverns was dependent upon its location away from the corrupting influences of metropolitan political life.

The Mitre itself was located on the south side of Fleet Street, at number 39, almost opposite the Church of St Dunstan, a short distance to the east of Temple Bar (fig. 1). It was an old tavern in Boswell's day, and is likely to have been the same tavern that Samuel Pepys visited on two occasions on 21 January and 18 February 1660. Rocque's map shows the Mitre standing a little back from Fleet Street itself, connected by a little maze of allies to Serjants Inn and the complex of buildings associated with the King's Bench. This was, then, at the heart of London's legal district, the home of the monarch's official legal representatives – who would by the end of the century be responsible for bringing the trials for treason and sedition, such as John Frost's, to court.



Figure 1: John Rocque, *A Plan of the Cities of London, Westminster and Southwark* (London, 1746)

Boswell frequently met with Johnson and his circle here until Johnson's death in 1784. By this point the Mitre had become well-known for holding meetings of the popular debating societies that flourished in London in the second half of the eighteenth century, one of which Boswell had himself visited at the Robin Hood Tavern in 1763. The Oratorical Society moved to the Mitre in February 1780, from its previous meeting place at Lincoln's Inn Field "for the convenience of more room" (*Westminster Chronicle*, 21 Feb. 1780). This is significant because the Oratorical Society was open to women and so it challenges the common misconception that taverns were all-male venues. We have already seen that Boswell entertained women both at the Shakespeare's Head in Covent Garden and at the Star and Garter in Chelsea. In each case the women that Boswell took there worked as prostitutes, or were former prostitutes, but these were not the only women in taverns. Respectable, educated women also went to taverns to engage in debates, although their presence of these women was highly contentious.

Debating Societies, a form of entertainment and improvement that Donna T. Andrew traces back to the smaller disputing clubs of the 1730s and 40s, had always been associated with taverns. As they became more widespread in the last three decades of the eighteenth century, so their meeting spaces proliferated, but they were originally tavern-based clubs, that met in such places as the Robin Hood in Butcher's Lane, and the Queen's Arms in Newgate Street. The Society for Free Debate is most often associated with Coachmaker's Hall in Nobel-Street, Foster Lane near Cheapside, but it originally met in the Crown Tavern on Bow Lane, moving to Coachmakers'-Hall in November 1777 (Andrew 25), presumably because the Crown was no longer big enough to support the increasingly popular debates that were held there. The Coachmakers' had a "spacious and commodious hall" which the Society for Free Debate made use of until 1792 when the society was closed down because John Thelwall, who was running the

society at the time, insisted that the debates should be of a political nature.⁹ But long before local magistrates began to clamp down on the suspiciously republican sentiments expressed at debating societies meetings, the very act of a large group of people gathering together in a “commodious” space was controversial – and if the meeting was in a tavern like the Mitre, and involved the participation of women, it was all the more likely to face objection.

The advertisements for debates at the Mitre went out of their way to reassure any women who wanted to attend that they would be safe and comfortable. A separate part of the tavern was to be “allotted for Ladies” one advertisement promised, adding that “the room is lighted with wax, and good fires” (*Westminster Chronicle*, 21 Feb. 1780). And indeed the experiment proved a success, with not only the Oratorical Society, but other mixed debating societies meeting there. The Society for Free Debate, for example, began meeting in the “Assembly Room” of the tavern from 8 September 1785 (Andrew 168). They met each Thursday to discuss both political matters, and matters specific to gender, such as “Which is the more dangerous quality to the possessor, Wit in the Male, or Beauty in the Female Sex?” and “Whether the surly Old Bachelor, or the peevish Old Maid, was more contemptible” (*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* 17 Jan. 1787). The topics for these debates suggest that the presence of respectable women at these tavern meetings was a novelty, something that provoked explicit analysis and self-examination.

For Mary Thale, the gendered tavern debates of the 1780s are not serious, when compared with the more politically motivated debates that occurred in the mid-1790s following the publication of Wollstonecraft’s second *Vindication* (*London Debating Societies* 83-4). Certainly, the advertisements placed in newspapers tried to soften any possible controversy regarding the participation of women in tavern debates, urging “those Ladies who mean to favour this Society with their presence” to “attend early, that they may be accommodated with seats” (*General*

Advertiser, 18 Jan. 1787) and insisting on the wit and humor displayed by members of both sexes (*Gazeteer and New Daily Advertiser* 3 Jan. 1787). Nevertheless, the presence of women at tavern debates was not a matter to be taken lightly, as the *Times* made clear: “The debating ladies would be better employed at their needle and thread, a good sempstress being more amiable than a female orator.” (*Times* 29 Oct. 1788, qtd in Andrew xi). This hostile attitude towards female tavern talk suggests that there was more at stake in these debates than whimsical entertainment. “The Question of last Thursday evening,” one advertisement proclaimed, “Whether the spirited girl who elope for love, or the dull insipid female who marries for money, was more blameable,’ was after a most animated debate, replete with wit, humour, and sound argument, determined in favour of the spirited girl” (*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* 3 Jan. 1787). The debates may have been humorous, but they also cultivated “sound argument,” a skill highly prized among male tavern-going circles like the ones in which Johnson and Boswell participated. And indeed across the eighteenth century men had been attending debating societies in order to hone their oratorical skills and train themselves for careers in law, politics, and literature (Thale 57). The subjects under discussion at the Mitre in the 1780s may not have been as weighty as those of the mid-1790s that explicitly discussed equality for women, but women’s inclusion in tavern talk was nevertheless a highly significant incursion of women into the masculine convivial – and potentially professional – domain.

There can be little doubt that Johnson would not have approved of this kind of activity at his beloved Mitre. In the *Life of Johnson* Boswell records an anecdote concerning a debating society that met at Coachmakers’-hall:

The subject for this night was, the text which relates, with other miracles, which happened at our SAVIOUR’S death, “And the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after her resurrection, and went

into the holy city and appeared unto many.” Mrs. Hall said it was a very curious subject, and she would like to hear it discussed. JOHNSON. (somewhat warmly,) “One would not go to such a place to hear it, —one would not be seen in such a place—to give countenance to such a meeting.” (1136-7)

As Jon Mee has pointed out, Johnson thought popular debating societies had “no business discussing what he thought to be established truths of national religion,” especially when women were present (*Conversable Worlds* 99-100). But Johnson’s warm complaint also registers a concern about the spatial configuration of the debate. “One would not go to *such a place*,” Johnson says (emphasis mine) because his attendance would legitimate a gathering of which he wants to be seen to disapprove. Johnson’s objection to debating is no doubt partly due to the subject matter, but it is also partly spatial. Johnson doesn’t want to be associated with the Coachmaker’s Hall, a large venue that could accommodate hundreds of people to engage in open debate (Andrew xi n.12). One can only imagine what he would have made of the very same Society setting up regular debates in his favorite tavern.

Boswell and Johnson’s tavern gatherings were always relatively small, private affairs with a highly circumscribed number of guests, and when they met at the Mitre they would have met in one of the smaller rooms rather than the large assembly hall used by the Society for Free Debate. When Johnson established the Club with Joshua Reynolds at the Turk’s Head Tavern in Gerrard Street in 1764, the number of members was similarly restricted. Initially only nine men were permitted, rising to twelve men in 1768, and when the ranks swelled to thirty in 1777, Johnson grew dissatisfied and set up his own Essex Head Club instead with a membership limited to twenty-four (Mee 94).

The decision that the club should meet in the Turk’s Head tavern, implies that the members of the Club understood that a tavern would be the ideal place in which young aspiring

gentlemen with a literary bent might gather to discuss ideas pertaining to literature, art, and politics. Taverns, in the Johnsonian tradition, were spaces that encouraged stimulating conversation, in which aspiring writers, actors, artists and politicians could, through their networked interests and the interchange of ideas, develop a sense of themselves *as* writers, actors, artists and politicians. As Charles Burney later wrote, “it was Johnson’s wish that our Club should be composed of the heads of every liberal and literary profession, that we might not talk nonsense on any subject that might be started, but have somebody to refer to in our doubts and discussions, by whose Science we might be enlightened” (Boswell *Correspondence* 331). The project of Johnson’s Club, as Burney’s comments indicate, was explicitly an enlightenment project. By meeting together its members would contribute the one another’s stock of knowledge, and become increasingly learned in all branches of the “liberal and literary” professions. And as Boswell’s diaries make abundantly clear, this undertaking was explicitly a reflexive exercise in self-definition, in viewing oneself as a participant in an culture of learned men, worthy of their company and understanding oneself as a literary man.¹⁰

This process of literary self-construction was importantly premised upon the Club’s exclusivity. This exclusivity was reinforced by the meeting place, the Turk’s Head tavern, the building for which – unlike the Mitre, which was destroyed in the 1830s and about which surprisingly little information remains – still exists, and can thus provide helpful information about the spatial configurations of the Club.

The Turk’s Head was located at 9, Gerrard Street, in what is now Chinatown in Soho. (The building is currently the New Loon Moon Asian supermarket, which bears the requisite plaque celebrating the Club). As with most buildings it has undergone considerable alteration since it was occupied by Christopher Winch, a victualler who had previously kept the Turk’s

Head in Greek Street, and moved to Gerrard Street in 1759, when the building was first constructed. Nevertheless, the basic layout of the premises remains broadly in tact. The house consists of a basement, three storeys and a dormered mansard roof. There is substantial brick wall running down the center of the house from front to back, dividing the interior into two parts of equal width. According to the *Survey of London*, written in 1966 before the building had been divided in two, “the east side of the house is deeper than the west and contains two rooms on each floor, the long back room having, as its only source of daylight, a two-light window in the west wall, opening to a north-west area. The west part contains a front room behind which is the spacious staircase compartment” (fig. 2) (*Survey* 329).

The suite of rooms on the second floor was probably that used by the Club, and was not greatly altered when it was described in characteristically loving detail by the *Survey of London*:

the largest room, at the back is fully wainscoted in deal, with a plain dado finished by a cornice-rail below a series of tall wide plain panels, in framing finished with an ovolo and an inside fillet. The box-cornice of generous girth, is enriched with an egg-and-dart ovolo below the plain corona, and a leaf-ornamented cyma above. The wide chimney-breast, projecting centrally from the north end wall, has one large oblong panel above an advanced face, finished with a corniced-capping, against which the chimneypiece is fixed. This chimneypiece of wood, simple in design, with an ovolo architrave framing marble slips, now painted, a plain pulvino frieze, and a cornice-shelf. (*Survey of London* 390)

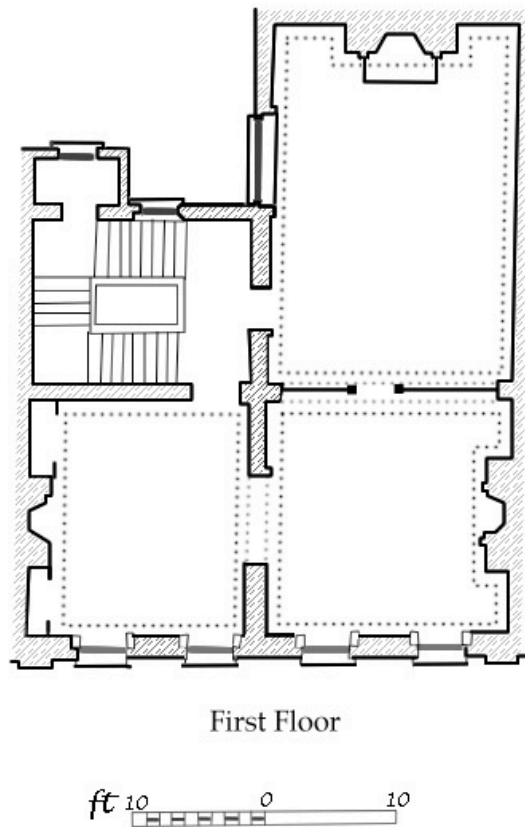


Figure 2: Floor plan of the "First Floor" (i.e. U.S. second floor) of 9, Gerrard Street.
Adapted from *Survey of London* 34: 389.

Measuring approximately seventeen by thirty feet this large back room is a relatively small space compared with the other tavern spaces we will be encountering in this study, appropriate for gatherings of an exclusive club of gentlemen. Certainly there would not be space in any of these rooms for debating societies with hundreds of spectators, as we are told gathered in the assembly room of the Mitre (Andrew xi, n.12).¹¹ The Turk's Head's size is appropriate for the use to which it was put by the Club – a meeting place for an exclusive society of the best-known writers and artists of the day. The wainscoting (defined by Johnson's *Dictionary* as “the inner wooden covering of a wall”) would have leant the room a dark, opulence typically associated with more up-market

interiors of the period, enhanced by the marble slips. (The photograph in fig 3 shows the wainscoting in 1965, now painted white, but would originally have been of exposed wood). At the same time, however, the decorations are relatively modest compared with some of the other taverns we will encounter. The chimney piece is described as, “simple in design” and the egg-and-dart pattern of the ovolo (a kind of convex moulding) was an entirely standard decorative motif. The Turk’s Head tavern was elegant, but not ostentatious, small enough to be intimate, but large enough to offer sufficient space for a gathering of great minds. It was space that could provide domestic comforts, in which the members’ wit and wisdom could be given free reign, at a sufficient distance from the potentially corrupting influence of the ostentatious world of the court. In short, it reflected to the Club members precisely the qualities that the members hoped their Club might embody.



Figure 3: Second floor back room in 1965. Reproduced from *Survey of London* xxxiv, plate 65b.

In some ways my point is entirely unexceptional. When men gathered in taverns to talk about literature, politics, or anything else, they selected venues that best suited the purposes for which they had gathered. The corollary to this, however, is that you can learn a great deal about the aims, intentions and self-projections of a given gathering by understanding the venues in which they chose to gather.

According to Boswell, the Club moved from the Turk's Head when it was converted into a private house in 1783 (*Life* 339). Four years later the Mitre also closed its doors. Whether there was any direct correlation between the use of the Mitre for debates at which women were present and its closure, we can at this point only speculate. Nevertheless the closure of these two taverns within four years of each other provides an index of a larger pattern in developing tavern conviviality: the smaller, older taverns of the early eighteenth century were being superceded by much larger taverns with magnificent assembly rooms intended to accommodate large, explicitly "public" meetings. As we will see in greater detail in Chapter 2 this new form of tavern was initiated by the London Tavern in 1764, which had a massive impact on both tavern architecture and the ways that conviviality was perceived. When in the John Frost trial, Erskine asked the jury if the time had come when a gentleman must "fill his wine by a measure" and be on his guard against "opening his soul," he was appealing to an older idea about the tavern, inherited from the Johnsonian tradition, which understood the tavern as an exclusive, private and gentlemanly space but which by the 1790s was no longer applicable. By the end of the century Erskine's fantasy of the tavern as a private space had become entirely unsustainable.

Nevertheless, Erskine's comments suggest the power of the idea about the tavern that Johnson had articulated, and this idea continued to shape the symbolic meaning of the tavern long after the architectural form had changed. For this reason I'm skeptical about approaches to

physical space that privilege the material form over the literary constructions. I'm thinking here of scholars who critique Habermas' theory of the public sphere on the grounds that coffeehouses "were not really like that."¹² Regardless of whether coffeehouses were, in fact, places where differences of rank and class were suspended, or where the best argument won the day, those ideas nevertheless shaped the experience of going to the coffeehouse. Regardless of the historical reality, these were the ideas and principles to which the coffeehouse and its patrons often aspired. So it is with the tavern. Whether or not the tavern ever was – or could be – the idealized domestic space for improvement and conversation that Johnson described it as, the idea was important to the way that men, like Boswell, experienced it. The most sophisticated accounts of space, it seems to me, are those which combine an account of the physical structure, with an account of the way it was used, while simultaneously taking into account attempts to theorize the space and give it what we might think of as a literary, imaginative form, which in turn feeds back into the material form and its uses. That is the task that I have undertaken in this dissertation. The problem, of course, is when two different narratives compete to define the same physical structure, which is precisely what happened in the Frost Trial, and which happened again and again over the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries until the tavern finally ceased to exist as a recognizable and distinct institutional formation.

Literature

Before sketching out the contours of the rest of this project I want to reflect for a moment on what it means to use James Boswell as a guide to the convivial culture of the 1760s, as I have been doing. Though there is no reason to suppose that Boswell's record of the taverns he visited is inaccurate, the journal is nevertheless palpably motivated by his desire to construct an identity

for himself. This is evident on virtually every page, where he consistently compares his actions to various literary models. Boswell has, he says, a plan of “studying polite reserved behaviour,” a combination of Addison’s character in sentiment, Sir Richard Steele’s gait, and West Digges’s (the actor’s) deportment and fashion (61-3). At other times he likes to view himself as “a Man of Pleasure” (140), a “great man” (298), or a man who can hear a church service with “true devotion” (265). The insistent reflexive turn in the journal is echoed in the mode of its composition, which as Frederick Pottle has discussed, was not consistent. Sometimes, Pottle points out, Boswell would fall behind several days in his writing and catch up at one sitting, providing him with opportunities to plan and maximize narrative effects, such as the suspense built over his dalliance with the actress Louisa Lewis (Boswell *London Journal* 11-13). The mode of the journal’s composition, that is, allows Boswell to create familiar narrative patterns into which he can cast himself.

The primary unit of this narrative, however, is the anecdote, the short, metonymic story constructed to be “representative,” but which when collected on mass has a tendency to contradict itself.¹³ Boswell’s *Journal*, like his *Life of Johnson* and like the existing histories of the tavern, participates in subgenre of the anecdote that is often referred to as “table talk,” a genre to which the title of this dissertation alludes. When writers prepared their reminiscences of literary life in the metropolis for publication, they took for granted that what their audiences most wanted to read were anecdotes about the conversations and encounters, witticisms, and *bon mots* of the great writers of their day. Most often these involved recollections of conversations held over dinner, often (though by no means exclusively) at the tavern. Anecdotes of the conversations of John Selden, Samuel Johnson, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Samuel Foote, Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw have all been collected under the title “table talk,” William Hazlitt has a

collection of essays, and William Cowper a poem by the same name. The genre is supposed to represent informal chat, and its underlying premise is that in recording the speech of the great men of letters in unguarded moments, not in their polished publications, we can know them better and love them more. The true genius of the writer, it is assumed, might be more visible in their spontaneous effusions of wit than in their carefully crafted literary productions. Table talk thus promises to both supplement and supplant more traditional literary forms by offering what cannot be gleaned from published writing – evidence of the consistent brilliance of the writer, even, and especially, when they are not speaking with a public audience in mind.

Yet the fantasy of table talk as a candid look at the monumental literary figure in private moments is complicated by the desire of the (usually male) subject to shape his literary legacy precisely through his conversational performances. Samuel Johnson for one knew that Boswell was recording his conversations in his journal, and writers knew that in order to participate in masculine literary culture they would need to cultivate their conversational style and formulate memorable *bon mots*. The essays collected in William Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age*, for example, are unremitting in their judgment of the Age's great literary figures according to their ability to engage in sparkling displays of verbal dexterity around the table. Despite Godwin's "incessant activity of mind," for example, his "powers of conversation are but limited" (35-6). Horne Tooke could "make a mere child of him [Godwin]—or any man" (36), and had a talent for "a ready repartee, a shrewd cross-question, ridicule and banter" (72-3). Southey's conversation is like a commonplace book, he is "not remarkable either as a reasoner or an observer: but he is quick, unaffected, replete with anecdote" (128). "The tones of Coleridge's conversation are eloquence" (128) and he is deemed the "most impressive talker of his age" (41). Leigh Hunt in conversation is "all life and animation, combining the vivacity of the school-boy with the resources of the wit and

the taste of the scholar” (289). Table talk for Hazlitt is combative, intended to “set the individual off to advantage,” but unlike the tavern talk of Johnson and his circle, where conversation is much more clearly aligned to improvement and enlightenment, Hazlitt is much more ambivalent about the transformative potential of talk. Where for Boswell the combative conversation he enjoys with Johnson is unambiguously beneficial to his mind and morals, for Hazlitt table talk is often cruel, pointless, and intended to show off the brilliance of the speaker at the expense of others. For Boswell, brilliance in conversation directly reflects the brilliance of the mind and translates seamlessly into other pursuits: literature, politics, acting, art (to name just a few of the professions practiced by members of Johnson’s Club); for Hazlitt, table talk has a particular form of its own which does not necessarily translate into written works or public oration. Coleridge, for example, is a better talker than he is a writer (41), and Tooke was a particularly talented conversationalist, but lacked the capacity to move an audience when speaking in parliament (72). Indeed, Hazlitt’s *Spirit of the Age* reconsiders table talk as reliable measure of literary merit, and recognizes that the greatest writers of the age are by no means the greatest conversationalists. It nevertheless remains committed to describing the style of each subjects’ private conversation as if nostalgic for a time when literature and conversation were more seamlessly integrated – a nostalgia which pervades many of the accounts of the tavern.

Inaugurated, perhaps, by William West’s *Tavern Anecdotes* (1825), the taverns in which table talk occurred became themselves objects of interest, and from the mid-nineteenth century books dedicated to chronicling the taverns of London and their literary associations became a substantial industry. John Timbs (1866), Edward Callow (1899), Henry Shelley (1909), and Leopold Wagner (1924), published books describing the taverns of old London and detailing the literary men who frequented them. Antiquarians such as Frederic Crace, John Paul De Castro,

D. Foster, and Philip Norman set about collecting newspaper clippings, images, and other materials relating to taverns in order to provide an archive of materials relating to these institutions that were understood as central locations to the cultural life of the metropolis.¹⁴

While this instinct still lives on in London guidebooks, in books and websites dedicated to historic Pubs of London, and indeed in the London pubs themselves which proudly proclaim their associations with the authors who frequented them in the past, the centrality of the tavern to the way we narrate literary history diminished considerably over the course of the twentieth century. Many of the taverns that had once connected London to its literary past had been destroyed, no longer offering a material reminder of the sites of literary production. More significantly, as English Literature as a distinct discipline became institutionalized in universities across the twentieth century, the anecdotal history of literature that connected literary works to the lived experience of their authors came to seem amateurish, associated with popular literary history, not a serious scholarly concern. That the taverns with which authors were familiar frequently made their way into their published works is, I believe, justification enough to revisit these sites that have been too long ignored, and to ask what they can reveal about the texts in which they appear, the relationship of text to context, and literature's relationship to seriousness and pleasure.

This dissertation is founded on the premise that a reconsideration of the tavern, and its role in the development of literature is long overdue, and that a study of metropolitan tavern culture informed by recent critical approaches reveals a very different institution to the one posited by nineteenth-century observers. On the one hand this study aims to move beyond the oft-repeated, unsubstantiated anecdotes told about the taverns in popular guidebooks to the Taverns of Old London by uncovering new evidence, taken from contemporary accounts of

taverns from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to reveal what taverns were like, what happened in them, and how they were understood. This social-historical aspect of what follows is made possible by recent developments in access to primary resources now available and searchable online. We no longer need to rely on the same anecdotes that are repeated and embellished in the popular histories of the tavern. Now we can quickly and easily search contemporary newspapers for information on individual taverns, which, supplemented by digitally reproduced images, architectural plans, and trial proceedings (to name just a few of the digital resources that I have relied upon in the pages that follow) can give us a much fuller sense of the range of activities that occurred in London's taverns, and how they were perceived. Wherever possible, rather than relying on spurious anecdotal evidence about taverns, I have authenticated my claims with primary research, either in physical or digital archives. Whenever an address is mentioned I have confirmed a tavern's location on a contemporary map; whenever a date for the opening or closing of a tavern is given, I have confirmed the dates with newspaper coverage, or other contemporary archival documentation, and each source has been carefully recorded in the endnotes. In short, part of this project consists of a more scholarly reconsideration of the taverns discussed in popular accounts of the Taverns of Old London. This approach gives access to a much wider series of concerns centering on the tavern. Rather than mythologizing the tavern as the source of England's literary genius, a nationalist agenda that is explicit in many of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century accounts of the tavern, contemporary documents reveal an institution caught up in a complex negotiation of England's place in a global economy, as the commercial interests of Empire confront the ideologies of domestic patriotism head on (see especially chapter 2). This reconsideration also reveals that the metropolitan tavern was not quite the exclusively male, homosocial domain that the retailers of

tavern anecdotes presented. Throughout this study we will find women of all kinds in taverns, working as singers, waitresses, prostitutes, and owners, and attending the dinners, debates, concerts, and balls that were held in them. Finally, this study demonstrates the importance of the tavern to the way the category of “literature” was conceived, and to the limitations placed on the imagination by government attempts to limit what was being discussed in taverns, and how this tavern talk made its way into print (see especially Chapter 3).

On the other hand, I do not mean to dismiss the anecdotal histories of the tavern – and there are numerous tavern anecdotes in what follows. Indeed, I want to recognize the importance of myth, legend, and carefully constructed *bon mots* – of tavern talk – to the history of the tavern and to its construction as a domain of experience straddling the real and the fictional. As Erskine’s appeal to the Johnsonian tavern ideal in the Frost trial demonstrates, these myths structured the lived experience of the tavern, and the possibilities for permissible behavior. In this, my project shares much in common with Helen Deutsch’s *Loving Dr. Johnson*, a work that, among other things, attempts to recuperate the anecdote from its designation as “bad history” and to show its value as a literary genre that attests to the importance of readerly desire. Part of this desire, Deutsch argues, is for preservation. It is the impulse to rescue dead authors from mortality by keeping alive the stories that seemingly offer to preserve the reality of their personal experience, beyond the published works (15-27). This was the way that eighteenth-century writers understood the anecdote, which Johnson, defined in his dictionary as “something left unpublished; secret history.”

Writing in 1793, Isaac D’Israeli described anecdotes as “substitutes,” by which “we are enabled, in no ordinary degree, to realise the society of those who are no more; and to become more real cotemporaries [*sic*] with the great men of another age, than were even their

cotemporaries themselves” (50). This desire to “join the society of eminent men,” to link the living to the dead, is precisely what the tavern offers. It holds out the promise of a material form that exists through time, connecting the literary past to our present.

In an essay on ‘Pleasant Recollections Connected with Various Parts of the Metropolis’ for *The Indicator* Leigh Hunt, described the capacity of taverns to connect the present with figures from literary history:

But who knows not Eastcheap and the Boar’s-head? Have we not all been there time out of mind? And is it not a more real as well as notorious thing to us than the London tavern, or the Crown and Anchor, or the Hummums, or White’s, or What’s-his-name’s, or any other of your contemporary and fleeting taps? But a line or two, a single sentence in an author of former times, will often give a value to the commonest object. It not only gives us a sense of its duration, but we seem to be looking at it in company with its old observer; and we are reminded, at the same time, of all that was agreeable in him. (23)

Hunt’s claim that the world of the Boar’s Head, the tavern frequented by Falstaff in Shakespeare’s *Henry IV* plays, is timeless and that the physical world of the London taproom is fleeting and insignificant is, in some ways, a characteristically Romantic view of the role of literature. Shakespeare here is being recruited into the ranks of the Romantic poets, the power of his imagination creating literature whose significance far exceeds its immediate historical moment. The literary past provides food for the inadequacies of the present, just as Wordsworth’s Tintern Abbey provides “life and food / For future years.”

What I want to draw attention to here, though, is the importance of the material world to this idealized and timeless literary domain. The Boar’s Head may be primarily associated with the time when Shakespeare wrote the *Henry IV* plays, but it was still standing when Hunt was writing in 1819. (It was finally demolished in 1831.) It is important for Hunt that the tavern still exists, that it is a site of cultural memory that has a material form and which can be visited and

experienced. The Boar's Head that we have visited in our imaginations is predicated upon the actual material existence of the tavern; the tavern is a material structure that satisfies the reader's desire to be connected with dead authors.

Depending on your perspective, it is either an unfortunate fact, or a delicious irony that the Boar's Head in Eastcheap in which Leigh Hunt imagines communing with Shakespeare was not, in fact, the tavern that Shakespeare used as a setting for *1 Henry IV*. That building burned down in the great fire of 1666 and a new structure – also called the Boar's Head – was built in its place in 1668 (Rogers 29). But Leigh Hunt was not the only one taken in by this act of subterfuge. Oliver Goldsmith is similarly mistaken in his *A Reverie at the Boar's Head-Tavern in Eastcheap* (97-112), and Boswell in his *Journal of A Tour to the Hebrides* mentions to Johnson “a club in London, at the Boar's Head in Eastcheap, the very tavern where Falstaff and his companions met; the members of which all assume Shakespeare's characters” (307). In 1820 Washington Irving, in the persona of Geoffrey Crayon, sets out to “see if the old Boar's Head Tavern still exists,” but is disappointed to find that the original tavern is no longer there (115).

This slippage between material history and fictionalized fantasy pervades many of the anecdotal accounts of the tavern. Consider, for example, Peter Cunningham's description of the Mitre Tavern in his *Handbook of London: Past and Present*:

The Mitre Tavern, Mitre Court, Fleet Street, over against Fetter-Lane. The Mitre of Dr Johnson and James Boswell, where Johnson used to drink his bottle of port and keep late hours. It was here that Johnson said to Ogilvie, in reply to his observation, that Scotland had a great many noble prospects: “I believe, Sir, you have a great many; Norway too has noble wild prospects, and Lapland is remarkable for prodigious noble wild prospects; but Sir, let me tell you, the noblest prospect which a Scotsman ever sees is the high road that leads him to England.” Here strangely enough if Johnson had remembered the saying, the tour to the Hebrides was first started; and here, at their old rendezvous, as Boswell calls it, Goldsmith often supped with Johnson and Boswell. Here Johnson entertained

“young Col.” when in London. In Johnson’s time the landlord’s name was Cole. The present landlord is far from insensible to the fame which Boswell has bestowed upon his house, and Johnson’s warm corner, distinguished by a cast from Nolleken’s bust of the great moralist, is still pointed out to enquiring strangers. (1:340)

The repeated “here” of Cunningham’s list of factoids insists on the importance of the precise geography of the anecdote. The Mitre tavern is significant because these famous Johnsonian *bon mots* were uttered here and nowhere else, and we now can occupy the same space in which these well-loved sentences were uttered, a space that has been monumentalized with a Johnsonian bust. The tavern forms a community with the past, shapes the experience of the present, and our understanding of our own position in history. Too bad, then, that the Mitre that Boswell and Johnson frequented closed in 1787, converted into a gallery to display Thomas Macklin’s portraits of British Poets (*Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, 21 Mar. 1788), before being ripped down in the 1830s (Bell 493). Johnson’s Mitre Tavern had not been in Mitre Court at all, but on Fleet Street, nearby (fig. 1). I point this out, not to undermine the credibility of the anecdotal form of tavern talk, but to suggest the capacity that taverns hold for fulfilling the desire of connecting readers to the past – a desire so powerful that it can overwhelm even the historical reality the tavern apparently upholds.

This dissertation, then, is not a comprehensive history of the Taverns of London – that book has yet to be written – and while the chapters are arranged broadly speaking in chronological order, this arrangement should not be taken to imply that the work forms a systematic survey of tavern history in the manner of Peter Clark’s work on the English Alehouse. Rather the chapters offer a series of different perspectives on the vexed relationship between literature and politics as observed through the lens of the tavern. This dissertation is not a discussion of great pub scenes in literature – for that I recommend Steven Earnshaw’s

entertaining and informative *The Pub In Literature*. Nor indeed is it a study of the consumption of alcohol in the period – Anya Taylor’s *Bacchus in Romantic England*, begins to tackle that huge and complex issue. Rather, it is an attempt to understand the importance of the tavern to the way that literature was conceived and understood, and the importance of literature to the way the tavern was built and understood, at a time when both the tavern and the category of literature were undergoing dramatic and irrevocable change.

By “Tavern Talk,” I mean to refer to the culture of conviviality that occurred in taverns, to the talking, the drinking, the toasting, and the singing that occurred behind tavern doors, and that all too often threatened to spill outside of the confines of domestic tavern space into other, less forgiving venues. But I also mean to refer to the anecdotes and myths that circulate about taverns, their capacity for opening a window into the past, and for connecting that past to the present – along with the accompanying fears of anachronism that these atemporal dislocations inspire (see especially chapter 5). In the case of the John Frost trial, the Johnsonian myth of tavern talk structures Erskine’s understanding of the behaviors that might legitimately occur within the tavern. Problems arise, however, when the talk overflows from the tavern to the coffeehouse. But private tavern conversations threatened to invade other areas of metropolitan life too. In chapter one, “Captain Morris in Full Glee,” I discuss the Westminster Election of 1784, when Captain Charles Morris shot to fame as a writer and singer of obscene political ballads that promoted Charles James Fox’s Whigs. Morris’s songs were almost universally applauded for their bawdy yet clever humor when they were sung at the tavern meetings of the Whigs, but met with an altogether more ambivalent response when sung at balls at which women, such as the Duchess of Devonshire, were also present. In chapter two, “Edmund Burke in the Tavern,” I consider Burke’s discussion of London societies at which the significance of the

French Revolution was debated. Here, I argue, Burke's concern is with an emerging middle class that has gained wealth through commercial speculation, that is educated, and that meets in London's taverns to discuss politics. The problem for Burke emerges when these tavern clubs publish their proceedings in print and thus make the saucy declamations of tavern talk accessible to a much wider public.

Chapter three, "Crown and Anchor Dreams," discusses in detail one of the taverns that got caught in the crossfire of revolutionary politics and the loyalist counter-revolutionary backlash. The Crown and Anchor had been a meeting place for literary tavern talk since the 1710s, and supplies the venue for a number of Boswellian anecdotes in the *Life of Johnson*. By the 1790s, however, it had gained a reputation for contentious political discussion as a meeting place both of John Reeves's Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers, and reformist groups from across the socio-economic spectrum, including Fox's Whig Club, the Society for Constitutional Information, and the London Corresponding Society. In both graphic satires and in prose works of the early 1790s the Crown and Anchor is depicted as a site of combustible political opinions that threaten to spill out into the surrounding streets and spread across the nation. By the mid-1790s, however, as the government's campaign to suppress errant political opinions took hold, the tavern is consistently represented more ambivalently, more cautiously, and comes to signify the combustible political opinions that can no longer be openly discussed.

My fourth chapter, "Silencing the Alehouse Ballad," shows how the political ballads that were associated with tavern culture also affected its more humble cousin, the alehouse. While many of the songs that were sang in alehouses were the same as those sung in taverns, the alehouse became the locus for a revolution of morals and manners that conservative reformers

hoped would ultimately compel a corresponding revolution in tavern behavior. Attempts to clean up the culture of alehouse singing by replacing loose, immoral and political songs with pious hymns and psalms were only partially successful, but as Wordsworth's preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* attests, raucous ballad singing came under increased scrutiny, and politically-motivated balladry came to rely more heavily on print, than on convivial assembly.

My final chapter, "Anacreontics and Anachronism" returns to Captain Morris, the singer of bawdy tavern ballads in the 1780s, who had continued writing convivial poetry throughout the turbulent revolutionary period, and by the 1820s and 30s was feverishly trying to refashion himself as a polite poet. Living into his nineties Morris had outlived all his former heavy-drinking companions and was left to reflect on the legacies of a convivial lifestyle that had come to be regarded as the barbarous behavior of a pre-modern age. Identifying with the taverns that he watched being ripped down Morris recognizes that his devotion to Bacchus is out step with the improvement narratives of modernity, but nevertheless displays a pervasive nostalgia for the world of masculine conviviality in which he made his name. I show how Morris's verse was adopted by the song and supper clubs of the 1820s and 30s. Now, however, rather than offering a patriotic expression of the ideologies of the ruling classes, Morris's "social effusions" were performed in the illicit taverns of an atavistic underworld. The songs sung in these "queer haunts" should, I argue, be understood as attempts to negotiate a place in nineteenth-century culture for a convivial ideology whose mirth refused to be entirely extinguished. They recognize what might be lost in the effort to shape the metropolis into a respectable, sober, imperial center.

Taken together these chapters trace a revolution in metropolitan sociability, from an age when men could gather in taverns to help cultivate an image of themselves as the leading figures of a masculine literary culture, to a time when this fantasy had been exposed as thoroughly

unsustainable. *Tavern Talk* is about the talk that happens in taverns and the talk that happens about taverns. It is a study of the talk that constitutes the tavern as such. But it is also committed to the importance of the materiality of the tavern as a key site for initiating talk, and for considering how ideas both literary and extra-literary shape the built world, and how the built world gives shape to ideas.

Chapter 1

Captain Morris in Full Glee

Shortly after Charles James Fox had secured victory in the controversial Westminster Election of 1784, Frances Crewe, the celebrated society hostess, held a celebratory ball. The guests were a highly select group of influential figures including the Prince of Wales, the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, the Duchess of Portland, Earl Fitzwilliam, the Earl of Jersey, Lord North, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Reports on the celebration in the morning newspapers, however, focused not on the royalty, nobility, and leading Whigs in attendance, but on Captain Charles Morris, a songwriter and poet whose performance of his famously seditious song, “Baby and Nurse,” attracted enthusiastic acclamation:

The supper business was soon dispatched and at the unanimous request of the Ladies, Captain Morris was placed in the chair, and a general call ensued for the Baby and Nurse; he sung it in his very best stile, and the fair circle chorused with the most heart-felt spirit. The ladies then drank his health, and cheered him three times with true festive glee; upon which Captain Morris, after thanking the fair company for the honour of their charming approbation, gave as a toast *buff and blue and Mrs. Crew*, to which Mrs. Crew very smartly returned in a glass, with a *buff and blue and all of you*. The toasts being drank, a party in another supper-room, consisting of Lord North, the Duchess of Portland, Lady Jersey, and others, sent a deputation to Captain Morris, requesting him to come into their room, upon which he went, and gave that company *the Baby and Nurse*, he then came back to the great room in a crash of applause from the Ladies fair hands, and resumed the chair; the company from the other room soon followed, and he entertained them with a continual succession of droll songs – applicable to the times, and sung them with a spirit that made every fair eye in the room dance with delight. (Hartley 378-9)

This report, which originally appeared in Mary Say’s *General Evening Post* (18-20 May 1784) – one of the very few newspapers run by a woman – is notable for the way it insists on women’s

participation in rituals typically associated with masculine tavern culture. The repetition of “fair” in the report (“the fair circle,” “the fair company,” the “Ladies fair hands,” “every fair eye in the room”) integrates the heavily encoded word into a discourse of male conviviality – of drinking, singing, cheering and toasting – suggesting that feminine “fairness” and masculine rituals of convivial assembly might be harmoniously assimilated. The ability of the “fair ladies” to appreciate Captain Morris’s songs, legitimizes their participation at political gatherings, while their “fairness,” with its suggestions of beauty, lightness, and genteel civility, diffuses the threat of women whose incursions into politics were more frequently depicted as an aggressive usurpation of a male domain.¹

The report complicates some of the familiar narratives we have constructed about the relationship of gender and politics in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in particular the notion that women’s exclusion from politics during this period was in part a result of their exclusion from the kinds of convivial assemblies in which men gathered to discuss politics. I’m thinking in particular of Catherine Hall’s observation that “the fact that the location of...many of the clubs [in which politics were discussed] was in the tavern, clarifies one reason for women’s exclusion from them” (158). Hall has in mind in particular the middle class women who failed to campaign for suffrage when their male counterparts did, rather than the aristocratic women who were Frances Crewe’s guests, nevertheless the newspaper report, directed largely at a middle-class audience, suggests that political-convivial assembly and femininity were not always necessarily at odds, even for the middle classes.

Since Hall made her observations about the separation of male and female sociability and its impact on political discussion (to which I will return later), a number of important advances have been made in our understanding of sociability in the period. Gillian Russell, in particular,

has explored the varieties of female sociability in the late eighteenth century and has drawn our attention to a variety of venues that catered to specifically female sociability, such as the Carlisle House Club, the Pantheon, and the Ladies Club or Coterie, through which women challenged the masculine nature of metropolitan public life. And, from a different perspective, Marc Baer has documented the ways in which women, while not able to vote, nevertheless greatly influenced the outcome of elections, in part, by occupying the public spaces in which voting occurred (Baer *Rise and Fall* 137-146). Here, I want to approach the question of women's participation in political discussion by considering their relationship to one of the central components of political-convivial culture, the drinking song. As the report from the *General Evening Post* suggests, convivial singing, far from being the bawdy form that we frequently assume it to be, was understood as a perfectly respectable form of polite entertainment, that women could enjoy as much as men. And the writers of drinking songs – like Captain Charles Morris – were among the most celebrated artists of their day. Of course, this does not preclude the possibility that drinking songs might also be bawdy, which they often were, but it nevertheless points to a much more complicated relationship between politics, gender, and rudeness in the convivial assemblies of the late eighteenth century than narratives about the separation of male and female sociability often acknowledge. The exclusion of middle-class women from convivial gatherings required the development of an association between bawdy humor and impropriety, which had not always been readily apparent.

In this chapter I want to rethink our received ideas about women's exclusion from political-convivial culture by focusing on the triangulated relationship between Captain Charles Morris, the Duchess of Devonshire and convivial singing in the 1780s. I will explore some of the drinking songs that Morris sang at the gatherings of Fox's Whigs during the 1784 Westminster

election, in order to consider what kinds of messages these songs held for his audience, how his performances were understood to aid Fox in his election campaign, and what it meant for the Duchess of Devonshire to be associated with this kind of drinking song. I will then discuss the role of convivial singing at the meetings of the Anacreontic Society, where Morris's songs were frequently performed, showing how these drinking songs had a different meaning for this specifically middle-class society than they did for the more aristocratic Whigs. I will show how the Duchess of Devonshire's presence at one of their meetings helped to consolidate the association between bawdy humor and impropriety, which it had been previously possible to overlook. This will put us in a better position to understand why it was that middle-class women were marginalized from the convivial gatherings through which men mounted their campaign to extend the franchise. First, however, it will be necessary to understand a little better the much misunderstood genre of the drinking song, and to see how it functioned in the convivial meetings of the 1780s.

The rules of conviviality

In 1782, the Paternoster Row printer John Fielding published *The Convivial Songster*, a collection of nearly two hundred "Songs of Humour," with titles such as "Bacchus, one day gaily striding," "Fair Venus, they say," and "Gay Bacchus, liking Escourt's wine," each accompanied by a musical score, and prefaced by the editor's comments on the best way of performing these songs. Observing, "there is no accomplishment more engaging to those who delight in conviviality than that of singing, when agreeably executed," the editor notices that frequently "the person with the worst voice gives the greatest pleasure." This is, he claims, a peculiarity resulting from the fact that the pleasure of drinking songs lies less in the musical abilities of the performer, than in the

“happy taste in selecting good words,” or by some humorous “peculiarity in the singer.” While understanding that it would be impracticable to make a person humorous by giving him rules, the editor nevertheless proceeds to offer advice to the convivialist about how best to perform songs in a pleasing manner.

The first principle for all convivialists is “not to need much entreaty to sing.” “If we go into society,” he continues, “it is our duty to be conformable and good-humoured... This disposition to oblige establishes the reputation of cheerfulness, good sense, and propriety: the reverse must consequently have the contrary effect. It should be remembered likewise, that to sing without being requested is equally improper, as it always makes a person appear vain and sometimes contemptibly so” (i-ii). The editor then proceeds to offer nine further rules, each with an extended discussion, ranging from the pragmatics of singing (“sing from the chest, and not from the throat;” “Not to sing through the nose”) to more ideologically loaded, aesthetic advice about the best way of being agreeable to the company (“Avoid vulgarity of manner,” “not to be too fond of trills, graces, and divisions”). The introduction to the *Convivial Songster* demonstrates that conviviality involved a series of highly regulated interactions that were taken very seriously. While the overall effect was to achieve “humour,” convivial merriment was not understood as raucous intemperance, but the ability to be agreeable to the company within highly circumscribed limits – with all the attendant potential for error and the consequent forms of embarrassment that implies. Moreover, the principles upon which these limits were based were principles of propriety. Humor was in service of polite convivial civility, according to the editor of the *Songster*, and should be precisely ordered to demonstrate the taste, good sense, and elegance of its participants.

The fact that the author found it necessary to enumerate these principles suggests that they were not always well observed. “There cannot be any thing more offensive to a well-formed taste than the present mode of company-singing,” the editor complains. “They aspirate in the middle of words; they affect a roll, and a slang manner, as it is called; they bawl as loud as they can; they offend against every rule that is here laid down. Such is the common vulgar manner, and yet it is universally imitated” (v). The tavern convivialist frequently imitates the manner of the vulgar alehouse balladeer, the editor complains, determined to present himself as a gentlemanly connoisseur of the art of polite convivial practice.

What is most remarkable, perhaps, is that this civility extends only to the performance, less so to the *content* of the songs. Despite the claims that “songs that have no merit but what consist in obscenity have been carefully excluded” and that the editor has carefully removed any obscenities from the songs, the *Songster* is avowedly “a manual of the bon vivant, and not the parlour.” The songs are too risqué for a domestic setting, but appropriate for a tavern, and the opening song offers an example of the kind of words that might be heard with impunity at a convivial gathering, but not in a parlor:

Last night a dream came into my head,
Thou wert a fine white loaf of bread:
Then, if May butter I could be,
How I would spread, oh! how I would spread myself on thee!
This morning, too my thoughts ran hard,
That thou wert made a cool tankard;
Then, could I but a lemon be,
How I would squeeze, oh! how would I squeeze my juice in thee! (2)

According to the introduction, the songs included in the collection were those that displayed “wit or humour,” but none that were “obscene.” For the editor of the *Convivial Songster* “obscenity”

included words deemed “vulgar,” but did not extend to metaphoric depictions of sexual acts. The “wit” of figurative language, no matter how crude the comparison may be, was adequate to relinquish it from accusations of vulgarity. And indeed a song’s “wit” was its chief recommendation.

While the editor presents the music to the songs, the music remains very much secondary to the words. Some of the songs, he says, “have been inserted as much for the sake of the music as the words, but there are none where the words are totally destitute of merit.” The editor appeals to lovers of poetry who are best equipped to judge the value of the songs. “Those who are well read in English lyric poetry will, it is presumed, do the songs in this collection the justice to acknowledge they are, in their several kinds, some of the best in the language” (vi). Drinking songs, in other words, constitute a form of lyric poetry to be judged alongside other forms of metrical composition as expressions of polite civility. They are not only perfectly respectable in themselves but, if properly performed, guarantee the respectability of the singer.

The editor of the *Convivial Songster* was not alone in his understanding of drinking songs as a polite form of lyric poetry. Writing for *The London Magazine* in May 1780, James Boswell, under the pseudonym “the Hypochondriack” wrote, “the Drinking-songs of different nations are innumerable; and are, for the most part, very distinctly marked with national characters” (“Hypochondriack” 177). According to Boswell, the English drinking song has a noticeably “reasoning cast.” They are clever, Boswell claims, and their wit guarantees their civility. For Boswell, the drinking song represents a legitimate expression of a civilized culture, and should be understood as an index of the degree of civility to which that culture has attained.

Claiming that “the ingenuity of the poets has been much exercised upon Drinking as upon love itself,” Boswell proceeds to trace a historiography of the drinking song, beginning in

classical Rome (Catullus, Lucretius, Horace), ending in Sheridan's *The Duenna*, and taking in Walter Pope, Congreve, and Thompson along the way:

It would be improper to fill my papers too frequently with quotations. I shall therefore only refer my readers to the fine passages upon the subject in *Lucretius*, and in *Horace*, which every man of taste will read with pleasure again and again. But the most substantial piece for Englishmen is *Thompson's* description of a Drinking-bout, after a fox-chace, where all the strong and coarse circumstances of rustic intoxication are selected and brought together with admirable justness, and in a style of humour, which *Thompson* has exhibited in that single instance. (177)

Classical learning is a justification for a genre that Boswell insists must be appreciated by “every man of taste.” Those who do not appreciate the art of the drinking song, Boswell suggests, do not possess an adequately refined sensibility.

Thompson's Scottish ancestry, as Boswell's own, is elided so that the fox-chasing scene from *The Seasons* becomes characteristic of an English national tradition that is in fact not English at all, but borrows from and is theorized by Scottish writers. Boswell's genealogy seeks to justify the tavern conviviality that Sheridan (the Irishman) and Boswell (the Scot) both enjoyed, arguing that there is a longer, broader, and more respectable (English) tradition of drinking song into which convivial drinking practices might be placed.² The strangely mobile sense of nationhood that Boswell relies on to make a case for the respectability of “English” convivial practice is just one of a series of temporal and geographical displacements which underscore his sense of English propriety, and begins to hint that polite English conviviality might not be as stable a notion as he wants to claim. Nevertheless, Boswell's sense of the drinking song as a respectable expression of a reasoning cast was a widespread belief in the second half of the eighteenth century. Indeed, even the name of one of the main sub-genres of drinking song, the Anacreontic, implies that there is a

classical – and hence respectable – precedent for songs in praise of drink, the convivial practice of singing allegedly inspired by the poems of Anacreon.³

Boswell's comments on drinking songs formed part of a series of three essays "On Drinking" that he wrote for the *London Magazine* in which he assumes a complicated relationship to alcohol, acknowledging on the one hand that "I love Drinking" and that "I have a constitutional inclination to indulge in fermented liquors, and that if it were not for the restraints of reason and religion I am afraid I should be as constant a votary of Bacchus as any man." On the other hand the Hypochondriack, playing up to his name, understands that excessive drinking is a sign of moral weakness and his "continual fear" of the dangers of fermented liquors "counterbalances both the pleasure of occasional gratification and the pride of successful resistance" (169). This oscillation between enjoyment and guilt is in the end the mechanism by which drinking becomes acceptable. The gratification of desire is held in check by reason – the ultimate test of enlightened civility.

One of the ways that Boswell's "Hypochondriack" sought to justify the role of the drinking songs in the development of civilized national identity was by drawing distinctions between drinking, on the one hand, and drunkenness on the other. Drinking is a pleasure, Boswell claimed, whose purpose is "reasonable refreshment." Drunkenness is "putting a devil in our mouths to steal away our brains." The line between the two, however, is thin, the constitutions of men "infinitely various," and even the "same man is different at different times" with regard to his ability to navigate the line between drinking and debauchery (198-9). Yet for all this slipperiness, national characteristics are clear: nations in the north drink more than those in the south, in order "to supply by art the want of that genial warmth of blood which the sun produces." The English, of course, are drinkers, not drunks. The Irish drink ruinously. The

Scottish are noticeably absent, though perhaps their habits are self-explanatory on account of their latitude. The Spanish also drink, especially people of rank, but not so much as those in the north. And among the native population of America, the love of strong liquors defies belief. Boswell quotes William Robertson's *History of America*, which confirms that "Whatever be the occasion, or pretext, on which the Americans assemble, the meeting always terminates in a debauch. Many of their festivals have no other object and they welcome the return of them with transports of joy." The Americans are incapable of behaving with reasoned civility, or recognizing the nice distinction between drinking and drunkenness.

For this ethnography of drinking, Boswell draws on his legal training and refers to the discussion of drunkenness in William Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. Discussing the question of whether temporary madness through drunkenness or intoxication might lessen the culpability of a person's behavior, Blackstone is adamant that it should not. Indeed, following Edward Coke, he argues that drunkenness might increase the severity of the punishment as a felon's drunkenness is a further offence. He continues:

It hath been observed that the real use of strong liquors, and the abuse of them by drinking to excess, depend much upon the temperature of the climate in which we live. The same indulgence which may be necessary to make the blood move in Norway would make an Italian mad. A German, therefore, says the president Montesquieu, drinks through custom, founded upon constitutional necessity; a Spaniard drinks through choice, or out of the mere wantonness of luxury: and drunkenness, he adds, ought to be more severely punished where it makes men mischievous and mad, as in Spain and Italy, than where it only renders them stupid and heavy, as in Germany and more northern countries. And, accordingly, in the warm climate of Greece, a law of Pittacus enacted "that he who committed a crime when drunk should receive a double punishment;" one for the crime itself, and the other for the obriety which prompted him to commit it. The Roman law, indeed, made great allowances for this vice: "*per vinum delapsis capitalis pœna remittitur*" ["capital punishment is remitted where occasioned by ebriety"]. But the law of

England, considering how easy it is to counterfeit this excuse, and how weak an excuse it is, (though real,) will not suffer any man thus to privilege one crime by another. (bk. 4, ch. 2)

Blackstone's comparative construction of a specifically English understanding of drinking posits an England that is intolerant of the excuses offered by other nations and other historical periods. Here ancient Rome and Greece are conflated with contemporary Spain and Italy as drinking habits are geographically determined, taken to be the natural, timeless and unchanging result of the climate. England's temperate weather – not warm like Greece, or cold like Norway – offers a sensible median climate amenable to the superior judgment of the English people, and a correspondingly sensible system of justice. Other civilizations, whether ancient or modern, have different attitudes according to their climates, but only in England is it understood that such excuses are easy to fake and should play no part in the legal system.

Developing Blackstone's understanding of the natural predispositions of nations, Boswell asserts that drinking songs are the result of a complex calculus of latitude guided by civility. Among the English one finds "reasonable" refreshment, and English drinking songs are indicative of the nation's "reasoning cast." In Ireland, where the drinking practices are ruinous, there still remains an ability to reflect on the consequences of excess, evidence for which Boswell provides in the form of an Irish poem called the *Next Morning*, which describes the effects of the night before, concluding with the resolution to be "Fair temperance, ever thine." In Boswell's ethnography of drinking practices, the ability to recognize the consequences of debauchery is evidence of potential for improvement, something well beyond the reasoning capacity of the American "savages."

The ironies of Robertson's observation that among the American native populations "the persons of greatest eminence, the most distinguished warriors, and the chiefs most renowned for

their wisdom, have no more command of themselves than the most obscure member of their community” (199), elude Boswell’s notice entirely. But one only need look to London’s taverns, to the Shakespeare’s Head in Covent Garden, the Crown and Anchor in the Strand, or the Star and Garter in Pall Mall, to discover that if sobriety is a measure of civility, then the persons of greatest eminence in England were no more civilized than the native Americans discussed by Roberston, or indeed the most obscure residents of the metropolis. The principal distinction to be made between the behavior of eminent Englishmen and the savages in the colonies, then, was the language in which their celebrations were described. While in the colonies drinking to excess was considered “debauchery” and their sociable practices “ruinous,” in the metropolis similar festivities were described as a sign of the gaiety of the company and the elegance of their tastes, a point made abundantly clear by the elegant convivial gatherings of Fox’s Whigs at the time of the 1784 Westminster Election, when Captain Charles Morris first came to prominence.

The Westminster Election

The fiercely contested general election of 1784 occurred in an atmosphere of considerable political tension. The king had dissolved the much-derided Fox-North coalition of 1783 and had installed the twenty-four year old William Pitt as his first minister, despite the fact that Whigs controlled the majority of the seats. After several attempts Fox successfully engineered the dissolution of parliament in order to force a general election. With Fox being one of the candidates, the three-way race for two Westminster seats was of immense strategic significance to the national political landscape. Lord Hood, supported by Pitt, was regarded as the certain victor, but the battle between Fox and Cecil Wray (also a Pittite) for the second seat was

ferocious, with rioting breaking out on several occasions at Covent Garden, resulting in at least one death (Baer *Rise and Fall* 98).

The polling for Westminster took place over forty days, between 1 April and 17 May. While he got off to an early lead over both his rivals, Fox fell behind Hood and Wray on the third day of polling, was in last place for twenty days, and his enthusiasm for the fight was frequently called into question (Hartley 410). Fox's eventual victory over Wray, by a meager 236 votes, has been attributed to a variety of factors, of which the most frequently discussed has been female influence, and particularly the efforts of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, who was said to have relentlessly canvassed on Fox's behalf, offering kisses in exchange for votes. A less frequently discussed aspect of Fox's political campaign, however, was the use of political balladry to attack Pitt and his supporters.

James Hartley's six-hundred page *History of the Westminster Election*, concludes with over one hundred and thirty "poems" (as opposed to the "Paragraphical Part of the Miscellany") relating to the Westminster election, ranging across all political persuasions, though the majority of them are pro-Fox. This substantial though not exhaustive collection of ballads which includes lyrics to songs sung in taverns as well as poems that were written for publication in newspapers, attests to the to the continuity between "songs," "poems," and "ballads" in the 1780s, and to the importance accorded occasional satiric verse, a body of work that is in constant conversation with visual satires and newspaper reports of the period. Hartley's collection is not intended to be comprehensive, however, and the editor admits to censoring the most "objectionable matter," though he worries that the reader "may think our Covent Garden, something like its great prototype, not so clean swept as it ought to be" (x).

One poem that is frequently mentioned in the *History's* newspaper reports but is omitted from the collection, presumably because it was one of the “obnoxious plants” which Hartley thought needed weeding out, is Captain Morris’s “Baby and Nurse,” a song written in strict ballad form, to the familiar tune of “Derry Down.” The ballad gleefully represents Pitt as a “troublesome brat” petulantly crying because he wants a parliamentary seat. The nurse of the poem’s title is King George III, who is tasked by “Mother Buckingham” with giving young Pitt everything he wants to stop his tantrums.⁴ (See Appendix).

While “Baby and Nurse” is omitted from Hartley’s volume, Morris’s popular “Billy’s Too Young to Drive Us,” is printed there for the first time, along with a note respecting the authorship which asserts that “none but the witty writer of the celebrated Baby and Nurse could have composed [it]” and that it “it carries with it in every line indubitable marks of its legitimacy” (506). Despite being too obscene to be committed to print, in a vast field of political poems Morris’s verse stood out as uniquely ingenious, his sparkling wit instantly recognizable despite his many imitators.

The author of these ballads, Captain Charles Morris, was a former army officer who had fought in the American Revolutionary War before transferring to the king’s Life Guards (Waddington). His talents as a writer of witty lyrics to well-known tunes first generated public attention with the song “The Coalition,” a much-admired attack on the Fox-North coalition (see Appendix). Despite its unflattering representation of Fox, it was said that Morris had impressed the Whigs with the “extensive influence of his wit and convivial humour” (Hartley 277-8). Once it had become clear that they would be unable to silence him, Fox relentlessly pursued Morris with a “constant round of feasts, dinners, parties, debauches &c.” until he signed up as a Whig, vowed never to perform the “Coalition Song” again, and began to write a series of anti-Pitt songs

instead. *The Public Advertiser* commented, “Captain Morris’s song of the ‘BABY and NURSE,’ which abuses Mr. Pitt, is one of the severest compositions he ever wrote, except one on the Coalition which abuses the other party ten times worse” (18 Aug. 1784). Adored by Fox’s supporters, ridiculed by Pitt’s, it is clear from reading the newspapers around the time of the 1784 election that his political ballads had catapulted Morris to an extraordinary prominence.

But whatever the opinion of Morris’s notorious verses, the political efficacy of tavern singing was never in doubt, and political songs were understood as key weapons in the armory of an election campaign. Songs could not only enliven tavern meetings and be heard in the streets by ballad hawkers selling their wares, but they would be recorded and talked about in the partisan newspapers, and, if sufficiently memorable, discussed in the drawing rooms and parlors of electors where they could have a material impact on the outcome of an election.

Newspaper commentators regarded Morris’s songs as contributing to Fox’s success in the 1784 contest in a number of ways. Songs such as the “Baby and Nurse” and “Billy’s Too Young to Drive Us” were helpful as propaganda, dispersing anti-Pitt (and by implication pro-Fox) sentiment. But even when Morris’s songs were not explicitly partisan, his reputation carried political capital, his support of Fox functioning as celebrity endorsement. On 16 March 1784, for example, the *Morning Chronicle* described how at a meeting at the Shakespeare’s Head Tavern in Covent Garden (the same tavern in which Boswell had entertained prostitutes in 1763) Charles Fox was supported by “two men of the greatest wit and genius now living, Mr. Sheridan on his left hand, and Captain Morris on his right, both unique in their way, the one in theatrical the other in convivial composition.” The support of such eminent wits was supposed to reflect favorably on the Whig leader, and elsewhere it was reported that Fox believed his relationship with Morris had bought him “at least 500 good votes” (Hartley 255).

The chief contribution that Morris made to Fox's campaign, however, was the contagious energy of his performances. Indeed, in the accounts of his singing that frequently appeared in newspapers, commentators dwelt less on the content of his verse – which remained too obscene to print – than the joyful spirit of conviviality, the mirth and hilarity, that his performances engendered. The *Morning Chronicle*, for instance, reported on how Morris's entertainments could whip Fox's supporters up into a frenzy of political passion:

A few healths went round, and a patriotic spirit, amounting almost to enthusiasm, seemed to possess the whole assembly, a song was sung, but the whole company grew clamorous for Captain Morris, who on account of indispensable business, did not arrive till six; as soon as he came, a burst of convivial joy broke from the whole room, and as soon as he could reach Mr. Fox, he was mounted in a chair on the table directly before him; they then called out for that immortal song, the Baby and Nurse; he sung it, but in the midst of such torrents of applause, that he was obliged to wait many minutes, between each stanza, before the plaudits and shouts subsided—they then cheered his health, three times, in a bumper. Mr. Fox then addressed the meeting, in a most manly and well adapted strain of eloquence, requesting them to be alert and vigilant, in the great business of the meeting, concluding by saying, that as the evening was advanced, Captain Morris should give them one more song. Captain Morris then gave the Jest, that was encored with such rapturous applause, that the Captain sung it a second time, which seemed to put the company into such a general frenzy of zeal, that they all dispersed in a rage of patriotism, and determined to exert every possible endeavor, and the gallant champion of their rights and liberties, to the most triumphant victory." (29 Apr. 1784)

For all its unashamedly partisan support for Fox, the report reveals much about Morris's contributions to the carefully orchestrated ebbs and flows of the meeting. In particular it describes Morris's ability to produce a potentially volatile fervor that has to be carefully rechanneled into political action. Fox's requests for the gathering to be "alert" and "vigilant" are clearly intended to calm the enthusiasm of a crowd that is growing increasingly unmanageable. Morris's final performances of the "Jest," on the other hand, are intended to reinvigorate the

gathering into a zealous frenzy, to send them out in high spirits and to provide the impetus for an industrious canvas of electors.⁵ Morris's value to such meetings is clear: his unique ability to foment zealous excitement translated directly into the energy needed to win an election. The warm feelings his good-humor elicited reflected the generous conviviality that was central to Fox's political persona and ultimately his success.

There is, no doubt, good reason to be skeptical about the practical efficacy of political ballads. These are unabashedly partisan articulations of party politics, and it is highly unlikely that Morris's lyrics would have persuaded any die-hard Pittite to vote for Fox. Nevertheless, contemporary accounts seem convinced of the role of political balladry, not merely in consolidating already existing loyalties, but in infusing an already zealous crowd with the energy they needed to campaign on Fox's behalf, convincing others of Fox's superiority and persuading them to cast their votes.

For all the masculine bravura of the vigor generated by his performances, it would be a mistake to assume that Morris's "obsceno-political ballads," as the *Morning Post* called them, (24 Aug. 1785) appealed exclusively to men. Prominent among Fox's supporters whose efforts Morris's songs were said to inspire was the Duchess of Devonshire, whose canvassing efforts on Fox's behalf were widely reported in the press, lampooned in print satires, and ridiculed in songs. While by no means the only woman engaged in political canvassing, the Duchess was singled out as the "Tipling Dutchess," [sic] the leader of the "ton" whose adoption of masculine modes of behavior was considered by Fox's opponents to be particularly egregious (Baer 140). Songs such as "the Canvassing Dutchess," depicted the duchess roaming the Westminster Streets, offering kisses (or more) to artisans and shop-owners in exchange for votes (Hartley 432). As one ballad declared:

Each day you visit every shop,
 Into each house your head you pop,
 Nor do you act the prude;
 For ev'ry man salutes your Grace,
 Some kiss your hand and some your face,
 And some are rather rude.

The poem goes on to suggest that the Duchess had been the cause of Westminster street walkers losing all their trade because men have grown to despise paying for the prostitute's "wanton airs," now they can kiss a duchess for free (Hartley 434).



Figure 4: Anon. *Female Influence; or, the Devons—e Canvas*. London: William Wells, 3 Apr. 1784. BM Sat. 6493.

It was not just class boundaries that the Duchess's canvassing was thought to transgress, however. Her political activities were also regarded as crossing gender lines, typically codified through the trope of cross-dressing. As one poem put it, "The Duchess has taken on the breeches" (Hartley 432).⁶ In a print published by William Wells, she is shown advancing towards

a butcher with her dress hitched up, revealing a masculine pair of boots (fig. 4). In an impression of the print held in the British Museum, the Duchess's boots are colored the same as the breeches of a gentleman standing behind her, her breeches, the same color as his socks, the visual substitution linking the Duchess's fashions to the gentleman's clothes, while simultaneously suggesting a reversal of masculine attire, with an implied reversal of gender roles.

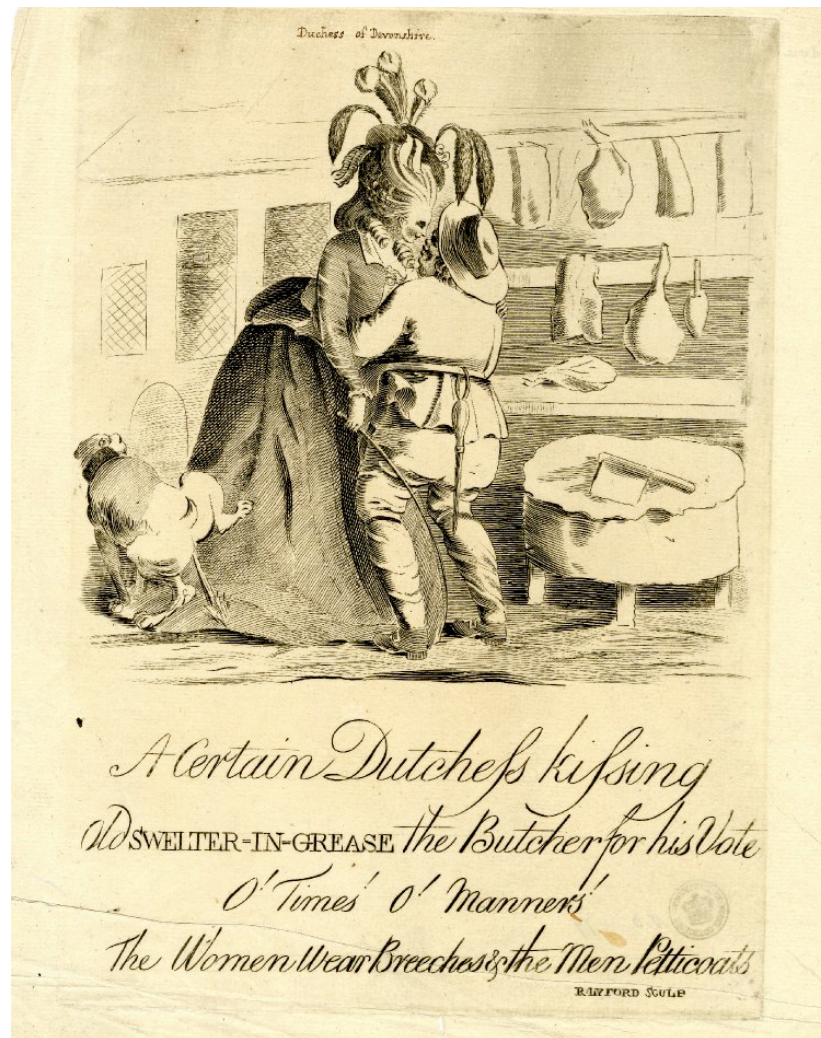


Figure 5: Anon. A Certain Dutchess kissing Old Swelter-in-grease the Butcher. London: R. Lyford, n.d.; BM Sat. 6533.

Most frequently these two transgressions of class and gender are portrayed simultaneously as the Duchess's effort to secure Fox victory in the election involved both condescension to circulate among working men, and her domination of them. In *A Certain Duchess kissing Old Swelter-in-Grease the Butcher for his Vote* (fig. 5), the Duchess is depicted leaning down to kiss an eager butcher, her right hand holding his shoulder, her left holding a riding whip which rests across the back of his thigh. "O! Times! O! Manners!" the print bewails, "The Women Wear Breeches & the Men Petticoats." While the Duchess is poised to use her whip, the butcher's cleaver rests on a butcher's block, his job and masculinity put to one side in his eagerness to embrace the Duchess. A dog meanwhile urinates on the Duchess's dress, suggesting how much the Duchess's dignity has been compromised by getting involved in political matters. The Duchess, who was renowned for her beauty, remains elegant in the prints and poems, but her elevated status is undermined by her willingness to use her position, beauty, and frequently her body for political advantage.

As Anna Clark has pointed out, the scandal that arose around the Duchess of Devonshire's involvement with Fox's campaign was less because she was a woman than because she represented the corrupting influence of aristocratic patronage (*Scandal* 78). In Clark's assessment, the Duchess did little to advance the cause of women in politics, as her primary aim was to secure the success of Fox, her cousin, with whom she had embarked on a two-year long affair (Baer 44). Her canvassing efforts were not intended to extend women's rights, or to mobilize the women who took part in debating societies that raised the issue of female suffrage, but to support the candidate over whom she had most influence for her own individual benefit (Clark 76). This assessment, however, underestimates the reassessment of traditional gender categories that the Duchess's high-profile political activity provoked. Certainly, anti-Fox commentators took the opportunity to reinscribe gender differences, insisting, for example, "the

ladies who interest themselves in case of Elections, are perhaps too ignorant to know that they meddle with what does not concern them” (Hartley 252). But other commentaries, such as the one in the *General Evening Post*, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, demonstrate that the Duchess’s energetic participation in the Westminster election forced a reexamination of the behaviors that might be considered appropriate for women.

Among the numerous criticisms leveled against the Duchess of Devonshire’s supposed masculinity was her penchant for Captain Morris’s verse. It was reported that the memory of ‘Jenny Sutton’ and ‘the Plenipotentiary,’ two of his most obscene songs, gave “a kind of relish to her Grace’s solicitations” when canvassing on Fox’s behalf (Hartley 255). ‘The Plenipotentiary’ was a notoriously explicit song cataloguing the sexual exploits of a well-endowed Algerian ambassador during a trip to London. ‘Jenny Sutton,’ meanwhile, was a drinking song in praise of an army prostitute whose “strange electric motions” were available at the cost of a shilling to “ev’ry man on duty.” The report of the Duchess’s “relish” for Morris’s songs, then, is yet another hint that her zeal to help Fox’s cause amounted to a form of prostitution. But it also suggests that the Duchess’s enjoyment of bawdy songs was inappropriate – these songs partook of an exclusively male humor in which women had no right to participate. The criticisms of the Duchess’s affection for Morris’s songs attempt to define appropriate humor for “women of quality,” drawing distinctions between male and female laughter, and marking out for the newspapers’ predominantly middle-class audience the attitudes appropriate to female respectability.

From the Whig’s point of view, however, as the *General Evening Post*’s report suggests, the ladies’ embrace of Morris’s songs at Frances Crewe’s ball was a powerfully symbolic gesture, resisting a discourse of feminine sociability that sought to limit women’s participation in the

rituals of political life. The *General Evening Post* suggests that the Duchess's activities also prompted a wider conversation about the kinds of activity in which women might legitimately be involved, including the question of whether they should participate in political-convivial entertainment. The enthusiastic appreciation of the women at Mrs. Crewe's ball for Captain Morris's verse amounted to a tacit endorsement of the genre of tavern singing that was a central component of Whiggish culture, and demonstrates that the vigor of conviviality was by no means the exclusive domain of men. Indeed, political balladry formed part of a political creed that (however mistakenly) prided itself on its inclusivity. The embrace of popular forms such as the ballad, as well as the kinds of coarse humor that the ballads displayed, were understood as evidence of the broad appeal of Whig politics. And as Vic Gatrell has noted, Morris's 'The Plenipotentiary,' was among the best-known convivial songs of the period (296), and as such deserves some closer scrutiny, as it can helpfully illuminate how Morris's bawdy songs intersected with Whiggish convivial ideology.

Bawdy Politics

'The Plenipotentiary' was referred to in prints by Rowlandson, Gillray and both Isaac and George Cruikshank, and was included in numerous collections of songs in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Robert Burns included a transcription of it along with two other songs by Morris in a letter to William Stewart, with it subsequently appearing in *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*.⁷ In addition to Morris's tavern performances, 'The Plenipotentiary' circulated in collections of Morris's songs, as a cheap street ballad, and in more expensive scores. It was sufficiently well known that a journal, launched in 1787, was named after it and included contributions, by among others, "Jenny Sutton."⁸ In the late eighteenth century it was so familiar

that it was often referred to by the abbreviated title of “the Plenipo,” and it remained popular well into the nineteenth century, with references to it appearing in visual satires until 1810, and in verse until at least 1826, when it was still sufficiently well-known to merit its transformation into song attacking a Northumberland MP.⁹

The song (see Appendix) was a celebration of a well-endowed Algerian ambassador’s genitals, describing across fifteen stanzas his sexual adventures on a diplomatic visit to England. For Gatrell ‘the Plenipotentiary’ is illustrative of three assumptions about sex that he says pertain to much verse of this kind, which he (misleadingly, I want to suggest) calls “libertine.” Firstly, “that the pursuit of sexual pleasure was justified by the urgent promptings of ‘Nature’;” secondly, “that because women were beings as ‘natural’ as men, the sexes’ desires and pleasure were identical;” and finally, “that women hungered for the penis” (297-8). While there can be little doubt that each of these assumptions operate in ‘The Plenipotentiary,’ I want to expand on Gatrell’s observations in order to see how these central tenets of bawdy humor play out in the particular example of Morris’s song, and how the poem might reflect more nuanced understandings of the culture in which it was produced.

Despite its location at the peripheries of both Ottoman and European economic spheres, the Plenipotentiary’s native country, Algeria, is exoticized in the song as the unknown and unknowable world of the East, and the envoy is associated at different points with “Algiers,” “Tripoli,” “Turks,” and “the Barbary Coast,” the whole of the Ottoman empire reduced to a homogenized region associated with mussulmen, despotism, and sex. We have come to understand these assumptions as part of the conversation by which Britain constructed a national identity, developing a series of binaries by which European colonial powers could distinguish themselves from the East. (“They” are slaves to the superstitions of religion, “we” are enlightened

subjects regulated by understanding; “they” are governed by a system of despotism and tyranny, “we” live under the freedoms secured to us by the Glorious Revolution of 1688; “they” are driven by unrestrained sexual urges, “we” control our urges with reason). These sets of binaries by which the Occident is distinguished from the Orient are, however, profoundly destabilized by the topsy-turvy world of the bawdy song. Rather than distinguishing itself from the despotic world of the Orient, “The Plenipotentiary” strongly identifies with the East, the Algerian ambassador operating as an embodiment of the desires of the assumed audience, whose pleasure is – at least in part – a vicarious thrill at the plenipotentiary’s ability to effortlessly satisfy female desire, as the “Ladies” he meets on his tour of the town uniformly marvel at the his wondrous “pintle,” despite the violence it does to their bodies.

Indeed, it is notable that “the Plenipotentiary” does not present the familiar view of the Orient as a feminized realm, but rather, through the figure of the Algerian envoy, associates the East with a brutal, potent, and highly sexualized masculinity. It is important here, I think, to keep in mind the distinction between modern and pre-modern Orientalism, suggested by Said, and elaborated by Saree Makdisi, which identifies the late eighteenth century as the moment in which the “new Orientalism” was first beginning to develop. The salient point about this specifically modern Orientalism is that, rather than understanding the Orient as a static, backward, and undeveloped version of Europe, it describes a *process* by which the Orient and the Occident are brought into being, not as historically stable entities, but as representations that are endlessly re-presented to constitute continually shifting realities:

Orientalism is *part of* the process that brings those fluid and dynamic identities, “the Orient” and “the Occident,” not into *being*, but into an endless *becoming* – and coextensively, into a constantly changing and dialectically constituted historical relationship with one another. (Makdisi *Romantic Imperialism* 116)

Representations of the Orient, that is, are determined by the historical conditions of the place of production and reflect not only assumptions about the East, but also ideas about the culture in which they are produced. In this early “new Orientalist” text, then, we are presented not with images of the luxurious seraglio or the feminized domesticity present in the writings of, say, Mary Wortley Montagu and discussed by Billie Melman, but of a Turkish ambassador as an embodiment of male wish-fulfillment. If this view of the Orient seems unfamiliar, it is in part because the discourses of evolution, racism, and industrial capitalism with which Orientalism later fused had not yet fully developed, but in part it is because this is an image of an Eastern visitor as viewed in the cracked mirror of a Whiggish drinking song, one that, through its dialectical relationship with the East, reveals much about the Whigs’ assumptions about gender.

One of the more surprising aspects of the song, perhaps, is its recognition of the political influence of women in the town. The assumed background – unacknowledged in the song itself – is the series of widely reported attacks that the Spanish military had mounted against Algiers for control over the seas off the north coast of Algeria, which was notorious for its piracy. In the world of the song the Dey of Algiers is sufficiently worried about the skirmishes that he sends an ambassador to England in order, presumably, to prevent England forming an alliance with Spain. Rather than meeting with male politicians, however, the Dey of Algiers recognizes that the way to gain influence is through England’s women, (“as he knew in our state that the women had weight...”).

Of course, this is little more than an opportunity to bring the plenipotentiary’s impressive “cods” into contact with English ladies, nevertheless it reflects – or perhaps refracts – debates that were played out in newspaper reporting, visual satires, and political songs on the subject of the 1784 election.¹⁰ The poem, in fact, represents a tour of caricatured English women, beginning

with the “Ladies of the court” and moving in descending order of prestige through “dames of intrigue,” a Duchess, an Alderman’s bride, and an old Harridan, to a “boarding school miss.” Prestigious ladies of the “ton” are assumed to have political influence in England, but not just aristocratic women like the Duchess of Devonshire. Old and young, Duchesses and schoolmistresses, might equally influence public opinion.

If, as it was rumored, “the Plenipotentiary” did indeed give “a kind of relish” to Duchess of Devonshire’s exertions it might well have been because the Duchess recognized herself in Morris’s portrayal of influential political women. The song offers a backhanded compliment to women like the Duchess, who in 1784 had come to stand in for politically powerful women everywhere, and whose canvassing efforts were similarly represented as a cross-class “tour” of Westminster electors. The identification would have been all the more clear because of the song’s association of political influence with rapacious sexual appetites – which the Duchess was frequently portrayed as possessing. Here, however, women’s sexual appetites are comically exaggerated, parodying the portrayals of female lust that were much more slyly suggested in newspaper reports of canvassing women.

While much of the pleasure of the song lies in its use of graphic language and its equally graphic descriptions of various sex acts, their anticipation, and their aftermath, central to its comic effect is the juxtaposition of these obscene aspects with a discourse of polite civility. This is perhaps best illustrated through the repeated use of the polite form of address “Sir,” as an unstressed syllable at the end of otherwise stressed line endings. This was by no means unique to “the Plenipotentiary” and was no doubt primarily a scansion device, used to help fit the lyrics to the tune. Nevertheless, in the exaggeratedly bawdy context of “the Plenipotentiary” it achieves a

more heightened comedic effect in a way that, I want to suggest, indicates a political philosophy that should not be dismissed as mere phallo-centric “libertinism.”

The repeated use of “Sir” posits a relationship between the singer-author and the audience member that is at once intimate and respectful. It is a form of direct address between individuals, not one man speaking to a crowd, which implicates the audience member as complicit in the song’s bawdy sentiments while simultaneously assuming the posture of civility. Indeed, for all the song’s coarseness, much of the humor is generated by the tonal incongruities that occur when coarse expressions are placed alongside the discourse of polite culture. Examples abound in each verse, such as when the “delicate maiden of honour” demurely registers her shock at the size of the Plenipotentiary’s penis, but who resolves nevertheless to have a “drive;” or the Alderman’s bride who had so cuckolded her husband that his horns had “sprouted like Venus’s myrtle;” or the “woeful quandary” of the elderly virgin whose bladder is burst by the Plenipotentiary. Perhaps the most thoroughgoing example, however, is the Plenipotentiary himself who, in his role of ambassador to the Dey of Algiers, embodies the principles of polite civility which are assumed to offer an alternative to the violence of war. The “tour” on which he embarks is less dignified than his polite functions suggest, and rather than embodying the principles of ambassadorial magnanimity he becomes a cipher for often violent sex. The shifting referent of the phrase “the great Plenipotentiary” at the conclusion of each stanza, which at times refers to the man, at times to his penis, and at times to his penis as a synecdoche for the man, conflates man and penis, and equates the culture of politeness with sex in a way that punctures the polite pretensions of elegant sociability, and exposes the “natural urges” which such pretensions are designed to mask. In a gesture characteristic of Morris, as the changes are rung on the word “plenipotentiary” over the course of the song, its Latin meaning (literally “full

power”) comes to signify both the political powers endowed to his envoy by the Dey of Algiers, and to the ambassador’s sexual prowess, so that the protagonist, the song title, and the song itself come to signify a world in which violent sex and politics are entirely interchangeable.¹¹

This suturing together of the coarse and the refined assumes that the vulgar and the polite are not inimical, either for language or for persons. There is nothing inelegant, it suggests, about coarse humor (and indeed the most “elegant” men in the land – the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Norfolk – were among Morris’s patrons) the implied corollary of which is that all who enjoy coarse humor might be considered polite. The distance between the princes and dukes Morris entertained and the “vulgar,” who equally enjoyed Morris’s verse might not be so very great. With a little polish the street-singer might be just as elegant as the aristocrat.

The libertine tendencies of Fox and his circle can be understood as resisting the prudishness of an emerging national identity that was associated in particular with Pitt, who was depicted by Morris in another of his popular songs as “The Virgin Minister,” a chaste, well-spoken gentlemen who refuses to allow anyone to touch his penis, and is thus presented as a chronic masturbator:

Troth, and its right,
That the tool of a minister,
Ne’er should be manag’d
By hands but his own.

According to the circles in which Morris mixed in the 1780s, this risible prudery undermined the manly vigor that was central to Whig principles and upon which the robust health of the nation was based. That the kinds of humor expressed in these songs were enjoyed as much by the men and women in alehouses and on the streets as by the tavern-going elite only served to illustrate

that Whig principles represented the views of the people. Indeed, “the Virgin Minister” (see appendix) declares itself to be a street ballad in its opening lines:

Come then be silent
And join in my ballad,
A better you never saw
Pinn’d on a wall.

Precisely how the listener is supposed to remain silent while simultaneously joining in the ballad is not clear, but Morris inscribes his song into a culture of street balladry that is both aural and textual. It encourages the audience to listen, and to admire the lyrics that are pasted up on the walls of alehouses and in the streets.

Elite Whiggish culture can in no way be described as “democratic,” at least with the implication of universal suffrage by which we typically understand the term today. Nevertheless, the claim that they represented the values of “the people” and fought for their liberties, was one of the cornerstones of Whiggish political identity, and Fox’s identity as the “man of the people” in particular. For all their aristocratic excesses, the Whigs saw themselves as sharing a cultural inheritance with the common man, and one of the ways they sought to inscribe that shared inheritance into their culture was through song, and through the structures of feeling and modes of humor the songs articulated, that could be enjoyed by all irrespective of distinctions of rank and (potentially) sex. While it was doubtlessly obscure to the participants at the time, with the benefit of hindsight it is clear that the bawdy humor that united plebe and patrician was a reaction against the kinds of propriety that would come to typify middle-class ideology in the coming decades, and whose pressure was being increasingly felt by both aristocrats and the poor in the 1780s. The obsceno-political culture of which Captain Morris was the laureate, then,

might be understood as resisting the developing ideologies of the middling sorts that would eventually eliminate much of their culture.

Whether they were sung in the male tavern meetings, in the balls held by prominent ladies of the town, or by ballad hawkers on the street, Morris's songs were celebrated for their wit, and were understood to lend a favorable energy to political gatherings. But in the 1780s they were also much admired at meetings of the middle-class gentlemen who attended meetings of the Anacreontic Society, where – at least for a while – the connection between bawdy humor and impropriety remained obscure. It took the presence of the Duchess of Devonshire to make visible to the members of the society that their convivial entertainments were perhaps not as respectable as they would have liked to believe.

Conviviality and the middle class

On 22 March 1780 a member of the Anacreontic Society wrote a letter to the *Morning Chronicle* explaining the genesis of the organization:

Sir,

I will not pay you so ill a compliment to suppose you have never heard of the Anacreontic Society. I therefore flatter myself the following account of its institution and progress will not be unacceptable to you or your polite readers. –It was begot and christened by a Mr. S—th about the year 1766, at a genteel public-house near the Mansion-house, was nursed at the Feathers and Half-moon taverns, in Cheapside, and received a great part of its education at the London Coffee-house.

The emphasis in this sketch, as Stella Achilleos has pointed out, is on the gentility and refinement of the society (21-36). From the opening “compliment” to the editor of the newspaper and the community of “polite readers” that the correspondent imagines himself to be a part of, to the “genteel public-houses” in which the society was “begot and christened,” and the coffee-house in

which it received its “education,” the letter insists throughout on the society’s participation in the culture of polite, learned civility. The courtesy of the letter depicts the society as a respectable gentleman receiving his education in a way that is designed to distance the society from the vulgar crowd of the alehouse, but also from extravagant aristocratic excess. The letter to the *Morning Chronicle* describes its members as “Peers, Commoners, Aldermen, Gentlemen, Proctors, Actors and Polite Tradesmen,” and while there is no reason to doubt that there were members who were indeed peers, the core membership of the Anacreontic Society seems rather to have been “bankers and merchants” – gentlemen, that is, in the sense of “not vulgar” but also, just as crucially, not the nobility or gentry (Kelly 2:102).¹²

While it was commonly understood that gentlemen of the middle classes should adhere to the dictates of polite civility, precisely what values constituted “polite” behavior remained negotiable. The Anacreontic Society, a group of amateur enthusiasts for musical performance, taking their cue from more exclusive clubs like the Sublime Society of Beef-Steaks and Fox’s Whig Club understood that the performance of drinking songs was a central component of polite sociability. Their meetings, which from the 1770s were held at the Crown and Anchor Tavern every two weeks on Wednesday evenings, consisted of a concert by professional musicians – frequently performing the works of Handel, Mozart, Pleyel or Haydn (who himself attended one of the meetings) – followed by dinner, which would be served in a separate room while the concert room was prepared for the performance of more light-hearted singing.¹³ This tripartite structure – concert, dinner, convivial singing – enabled the Anacreontics to accommodate a wide range of musical forms and tastes, from concertos and symphonies, through fashionable catches and glees, to bawdy ballads, but it was the convivial part of the evening that seems to have generated the most commentary. “Here conviviality reigns in every shape,” the correspondent to

the *Morning Chronicle* wrote, “catches and glees in their *proper stile*, single songs from the first performers, imitations by gentlemen, much beyond any stage exhibition, salt-box solos, and miniature puppet-shews, in short everything that mirth can suggest.” The correspondent suggests that the Anacreontic entertainments are “much beyond... stage exhibition, salt-box solos, and miniature puppet-shews,” implying that their gatherings were far superior to Bartholomew Fair entertainments, despite the “mirth” that the performances generate. This is, he says, conviviality not debauchery, poised between courtly music and plebeian entertainment. It was, in short, an unequivocally middle class venture, and indeed is often remembered among music historians as providing a crucial role in bringing “classical music” from the courts to the middle classes – a journey facilitated by taverns, some of which had organs installed in their large assembly rooms (King 383).¹⁴

The Anacreontic Society’s most enduring legacy, however, is its contribution to American nationalism. The society’s constitutional anthem “To Anacreon in Heaven,” written by the society’s first president Ralph Tomlinson to a tune by fellow-member John Stafford Smith, became the inspiration for Francis Scott Key, who wrote alternative lyrics to the song, transforming it into “The Star Spangled Banner.” Commentators like to observe what a delicious irony it is that the national anthem of a country that banned the sale of alcohol for fourteen years should have started off life as a bawdy English drinking song, although (regrettably) it was no such thing.¹⁵ It was English, that much is true, and it was a drinking song, but it was also an expression of patriotic sentiment, intended to signal the respectable conviviality of the society.

“To Anacreon in Heaven,” opens with a petition from “a few sons of harmony” to Anacreon, asking if he would be the “inspirer and patron” of their Society, to which he readily agrees saying:

Voice, fiddle, and flute, no longer be mute,
I'll lend you my name, and inspire you to boot;
And besides, I'll instruct you, like me, to entwine,
The myrtle of Venus with Bacchus's vine.

The song is full of comic lurches in diction as the mythic structures of Anacreontic verse are punctured by colloquialisms (such as the phrase “to boot” here), the heroic language associated with the classical gods deflated to the level of the human.

Hearing of Anacreon's plan to support the endeavor of the sons of harmony, Zeus objects on the grounds that all of the goddesses will leave Olympus to join the “sons of Anacreon”:

The yellow-hair'd god and his nine fusty maids,
From Helicon's banks will incontinent flee;
Idalia will boast but of tenantless shades,
And the bi-forked hill a mere desert will be;
My thunder, no fear on't, shall soon do its errant.
And dam'me, I'll swinge the ringleaders I warrant;
I'll trim the young dogs for thus daring to twine,
The myrtle of Venus with Bacchus's vine.

There is a suggestion, buried under a dense layer of classical allusion, that the muses, depicted as “fusty maids,” will flee from Helicon's banks with a degree of eagerness not befitting the dignity of the gods. “Incontinent” suggests the maids' lack of restraint, with a possible sexual connotation, resulting from their confinement in Helicon, which evidently does not possess the convivial pleasures that might be found at the Crown and Anchor. Zeus, meanwhile, speaks in an approximation of the flash language that pervades the urban street ballads of the eighteenth century (“dam'me, I'll swinge the ringleaders”). This indeterminacy, operating somewhere between London's lowlife and elite dignity is typical of the Anacreontic Society's self-representations, at a time when “middle class respectability” was a wildly unstable category.

In the song, Apollo comes to the defense of the sons of Anacreon, providing them each with laurels to repel Zeus's thunderbolts. Momus, the God of satire, joins Apollo's defense, at which point Zeus (here called 'Jove,' demonstrating the society's fluency in both Greek and Roman classical mythology) relents, and pronounces his blessing on the Society, before the song concludes with an earnest articulation of the principles of the society:

Ye sons of Anacreon then join hand in hand,
Preserve unanimity, friendship, and love:
'Tis your's to support what's so happily plan'd,
You've the sanction of Gods, and the fiat of Jove.
Whilst thus we agree, our toast let it be,
May our club flourish happy, united and free;
And long may the sons of Anacreon entwine
The myrtle of Venus and Bacchus's vine.¹⁶

In their attempt to carve out a space for middle class conviviality, the gentlemen of the Anacreontic Society named their principles as love and freedom, embodied in the symbols of myrtle and vine. And while the song occasionally flirts with double entendre, it is careful never to dwell in the domain of bawdiness for long, quickly reestablishing the Society's polite credentials. The song acknowledges the role of convivial mirth in the proceedings of the Society, but then emphasizes the principles for which it stands are the polite and honorable principles of freedom and love. The Anacreontic Society, in other words, unapologetically celebrated wine, women, and song, but the wines were the finest that the Crown and Anchor, one of London's most elegant taverns, had to offer, and the "song" included music by the Western canon's most celebrated composers, performed by the same musicians that regularly performed for the king.¹⁷

Women, one the other hand, were a much more vexed issue for the Society. For all its celebration of "the myrtle of Venus" and its hint that the female muses might find something

attractive in the manly vigor of the sons of Anacreon, “To Anacreon in Heaven” ultimately fails to address questions of female beauty, sex, or fertility, with which Venus was associated, preferring instead to declare the homosocial bonds of “unanimity, friendship, and love.” The Anacreontic song, that is, noticeably avoids answering the question of how respectable gentlemen of the middling sorts should think about women in their convivial meetings – a confusion which would, as we will see, ultimately lead to the society’s collapse.

Newspaper reports of the Anacreontic meetings unanimously understood the performance of “To Anacreon in Heaven” as a central aspect of the bi-weekly festivities. Not only did it introduce the more light-hearted tone of the after-dinner singing, but it was in itself a great favorite that merited as much attention as a Haydn symphony, and typically a good deal more. The great tavern singers of the day – Bannister, Dignum, Incledon, Reinhold, Sedgwick – all took on the task of performing the verses of the song, to be joined by the assembled convivialists in the chorus.

In the 1780s Charles Bannister was the definitive performer of the song, which he sang with “vigor and enthusiasm” (*Public Advertiser* 21 Nov. 1785) and an “irresistible energy” (*General Evening Post* 3-5 Oct. 1786) – the qualities that were most highly prized in convivial circles. Bannister was a well-known actor and singer who had oscillated between Drury-Lane and Covent Garden throughout his career, and was known for his resonant bass singing voice, his falsetto, and his mimicry (Holland). His performances of the “Anacreontic Song” were much admired for the way he “acted as well as sung the song” (*Public Advertiser* 21 Nov. 1785) and could give the words new energy and meaning by “thoroughly distinguishing the several characters,” a strategy which was deemed “truly electrical” (*Morning Chronicle* 21 Jan. 1786). Thomas Sedgwick, who took over as the regular performer of the song in late 1786, was equally

praised for his performances, although the terms the newspapers used to describe his singing are notable for their emphasis on propriety, rather than energy. Rather than performing with “enthusiasm,” and “vigour” as Bannister had done, Sedgwick was applauded for his “taste and judgment” (*Morning Herald* 8 Dec. 1786). In Jon Mee’s account, enthusiasm “became less something to be prohibited and excluded than regulated and brought inside the conversation of culture” in the Romantic period (*Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation* 3), but the particular conjunction of enthusiasm with the practices of conviviality remained an especially combustible combination in the 1780s, which advocates of polite conviviality were anxious to avoid. The shifting terminology no doubt reflects a different style of performance, but it also represents a significant shift in attitudes towards conviviality and displays in particular a more circumspect position toward the propriety of “enthusiasm” and “vigor,” both as terms with which to express approbation for convivial practice, and as behaviors to admire. When Charles Dignum performed the constitutional song in December 1790, he did so “to the satisfaction of every one present,” an evaluation whose muted praise casts the audience members as contented consumers rather than a potentially volatile crowd (*Diary or Woodfall’s Register* 17 Dec. 1790). Charles Incledon, meanwhile, sang the song in December 1791 with “spirit, freedom, and character” (*London Chronicle* 22-24 Dec. 1791) and “without any flourishing embellishments” (*Public Advertiser* 24 Dec. 1791), an approving assessment that recuperates the notion of a positive spiritedness by aligning it to a manly plainness, and thus avoiding the potential dangers of enthusiasm and feminine excess. The terms in which performances of the constitutional song were described reflect the highly unstable notions of middle-class propriety, but they nevertheless all agreed that the constitutional song was genteel – something that could not be said for all of the songs that followed.

Supper, usually served at around ten o'clock, separated the formal concert from the more convivial music, but there was a wide spectrum of songs performed after supper, beginning with the constitutional song itself, and some of the more elegant drinking songs, followed by fashionable catches and glees, then growing increasingly outré as the evening wore on, frequently not breaking up until two or three in the morning. Looking back on his days at the Anacreontic Society, Richard Stevens recalled that many of the songs performed after supper "were very disgraceful to the Society; as the greatest levity, and vulgar obscenity, generally prevailed. Improper Songs, and vicious compositions were performed without any shame whatever" (25). This does not appear to have stopped him from attending meetings, however, and many contemporary accounts of the society found nothing very scandalous in the performance of such songs, which were understood as contributing to a desirable sense of convivial good humor.

The Morning Chronicle, complained that the after dinner singing was not boisterous enough, remarking that there were too many glees performed after supper, which in general "are not favorable to hilarity" and were performed "too much in the cathedral style." Such singing, it was felt, would give "a pleasing variety to the concert," if they were intermixed with the instrumental music before supper, but they were not calculated to inspire gaiety once the convivial portion of the evening had begun (21 Jan. 1786). The *Public Advertiser* likewise argued that "Glees, however perfect in their execution, will grow tedious to ears not purely musical," and that the Anacreontics, who were unique in their ability to connect the "mirth of the festive board" with the "promotion of musical science," had an obligation to provide "food for Laughter" (7 Oct. 1785).

Much of this is, of course, heavily coded language. The kinds of "humor and whim" that the newspapers so genteelly demand, but are too polite to mention by name, might be inferred

from John Fentum's collections of songs "Sung at Most Convivial Societies with Universal Applause." Fentum's shop at 78 Strand, at the corner of Salisbury Street, sold a large variety of musical scores, including genteel country dances and compositions by Beethoven, Mozart, and Haydn.¹⁸ But Fentum also published a large number of individual songs sung at convivial societies such as the Je Ne Scai Quoi Club and the Sublime Society of Beef-Steaks, and indeed seems to have had an unofficial professional relationship with the Anacreontic Society (*The World* 3 May 1788). Unlike the cheaply produced broadsides, garlands, and slips, which we typically associate with the ballad tradition, Fentum's relatively expensive songs retailed for 6d, were reproduced across several folio pages, and printed along with the musical score, often intended to be played on the flute or the flute with guitar. Yet, for all the assumed politeness of Fentum's publications, the songs he published were frequently rude, crude, and uncensored, and consisted of songs that could be heard both in gentlemanly tavern-going circles and in the streets and alehouses of less well-healed Londoners. Some of these songs, like "Sandman Joe" – a ballad about a poor sand seller who finds solace in the comforts of gin and sex with his "flash girl" Sally – originated as street ballads and were later adopted by tavern-based convivial societies. But movement in the opposite direction was equally common, and numerous songs were written for performance at convivial societies before circulating more broadly in the streets of the metropolis. In the latter category were the songs of Captain Morris, which were especially popular at convivial societies, and Fentum provides the words and music to many of the songs found in the cheaper, words-only editions of Captain Morris's songs published by Ridgeway. Among the songs Fentum published and labelled "as sung at the Beef-Steak Club and the Anacreontic Society" were "The Coalition Song," "Billy's Too Young To Drive Us," "The Plenipotentiary," "Jenny Sutton," and "The Virgin Minister," along with many other Morris compositions,

including “The Amours of the Gods,” “My Spirits Are Mounting,” “The Toast,” “The Tree of Life,” “The Triumph of Venus,” and “When the Fancy Stirring Bowl” (*Collection of Favourite Songs* n.p.).

Morris himself never attended meetings of the Anacreontic Society. His preferred arena was the more exclusive dining clubs of the nobility and gentry, and the Anacreontics was an organization for the middling sorts. Nevertheless, his songs were frequently heard there, performed by others, contributing to the mirth and hilarity of the convivial part of the evening, which throughout the 1780s was understood as providing an admirable vigor to middle-class conviviality, and was taken just as seriously as the earlier concert. By the 1790s, however, the assumed politeness of the bawdy drinking song humor became much harder to sustain, and the society, apparently at the height of its popularity, suddenly collapsed.

The myrtle and the vine

According to William Parke, the Anacreontic society’s demise was the result of a combination of the concern over the role of women in the society and increasing pressure on the propriety of the songs that were performed there. At the center of the debate was the Duchess of Devonshire, who attended one of the meetings, staying for both the concert and – more controversially – the after-supper conviviality. “They caused the elevated orchestra fitted up by the musicians at balls to be fitted up with a lattice affixed to the front of it, for the accommodation of her grace and party,” Parke reports, “so they could see, without being seen” (84). In spite of these precautions, society members knew that the Duchess was present, which apparently had an adverse effect on the performers. “Some of the comic songs not being exactly calculated for the entertainment of ladies, the singers were restrained,” Parke recalled, “which displeasing many of the members,

they resigned one after another; and a general meeting being called, the society was dissolved,” the final meeting taking place on 22 December 1791.

Newspaper reports, though not mentioning the Duchess of Devonshire by name, corroborate Parke’s account, confirming that “ladies” did, indeed, attend a March 1791 meeting of the society, watching the proceedings from the elevated balconies of the great assembly room in Thomas Simpkin’s recently renovated Crown and Anchor (see Chapter 3). There, they were permitted to watch the concert performances and stayed to watch the after-dinner entertainments – but only as long as decency allowed.

Several ladies were in the gallery, who assisted the company to entwine

“The myrtle of Venus with Bacchus’s vine;”

but about one o’clock when the *luxuriance* of the vine seemed likely to overpower the *delicacy* of the *myrtle* they retired. (*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* 11 Mar. 1791)

The question of whether women should be allowed to attend the Anacreontics’ festivities, and thus have a role in convivial assembly, was a cause of considerable contentious debate in the final, aborted season of the society. Some felt that presence of women would have a wholesome effect on the society, moderating some of their excesses. The *Morning Post* argued that rather than “cooping up the women in a dark gallery” they should be admitted to “the cheerful table, and *above board*, in the true spirit of Anacreon” (29 Nov. 1791). After the penultimate meeting of the society, the same newspaper argued that the resignation of the bawdy ballad singers was a considerable improvement to the proceedings:

The convivial attraction of the Anacreontic Society is as great at present, as when it was first instituted. The Company is more select, and those petty *ballad writers* are excluded, who latterly disgraced this *joyial assemblage*. (12 Dec. 1791)

But the debates over the presence of women at the Crown and Anchor had evidently diminished the society and numerous subscribers resigned, without whom, Parke says, it was impossible to

continue.¹⁹ Several newspapers predicted that the society would renew its “vigor” after the opening of the 1791 season. The *Public Advertiser* hoped that the society “would flourish under its new establishment with all its former vigor” (10 Dec. 1791) and after the final meeting prematurely proclaimed that “there can be no doubt that under the present able and spirited management, this Society will retrieve all its former honours” (24 Dec. 1791). By now, however, vigor had been exposed as a suspicious quality, to which discerning professional gentlemen should perhaps not aspire.

If reports from the 1784 Westminster Election are to be believed, the Duchess of Devonshire and her party would have had little concern listening to the bawdiest of songs that the Anacreontic singers performed, for Captain Morris had offered equally risqué material just a few years earlier, reportedly to their delight. The difficulty was not that the women were offended, but that the performers and subscribers did not feel comfortable behaving in their usual manner knowing that women were present. According to Brian Robins, the society’s demise illustrates “how closely societies protected their right to meet convivially in exclusively male company” (75). But the language used by society members and newspaper reports to describe the Anacreontic Society suggests a more complicated relationship between women and middle-class respectability. It wasn’t so much that the Anacreontics fiercely contested their right to all-male assembly, than that the presence of women had exposed to the Anacreontics the questionable nature of the songs that they performed. The Duchess of Devonshire had revealed to them that their convivial entertainments were no longer commensurate with the proprieties appropriate to a middle-class view of respectability.

This episode also, I think, helps us to understand better the process by which women were marginalized from the political struggles undertaken by middle class men in the late

eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Catherine Hall argues that, while women never had been very involved in the political sphere, “many precedents were broken and assumptions challenged in the struggle by manufacturers, merchants, professional men and farmers to win the vote for themselves” (152). She consequently makes an attempt to “explain and document” this process, and central to her account is the culture of conviviality from which women were, she says, systematically excluded. Focusing in particular on the clubs and societies of Birmingham, where men gathered at taverns such as the Poet Freeth’s, the Fountain, and the Hen and Chickens, to drink, sing, and discuss politics, Hall argues that “the fact that the location of so many of these clubs was in the tavern clarifies one reason for women’s exclusion from them. Pubs were increasingly being defined as inappropriate settings for women who wished to maintain their gentility in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries” (158). I do not disagree with this assessment, and indeed the disastrous consequences of the Duchess of Devonshire’s attendance at the Anacreontic meeting provides further evidence of the increasing separation of men and women in the venues of sociability. I think, though, that we are now in a position to make a number of refinements to Hall’s argument.

The first refinement I want to make is simply to point out the slippage in Hall’s terminology between “taverns” and “pubs,” which are not the same. Indeed the term “pub” does not come into regular use until the second half of the nineteenth century, by which point taverns had virtually ceased to exist. And while I recognize that this may seem pedantic, the reliance on the anachronistic term “pub” has often obscured some crucial differences in earlier modes of sociability. Hall goes on to argue, “often the taverns were divided up into separate room, with facilities for different classes. ‘Commerical rooms,’ ‘smoking rooms’ and ‘snuggeries’ abounded, with the landlady often making herself responsible for preventing any breach of decorum” (159).

Here Hall is describing a recognizably late nineteenth-century arrangement of the pub, by which point the division between male and female sociability that she is interested in tracking had been already long established. That is, the architectural arrangements Hall describes did not *cause* women's exclusion from convivial assemblies, as she suggests, though these interior divisions and women's exclusion from them, may both have been influenced by the increasing desire to monitor the respectability of sites of convivial assembly.

Secondly, I want to acknowledge an important relationship between London and Birmingham sociability. My primary concern is with London taverns, whereas Hall's investment is in tracking the growth of the franchise, in which Birmingham, a large industrial town that had no representative in parliament until the 1832 reform act, was profoundly influential. Nevertheless, for all of the considerable differences between the political life of London and Birmingham, there is an important continuity in convivial practice. Hall quotes Eliezer Edwards who recalled his recollections in Birmingham in the early nineteenth century: "As in the West End of London, every man has his club, so in Birmingham every man had his tavern where he regularly spent a portion of each day" (qtd in Hall 158). Again there is a problem of chronology here. Edwards refers to London's West End Clubs, which were, broadly-speaking, a late nineteenth-century phenomenon, evolving out of the earlier tavern culture. As Amy Milne-Smith has recently argued, many of these clubs started off as regular tavern-based clubs and societies, which at a certain point, decided to buy their own premises, which were often the taverns in which they were already meeting (21) – and indeed the rise of the clubs seems to have hastened the demise of the tavern for precisely this reason. Edwards, writing in 1879, is comparing the current situation in London with the earlier situation in Birmingham (note the shift in tenses from "has" to "had"), assuming that his readers will be more familiar with London sociability.

Precisely how accurate it is to compare Birmingham in the early nineteenth century to London's West End in the 1870s I will leave it to my reader to imagine. My point here though is to emphasize that the metropolis is considered the standard against which other town's convivial culture might be measured. It suggests the importance of London sociability to the way other areas developed and understood their own sociable practice. Despite the differences between London and Birmingham's political situations, London nevertheless provides the model for the kinds of political-convivial conversations that might occur in the Midlands.

Finally, the example of the Duchess of Devonshire can help us to understand the complex class dynamics of the exclusion of women from political-convivial conversation. And as we saw in the introduction to this dissertation, in the 1780s middle-class women frequently attended tavern debating society meetings, so women's presence in taverns was widespread. As the example of Frances Crewe's ball suggests, there was no inherent reason why women should not participate in political-convivial culture, however masculine it was often taken to be. The freedom for women such as Mrs. Crewe and the Duchess of Devonshire to participate in these convivial rituals was, no doubt, assured by their aristocratic status, but there are many instances of ideas or fashions that begin among the elite, which then filter down to other parts of society. The fact that this did not happen in the case of female conviviality suggests that middle class women chose to reject these behaviors. Similarly, the Duchess of Devonshire's attendance at the Anacreontic Society meeting might have sanctioned a greater participation of women in convivial gatherings. That this did not happen implies a rejection not so much of the tavern space as such, but of the ideologies of conviviality.

I have argued that in the case of the Anacreontic Society meetings, the Duchess of Devonshire made visible to the men something that they found distasteful about themselves. This

suggests that the separation of male and female sociability did not take the form of active ejection of women from taverns, but rather the development of ideologies that associated the tavern with conviviality, and convivial humor with impropriety. The question remains what motivated this distaste for forms of sociability that had such widespread currency, and I will have more to say about this in Chapter 4. But part of the process by which women were excluded from political tavern talk seems to be a rejection of the perceived excesses of aristocratic women like the Duchess, who enjoyed a kind of humor that was increasingly understood as an improper form of pleasure.

This change in attitude towards convivial gathering seems also to have influenced Captain Morris's political ballads. Though Morris continued to write political songs until the mid-1790s, the tone of the songs is markedly more circumspect in the later songs than those he composed in the 1780s. One song he wrote for Fox's birthday, initially sung at a meeting of Erskine's Friends to the Liberty of the Press, in January 1793 (*Morning Post* 21 Jan. 1793), began:

Well, now the prospects of Britain's a blank—
No hope from her councils, or gold from her Bank;
When all the vile schemes of destruction and woe
Have come back on ourselves, that were meant for our Foe.

(Songs Political and Convivial 62)

The song catalogues a variety of ills of the age, but professes a determined patriotism and faith that Briton's love of Freedom will overcome the present hardships of an economy diminished by an unjust war with France. Despite this apparent optimism the song nevertheless registers a sense of defeat, as though the spirit of hilarity and mirth of the 1780s can never be rekindled. The war may end, but something irretrievable has been lost in the intervening years of Pitt's government:

Oh, no, gallant Britons! there lives in your breast

A spirit too long, and too blindly suppress!—
A spark of the flame your brave ancestors knew,
When they won back the land and gave freedom to you!
And you, gallant Britons, the treasure defending,
Shall yet for you sons the blest legacy save;
For the moment comes fast, when the die will be cast—
And the banner of Freedom triumphantly wave!

The song expresses a determined faith that the “spirit” and “spark of the flame” that has been suppressed will once again burn brightly, but the song is never wholly convincing, its optimism feels forced when stacked up against the burdens and chains enforced by Tory austerity measures catalogued in the previous eight stanzas. Morris’s earlier convivial lyrics had celebrated the present, exhorting his fellow convivialists to drink another toast and joyfully participate in the mirth of the moment. This song for Fox’s birthday finds no solution in the present, but appeals instead to the spirit of the past, and hopes for its revival in the future. Even the chorus’ denial of the hopelessness of the present time (“Ah, no Britons, no – it cannot be so / While there’s justice ABOVE and oppression BELOW”) hopes for divine intervention rather than believing that the festive spirit of conviviality might generate the energy needed to make Britain great, as his previous ballads had done. The insistent “now” of convivial hilarity has been drowned out by famine and suffering.

The shifting mood of Morris’s songs was no doubt caused in part by physical hardships of the years during the war with France (Wells 1-14). The occasionally forced optimism of the Whigs during the 1784 election campaign must also have been much harder to sustain after a decade in opposition. But the new tone of resignation in Morris’s songs of the 1790s was part of a much larger reassessment of vigorous conviviality. In the 1780s convivial tavern meetings had been a conventional means for generating political support, but in the aftermath of the French

Revolution political-convivial gathering came to be viewed with greater suspicion, by men as well as women, as Edmund Burke's attacks on metropolitan tavern meetings make clear.

Chapter 2

Edmund Burke in the Tavern

On 28 July 1787, in the buildup to the trial to impeach the East India Company director Warren Hastings, *The World and Fashionable Advertiser* reported on the Duke of York's suspicious preference for German musicians. "What an indelible disgrace this is to Mr. Pitt!" the newspaper exclaimed. "England has already tamely submitted to Mr. Dundas publicly keeping a *Scotch Bag-Piper!* and now—but Liberty will speak—though the East India Company Directors are sitting in their Paper Crowns, in most regardless security at the London Tavern" ("Political Hints" 3). The Duke had just returned to England after living in Hanover for six years and the newspaper questions the validity of a Hanoverian royal family whose loyalties remain as much in Germany as they do in England. England, meanwhile, is the embodiment of a generic, unspecified "Liberty" of which the newspaper regards itself the voice, a voice so exasperated it cannot complete its sentences. The Duke's fondness for German musicians, comparable to the Scottish Dundas's questionable taste for bagpipes, is seen as a betrayal of his national obligations and a compromise of those English liberties. Analogically, the East India Directors also fail in their obligations, spending their time in the London Tavern rather than attending to England's interests in India. The tavern is understood as a space of global commerce that is inimical to Englishness as it distracts the directors from the patriotic duties they have been entrusted to perform. Rather than upholding English liberty they sit in oblivious "security" at the tavern corrupted by the power gained from foreign trade, their "paper crowns" (faintly echoing Falstaff's cushion-headed portrayal of Henry IV in the Boar's Head) indicating both a false sovereignty and bureaucratic reign. The symbols of monarchical rule have been exchanged for

paper, as English liberties have been exchanged for the written contracts and paper money of commerce.

This squib provides a helpful context for an alternative understanding of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, a text that is similarly concerned with liberty and sovereignty. Burke's loyalty to the royal family is less equivocal than *The World's*—a product, no doubt, of the recent events in France—but the concern with English liberties being weakened from within by the unheeding sovereignty of paper finds direct echoes in Burke's writings on the French Revolution. So too, does the connection between global commerce and the London Tavern, a tavern that in *The World* is imagined as the convivial resort of the East India Company directors, and which appears in the *Reflections* as the meeting place of Richard Price's Revolution Society. The London Tavern's association with the East India Company, a connection that had been long established by 1790, suggests that Burke's attitudes towards the tavern sociability of Richard Price in the *Reflections* is influenced by his experiences dealing with the East India Company. Burke understands the London Tavern, I want to suggest, as the headquarters of a commercial class whose speculative economic interests have begun to compromise English freedoms. A more nuanced account of eighteenth-century tavern culture in general, and of the London Tavern in particular, demonstrates that Burke's concerns about the French Revolution were shaped by his association of the tavern with East India Company, and with the increasing role that tavern-based societies had in government.

In recent years, Karl Marx's understanding of Edmund Burke as “an out and out vulgar bourgeois” (925) whose views on the French Revolution are representative of reactionary conservative attitudes towards political change has come under sustained attack from two

different and seemingly incompatible directions. Recognition of the importance of seeing the British literary tradition within a global context has encouraged interest in Burke's views on imperialism in his writings on America, Ireland, and India. This body of work tends to celebrate Burke's sustained engagement with the ethics of empire. Uday Mehta, for example, recognizes that "there is scarcely a page in the thousands that Burke wrote and uttered during the Hastings trial, in the speech on the debts of the nabob of Arcot, in the Fox India Bill speech, or in his numerous other writings on India and the British in which a simple but piercing concern with brutality, exploitation, the humiliation of women, the avarice of the [East India] company and its parliamentary patrons, the corresponding effect of destitution and the arbitrary use of unjust power is not an illuminated feature of the background that he is aware of, and the implications of which he is at pains to convey to his audience" (156). While never suggesting that Britain should withdraw from its imperial projects, Burke has come to be seen as a prescient and sensitive observer on the effects of Empire, and an advocate of oppressed populations who spoke eloquently their behalf.

Burke's writings on the French Revolution, on the other hand, have come to seem increasingly elitist as scholars have turned their attention to other counter-revolutionary texts. According to Mark Philp, the popular loyalism of writers such as William Paley and Hannah More rejected the Burkean view that "the vulgar were the objects of conservative thinking, not intended participants in it" (44-5). Kevin Gilmartin taking up Philp's point argues that, given the popularity of these loyalist movements, Burke's series of anti-revolutionary writings should be understood as deliberately resisting the "pragmatic and potentially transgressive energies of a 'vulgar' conservatism" in Britain" ("Burke and Popular Opinion" 96). Studies of the broader field

of counter-revolutionary loyalism, that is, regard Burke as painfully out of touch with the forces of domestic oppression.

The desire to move beyond Burke's conservatism to explore a greater range of popular loyalist writing is motivated in part by the turn to plebeian culture in Romantic-period studies. This field, which has emerged in the wake of E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class*, tends to view the tavern (as Thompson himself viewed it) as the resort of the laboring and artisanal classes.¹ This association of the tavern with plebeian culture—which might more accurately be described as centering on the alehouse—has at times blinded scholars to the wide variety of uses which the tavern served in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, many of which were as far removed from the alehouse activities of the radical underworld as might be imagined.² This chapter, then, proceeds in two parts. In the first section I provide a history of the London Tavern, outlining how it was received and understood. I will demonstrate that far from being the haunt of dissatisfied and potentially seditious laborers and mechanics, the London Tavern was almost universally represented as an elegant site of assembly, frequented by politicians, aristocrats, and royalty, but with particular associations with mercantilism and the East India Company. In the second section I will show how this more nuanced understanding of the London Tavern exposes Burke's fear that the coming revolution in Britain will consist not of an insurrection of the oppressed masses, but of an uprising of respectable tavern-going merchants, whose empiricist values have gained legitimacy through the speculations of literary men. Consistent with his writings and speeches on India, Burke's writings on the French Revolution present the tavern and literature as complicit in generating support for a revolution that prioritizes the economic interests of the country over the moral obligations of government.

In this sense I want to challenge Pocock's influential view of the *Reflections* as written within a liberal Whiggish tradition of political writing that understood the importance of commerce to the modern state. "We should remind ourselves that Burke neither belonged to nor feared a class of entrepreneurial capitalists," Pocock writes. "His theory of revolution as worked out between 1789 and his death eight years later, stressed not the independent power of men of wealth, but the uncontrolled energy of men of talent" (x). It is this version of Burke that I want to challenge, not because I'm particularly hostile to Pocock's Burke, indeed I have been greatly influenced by Pocock's insistence on reading political theory in the historical context in which it was composed. But this does beg the question of how we might we go about constructing this context. For Pocock, writing in the US in the late 1980s, the relevant contexts are the stridently anti-revolutionist narratives about the Glorious Revolution (which was considered "glorious" because not accompanied by a domestic civil war [xii]) and a transatlantic dissenting tradition forged in the wake of the American Revolution (xvi). He has, however, much less to say about the relevance of Burke's involvement with the Warren Hastings Impeachment Trial. Burke's experiences with the East India Company had greatly influenced his views on commerce, which appears in the *Reflections* not as a benign force binding human society together, as Pocock suggests (xv-xvi), but a much more volatile phenomenon that has alarming consequences when it falls into the hands of selfish speculators. What I want to demonstrate in this chapter, then, is what can happen when we shift our attention from one context (Pocock's political history), to another (a physical, material history of the tavern). What this focus on the tavern makes clear is that for Burke the "men of wealth" and "the men of talent" come to be so closely associated they are indistinguishable.

“The Grandest Tavern in All Europe”

The opening sections of Burke’s *Reflections* are preoccupied with the “proceedings in certain Societies in London” (to quote from the work’s full title), and in particular with the Revolution Society’s conduct on 4 November 1789.³ Burke reports that the society had gathered at a dissenting chapel in the Old Jewry to hear a sermon by Richard Price. They had then moved to the London Tavern in Bishopsgate Street, where they agreed to send a congratulatory address to the new French Republic:

To make this bountiful communication they adjourned from the church in the Old Jewry to the London Tavern, where the same Dr. Price, in whom the fumes of his oracular tripod were not entirely evaporated, moved and carried the resolution or address of congratulation transmitted by Lord Stanhope to the National Assembly of France.

(Writings 3: 319)

Scholars have been alert to Burke’s suggestive use of “fumes” here, which partakes of a language of intoxication that connects the revolutionary spirit to a figurative drunkenness associated with the taverns in which the Revolution was debated and discussed. “‘Fumes,’ is nicely resonant,” writes John Faulkner, “capable of suggesting an impotent resentment, and here certainly conveying a noxious obscurity” (6). Noxious, perhaps. But the problem with the Revolution Society’s meeting is not one of obscurity. In fact, part of Burke’s point is the alarming prominence of the meeting. This problem is exacerbated by the meeting’s association with the London Tavern, a celebrated public house that was built on a scale previously unknown in London and which set the pattern for a new kind of tavern that dominated the social, political, and cultural life of the metropolis until the middle of the nineteenth century.



Figure 6: Thomas Hosmer Shepherd. “The London Tavern.” (1848). British Museum Crace Collection, Crace XXIV.42.

The London Tavern, situated on Bishopsgate Street in the heart of the financial district of the City, opened on 14 September 1768 to universal admiration. The *Public Advertiser* for 16 September reported that “upwards of 500 reputable Merchants were present” at the tavern’s opening and that it was “reckoned the grandest Tavern in all Europe.” A drawing of the tavern made by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd in 1848 shows a solid-looking structure with three floors, decorated with a combination of rounded arches and horizontal moldings (fig. 6). It stood more

than eighty feet wide and seventy feet high, with “lofty Venetian windows, reminding one of the old-fashioned assembly-room façade” (Timbs 2: 274).

What impressed most commentators on the tavern, however, were the magnificent dining rooms. Designs by William Newton for the “eating room and ballroom” dating from the time of the tavern’s construction reveal that the top floor of the London Tavern consisted of a single large room measuring 73 feet long, 33 feet wide, and 36 feet in height (fig. 7 and 8).⁴ This room could reportedly seat between three and five hundred guests for dinner. One observer’s description of the room, emphasizes the highly ornate decorations:

The ceiling is slightly covered, and round the room are attached pillars of the Corinthian order, the capitals and bases being gilt, and the shafts, which are of blue and gold, fluted; these pillars support a rich architrave, above which are caryatidæ supporting the cove which is ornamented with medallions painted in oil, and stucco ornaments. At the north and south ends of this noble room are coved recesses with galleries for music. From the ceiling depend five chandeliers of cut glass. (Allen 3: 152)⁵

In addition there was a large dining room, known as the “pillar room,” on the first floor measuring 40 feet by 33 feet, which contained a “semi-circular recess, on each side of which are coupled columns of the Corinthian order” (Allen 3: 152). Unlike London’s older taverns, which were sub-divided into several smaller rooms, the London Tavern could accommodate large dinners and meetings. It was a new kind of tavern that reflected the values of eighteenth-century commercial society—a refined space located in the center of the City where London merchants could gather to discuss business and polite conversation could flow freely around the large open spaces.⁶

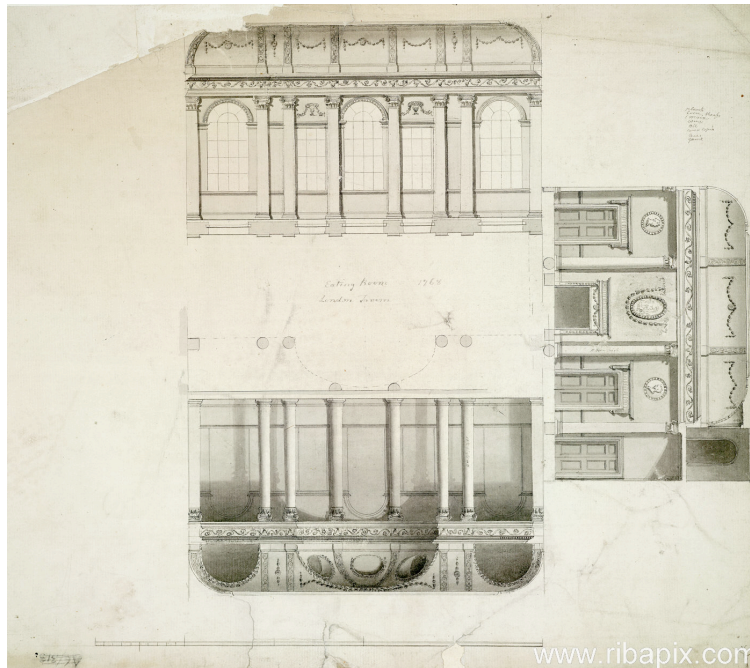


Figure 7: William Newton. “The London Tavern, Bishopsgate-Street-Within, City of London.” RIBA Library Drawings & Archives Collection. RIBA20575.

Contemporary descriptions of the tavern consistently emphasize the grandeur of the tavern’s appearance and the elegance of the accommodations that the tavern supplied—its stately architecture reflecting the experience that could be anticipated within. In *Roach’s London Pocket Pilot* (1796), the London Tavern is listed with five other taverns (the Paul’s Head in Cateton Street, the Globe in Fleet Street, the St Alban’s Tavern in St Alban’s Street, the Thatched House Tavern in St James’s Street, and the Star and Garter in Pall Mall) as providing the best food available in London.⁷ According to Roach, this group of taverns provides “all the most delicate luxuries upon earth, and where the fortun’d voluptuary may indulge his appetite, not only with all the natural dainties of every season, but with delicacies produced by means of preternatural ingenuity” (43-4).⁸ So well known was the tavern for its food that the chef, John Farley, produced *The London Art of Cookery and Housekeeper’s Complete Assistant*, which might be regarded as one of the

first celebrity cookbooks, aimed at encouraging the aspiring middle classes to enjoy the same kinds of delicacies that could be had at the famous tavern.⁹



Figure 8: A much later image of the tavern, one of several that appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, provides a sense of the scale of the upper dining room, and of its ornamentations. “Grand Dinner to General Charles J. Napier, at the London Tavern.” *Illustrated London News*. 25 Mar. 1849. 193.

Contemporary descriptions of the tavern consistently emphasize the grandeur of the tavern’s appearance and the elegance of the accommodations that the tavern supplied—its stately architecture reflecting the experience that could be anticipated within. In *Roach’s London Pocket Pilot* (1796), the London Tavern is listed with five other taverns (the Paul’s Head in Cateton

Street, the Globe in Fleet Street, the St Alban's Tavern in St Alban's Street, the Thatched House Tavern in St James's Street, and the Star and Garter in Pall Mall) as providing the best food available in London.¹⁰ According to Roach, this group of taverns provides "all the most delicate luxuries upon earth, and where the fortun'd voluptuary may indulge his appetite, not only with all the natural dainties of every season, but with delicacies produced by means of preternatural ingenuity" (43-4).¹¹ So well known was the tavern for its food that the chef, John Farley, produced *The London Art of Cookery and Housekeeper's Complete Assistant*, which might be regarded as one of the first celebrity cookbooks, aimed at encouraging the aspiring middle classes to enjoy the same kinds of delicacies that could be had at the famous tavern.¹²

Eyewitness accounts frequently speak in superlatives, emphasizing the tavern's uniqueness—it is *the* grandest tavern in London, if not Europe, providing the best dinners that can be found in the metropolis. An article in Dickens's *Household Words*, written by James Hannay and W.H. Wills, emphasizes the special place that the tavern holds in the popular imagination as the epitome of tavern-ness. "It is made known to the world by the newspapers as the "London Tavern"—*the* London Tavern, supposed to represent the genus" (73). Much earlier than *Household Words*, however, the vexed question of how typical, or how exceptional the London Tavern was—whether it was the unique epitome of a genus or just another tavern—might be illustrated by examining the shifting categories it was considered under in successive issues of John Feltham's *Picture of London*. The first edition (1802) of this "correct guide to all the curiosities, Amusements, Exhibitions, Public Establishments, and remarkable Objects in and near London," listed the London Tavern along with twenty other hotels, coffee houses, taverns, and inns, under the heading "Chiefly for the Accommodation of Families," and stated that it contained "an

elegant suite of rooms, where merchants and gentlemen frequently meet in large parties to discuss public business and partake of well-dressed dinners” (349-50). It was, Feltham suggests, a wholesome tavern where families—women and children included—travelling to London might eat without harassment.¹³ By the 1806 edition, however, it was no longer listed as suitable for families, but belonged to a more exclusive list of taverns “Chiefly used for Public Dinners,” which consisted of just five taverns: the Crown and Anchor in the Strand, the London Tavern, Lewis’s New London Tavern and Coffeehouse in Cheapside, the Shakespeare Tavern in Covent Garden, and the Paul’s Head on Cateaton Street (Feltham *Picture for 1806* 355). This shift in classification registers, rather belatedly, the increasing importance of tavern dinners to the public life of the city, and a move away from the tavern’s former associations with supplying domestic comforts. In the 1810s the category of taverns “used chiefly for dining” would be shortened simply to “taverns,” as the term became increasingly used to signify this class of opulent houses catering to the dining needs of London’s elite.¹⁴

Feltham’s list registers a significant shift in which taverns were regarded as the most important in the metropolis. In 1796 *Roach’s London Pocket Pilot* had listed the London Tavern with a group of older taverns whose significance owed much to their history. The Paul’s Head, the Globe, the St Alban’s Tavern, the Thatched House Tavern, and the Star and Garter were all venerable institutions whose origins dated at least to the beginning of the eighteenth century. The taverns in Feltham’s list, on the other hand, were predominantly newer taverns that were built on the model established by the London Tavern in 1768. The Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand, though an older tavern, had been rebuilt and substantially enlarged in the 1780s. Lewis’s New London Tavern and Coffeehouse on Cheapside (also known as the New London Tavern)

was similarly refashioned in the 1780s from its former existence as the Half Moon Tavern.¹⁵ Not yet built, but soon to make Feltham's list of "taverns" was the City of London Tavern, which stood opposite the London Tavern on Bishopsgate Street, and was built to compete with it, in name as well as elegance. William West, described the City of London as having been built "in a manner suited to the capital of Britain, and rivals the former [the London Tavern] in its accommodations" (99).

A lengthy article in the *European Magazine and London Review*, celebrating the tavern's opening, similarly understood the City of London Tavern as reflecting the grandeur and importance of the metropolis, which is understood in commercial terms: "the magnificent fabric... is to be considered not only in the light of a building highly ornamental to the city of London, but as emblematic of its opulence, and if with its external appearance is connected its internal establishment and domestic arrangement, of commercial importance and commercial convenience" ("City of London Tavern" 5) The article goes on to defend the reputation of taverns, confessing that until the middle of the eighteenth century "the tavern system was carried too far" and a great many "were most properly suppressed." By 1809, however, the author of the article is pleased to observe, "taverns in this age have assumed a much higher character than they ever before obtained; also, that our multifarious commercial and municipal concerns have rendered many in the eastern part of the metropolis [i.e. the medieval City] absolutely necessary" ("City of London Tavern" 6). This new breed of tavern, of which the new City of London is a prime example, is—unlike the taverns that proliferated in the earlier eighteenth century—respectable, productive, and in line with a new vision of London as the center of an empire whose mercantile vigor is matched by a decorous restraint. The new London taverns, this writer

insists, are the embodiment of English propriety, and an admirable system of values appropriate to the enterprise of commercial imperialism.¹⁶

The London Tavern, which had set the standard for this new breed of taverns had always been associated, not merely with fine dining, but with the fine dining of merchants. The reader of London's newspapers would have known the tavern as the home of large-scale meetings of City merchants. From the tavern's opening at which "upwards of 500 reputable Merchants" were present (*Public Advertiser* 16 Sept. 1768), to the "merchants and gentlemen" which Feltham describes as discussing business there (Feltham 350), and to the confusion with the Bank of England reported in *Household Words* (Hannay and Wills 73), the tavern was strongly associated with the commercial crowd of the City, who gathered there to discuss "public business." The insistence on the respectability of the merchants who gather in the London Tavern presents an image of the public house as far removed from the licentious world of the alehouses of the London underworld as possible and insists on the absolute respectability of commerce, which, as Burke was acutely aware, was an increasingly important aspect of the shifting political landscape.

While the London Tavern remained associated with various commercial endeavors throughout the nineteenth century (in *Nicholas Nickleby* [1839], for example, it appears as the setting for a public meeting of the United Metropolitan Improved Hot Muffin and Crumpet Baking and Punctual Delivery Company [Dickens 24-31]), eighteenth-century accounts associate it specifically with "merchants," the class of men that Adam Smith described as exercising "no one regular, established, or well known branch of business," but which "enters into every trade when he foresees it is likely to be more than commonly profitable" (Smith 216-7).¹⁷ The industrial revolution may have been gathering momentum by the time Burke wrote his *Reflections*,

but the merchants who are imagined as the patrons of the London Tavern are not industrial capitalists and captains of industry but participants in a global mercantile system of buying and selling, import and export, centered on British foreign territories, particularly in India. These merchants were typically understood in terms that we might associate more with early modern mercantilism than industrial capitalism—though by the late eighteenth century these merchants had begun to break free of the system of aristocratic patronage that characterized merchant capitalism, and had begun to establish an increasingly powerful foothold in the political system.

In February 1769, an advertisement in *Lloyd's Evening Post* announced that “Many Gentlemen, Members of Parliament, and others, divested of every personal Consideration, and unconnected with any Party, have formed themselves into a Society at the London Tavern under the Title of SUPPORTERS of the BILL OF RIGHTS. Their sole Aim is to maintain and defend the legal, constitutional Liberty of the subject.”¹⁸ This meeting marks a watershed moment in the evolution of a political system structured around commercial interests. The efficacy of the meeting owed a great deal to the choice of meeting place, the London Tavern, which conferred prestige on the meeting, and consolidated the link between commerce and politics.

For all the generic language of “constitutional liberties,” the specific occasion for the formation of the society was the expulsion from parliament and imprisonment of John Wilkes following his victory in the Middlesex election. Wilkes, the radical libertine who had been made an outlaw for his libelous journalism, had returned to England in 1768 in considerable debt, a situation compounded by his decision to stand for parliament. Wilkes’s supporters organized the London Tavern meeting to protest the arrest of their elected representative whose name – and

heavy-drinking, libertine lifestyle – had come to define a notion of English liberty. The meeting was called to collect a subscription to help relieve Wilkes’s debts, which resulted in a collection of around £3300, and the injunction to collect similar subscriptions throughout the kingdom.

As John Brewer has shown, the Wilkes affair marks a seminal moment in the commercialization of political culture. By proposing parliamentary reform, Wilkes promised freedom from the corruptions of a regime of aristocratic privilege, an offer that strongly appealed to the merchants and tradesmen whose livelihood depended on a system of patronage that was widely perceived as corrupt. What united the seemingly disparate desires of Wilkite political radicals and tradesmen, Brewer argues, was the promise of “independence”:

The autonomy and self-reliance sought by clubs of shopkeepers, retailers and tradesmen was readily expressed in the radicals pursuit of freedom from clientage. The radical stereotype, as portrayed in their literature, makes this connection quite explicit, and self-consciously unites political independence with financial autonomy. (“Commercialization” 232)¹⁹

Though often taken to be the first major extra-parliamentary political association, the Society of the Supporters of the Bill of Rights (SSBR), as Brewer points out, was formed to help co-ordinate the already existing out-pouring of support – and the financial contributions – that were flooding in from clubs of tradesmen and friendly societies from around the country, indeed the world.²⁰ By doing so the society consolidated Wilkes’s heterogeneous supporters into a single, unified movement, a movement whose headquarters were understood to be the London Tavern. The relatively wealthy SSBR may have only been the top of a hierarchy of associations that supported Wilkes, but it was nevertheless the most visible group. A few days after the first meeting of the SSBR, the *Whitehall Evening Post* wrote of the meeting in the usual admiring terms: “it is imagined

the generous behavior of the gentlemen at the London tavern, as it is so eminent an example, will have its due effect” (23-25 Feb. 1769). The elegance and central location of the tavern granted the SSBR a status that other societies meeting in provincial alehouses and inns could not command, and the London Tavern quickly became a shorthand for Wilkite radicalism. The “eminence” of the London Tavern meeting, which has become metonymically associated with Wilkite radicalism as a whole, announced that this was a respectable political movement that demanded attention. The views of the tradesmen, retailers, and shopkeepers would be heard because they had been organized into a cohesive statement by the London Tavern society, whose status was assured by their meeting place. Five months after it had first opened, The London Tavern came to symbolize the respectable gentlemen whose commercial interests were understood to be representative of the political views of shopkeepers, retailers and tradesmen across the nation.

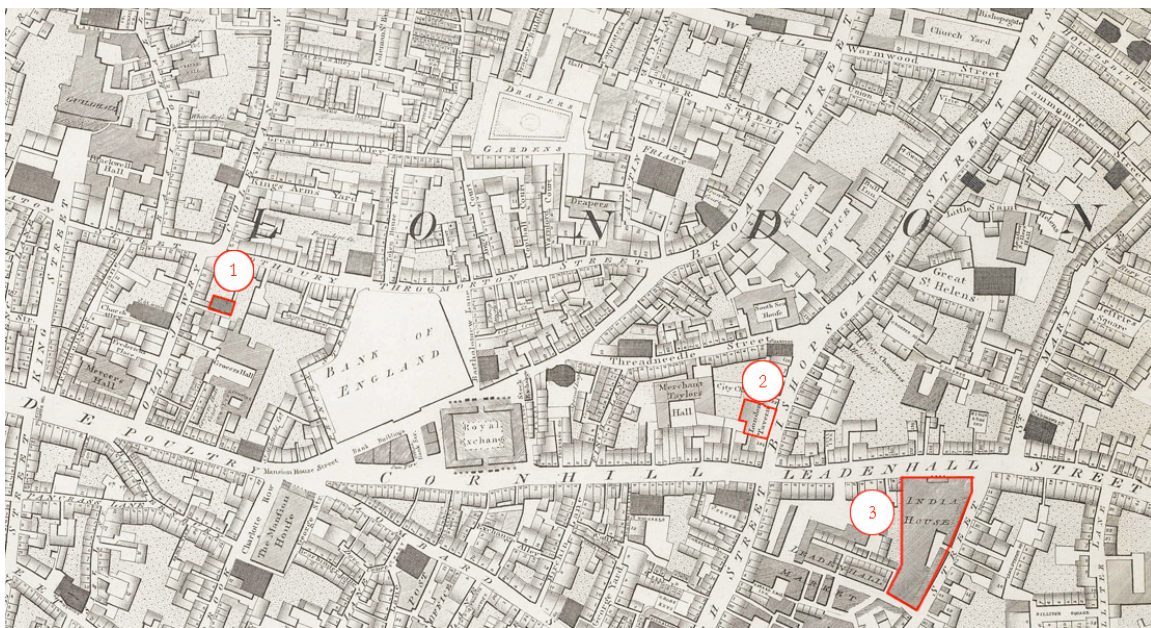


Figure 9: Detail from Richard Horwood. Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster, the Borough of Southwark, and Parts Adjoining, shewing Every House. London: Horwood, 1792-9. Marked are the meeting house in Old Jewry (1), the London Tavern on Bishopsgate Street (2), and East India House on Leadenhall Street (3).

Guidebook writers seeking to make the confusion of the metropolis navigable to the stranger, along with newspaper reporters, understood that the London Tavern was a space designed for “public meetings,” a category that blurs the distinctions between politics and commerce. Public meetings were most often gatherings of merchants, frequently with politicians, who met to dine to celebrate anniversaries (such as the Revolution Society which met to celebrate the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution of 1688), or to discuss business that was considered of national relevance (Baer 186-191). But it was with the East India Company that the tavern was most consistently allied.

The London Tavern was located just around the corner from East India House on Leadenhall Street, making it ideally situated to accommodate meetings of employees of the Company. From the beginning of its existence in 1748, until its destruction in 1876, two years after the dissolution of the East India Company, the London Tavern functioned as an unofficial extension of the Company’s headquarters. It was used for meetings to discuss the appointment of new Company directors (*Morning Chronicle* 6 Apr. 1780), to celebrate the launch of new Company ships (*Public Advertiser* 12 Nov. 1768), and for the Company directors to entertain guests.

From the earliest days of its existence the history of the tavern and the history of the Company were intertwined. The tavern’s architect, William Jupp, was the brother of Richard Jupp, who served as the chief surveyor for the East India Company from 1768 until his death in 1799, and was partially responsible for the redesign of East India House as well as a number of East India Company warehouses (Colvin 566-8). Dinners held by the Company directors were regularly announced and reported on in the press, which rarely missed an opportunity to marvel

at the magnificence of the gatherings. “A Splendid entertainment was this day provided at the London tavern by the directors of the East India company,” *The Gentleman’s Magazine* reported a few months after the tavern’s opening, in the tone of admiration adopted by the vast majority of reports on London Tavern activities (Urban 411). Impressive dinners at the London Tavern became a trademark of the Company directors, who frequently hosted banquets there to honor their most esteemed employees before they made the trip to India. “Many a gallant soldier and many a wise administrator carried back with him to India the big card of the East India Company inviting him to dinner at the London Tavern, and religiously preserved it as one of the most cherished records of an honorable career,” wrote one early twentieth-century commentator on the Indian Mutiny (Kaye 1: 274). Once again, it is the honor of being invited to dine at the London Tavern that is most worthy of comment. The “gallantry” and “wisdom” of the Company employees, here understood not as respectable merchants and gentlemen, but as administrators and soldiers, neatly elides the more violent aspects of the (ostensibly commercial) Company’s military dominion over British Indian territories. Even to commentators looking back on the tavern from the early twentieth century, the elegance of public dinners at the London Tavern provided a magnificent distraction from the brutal realities of British commercial imperialism.

A notable but revealing exception to the obsequious insistence on the London Tavern’s elegance can be found in *The Town and Country Magazine* in January 1773, which published an anonymous satire with an accompanying image, critical of the East India directors, set in the London Tavern. “The Directors in the Suds or the Jaghire Factor dismayed at the Ghosts of the Black Merchants” was published in response to the passing of the East India Loan Bill, which

prevented the East India Company directors from sending out their own supervisors to India to manage the Company's financial affairs. The Act recognized the administrative functions of the Company in India, while establishing that it was answerable to the British government, declaring that the Crown would take formal possession of lands that the company had acquired (*Parliamentary History* 17: 921-931).



Figure 10: Anon. "The India Directors In The Suds." *The Town and Country Magazine*. Jan. 1773. BM Sat. 5102.

The *Town and Country Magazine* satire records an imagined meeting of the directors taking place at the London Tavern to discuss how the Company might prevent its authority from being further diminished. The directors bemoan the dwindling significance of the Company, and regret not paying more bribes. Lord Clive then arrives, confers his hearty good wishes upon the directors, and apologizes for his behavior in parliament when the Bill was under consideration. It was, he explains, already decided that the Bill would pass so he supported the Bill in order to gain a little popularity. Four "ghosts of the black merchants" then appear demanding justice and

accusing Clive of treachery and hypocrisy. Lord Clive says that he can stand it no longer, “truth and justice are too powerful for hypocrisy and guilt,” he exclaims and, after the ghosts disappear, the directors are unable to continue the meeting and retire without coming to any kind of resolution.

Lord Clive, whose conduct in India and the great wealth he acquired as major-general of the military wing of the Company was a popular target for satirical attacks, provides the principle object of the satire, though the other Company directors are shown to be equally corrupt. The satire presents the London Tavern as the usual resort of the Company directors and the site of their less-than-honorable machinations. Nestled ambiguously between public and private, the tavern is the cause of some concern. Before Lord Clive’s entry, Sir George Colebrook stops the discussion of the waning influence of the East India Company to urge the other directors to be “cautious on so tender a point, perhaps we may be overheard: consider that we are in a public tavern.” According to the *Town and Country Magazine*, as the resort of England’s wealthy merchants the London Tavern is sufficiently exclusive that it can accommodate the conspiratorial discussions of Company directors, but not sufficiently secluded to admit of discussion that might be used against the Company. For all the tavern’s exclusivity, overheard conversations might circulate as harmful gossip. According to the satire, the exclusive luxuries of the tavern encourage the dishonorable intentions of the directors (who are, “in the Suds,” an expression which suggests that their political plotting is inspired by the wine which has loosened their tongues), while at the same time the public nature of the tavern, and the ease with which information flows in its large open spaces, is a helpful curb to the excesses which might otherwise occur in private. The London Tavern is presented as a site of commercial activity corrupted by

hunger for wealth and power, but one that is successfully regulated to place limits on the extremes of the East India Company's over-reaching ambition.

Burke, the Tavern, and Literary Men

Recapitulating his concern with Price's sermon—a theme which is woven throughout the *Reflections*—Burke writes:

On the forenoon of the fourth of November last, Doctor Richard Price, a Non-Conforming minister of eminence, preached at the Dissenting meeting-house of the Old Jewry, to his club or society, a very extraordinary miscellaneous sermon, in which there are some good moral and religious sentiments, and not ill expressed, mixed up with a sort of porridge of various political opinions and reflections: but the Revolution in France is the grand ingredient in the caldron. I consider the address transmitted by the Revolution Society to the National Assembly, through Earl Stanhope, as originating in the principles of the sermon, and as a corollary from them. It was moved by the preacher of that discourse. It was passed by those who came reeking from the effect of the sermon, without any censure or qualification, expressed or implied. (3: 245)

In light of the London Tavern's reputation for sumptuous gourmandizing and respectable meetings of city merchants, it is much harder to read this passage as a condemnation of the "noxious obscurity" of a licentious public sphere debauched by drunken excess. Price is noted for his "eminence," not his obscurity—the hint of sarcasm might question the justification for this renown but does not dispute it. And while the society may be "reeking from the effects of the sermon," Burke's concern is with their failure to censure the confusing miscellany of Price's address when it was transmitted to France rather than their intoxication (either vinous or spiritual). Burke's metaphor for describing Price's discourse is of bad cooking not excessive drinking. Price's moral and religious sentiments, which would, Burke implies, have made a

dinner worthy of the London Tavern, have been ruined by the excessive use of one ingredient, the French Revolution, which has turned the feast into a “sort of porridge.” (There are, unsurprisingly, no directions for the preparation of porridge in John Farley’s *London Art of Cookery*.)²¹ The point is not that the London Tavern is a site of enthusiastic excess, but that Price and his Revolution Society have sullied the reputation of a respectable tavern.

This observation helps to make sense of a puzzling aspect of Burke’s writing: his seemingly hostile presentation of the locations associated with the public sphere—the “licentious and giddy coffee-houses” of the *Reflections* (3: 321)—despite his own participation in those very institutions. He was, after all, a member, along with Samuel Johnson, Oliver Goldsmith, and Joshua Reynolds, of the club that met each week at the Turk’s Head Tavern in the 1760s. At the beginning of his political career he was a supporter of the heavy-drinking Wilkes, and accounts of the night Burke won his first parliamentary seat in December 1765 describe a riotously debauched celebration at which the toasts drunk included “Liberty, Wilkes and Liberty, Burke and Wilkes” (Maclean 135-6). In the 1780s Burke was a regular participant at Fox’s Whig Club, which met each month in the city’s larger taverns, most frequently the London Tavern or the Crown and Anchor. Indeed Burke was a regular attendee at the London Tavern, both at Whig Club meetings and at the anniversary dinners of the Benevolent Society of St. Patrick, which occurred annually on 17 March at the London Tavern, and of which Burke served as vice-president. The 1790 dinner of the society—which Burke attended along with the Society’s President, the suspiciously German Duke of York, and his fellow vice-president and Irish compatriot Richard Brinsley Sheridan—occurred four months after Price’s Revolution Society meeting, but before the publication of the *Reflections*.²² Throughout his life Burke was a regular

participant in London's culture of tavern conviviality. So if Burke casts the tavern as an inappropriate space for the Revolution Society, it is not because the tavern is disreputable, but because it is, in fact, far too respectable. The London Tavern's elegance makes it easy for patrons to acquire an erroneous sense of their own importance.

Writing to his correspondent in France, Burke says:

The vanity, restlessness, petulance, and spirit of intrigue, of several petty cabals, who attempt to hide their total want of consequence in bustle and noise, and puffing, and mutual quotation of each other, makes you imagine that our contemptuous neglect of their abilities is a mark of general acquiescence in their opinions. No such thing, I assure you. (3: 324)

Burke's objection to these London societies is not that they participate in a cacophonous, unregulated public sphere. The London Tavern was highly regulated, open only to the wealthy merchants that could afford the elegant—and expensive—turtle dinners. Rather, Burke objects to the solipsistic tendencies of the “petty cabals.” The elegant taverns obscure the societies' “total want of consequence,” and convince the participants that they have more authority than they can legitimately claim. The refined dinners foster an atmosphere of complacent self-affirmation, the “vanity” of the clubs resulting from the literary practice of “mutual quotation.” The problem is not that the public sphere is unregulated, but that it has short-circuited, so that privileged gentlemen gather in taverns, make toasts and draw up resolutions, which are quoted in newspapers and published in pamphlets, to be quoted back at future meetings, then published again, in an endlessly repeating circuit of repetition, which circumvents any broader consensus-building and convinces the club members that their own opinions are held by all. The publications, Burke says, resulting from these meetings, should not be taken as representative of

the views of the nation as they represent the narrow perspective of the exclusive, self-serving clubs rather than adequately representing public opinion.

The tendency of scholars to associate the tavern with the plebeian radical movement of the 1790s has distorted the object of Burke's critique, which is not of the dangers of an incipient democratic movement prompted by the lower orders, but of the radical consequences of a public sphere dominated by wealthy merchants who patronize London's exclusive tavern societies. Burke objects to the clubs whose publications presume to represent the opinions of the country but which, in fact, merely promote the commercial interests of the merchant class. This class of wealthy tavern-goers were the gentlemen attendees of the Revolution Society dinner, but they were also the merchants and East India Company employees with whom the London Tavern had always been associated.

Throughout his writings on the Revolution Burke consistently associates the French revolutionaries and their English sympathizers with the employees of the East India Company. Comparing the unlimited power that the French National Assembly has claimed with the restricted power of each of the branches of the British government, Burke insists in the *Reflections* that the "greatness" of the House of Commons is a consequence of its limited power within the constitutional Monarchy. As it is, he says, the Commons has great power, "And long may it be able to preserve its greatness, at the full! And it will do so, as long as it can keep the breakers of law in India from becoming the makers of law for England" (3: 290). The biggest threat Burke can imagine to the English government comes not from agricultural laborers, or the factory workers whose labor power fuelled the Industrial Revolution, or indeed from the artisans, shopkeepers and tradesmen who would form the London Corresponding Society. The threat is

rather from the East India Company, whose overweening desire for power in India has taken up so much of Burke's time in his work on the Hastings Trial.

“Formerly, few, except, the ambitious great or the desperate and indigent, were to be feared as instruments in revolutions,” Burke writes in *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1791), a text in which the connection between the East India Company and the threat of revolution in England is much more fully developed. But the example of the French Revolution has, he says, revealed that there are “more causes than have commonly been taken into our consideration, by which government might be subverted” (*Writings* 4: 325-6). Chief among these causes are the respectable tavern societies of the formerly peaceful middle classes. Indeed, the members of the new French government have “much more the air and character of the saucy declamations of their clubs, than the tone of regular office” (4: 315). The French government, like London's solipsistic societies, is audacious. It makes “saucy declamations,” which mindlessly erase the established institutions of the past in order to promote its immediate interests in the present.

The English, moreover, are particularly apt to accept the French system because they are already formed into a body, comprehending most of the dissenters of the three leading denominations; to these are readily aggregated all who are dissenters in character, temper, and disposition, though not belonging to any of their congregations—that is, all the restless people who resemble them, of all ranks and all parties—Whigs, and even Tories—the whole race of half-bred speculators; all the Atheists, Deists, and Socinians; all those who hate the Clergy, and envy the Nobility, a good many among the monied people; the East Indians almost to a man, who cannot bear to find that their present importance does not bear a proportion to their wealth. These latter have united themselves into one great, and in my opinion, formidable Club, which, though now quiet, may be brought into action with considerable unanimity and force. (4: 324)

The threat is familiar. Burke describes the recurring nightmare of those who have not been assimilated into the existing structure organizing into a unified body to seek their revenge on a social system that has left them behind. But, again, the people he includes in this list of the disaffected and disenfranchised who might break out into revolutionary violence at any moment are not the swinish multitude—at least, not in the commonly acknowledged sense—but religious dissenters (Richard Price and the Revolution Society, perhaps) along with dissenting people of “all ranks and all parties.” Burke recognizes that the chief instigators and beneficiaries of the revolution are the upper middle classes who “cannot bear to find that their present importance does not bear a proportion to their wealth.” The greatest threat to domestic peace comes from the *nouveau riches*, the merchant classes that have recently acquired wealth, rather than inheriting the landed property associated with older structures of patrilineal succession.

As Burke himself wrote in a footnote to the text, when he describes the unification of the disaffected into a club, the “one great and formidable Club” that he had in mind was the Bengal Club (4: 324), which met once every two weeks at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in order to rekindle friendships that had been made between East India Company employees during their years abroad (Philips 97). The Crown and Anchor in the Strand, which we have already encountered as the meeting place of the Anacreontic Society, was one of the new breed of taverns that Feltham listed along with the London Tavern as “chiefly used for public dinners,” and like the London Tavern was, as we will see in the next chapter, associated with radical politics. The Bengal Club came into prominence following the parliamentary election of 1784, when it was alleged to have exerted an undue influence over the election results. *Parker's General Advertiser*, for example, accused it of sending seventy-four members into parliament, which along

with thirty members sent by India House meant that the East India Company controlled one hundred votes—nearly half—in the House of Commons. No wonder then “that the Directors, and not Mr. P[itt], are said to be the real Ministers of this country” (*Parker’s General Advertiser* 8 Jul. 1784).

This ambitious class of “monied men” poses a threat, not because they are vulgar, but because they are *organized*. The tavern organizes these men into visible assemblies, clubs and societies – into the associational world discussed by Peter Clark – that exerts an increasing pressure on the operations of the state, but which from Burke’s perspective are not rooted in the institutions of government. They are illegitimate because they do not have the authority of the past. The tavern, and in particular the large, new taverns exemplified by the London Tavern, which were built explicitly to hold “public meetings,” acceptable though they may be to hold anniversary dinners, are no place from which to determine the political direction of the nation. But the “monied men” have assembled into a formidable club whose revolutionary potential might at any moment be unleashed. In their unrooted institutional home, the tavern, they meet, hold dinners, and consolidate their affiliations in solipsistic mutual quotation, by which means they have already secured a foothold in government, and threaten to overpower the state entirely, as they had done in France.

The dogma espoused by the French government, which threatens to inspire the already audacious commercial classes throughout Europe is the principle that “the majority, told by the head, of the taxable people in every country is the perpetual, natural, unceasing, indefeasible sovereign” (Burke 4: 322). It is frequently assumed that Burke objects to democracy as a principle for sovereignty, but the language he uses to describe this “dogma” reveals that his main

concern is not with the principle itself, but with the economic terms of its underlying logic. The dogma states that the majority is sovereign because they pay taxes. This is the empirical language and logic of merchants. Political authority, Burke argues, is debased on these grounds because it is a mathematical calculation. The public good has been surrendered to the speculative logic of commerce.

Just as Burke's writings on India exhibit a thoroughgoing disgust with the consequences of the East India Company's arbitrary use of unjust power in their avaricious pursuit of wealth, so his writings on the French Revolution demonstrate his alarm that a dehumanizing system of government, led by the merchant class, might spread throughout Europe, putting the empirical logic of commerce ahead of social harmony. Burke fears the consequences of the devolution of power from the European monarchies to the merchant classes whose rule in British India had been so disastrous for Indian culture and society.

When considering Burke's comments on the Revolution Society and the London Tavern, a question continually surfaces about the relationship between taverns and politics: how much does Burke's knowledge of the taverns inflect his opinion of the society, and how much does his opinion of the society inform his understanding of the tavern? I would argue that it is both simultaneously, but perhaps more the latter than the former. Burke, as David Bromwich has argued, was not necessarily a systematic thinker, but he was an expert rhetorician. "Burke never confused the use of reason in politics with mere obedience to a theory" (31), Bromwich writes, and while Burke often appealed to matters of "principle," those principles were often malleable, with Burke's perspective on a particular issue shifting in order to make his point as forcibly as possible. Indeed Burke was committed to the necessity of argumentative suppleness, believing

that an inflexible system of rules and strictures would be inadequate to the task of government, which he saw as tied to the practical contingencies of the situation. This was, of course, one of the reasons he railed against the theoretical reasoning of literary men, to which I will return shortly. And so it was with his presentation of the tavern. At times his knowledge of the tavern appears to determine his view of tavern talk, at times the Revolution Society shapes his understanding of the tavern, depending on the particular argument he is mounting. On balance, however, his writings on the French Revolution suggest that the particular conjunction of the London Tavern with the Revolution Society in the immediate post-revolutionary moment made visible an aspect of tavern conviviality that had previously been obscured. Namely, elegant taverns had facilitated a radical shift in the way extra-parliamentary groups understood their relationship to government. The Revolution Society, that is, made manifest a tendency that had been present in the associational world of the tavern all along, that the clubs and societies which gathered to influence political policy might at any moment overreach their role and assume a political power of their own.

Given that the object of Burke's deepest anxieties is not the threat of a revolution from the "lower orders" as is frequently assumed, it will be helpful to reconsider the notorious phrase which has been taken as emblematic of Burke's elitist class politics. The term "swinish multitude" appears in a discussion of the educational practices of the nobility and clergy. These two groups, Burke says, had historically benefited from learning, but as other sections of society began to be educated, so the purpose of education was corrupted:

Learning paid back what it received to nobility and to priesthood, and paid it with usury, by enlarging their ideas and by furnishing their minds. Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union and their proper place! Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the

master! Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude. (3: 335)

There can be little doubt that once the term “swinish multitude” passed into general currency it was taken to mean the vulgar, uneducated, lower orders. When popular radical writers of the 1790s reappropriated the phrase in such publications as Thomas Spence’s *Pig’s Meat; or Lessons for the Swinish Multitude* (1793-5), Daniel Isaac Eaton’s *Politics for the People, or Salmagundi for Swine* (1794-5), or Robert Thompson’s address “To the Public, alias the “Swinish Multitude”” (1794) they understood the phrase to refer to the lower classes, those who were neither of the nobility or the clergy, and who desired to be educated. These authors took it upon themselves to provide the education for the masses to which they thought Burke objected (as indeed, did conservative writers like Paley and More). But Burke’s image is used in service of an argument for a particular *kind* of learning, not as a barrier to prevent education. The multitudinous nature of the swinish multitude is a comment on the prevalence of this kind of debased, calculating schooling.

Significantly, Burke’s argument pivots on a financial metaphor, that learning “paid back” with “usury” the investment of the effort put in. Previously, he argues, the enlargement of ideas was considered sufficient, and no further reward was sought. That financial benefits resulted from this furnishing of the mind may be the case, but this was not the primary function of education. “Usury” here is meant both positively, in the sense that education provided the nobility and clergy with ample recompense; and negatively—education developed into a commodity that could guarantee a profit, and it became part of a calculus that began to judge the benefits of education according to its financial rewards. Education, Burke argues, has been debased by “ambition,” by which, it is clear, he means pecuniary and political ambition. It is an

objection to a system of education whose primary incentive is not a thirst for knowledge, but the political and financial benefits that might be accrued. Under a regime governed by the merchant classes, disinterested learning will be “cast in the mire,” and trampled on by “a swinish multitude,” by which he means the monied men who have abandoned moral imperatives, and who will stop at nothing to promote their own ambitions.²³

In his writings on the revolution, Burke presents the tavern as the home of both the East India Company merchants and their associates, the literary men, who have received the same debased education and promote the calculating logic of the merchant classes. It is where the world of global commerce and the world of literature mingle as the scribbling classes make public the ideologies that serve the private interests of the merchants. In the *Reflections* Burke worries that his French correspondent will judge the political scene in the nation “from certain publications which very erroneously, if they do at all, represent the opinions and dispositions generally prevalent in England” (3: 343). He is at pains to point out that the publications issuing from the narcissistic tavern clubs do not represent the political mood of the country. And in the *Thoughts on French Affairs*, Burke similarly associates the French revolutionaries with the class of men whose writings promote the ideologies of the wealthy merchants who have been taught to believe that commerce is the fundamental principle behind sound governance. The “chief actors in the French Revolution,” he writes, are “the monied men, merchants, principal tradesmen, and men of letters” (4: 325).

Of course, when Burke speaks of “men of letters” or “literary men” he does not have in mind the writers of poems, plays, and novels that have formed the core of the literary canon as we frequently understand it. “Literature,” as Paul Keen has shown, was in a state of considerable

crisis in the 1790s, and for Burke, as for many of his contemporaries, the category did not only denote works of “imaginative expression,” but all printed text (Keen 42-6). Burke associates literature in this sense with the spirit of revolution that threatens Europe, as old Enlightenment assumptions about the supremacy of reason and the improving qualities of rational-critical debate (improving to the point of perfection, if Godwin and Holcroft’s subsequent writings were to be believed) had over-reached their limits, and had begun to justify behaviors and principles that were destructive to the good of society. Burke dismissed the spirit of innovation that typified literature, as the “shallow speculations of the petulant, assuming, short-sighted coxcombs of philosophy,” which had begun to rip apart the traditions and customs that safeguarded the wisdom of past generations (3: 299).

By the 1790s “speculation,” which Burke associates with literature, had developed specifically financial connotations.²⁴ Adam Smith described the “speculative merchant” as a “bold adventurer,” who “may sometimes acquire a considerable fortune by two or three successful speculations; but is just as likely to lose one by two or three unsuccessful ones” (216-7). For Burke, as for Smith, speculation was a form of gambling, which undertook unnecessary risks in the anticipation of incommensurate gains. The financial gambles of mercantilism and the abstractions of literary theorizing both disregard the institutional wisdom gained from previous generations, and “speculate” about possible future outcomes, which have no basis in experience. Burke describes the members of the English mercantile tavern club whose abstract calculations underpin a potentially violent revolutionary spirit as a “race of half-bred speculators” (4: 324). The concern with the miscellany of Price’s porridge-like sermon has now been transformed into a disturbingly anti-miscegenistic image, informed by common stereotypes about the nabob whose

Englishness has been diminished by contact with the East. But the image of “half-bred speculators” is also, and primarily, an image of quixotic dreaming, of illegitimate theoretical reasoning that has broken free of the practical knowledge and is specifically allied with the men of letters, the political theorists (like Price) who popularize the empirical logic of the merchant class.²⁵

Burke consistently aligns the speculative literary theorizing with commerce, claiming that writers have produced the ideological underpinnings needed to establish the mercantile regime’s foothold in the ancient political system: “Writers, especially when they act in a body, and with one direction, have a great influence on the publick mind; the allegiance therefore of these writers with the monied interest had no small effect in removing the popular odium and envy which attended that species of wealth” (3: 380). These “men of letters,” once they have formed themselves into a club, support the value systems upheld by the emerging class of financial speculators, in part because literature itself is a form of speculation. By operating in the domain of ideas rather than practical experience, “literary cabals” foster an interest in novelty for its own sake, and thereby erode respect for the established institutions—the church and the state, chief among them—that had formerly supported stable government (Keen 43-6).

Burke affords a great deal of power to the role of text in shaping public consensus and bringing about social change. Literature is a technology that disseminates the theories of speculators, and writers are therefore responsible for taking private ideas and making them public. In this sense literature and the tavern are complicit, both threatening to dissolve the distinctions between private commerce and public state power. Burke opposes the Revolution Society meeting at the London Tavern both because it takes place in a tavern—a space that

facilitates the meetings of private clubs who make claims to public authority—and because Richard Price is one of the “unpropertied, disaffiliated, extra-institutional intellectuals” (Barrell 72) whom Burke held responsible for circulating propaganda that eroded support for older institutions in favor of a society founded on a principle of the pursuit of wealth. Both the meeting at the tavern and the subsequent publication of the Society’s proceedings are indices of the influence of ideas that threaten institutional stability. The tavern and print culture are aligned as the domains through which the emerging class of unpropertied merchants and tradesmen seek to establish their authority over the waning influence of ancient laws and institutions. Burke imagines the tavern as the institutional home of an emerging political regime, which would preside over the publication of endlessly proliferating texts that were committed to the circulation of capital and the destruction of landed property. Narcissistic tavern culture threatens to become a model for a new state founded on self-congratulation and the desire for wealth and power.

For Pocock, there are two groups that Burke identifies as revolutionary. Firstly, speculators in paper money and public debt, and secondly the atheist *philosophes*, the literary men who have organized themselves into clubs. The second group, Pocock points out are dangerous because they are the men of letters who “might be coming to replace the clergy as educators and disciplinarians of the people.” The first group, however, Pocock finds it difficult to explain. “It is a little odd to find him elaborating such an invective,” he writes (xxxiv). What the tavern allows us to see, however, is that these two groups are not separable in Burke’s mind. What is noteworthy about the literary men, Pocock points out, “is the emphasis laid on their organized and collective activity,” precisely the same qualities that he elsewhere attribute to the Bengal club, who met in the very same taverns in which the literary men gathered.

It is also clear from Burke's descriptions of the literary merchant-revolutionaries who meet in elegant taverns that they are not the peaceable individuals that Habermas describes as populating his bourgeois public sphere. They may be respectable, they may be organized, and they may believe in the emancipatory power of reason, but they are also imperialists driven by ambition and greed. Burke describes the new age of innovative speculators as the "new conquering empire of light and reason," a phrase whose imagery of imperial ambition is both a sarcastic jab at the limitations of reason, and a recognition of the violent consequences of system of government sustained by the calculating logic of commerce (4: 332). The French Revolution, and the horrors that Burke had prophetically anticipated in the *Reflections*, are the consequences of these structures of reasoning, and they will inevitably lead the formerly peaceable classes to violence again. "Never before this time," Burke says in *The Letter to A Noble Lord*, "was a set of literary men converted into a gang of robbers and assassins" (*Writings* 5: 213). For Burke, being a properly productive bourgeois individual with an education and a literary bent is no guarantee of a peaceful disposition. Especially if the education received encourages aggressive acquisition.

According to Habermas's theory of the bourgeois public sphere, the rational-critical debates carried out in coffee-houses and in print shape the political system by a principle of meritocracy in which the best argument wins the day, irrespective of rank or status. As Nancy Fraser has noted, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* assumes that these coffee-house exchanges are beatifically peaceable, failing to consider the more contentious arguments that occurred in conversation (292) and in recent years the more contested forms of address of both the polite and plebeian public spheres have received a great deal of attention (Barrell *Spirit of Despotism* 75-102; Epstein *In Practice* 90-7; Mee *Conversable Worlds* 14).²⁶ Burke's notion of

narcissistic tavern societies is helpful in this context because it understands the interactions of tavern conversation as non-contestatory—attendees already agree with the principles under discussion, and are happy to reconfirm their own prejudices through “mutual quotation”—but sustained nevertheless by a more structural violence.²⁷ More than simply a naive view of the material practice of deliberation, Habermas’s *Structural Transformation* presents a supremely non-violent view of social change, a theorization of state power goaded into benevolent decision-making from below by the pressure of public opinion. This recognition of the power of ideas—and argument—to stimulate social change, is of course, a large part of the theory’s appeal and accounts for its enduring popularity in literary and cultural theory. But Burke’s discussions of tavern meetings in his writings on the French Revolution make clear that the bourgeois individuals who participate in peaceable deliberative democracy gain *their* legitimacy from the violent exploitation of imperial subjects. In its endorsement of a system of government that ultimately derives its sovereignty from the practice of debate, Habermas’s theory endorses the bourgeois values of speculation that Burke saw as accompanying the violence inherent in incipient global capitalism.

By supporting the French Revolution, the “literary men” who frequented the same exclusive London taverns as the wealthy merchant class provided the ideological justification for a capitalist system in which desire for profit untethered government from its moral obligations. The world of the tavern, which exposes the links between revolution, commerce, and literature, makes visible the contradiction at the heart of the bourgeois public sphere: the benign meritocracy of ideas, arguments, and opinions that were supposed to provide an alternative to the violent domestic struggles that had characterized traditional views of historical change were

themselves sustained by violence. What Burke recognized, and cried out against—occasionally to the point of hysteria—was the running of governments according to the speculative principles of commercial calculation because the practice destroys the affective affiliations and structures of obligation that bind society together into “little platoons” (3:292) and creates a nation governed by ambition. Speculative principles, as the East India Company amply demonstrated, overlook the obligations of sympathy in the rapacious pursuit of wealth.

Chapter 3

Crown and Anchor Dreams

In *Imagining the King's Death*, John Barrell provides a new context for understanding the Romantic imagination. By examining the ways in which literary understandings of the imagination bled into legal understandings of imagining in the treason trials of the mid 1790s, Barrell shows how Coleridge's sense of the imagination, described in the *Biographia Literaria* as an essentially benign, apolitical generative force developed out of, and indeed was a reaction against, debates about what it meant to "compass or imagine the death of our lord the king." Though often unacknowledged, one point that Barrell's discussion makes abundantly clear is that at the center of discussions about what constituted dangerous imaginings lay the tavern. Judges, lawyers, writers, and satirists understood that when men gathered to discuss potentially treasonous or seditious ideas – when they gathered to imagine the king's death – they frequently did so in the tavern. The development of Coleridge's sense of the literary imagination, then, involved the severing of the imagination from its ties to treasonous metropolitan conviviality.

In this chapter, I will explore precisely how and why this separation took place by examining representations of the most well-known taverns of the period, the Crown and Anchor in the Strand. The Crown and Anchor's reputation has been cemented – with good reason, as we will see – as the home of the radical political imagination, associated most particularly with Fox and the Whig Club. As the meeting place of John Horne Tooke's Society for Constitutional Information, as well as a large meeting of the London Corresponding Society, it was heavily implicated in the treason trials of 1794, and was, as such, one of the taverns from which

Romantic literary imagination sought to distance itself. But I want also to complicate the idea of the Crown and Anchor as a site of radical politics, not simply by pointing out that the tavern was also the home of conservative political groups like John Reeves's reactionary Crown and Anchor Association, but by examining the tavern's reputation for less overtly political activities: as a domestic site, offering home comforts and good food to London's relatively wealthy gentlemen, and as a site for musical performance. In addition to its associations with reformist politics it was also the meeting place of the Anacreontic Society, as we have seen, and the Academy of Ancient Music, which was founded there in 1710 (Hawkins 3). Boswell and Johnson met there in the 1760s and 70s (Boswell *Life of Johnson* 397, 489, 493, 746) and both Coleridge and Hazlitt offered concurrent lecture series there in 1819 (Chandler 13, 274). The tavern features in numerous eighteenth-century novels, including Thomas Bridges' *The Adventures of a Banknote* (3:54), Charlotte Smith's *Celestina* (2:257), and Robert Bisset's *Douglas; or the Highlander* (3:125), it also appears in plays such as John O'Keefe's *The London Hermit*, Arthur Murray's *The Citizen*, and Samuel Foote's *The Lame Lover*. There is, as we will see, a politics to imagining the Crown and Anchor that is considerably more complex than merely locating the political imagination in the tavern.

In 1817 Coleridge described the imagination as a vital power that "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate" and ultimately "struggles to idealize and unify." It was, he argued, distinct from the fancy in its ability to create, not merely associate materials already present, and was, as such, the supreme human activity (7:304). The claim for the supremacy of the imagination represented a significant reordering of the hierarchy of mental processes, which for much of the eighteenth century had placed the imagination significantly behind reason, understanding, and their verbal articulation in the form of wit, tempered to various degrees by

the sentiments and sympathy. The dominant understanding of the imagination for much of the eighteenth century was as a vehicle for processing external sensory impressions.

Addison, for example, defined the pleasures of the imagination as “only such pleasures as arise originally from sight.” These pleasures in turn could be sub-divided into the primary pleasures, which “proceed from such objects as are before our eyes” and secondary pleasures, which “flow from the ideas of visible objects, when the objects are not actually before the eye, but are called up into our memories” (*Spectator* 3:583). As John Brewer has shown, the imagination was one of the terms by which eighteenth-century writers attempted to separate out the newly formulated cultural category of “the fine arts” from the vulgar pleasures of the senses and the gratification of the appetite (*Pleasures of the Imagination* 87-90). The imagination thus became a means to distinguish between people of good taste and those whose judgment was shaped by grosser pleasures. “A man of Polite Imagination” Addison wrote in the *Spectator*, “is led into a great many Pleasures that the Vulgar are not capable of receiving” (3:583). And here, I want to suggest, is one of the reasons why the tavern was a much more vexed space than the coffeehouse or alehouse – precisely because it was an elite space associated with polite pleasure, but which nevertheless appealed to the appetite and grosser sensations. The history of the tavern in the eighteenth century is shaped by attempts to navigate between the tavern’s double association with refined sensibilities and grosser physical pleasure – the tavern that is, straddled uncomfortably the opposing domains of the polite imagination and vulgar pleasure that the imagination helped to demarcate.

Nevertheless, for Addison the imagination, superior as it was to physical sensation, was less refined than the understanding, which was capable of producing new knowledge and

improving the mind of man. For Samuel Johnson, also, the imagination remained inextricably tied to the image, and was primarily a faculty for forming pictures in the mind. The imagination was thus “the power of forming ideal pictures; the power of representing things absent to one’s self or others,” or a “conception; image in the mind; idea.” But Johnson’s *Dictionary* also listed a more sinister aspect among its definitions of the imagination: to imagine could also be “to scheme or to contrive.” By the end of the century this sense of the imagination as a potentially dangerous force had intensified. In his *Appeal from the Old to the New Whigs* (1791) Edmund Burke wrote, “there is a boundary to men’s passions when they act from feeling; none when they are under the influence of imagination” (4:192). For Burke, the Enlightenment preoccupation with the understanding and reason had been superseded by the importance of feeling. The imagination, now aligned with the cold philosophy of “literary men,” could be considered a transgressive power capable of exceeding human intention. Far from the “first mover,” the creative power that Coleridge describes, for Burke the imagination, envisioned as a riotous speculation ungrounded by moral sentiment, needs to be regulated, to be brought back inside the boundaries within which feeling operates. It is wild, unpredictable, and lies dangerously outside of the control of the subject.

In a legal sense, however, as Barrell has discussed, the imagination had a very different history. In the archaic wording of 25 Edward III, the statute which defined the term, it is treason “when a man doth compass or imagine the death of the our lord the king.” According to the authoritative legal commentaries the imagination was understood as a faculty that prompted the enacting of the imagined desires – to imagine the death of the king was to plot against the king, intending to bring the imagined future to fruition (30-6). During the Treason Trials of 1794,

however, considerable pressure was exerted on this figurative understanding of the imagination. Imagining the king's death was taken by the Crown prosecution to include not only plots against the king's physical, mortal body, but also any threat to the political body of the king. The government's lawyers made the case that any threat to the constitutional status quo, including attempts to reform parliament, could be considered treason, if it diminished the power of the king. Arguing for the defense, Thomas Erskine continually called the government lawyers to account for imagining the distant consequences of the defendants' political principles. It was not the court's job, Erskine argued, to interrogate what might have happened given the consequences of the reform movement – this was an act of imagination on the part of the defense – but to establish the specific, immediate intentions of the defendants, bringing the word “imagine” back into contact with its figurative legal sense. By the time of the Treasonable Practices Act of 1795, an Act that sought to limit the activities of public house associations and to place limits on political discussion, the phrase “compass and imagine” could be glossed as “design,” or “invent,” where “invention” has specifically artistic connotations, indicating the representation of a subject (Barrell *Imagining the King's Death* 583). Aesthetic and legal understandings of the imagination had been brought into a much closer proximity.

This chapter explores the connection between the tavern and the imagination at a moment when the definition of the imagination was facing considerable pressure and provides an account of the literary consequences of this revolution in attitudes towards conviviality. The tavern, which for much of the eighteenth century had been associated with literature as a place in which aspiring literary men might be able to demonstrate their superior taste and capacity for inventive improving conversation, after the French Revolution became a place associated with

dangerous and seditious imaginings which could spill out of control and infect the entire kingdom. By examining representations – both textual and visual – of the Crown and Anchor, I will explore the wide variety of narratives into which the tavern was capable of fitting in the early 1790s, and show how, as literary understandings of the imagination mingled with legal definitions, the ways in which the tavern can be imagined are drastically curtailed. After examining the architectural history of the tavern, I will show how its reputation for suspicious imaginings was forged in the controversy surrounding a dinner celebrating the second anniversary of the French Revolution in 1791. Examining newspaper commentary alongside print satires, I will demonstrate how the tavern gained a reputation for producing dangerous political ideas, and how this reputation was challenged by its supporters who argued (unconvincingly) that the tavern was a harmless domestic site that merely supplied its patrons with dinner. Few were convinced that the tavern was a neutral space, however, and the extent of the Crown and Anchor's political commitment was interrogated in the trials for libel, sedition, and treason from 1792 onwards. In the trial of Daniel Isaac Eaton and in the 1794 treason trials the tavern was presented as unequivocally partisan, though whether its loyalties were with seditious extremism or reactionary conservatism remained obscure. I will then show how, under pressure from repressive government policies, artists and writers sought to distance themselves from the excessive political energies associated with the tavern. I will discuss how, in a highly uncharacteristic image by Gillray the Crown and Anchor appears as a fortress of respectability, its radical reputation forcibly curtailed. Finally, I will turn to Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art*, a novel in which the Crown and Anchor appears fleetingly, but significantly. In Inchbald's novel the tavern is associated with musical performance, a non-verbal art that diffuses the threat of

tavern talk, while simultaneously registering the importance of the tavern in the cultural and political life of London. The tavern, I will argue, should be understood not merely as the site of the perilous political ideas from which the Romantic imagination distanced itself, but as a potent symbol of what had to be suppressed in the development of Romantic ideology.

Crown and Anchor Plans

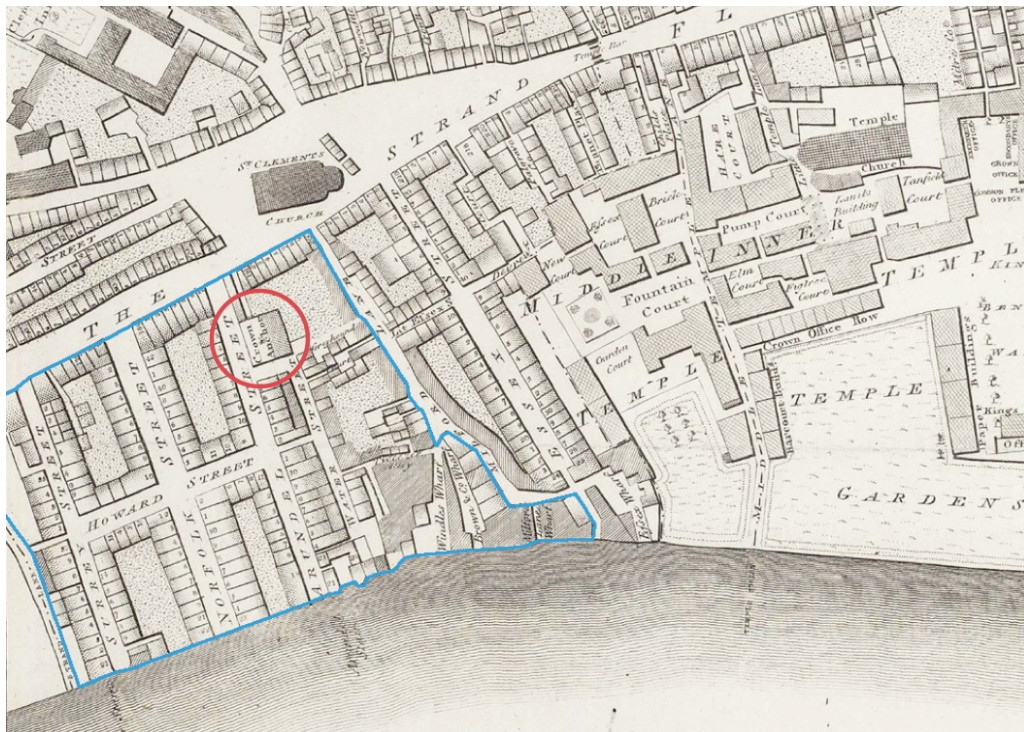


Figure 11: Detail from Richard Horwood. *Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster, the Borough of Southwark, and Parts Adjoining, shewing Every House*. London: Horwood, 1792-9. This first edition of Horwood's map shows the Crown and Anchor in its earlier incarnation prior to Simpkin's improvements. The Duke of Norfolk's Strand Estate is indicated by the blue line.

Throughout the eighteenth century the Crown and Anchor was one of the most fashionable taverns in the capital. It was located on the corner of Arundel Street and the Strand – one of the major thoroughfares which passed through the dense network of streets and allies east of Charing

Cross, connecting the west end with the City.¹ The land belonged to the Strand Estate of the Duke of Norfolk, a plot that stretched from the Thames to the Strand, and from Strand Lane (just beyond Surrey Street) in the west to Milford Lane in the east (fig. 11). This had formerly been the site of Arundel House, which had been purchased by the 12th Earl of Arundel in 1549, and then demolished and redeveloped to pay off debts in the 1670s. In the late 1780s a substantial number of leases had expired on the Estate and the 11th Duke of Norfolk (1786-1815) used the opportunity to set about redeveloping the area (Warne xiii-xiv, 157). At the heart of this project lay the Crown and Anchor, which was to be the centerpiece of the Duke's development, forming a fashionable meeting place on a scale to rival the London Tavern.

There had, in fact, been a well-known tavern on the site since at least 1707, to which Thomas Simpkin acquired the lease in the early 1780s. Under the Duke's direction, between 1786 and 1788 Simpkin began acquiring the leases on the premises surrounding the tavern, from Arundel Street to Milford Lane. By 1788 Simpkin had demolished a number of "ruinous old buildings" and built "a very large erection annexed to the said *Crown and Anchor Tavern*, consisting of two large dining rooms on the ground floor and cellars underneath and a spacious Ball or Assembly Room above the same and the remainder thereof he hath appropriated to an open yard and other conveniences."² All of this was in addition to the already substantial existing structure, which remained in place.

Plans and drawings of the tavern in the Duke of Norfolk's archive of deeds relating to the Strand Estate show the extent of Simpkin's undertaking. The frontage on Arundel Street was expanded from forty-five to seventy-eight feet, and was classically decorated with elegant columns dividing up the width into seven bays, three windows either side of a relatively modest

central entrance (fig. 12). The expanded tavern had an extensive complex of rooms stretching back 154 feet, as far as Milford Lane (fig. 13) (Warne 158, 216). In addition, a narrow passageway between two houses now enabled access from the Strand – evidently a consideration that was sufficiently important to the prestige of the premises to involve the reduction of valuable Strand-fronted properties.



Figure 12: View of the Arundel Street entrance of Crown and Anchor. Thomas Hosmer Shepherd (1852). British Museum Crace Collection, Crace XVII.147.

Descriptions of the ground floor “large dining room” indicate that it could seat five hundred guests and was dominated by two large fireplaces and carved, circular cornices in the ceiling from which hung substantial chandeliers in the floor above. There was a “prodigious” stone staircase with mahogany handrails that led up from the dining room to a lobby area where

guests could gather before entering the “Great Assembly Room” which measured 2,969 square feet and could accommodate upwards of 2000 people.³ The tavern also had a number of smaller rooms which in later accounts include a large drawing room, a smoking room, a news room, a library, a reading room, several ‘class’ rooms and a ladies room. The tavern frequently accommodated numerous different meetings, sometimes with conflicting interests, at the same time.⁴

Like the London Tavern, the Crown and Anchor had been built to cater to the increasing demand for large, high-profile gatherings. Its architecture reveals an understanding of taverns as public spaces that could accommodate large political meetings, and which could in turn reflect the Duke of Norfolk’s own political power. Yet unlike the London Tavern there remained a great deal of disagreement about how to understand the Crown and Anchor. In the literature and art in which it features, it was seen variously as a venue for drunken revelry, or for elegant dinners; as the headquarters of revolutionary enthusiasm, or of reactionary conservatism; as a site that embodied the principles of freedom of speech and the liberty of the presses, or of the repressive regime of a tyrannical British government. Such vacillating opinions might in part be a reflection of the wide variety of functions that the Crown and Anchor served. In addition to its role as a meeting place – for individuals, for clubs and societies of various sizes, for commercial transactions, and political debates – it also served a number of administrative functions: clubs left petitions at the tavern for the public to sign, subscriptions for various causes were left there, societies could have their mail addressed to the tavern for collection, and it functioned occasionally as an auction house for selling property.⁵ The wide variety of uses to which the tavern was put suggests that the tavern was perhaps a relatively neutral space after all, the very

neutrality of which allowed it to fit different narratives about public and private space, polite and vulgar imaginations, or conservative and radical politics.

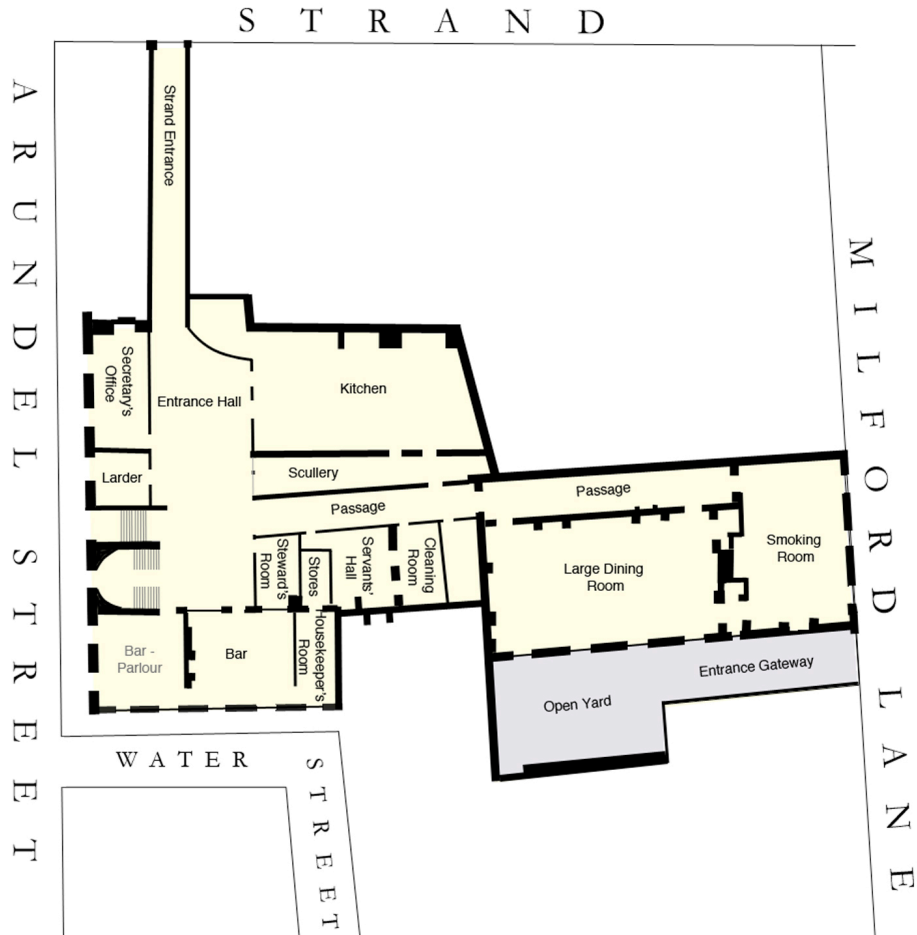


Figure 13: Ground floor plan of the Crown and Anchor, based on drawings held in the Duke of Norfolk's Deeds at Arundel Castle. ACC 186/1-24, and PM1 90.

The tavern's representational instability might also be attributed to the Crown and Anchor's location. The Duke of Norfolk's Strand Estate was in the heart of the legal district of London, with Middle and Inner Temple to the southeast of the tavern (two of the four inns of court where barristers trained and practiced their profession), and Clement's Inn to the north (one of the inns of Chancery, where solicitors trained and worked). But in addition to the

solicitors and barristers who must have been constantly passing, witnesses who visited the area in the 1790s record a bustling locale with a lively street life, not all of which accords with the image of respectability the legal profession might suggest. A number of trials at the Old Bailey in the 1790s suggest that the area around the Crown and Anchor was a popular resort among pickpockets, and a potentially dangerous place for the wealthy to travel. In 1790, for example, Edward Humphreys was sentenced to death for “feloniously assaulting James Cumberland Bentley, Esq. on the king's highway, on the 30th of March last, and putting him in fear, and feloniously taking from his person and against his will, one linen handkerchief, value 3 s. his property.” In the trial Bentley described the attack. As he was walking away from the Crown and Anchor, where he had attended a meeting, he saw Humphreys removing his handkerchief from his pocket, whereupon Bentley caught hold of the thief. Humphreys then “struck [Bentley], with a bludgeon, on the temple.” Bentley was able to force Humphreys to drop the handkerchief on the ground, but when he stooped to pick it up Humphreys aimed another blow at his head. “I had the presence of mind to raise this arm to save that blow,” Bentley’s account continues, “and from one of the other two [of Humphreys’s company] I positively swear, I received a violent blow at the back of my head; by this time a crowd began to gather round, and my friend cried out, for God's sake, will no man assist in taking this thief” (“Trial of Edward Humphreys” n.p.). Bentley’s account is of interest because it suggests just how busy the streets outside the Crown and Anchor must have been. The speed with which the crowd allegedly gathered suggests an area with a great deal of foot traffic. It is also notable that, in spite of the gathering crowd, Bentley’s companion has to call out for help, and indeed, it seems that no one did help Bentley, who himself had to grab hold of Humphreys, and drag him away until he could find a Constable to

apprehended him. The trial gives no indication of why the members of the crowd were so reluctant to help out the gentleman. Perhaps the onlookers did not want to get involved in a case that did not concern them. Perhaps they, too, feared for their lives. Or if the crowd on the Strand consisted not of respectable legal professionals and patrons of the Crown and Anchor but of the ballad singers, pornographers, thieves, prostitutes, and bawds who we will encounter in the alehouses on the North side of the Strand in the next chapter, perhaps there was an element of resentment towards the more wealthy clientele of the famous tavern, the sort that could afford to carry around a valuable handkerchief in his pocket.

While Humphreys's trial did not afford the accused much opportunity to defend himself, before announcing the stark verdict, the trial proceedings record Humphreys's brief defense:

As I was coming along the Strand, the gentleman was kissing a woman, in the street; and he turned round and said I took his handkerchief; he saw his handkerchief laying; I never struck him; I had no stick; he beat me, and cut my mouth.

GUILTY, Death.

It should come as no surprise that the word of a gentleman should be taken above the word of an accused thief in the 1790s, so my purpose for recounting the defense here is not to interrogate the processes of justice (though it serves as a helpful reminder of why "the people" were so frequently characterized as living under an oppressive tyranny in late-eighteenth-century debates about liberty) but because of the detail that Humphreys provides about Bentley "kissing a woman in the street," with its possible suggestion that the woman was a prostitute. It is, from a certain perspective, irrelevant to the case, and there is no indication in the proceedings that the judge (Justice Heath) was remotely interested in the veracity of the claim. Nevertheless, Humphreys clearly thought it was important to include that detail, most likely in an attempt to open Bentley's

character to suspicion. It also suggests something important about the street culture of the 1790s, because even if the defendant was making this detail up, we might suppose that “kissing a woman in the street” was at least a plausible thing to claim. It helps us to paint a portrait of an area of London in which ballad-singers and pickpockets mixed freely with legal professionals and gentlemen, where the singing of bawdy ballads in the streets and the choruses of drinking songs from elite taverns mingled in a potentially violent, and raucously uninhibited atmosphere.

It is significant that Bentley and Humphreys’s accounts of the events of 30 March 1790 provide very different understandings of the Strand around the Crown and Anchor. Bentley describes a respectable street scene in which a gentleman begins his journey home after attending a meeting at one of the city’s most reputable taverns. Humphreys’s brief portrait hints at a much earthier street scene, intimating the area’s licentiousness. Of course, these two images of the area are profoundly interested. Bentley’s description is designed to assert his own respectability, by which he means to make Humphreys fully culpable. Humphreys, meanwhile, attempts (unsuccessfully) to save his own neck by calling that respectability into question. These are two representational strategies with very different narratives of the area around the Crown and Anchor, which can thus differently color our understandings of the tavern. Taken together the trial’s descriptions of the Strand indicate that the implications of the location remained in flux, adaptable to a variety of narratives of metropolitan life.

These widely diverging accounts of the Crown and Anchor serve as a reminder that eighteenth-century conviviality cannot be reduced to any single principle, any more than the “public sphere” can be considered a singular, uniform entity. Nevertheless, the critical tendency in discussions of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century culture has been to view the tavern

as embodying a particular idea – most frequently an idea about political discussion. Even such a sensitive commentator as Christina Parolin, whose recent *Radical Spaces* dedicates two chapters to the Crown and Anchor, reconstructing the significance of the tavern in all its particularity, considers the tavern principally in relation to its importance to the development of the reform movement (111-2). While I am greatly indebted to Parolin’s work I differ from her conclusions in a number of ways. In the first instance Parolin’s approach is broadly diachronous, attempting to map changes in the use of the Crown and Anchor over the tavern’s entire history. This approach tends to the over-simplification of a particular historical moment in order to mark more distinct temporal contrasts. One instance is the suggestion that the Crown and Anchor had been the exclusive resort of “gentlemen” in the eighteenth century, but in the nineteenth century had become increasingly open to a plebeian and working class clientele as the “political nation” expanded. This conclusion fails to acknowledge that non-gentlemanly groups such as the London Corresponding Society (LCS), which consisted largely of artisans mechanics and shopkeepers, had also met in the tavern as early as 1793 (Thale *Selections* 71, 75). In addition, the evidence Parolin uses to establish the Crown and Anchor’s later embrace of a broader ranger of patrons – Francis Place’s visit to the tavern in 1809 (Parolin 132) – overlooks Place’s claim that his father, who was the landlord of a public house directly across the street from the tavern, regularly visited it with the Duke of Norfolk earlier in the eighteenth century (*Autobiography* 85). These exceptions (if indeed that is what they are) indicate a far greater degree of class mixing in the Crown and Anchor in the eighteenth century than Parolin’s study supposes, and suggest a more complicated picture of what both the bourgeois and plebeian public spheres looked like in the 1790s.

The longer trajectory of Parolin's study, and her investment in spaces of radicalism more generally, leads to an account that sees the tavern unambiguously as an important location for the reform movement. While she acknowledges that John Reeves briefly appropriated the tavern for the Crown and Anchor Society, for her purposes this association of the Crown and Anchor with conservatism was "short-lived," and she concludes that "the tavern's radical brethren" was not so easily displaced. Over the duration of its history, the tavern's importance to the reform movement cannot be denied, but I want to focus on the contentious moment in 1792-3 when the tavern's significance was still being hotly debated. By understanding the terms of this debate we can view the Crown and Anchor not as a site that was predetermined to become a space of radicalism, but as a highly contested site whose significance remained uncertain, and which was the subject of contrasting representations. In particular, I will examine a series of moments when the tavern's reputation for controversial political discourse came directly into conflict with its function as a private space which housed artistic performances, concerts, and displays of witty table talk.

The Whig Club

The frequently vexed interactions between the literary imagination and the dangerous imagination – and between poetics and politics, refined taste and vulgar passion – in the late eighteenth century depended to a large extent upon the particularity of place. Discussions of the tavern (Parolin's study, excepted) frequently assume a broad equivalence between different taverns. Scholars such as J. Ann Hone, Marc Baer, and James Epstein, for example, have acknowledged the importance of the political tavern dinner as an important feature of romantic-

era radicalism, and discuss the protocols of tavern meetings and their role in fostering public opinion, but each have emphasized the *forms* of tavern sociability, rather than the specificity of the location where they were held. Marc Baer, for example, identifies “five quintessential types” of dinners from across the political spectrum including: dinners before elections to rally support for candidates, dinners during elections to encourage electors to vote, celebration dinners after election victory, anniversary dinners, and dinners unrelated to elections but of a political nature (186). The tendency in this body of work, as Baer’s observations suggest, has been to classify “types” of tavern ritual (speeches, toasting, singing) that are similar across all equivalent meetings. The ritualized practices of tavern sociability are assumed to consolidate bonds of affiliation, so it is enough to know that a meeting took place in a tavern (it hardly matters which), and that a variety of toasts were drunk and songs sung.

Yet, as Jon Mee has argued, “how things were said as well as to whom and where things were said could be as important as the content or ideas being expressed” (“A bold and free-spoken man” 331). The location in which a speech, song, or toast occurred could substantially change the way the ritual was interpreted and writers could depend upon their audience’s detailed knowledge of the sites of fashionable recreation, and could assume a sophisticated understanding of the differences between the places of popular resort. By the middle of the 1790s a display of wit or a loyalist toast at the Crown and Anchor could be seen as dangerously seditious in sentiment precisely because of the reputation of the tavern. But this was not always the case. Before the French Revolution the Crown and Anchor was known as a perfectly respectable tavern, the home of musical performance and literary clubs. Its reputation as a hot

bed of seditious intentions depended to a large degree on the tavern's association with Charles James Fox's Whig Club.

The Whig Club was instituted in May 1784, initially to advance the cause of Fox in his campaign to secure one of the two parliamentary seats in the Westminster election, in which, as we have seen he ran against Lord Hood and Cecil Wray. It met eight times a year on the first Monday of every month except during the summer. Membership, which was exclusively male, cost two pounds, twelve shillings and sixpence annually, and attendees paid an additional five shillings for dinner at each meeting. To become a member a candidate had first to be proposed and seconded; his name, profession, and place of abode would be entered into a book by the secretary, then at the following meeting a ballot would occur, with three negative votes being sufficient to prevent membership (*Whig Club* iii-viii).

After success in the 1784 election, the Club continued to prove useful for promoting Fox's various political causes and providing Whigs, a loosely affiliated group with disparate interests, with a cohesive identity. The club became a useful recruiting tool for Fox's political interests, a venue for young men just entering into politics to socialize with leading politicians and providing a "good political net to catch young men just launching into the world from college" (Black 217). Its meetings were initially held at a number of different taverns that were thought adequate to accommodate the members, all of whom had sufficient largesse to afford the membership fees and many of whom were of "the most distinguished rank" (*Morning Herald* 8 Feb. 1785). In its first year the club met at the St Alban's Tavern in St Alban's Street (near Pall Mall) and the Star and Garter in Pall Mall, the Freemason's Tavern in Lincoln Inn Fields, the Shakespeare's Head in Covent Garden, Willis's Rooms (formerly Almack's) in St. James's

Square, the Crown and Anchor, and the London Tavern.⁶ Club membership was initially restricted to one hundred members, but by November 1784 it was extended by fifty members, and in February 1785 (when Burke was admitted as member) it was further extended to two hundred members (*Whig Club* iii-viii). A newspaper report on the May 1785 meeting, at which a further fifty members were admitted, claimed that for all the efforts of the publican, a Mr. Campbell, there was a general complaint that the Shakespeare's Head was too small for the Club, which "is now become so extremely numerous, that there will be a great difficulty in future to find rooms sufficiently large to accommodate them" (*Morning Chronicle* 4 May 1785). Nevertheless the club membership continued to grow, reaching 700 members by June 1791. In addition, members of the Whig Club of Ireland – one of the many regional Whig Clubs that were modeled after the original London club – were allowed to attend club meetings as honorary members. Of course, not every member attended each meeting, but according to a report in the *Morning Herald*, upwards of three hundred members attended a meeting at the London Tavern on 6 March 1786, at which point the club membership was capped at three hundred. Even allowing for exaggeration or miscalculation on the part of the newspaper, it might be reasonably concluded that attendance rates were high. The escalating membership probably accounts for why the St. Alban's Tavern, the Freemason's Tavern, and the Star and Garter were no longer used as venues after the first year, and why by 1788 the club met only at either the Crown and Anchor or the London Tavern – two taverns that had rooms large enough to accommodate societies so substantial. By 1793 the Whig Club met at the Crown and Anchor seventy-five percent of the time – the rest of the meetings being held at the London Tavern.⁷

From its inception the club generated a great deal of commentary in the press, both from newspapers that supported Fox and featured reports on the number of attendees at a given meeting, the toasts that were drunk, and the names of the stewards,⁸ and from newspapers that purported to be perplexed about the necessity and function of the club. One such report in the *Morning Post and Daily Advertiser*, replete with mockingly archaic diction designed to question the purported patriotism of the club, sarcastically wondered how a society devoted to convivial enjoyments could hope to further prospects of the nation:

Happy Britain! Thou hast now a Whig Club to protect thee from domestic ills and foreign dangers. —Men of clear heads and upright sentiments condescend to take thee under their protection:—not, however, by fighting thy battles—not by opposing thy enemies—not by honest or honourable exertions—but by eating and drinking and fiddling and singing, they engage to take care of the Constitution. — Happy Britain.!(13 Jul. 1784)

The *Morning Post* emphasizes the mundane pragmatics of dining over the symbolic function in order to ridicule the political efficacy of the meeting. Whiggish political dinners had seemed laughably harmless. Newspaper reports by both Fox’s detractors and his supporters focused on the sociable – rather than the political – functions of the club.

A report of an April 1785 meeting in *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* provides some insight into how these meetings were conducted. The meeting was held in the large ballroom of the London Tavern, and began at 4pm (the customary time for all meetings of the club). The Duke of Portland, the elected chairman for the meeting, took the chair at half past four. The business of the day consisted of accepting fifty new members to the club, whose names were read out, after which “truly excellent” dinner and wines were served. The emphasis of the report, however, is on the “festive spirit” and “mirth” of the meeting, which were chiefly supplied by

Captain Charles Morris, who had become a member of the Club in February 1785, at the same meeting as Burke. According to the report, Captain Morris “with that high flow of spirits and never ceasing good humour which attends him, kept all the social powers alive to a very late hour; and he, with Mr. Fox, Lord G. Cavendish, Mr. Sheridan, Col. Fitzpatrick and many other gentlemen, were left in full glee until three o’clock in the morning, and we believe broke up about four” (6 Apr. 1785). This on a Monday with Parliament in session – a matter of hours later Fox was debating the Corn Bill in the House of Commons.

A turning point for the Whig Club came in July 1788, during the run-up to another Westminster election. This time Fox’s seat was secure and Lord Hood, supported by Pitt, embarked in a fiercely contested battle with John Townshend, supported by the Whigs. The Whig Club typically did not meet between July and October but there was a provision within the rules for the secretary of the club, backed by at least seven members, to call an “extraordinary meeting.”⁹ Such a meeting was called for on 16 July 1788 at the Crown and Anchor in order to promote the cause of John Townshend. After the standing toasts were drunk Fox, who was chairman for the meeting, gave a speech in which he acknowledged that the club members had previously been “employed in convivial enjoyments” but was now gathered to demonstrate that they were “associated for better and nobler purposes,” namely, depriving Lord Hood of his seat and electing one of Fox’s cronies in his place. Fox’s speech was received “with the most signal applause,” and followed by a “variety of excellent toasts,” including toasts proposed by Burke and Thomas Erskine. After a series of further toasts “in the highest spirit of harmony and hilarity,” the entire club was split up into thirty-six parties and immediately went out to canvas in

each of the parishes of Westminster,” in which they were successful, with Townshend ultimately defeating Hood by 6392 votes to 5569 (Grego 289).

Contemporary newspaper reports commented on the Whig Club’s political activities in ways that suggest continuity between the sociable and political functions of the club. The *Morning Herald*, for example, commented that “Men capable of convivial enjoyments like the members of this club, who can abandon their pleasures in the very height of their fruition, to proceed upon their business, supported by a good cause, and encouraged by the countenance of the public, ensure infallible success to their exertions; such men so invigorated, and so determined, cannot be resisted with any effect” (17 Jul. 1788). Within Whig circles of the 1780s, successful conviviality translates into successful politics. Vigor in the one translates without apparent contradiction into vigor in the other. The willingness to leave off conviviality in order to attend to political matters, far from casting doubt on the prudence of tavern pleasures, or questioning whether the tavern’s baser pleasures might be incommensurate with more refined tastes, simply indicates an even greater degree of political commitment, but one for which tavern sociability remains a prerequisite. After the French Revolution, however, such an optimistic view of the benefits of public tavern life became much harder to maintain. The Whiggish sociability that had formerly been considered a continuation of their political principles began to be interpreted as dangerously out of touch with the political realities of the post-revolutionary moment.

Treason hidden under peas

The origins of the Crown and Anchor’s association with these new political realities can be precisely dated to July 1791. The link between the tavern and dangerous imaginings was forged

around the second anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille, when the tavern hosted a prominent celebration. The meeting, unusually, was not held by any particular group or association, but by an unaffiliated group of individuals. The stewards for the meeting, listed on the invitation, which – as was common practice – was sent to select individuals and printed in numerous newspapers, were unsurprisingly all men from the upper middle class and above, yet within this relatively narrow category they represented a diverse range of backgrounds and professions, including aristocrats, lawyers (Arthur Piggott), capitalists (James Milnes), poets (Robert Merry and Samuel Rogers), politicians (William Smith and Cecil Wray), and gamblers (John Barker Church).¹⁰

In an attempt to avoid controversy the advertisement stated “no cockade, or other badge of distinction, is intended to be worn at the said meeting” (*Morning Post* 11 Jul. 1791). The meeting, that is, was advertised as non-partisan, with no explicit club or party affiliation, and was theoretically open to anyone who could afford the 7s 6d ticket. It was simply intended to celebrate “the overthrow of Despotism, and the Establishment of Civil and Religious Liberty in France,” and the invitation requested that “no Gentleman will, on that day, move or introduce for discussion any question whatever relative to the public affairs or the local concerns of this country.” The intention to avoid controversy, however, proved futile. Writing for the *St James’s Chronicle*, Edward Tatham, the sub-rector of Lincoln’s College, Oxford, pointed out that “when you call yourselves *the Friends of Liberty in England*, and yet commemorate, as a subject of exultation, the Revolution in France, you more that indirectly insinuate that you wish England to follow its example” (30 Jun. – 2 Jul. 1791). Indeed, for Tatham, even the request to avoid discussion of England’s public affairs during the anniversary dinner was disingenuous as it was clear that the celebration was intended to intervene in public affairs; the invitation’s declaration

to the contrary made it only more plain that this was what the organizers had in mind. Tatham concluded his letter by declaring the Crown and Anchor dinner to be an “illegal and unconstitutional Act.”

Tatham’s letter to the *St. James’s Chronicle* provoked a number of responses in support of the Crown and Anchor celebration. One letter, signed “Omicron,” conceded that the joy expressed at the French emancipation from despotism by the invitation might be a little premature, but “if a number of honest citizens cannot meet together at a tavern to eat turbot and venison, and drink claret and Madeira in joyful commemoration of an event which they *conceive* to be *glorious* in the history of the world (whether it be so or not in reality) without *acting illegally and unconstitutionally*, our liberty is not so perfect as I have been always taught to believe (*St James’s Chronicle* 7 - 9 Jul. 1791).” Omicron’s letter articulates an old idea about tavern sociability expressed in many eighteenth-century drinking songs that gained renewed currency in the 1760s by John Wilkes’s particular brand of libertine populism (Clark *Scandal* 19-52). This idea of the tavern equates the social with the political, and insists that the ability to gather together to dine and drink is itself an expression of the freedoms secured to Britons by the Glorious Revolution of 1688. According to Wilkes and his supporters the more you drank the more assured you could be of your freedom; moderation was an assault on constitutional rights. In the discussions of the Crown and Anchor anniversary dinner, however, there are two significant variations on this familiar theme. First, two years before the 1793 Trial of John Frost discussed in my introduction the notion of legality is first introduced. While tavern sociability had long been associated with an expression of liberty, in the absence of a formal, written constitution those freedoms had always been generic and unspecified. Now, however, it was possible to conceive of tavern dinners not

simply in terms of their constitutionality, but in terms of their *legality*. That is, by either endorsing or questioning the existing political structure, a dinner could now be understood as operating within or breaking laws, specifically laws pertaining to libel, sedition, or treason. The discourse of constitutionality surrounding tavern dinners had merged with a discourse of legality, and tavern freedoms were becoming understood in increasingly litigious terms.

The second innovation in the public correspondence about the Crown and Anchor dinner is a rhetorical strategy employed by those defending the anniversary dinner. Despite acknowledging that the dinner was a celebration of the French Revolution, they simultaneously insisted on the routine practice of eating dinner. The dinner was represented as the mundane ritual of (in the case of “Omicron”) eating turbot and venison and drinking claret and Madeira. This strategy was most memorably employed by *The Morning Post*, which suggested that there should be sentinels placed at the Crown and Anchor’s great room “to have every dish uncovered before it is carried in for we all know that *Tom Jones* conveyed a love-letter to *Sophia Western* in the middle of a *roast fowl*, and therefore it is plain that treason may be hid under *green peas*, in the *stuffing* of a fillet of *veal*, and under the crust of a *pastry*” (12 Jul. 1791). The legality of the meeting is asserted by way of its banality – a tavern dinner cannot be treasonous, the argument runs, because it is an everyday experience. By focusing on the ordinariness of men dining together, the dinner’s apologists stripped the anniversary meeting of its symbolic function as an expression of constitutional freedom, and implied that concerns over the dangers of the anniversary dinner were imaginary fantasies or responses learned from the world of Henry Fielding’s sensational fiction, applied – with exaggeration – to prosaic realities. In a trope that will occur throughout much of the discussion of treason in the 1790s, the tavern is associated not with the excessive

imagination of the accused seditious, but with their accusers. To understand the tavern as a place of treason, Omicron suggests, is to have an overly active imagination.

Another respondent to Edward Tatham's letter to the *St James's Chronicle*—signed “A FRIEND TO THE CONSTITUTION” — combines the legal, bureaucratic understanding of the meeting, with the prosaic functions of a tavern, while also insisting on the meeting as an expression of constitutional freedoms. Arguing that England was “at present in amity with France,” and had publicly received the Ambassador of the new republic at Court, the letter insists that it was therefore not only “legal and constitutional” to celebrate the Anniversary of the Revolution, but also “a virtuous and laudible performance; as permissible and even enjoined by law.” The letter then examines the standing of the tavern in which the meeting was to take place:

The Crown and Anchor is a Tavern, open to entertain the publick; Government receives a revenue from the establishment; the Legislative license is its authority for cooking a dinner and serving wines; people may resort thither by law; and they may toast the Revolution of France, as a Revolution accepted and avowed by this kingdom. How, therefore, can a meeting by such authority, and to such end, be called illegal and unconstitutional? I will add a remonstrance to the Doctor himself—*he* has acted illegally and unconstitutionally, and is liable to a prosecution by the master of the Crown and Anchor Tavern, for repudiating his house, and damaging his livelihood, by a treasonable aspersion (12 – 14 Jul. 1791).

The defense against the supposed illegality of the meeting is countered by a legal discourse that places the tavern in a bureaucratic system that, in fact, is sanctioned by and supports the government. The problem with this understanding of the tavern, however, (effective though it may be as a response to Edward Tatham's letter) is that it imagines the bureaucratic structures that sanction the tavern's activities as static, and the tavern's role in those structures as permanent. By focusing on the present state of the law — on the amity with France, and with the

Crown and Anchor's legislative license – the letter, in fact, draws attention to the fragility of the tavern's relationship to public affairs. At any moment war could break out with France, and the tavern's license could be revoked. The ability to cook turbot or veal and serve claret or Madeira is dependent upon dynamic bureaucratic and legal structures that are – as the next few years would amply demonstrate – liable to sudden, dramatic shifts.



Figure 14: James Gillray. *Alecto and her Train at the Gate of Pandæmonium:—or—The Recruiting Sargeant enlisting JOHN BULL, into the Revolution Service.* London: S.W. Fores, 1791. BM Sat. 7889.



Figure 15: James Gillray. *The Hopes of the Party, prior to July 14th* — “From such wicked Crown and Anchor Dreams good Lord Deliver us.” London: S.W. Fores, 1791. BM Sat. 7892.

The July anniversary dinner’s association with excessive, corrupt or tainted imaginings is perhaps best demonstrated, however, by James Gillray’s *The Hopes of the Party, prior to July 14th*... “From such wicked Crown and Anchor Dreams good Lord Deliver us.” This was the second of two prints that Gillray produced on the subject of the 14 July dinner. The first, *Alecto and her Train at the Gate of Pandemonium...or... The Recruiting Sargeant enlisting John Bull into the Revolution Service* (1791) (fig. 14), equates the Crown and Anchor with Pandemonium, Milton’s capital of hell, and shows Alecto,

one of the three Furies of vengeance in Greek mythology, beckoning to John Bull to join her in the tavern with Fox and Sheridan, who are dressed in the garments of recruiting officers topped with French Grenadiers caps, playing the drum and pipe. The satanic Crown and Anchor, from whose door fly imps and demons surrounded in smoke, is presented as the headquarters of an effort to gather support for the French Revolution, which Gillray depicts as the coming of a hellish pestilence. John Bull, a country peasant, is torn between his loyalty to “Varmer George” who has been a “rare good Master,” and the allure of Fox’s drums, which are associated with the riches promised to the poor by the French Revolution and “all them fine paper Moneys” (George 6:807-8). *Alecto and her Train at the Gate of Pandemonium* contains a conservative critique of the disturbing effects of the rise of capital, whose institutional home is the tavern, but it also, despite the (admittedly transparent) efforts of the meeting’s organizers to appear non-partisan, establishes a connection between the Crown and Anchor and progressive Whig politics. This motif would recur in the second of Gillray’s prints on the subject, *The Hopes of the Party, prior to July 14th — “From such wicked Crown and Anchor Dreams good Lord Deliver us”* (fig. 15), which was produced a few days later, after the 14 July dinner.

In the print, Gillray shows the leaders of the Society for Constitutional Information, with Charles Fox at their helm, beheading the king outside the Crown and Anchor. In the background, Liberty, holding aloft a spear topped with a *bonnet rouge*, descends to the Strand upon clouds that encircle Christopher Wren’s Temple Bar – the gateway which indicates the western boundary of the City of London. It is a print that is concerned with the problem of insides and outsides: with ideas that can circulate outside the City, which cannot be thought within the City walls; with imaginings that are dreamt inside the Crown and Anchor, but which spill outside onto

the streets; and with private ideas that should belong to individuals, but which spill outside the realm of privacy and are made public. Gillray's print is a commentary on the production of excess and on the dangers that obtain when imagination exceeds its bounds and spirals out of control. The Crown and Anchor lies at the heart of this concern with ideas that exceed their geographical and imaginative limits, as a potent symbol for the power of revolutionary fervor, lying just beyond the walls of the City and threatening the established institutions of government with the extremity of its energies and its proximity to power.

In the image, Fox, wearing an executioner's mask, raises an axe to bring down on the neck of George III, who is held by the thighs in a suggestive position by John Horne Tooke. From the lampposts outside the Crown and Anchor swing Queen Charlotte and William Pitt, hung by their necks, but not yet dead, their bodies thrust together in a gesture suggestive of pre-necrophilic copulation. On the scaffold along with Fox, whose axe is raised above the neck of the King, are Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Joseph Priestley, Cecil Wray, and Tooke. Of these men, only Cecil Wray was in attendance at the Crown and Anchor, as one of the twenty-three Stewards of the meeting. Fox and Sheridan both stayed away from the tavern, no doubt in part because of the controversy generated in advance of the meeting. *The Times*, meanwhile, reported that John Horne Tooke did not attend the dinner, but dined at the Shakespeare's Head in Covent Garden with James Boswell, Thomas Paine, William Seward, and Robert Merry (16 Jul. 1791).¹¹ Joseph Priestley, meanwhile, was in Birmingham – at least until he was chased out by the “King and Country” mob that set fire to his home following the French Revolution anniversary dinner, held at a Birmingham hotel on the same day. (Priestley fled to London,

where he stayed with William Vaughan, the younger brother of Benjamin Vaughan, another of the Crown and Anchor stewards).

Evidently in composing the print Gillray is not interested in historical accuracy. Instead, the print's coherence depends upon an idea that associates these men with the Crown and Anchor, and more particularly, with the *outside* of the Crown and Anchor. Fox, Sheridan, Horne Tooke, Wray, and Priestley are grouped together as supporters of the French Revolution – and the end of the Monarchy – which is depicted as a product of Whiggish sociability. The Crown and Anchor may be the headquarters of Whiggish excess, but it spills outside of the tavern and begins to infect the surrounding streets. Indeed, as the presence of Priestley indicates, Whiggish revolutionary fervor has spread from the tavern in the Strand to at least as far as Birmingham, whose anniversary dinner participates in a Crown and Anchor spirit that has contaminated the kingdom.

Typically for Gillray, the politics of the print are difficult to pin down. While it is critical of Crown and Anchor supporters of the French Revolution, whose views threaten to break out in regicidal violence, it is equally unsympathetic to George III, whose wide eyes, bald head, and stuttering speech grotesquely caricature the king's madness that had preoccupied the satirists during the regency crisis of 1788-9, but from which he had by now apparently recovered. The angular, contorted bodies of Pitt and the Queen are hardly more appealing, and the raised hats and smiling expressions on the faces of the mob gathered around the executioner's platform are insipidly benign in the face of the violence done to the king and, by extension, the constitution. No one in the print comes off well, including the print-maker. The print's sub-title – “from such wicked Crown & Anchor-dreams good Lord, deliver us” – is issued as a prayer whose piety

registers as entirely insincere, especially given that the scene from which the prayer seeks deliverance is the work of the satirist's imagination.

The print's subtitle suggests that the image is a depiction of the kind of dreaming that occurs in the rooms of the famous tavern, fantasies that the tavern itself inspires. But the phrase "Crown & Anchor-dreams" might equally suggest that the *tavern* is the dreamer, endowed with a malevolent subjectivity. As a producer of dreams the tavern is responsible for ideas that are not under the conscious control of the thinker and reveals imaginings that should be kept concealed. The process of mediation suggested by the print's title further complicates this act of imagining: the print does not simply depict the party's hopes, but rather those hopes as imagined in a pious prayer. Again, the imagination is associated not with the tavern itself, but with the way the tavern is imagined by those who fear it: it is not the radicals who imagine the king's death, but the conservatives who imagine the fantasies of the Whigs. Despite the critique of this conservatism implied by the genre of the satire the print nevertheless aligns the conservative reaction to Whiggish extremism with the artistic practice of the print maker: both share the capacity to envision regicidal fantasies emanating from the tavern. Whether such an alignment between conservatism and satirist implies the disparagement of reactionary loyalist politics or the elevation of the artist is unclear.

The date of the print's publication (19 July 1791) is important, not only because it predates the execution of Louis XVI – the beheading of kings was still only a fantasy, or a notorious event from England's seventeenth-century history, rather than a present-day reality – but also because it predates the royal proclamation against "wicked and seditious writings" in May 1792 and the resulting increase in trials for libel, sedition, and treason (Barrell and Mee

1:xii). The print's depiction of an axe about to fall on George's head imagines the king's death in a direct way that would be made highly dangerous by the redefinition of the imagination that occurred in the middle of the decade, following the 1794 treason trials. As the site that produces such imaginings the Crown and Anchor was directly implicated in the redefinition of treason. After the trials it became impossible to represent the tavern in the same way again.

Home of the Grand Inquisitors

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that the Crown and Anchor was only a space of elite Whiggish excess – its functions and meanings were, at least initially after Simpkin's rebuilding, far more diverse. During the 1794 trials of Hardy, Thelwall, and Tooke the concern was less with Fox's putatively respectable cronies, and more with the tavern's ability to reach beyond the educated elite to a much broader and more intimidating public. The lawyers in the treason trials expended a great deal of energy connecting the activities of the relatively respectable Society for Constitutional Information (SCI), with those of the London Corresponding Society (LCS), thereby insinuating that elite political tavern groups had been debased by their association with the vulgar. One of the ways of asserting this connection (if only implicitly) was through their shared sites of gathering. Both societies had met at the Crown and Anchor, which indeed was the SCI's regular meeting place. The LCS, on the other hand had a much more complicated relationship with the tavern. While various members of its leadership had been invited to attend the dinners of the SCI, the LCS itself only ever met there once, on 8 July 1793.

At a meeting of the LCS General Committee on 6 June 1793, the LCS leaders decided that they would hold the first of the society's general meetings at the tavern. This was to be a

meeting open to all LCS members and friends, not restricted to the smaller, thirty person “divisions” which was the usual form of assembly. It was sufficiently important that the meeting be held at the Crown and Anchor that a special sub-committee was appointed to negotiate for the use of the tavern. The committee’s desire to hold the meeting at the Crown and Anchor could be attributed to the tavern’s association with, and known sympathy for the reform movement. But in fact the correspondence of the LCS, later used as evidence in the treason trials, suggests that the Crown and Anchor was specifically targeted because of its associations with the *loyalist* movement. While Parolin sees the tavern as consistently a “radical space” that John Reeves and his association briefly co-opted from the reform movement (121-2), in the early 1790s it was just as often seen the other way around.

On 27 June the committee reported that it had “agreed with the master of the Crown and Anchor [Thomas Simpkin] for the use of his Great Room on 8 July at the price of five Guineas. — which sum the Committee ordered to be paid forthwith in order to prevent any underhand maneuvers of the Enemies to Reform from taking place” (Thale 71, 75). Evidently the “enemies to reform” they had in mind included John Reeves’s Association for Preserving Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers. In a letter to a society in Norwich, dated 25 July 1793, LCS leaders Maurice Margatot and Thomas Hardy described the LCS general meeting as occurring “in the very nest of place and pension hornets, the Tavern where Reeves, the tool of the junto, holds his inquisitorial tribunal” (*Second Report from the Committee of Secrecy*, Appendix E). Reeves’s association—often referred to as “The Crown and Anchor Society”—was formed in November 1792 at the tavern for “discouraging and suppressing Seditious Publications, tending to disturb the Peace of this Kingdom, and for supporting a due execution of Laws made for the

protection of persons and property” (*Morning Chronicle* 23 Nov. 1792). By placing advertisements in newspapers, it solicited reports on the activities of seditious associations and the publication of pamphlets that sought to undermine the constitution. As it transpired, Reeves’s “inquisitorial tribunal” was meeting in the tavern at the same time the LCS was holding its general meeting. Writing to the Secretary of the Constitutional Society at Leeds, the LCS reported that its cause had become so popular that on “*the 8th of this Month* we had a General Meeting of the Society at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, the very Place where Reeves and his Accomplices meet.—He met there at the same Time in a Room under us, and, together with his Associates, swallowed a copious Draught of Mortification in seeing our Meeting so well conducted and so numerously attended; we say numerously, for having limited the Number of Admission Tickets to 700, many who had been dilatory in providing for themselves were unavoidably excluded” (*Second Report* Appendix E).

The LCS leaders’ desire to hold their meeting at the Crown and Anchor demonstrates that they understood the symbolic importance of the choice of venue. By holding their meeting in the large and fashionable Crown and Anchor the LCS were signaling a number of ideas, each of which were reiterated in their letters to other corresponding societies: that they were respectable, and no mere mob; that they were numerous, a political force to be reckoned with; and – what seems to have been most on the leaders’ minds – that they could, and would, directly challenge the attempts of Reeves’s loyalist organization to oppose their activities and force them underground by prosecuting landlords who housed their meetings. Each of these ideas would be used in the 1794 trials to prove that the LCS was intent on undermining the existing political order. In 1793, however, the decision to hold the meeting at the Crown and Anchor was part of

the LCS's ongoing campaign to construct an image of itself as a legitimate, respectable, and – above all – public organization, not one that had to skulk in corners and operate by subterfuge.

In addition to the high-profile treason trials of 1794 the Crown and Anchor also emerges as a central location in the trial of the radical bookseller and LCS member, Daniel Isaac Eaton for selling Thomas Paine's *A Letter addressed to the Addressers*. This was the second of Eaton's eight arrests for publishing seditious works, and the second in 1793. The prosecution argued that while Eaton was not the author of the work in question, he was the publisher of the work and was therefore guilty of "holding out to the public" a work that was "calculated to overturn the most invaluable rights of individuals." Paine's work, it was claimed, was designed to upend the principles of the constitution that guaranteed to confer upon Englishmen "their civil, moral, and political Liberty, and those felicities, which, under the protection of providence, were never given, in so ample a manner to any other Country." By questioning the established constitution Paine's works were designed to spread discontent throughout England, which could not have been achieved without Eaton who, as Paine's publisher, was responsible for the dissemination of Paine's destructive ideas.

While acknowledging that the publication of Paine's work might well cause "extreme dissatisfaction and discontent" among its readers, Eaton's defense denied that this was Eaton's purpose in selling the book. Vaughan drew the court's attention to the way in which the language of the injunction blurred the distinctions between Eaton's "motives and objects," and the means that he was accused of using for bringing them about. It was true, Vaughan conceded, Eaton had sold a sixpenny pamphlet, but this does not mean that Eaton was guilty of the charge he was being accused of, namely "intending to stir up and excite discontents and seditions among the

subject of our said Lord the King.” The defense would distinguish between the motives, the objects, and the means so that the jury members could judge for themselves whether Eaton’s desire to spread discontent could truly be deduced from “the mere act of selling this book” (*Trial of Daniel Isaac Eaton* 30).

The evidence used by the prosecution in the trial included the testimony of Charles Humphreys who had bought Paine’s pamphlet from Eaton at his 81 Bishopsgate Street bookshop on 1 February 1793. Humphreys had been directed to purchase a copy of the book by the Lord Mayor, who had received a letter from John Reeves at the Crown and Anchor, informing him that Eaton was selling Paine’s pamphlet. Vaughan’s defense of Eaton amounted to an accusation that Lord Mayor was harassing Eaton. Through “his spies, his emissaries, or informers, or whatever else you may please to call them” the Lord Mayor was plotting to convict Eaton. This plot, which involved volunteers purchasing Paine’s pamphlets from Eaton and reporting back to the Crown and Anchor headquarters, was not only harassment, but also bad legal reasoning. Eaton had been forbidden from selling Paine’s *Rights of Man* (the subject of Eaton’s first trial), but no such injunction had been made against selling Paine’s other writings. Vaughan then questioned the Lord Mayor’s credentials for deciding what constitutes seditious Libel:

Gentlemen, I do not understand that the Lord Mayor is a lawyer: Where has he learnt his law? I suppose from the Crown and Anchor Tavern – his law if he has any must come from the other side of Temple Bar, perhaps from the Association we have spoken of, for I never heard of its being extracted from coffee or sugar, or any other article of commerce in this city (31).

The specificity of the imagined geography is notable. Vaughan not only expects the jury and other people at the Guildhall trial to know the Crown and Anchor, but he can also assume a

knowledge of the surrounding area, and draw upon its location in the texture of his address. His audience will know the tavern is situated outside of the City of London and the capital's commercial center, they will know of its proximity to Temple Bar which marks its presence outside of the City, and that it is close to the legal district which straddled the City's borders. Vaughan depicts the tavern – a site his audience can be assumed to know well – as a site of conviviality for the Lord Mayor, who in his visits to the tavern will also encounter the dogma of John Reeves's loyalist association.

Vaughan's description of the plot against Eaton was couched in terms that are more frequently associated with radical clubs:

We have seen a system of things unknown before to the people of England; we have seen persons getting themselves together in holes and corners, and erecting themselves into an *Imperium in imperio* [sovereignty within sovereignty], under the pretense of defending the English constitution. These Associators, for so they stile themselves, are so many mere inquisitors, who have spread themselves and their sectaries through every part of the country, from the Channel to the Tweed; and from thence Northwards; but the chief tribunal, and the grand inquisitors of all, hold their office at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, in London (30).

In order to make the case that Eaton was being unfairly picked on by the Lord Mayor the defense council depicted loyalists getting together “in holes and corners,” insinuating that the supporters of the established constitution were no less shadowy and illegitimate than those who sought to question it. Vaughan posits a world in which the supporters of the established order are forced underground, while Paine's readers might openly, and with the sanction of the constitution, question the validity of the government. The headquarters for this illicit network of underground loyalists is the Crown and Anchor tavern, which, while retaining its prestige as the

resort of the ruling elite, is simultaneously cast as the prototype after which secret loyalist societies around the nation model themselves. The despotic principles taught at the Crown and Anchor reach out beyond the tavern's walls and "spread[s]" into every corner of the country.

Vaughan's description of the imagined spread of loyalism is remarkably similar to James Gillray's *Hopes of the Party*, which shows the energies of revolutionary fever spreading out from the Crown and Anchor. But it is similar also to the way Lord Chief Justice Eyre imagined the LCS "spreading itself every hour from division to division" at the 1794 Treason Trials (Barrell *Spirit of Despotism* 66-7), indicating the extent to which all sides of the political spectrum were groping towards an understanding of national political movements that seemed to appear across the kingdom almost simultaneously on a previously unimagined scale. A common strategy for trying to understand these broad-based phenomena was to posit a geographically specific and locatable center of influence, a nucleus of extremism out of which political opinion grew.

The Crown and Anchor, as the place that most often gets named as the headquarters of widespread but spontaneous political movements, played a central role in the development of national political identity in the years following the French Revolution. Both the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers and the LCS recognized that by presenting themselves as being connected to the tavern, they would be understood as being at the center of British political discussion. By controlling the way the tavern was used they could influence the way the political nation was understood. A far more common strategy, however – a strategy, exemplified by Vaughan's defense of Eaton, but which became used with increasing frequency after the King's May 1792 proclamation against seditious activities – was to associate the tavern with activities of political opponents. Radicals associated the tavern with loyalist

extremism; loyalists associated the tavern with radicalism. Once the tavern had become notorious as a place of extreme political discussion it became a powerful image for questioning the legitimacy of the enemy, whose activities threatened to disturb the harmony of the kingdom. It was no longer expedient to be associated with a tavern that had developed a reputation for dangerous imaginings.

A Crack in the Wig Club



Figure 16: James Gillray. *The Chancellor of the Inquisition Marking the Incorrigibles*. London: Hannah Humphrey, 1793. BM Sat. 8316.



Figure 17: Isaac Cruikshank. *A Scene in the Crown and Anchor Tavern or a Crack in the Wig Club* London: S.W. Fores, 1793. BM Sat. 8315.

On 19 March 1793 Gillray produced another print that featured the Crown and Anchor, *The Chancellor of the Inquisition Marking the Incurrigibles* (fig. 16) that demonstrates some of the limitations placed upon imagining the tavern that the king’s proclamation against seditious practices and the ensuing trials for treason and sedition had produced. The occasion for the print was the split among the Whigs, which occurred when Burke and his supporters formally seceded from the Whig Club in February 1793. In the print, Burke enters the Crown and Anchor with a blacklist naming his former colleagues who disagree with his view of the dangers of the new French republic. The standard reading of the print, that provided by M. Dorothy George, identifies the Crown and Anchor with John Reeves’s Association through its signage: ‘British Inquisition’ is written above the door, and on the left-hand pillar is an “anonymous letter box” indicating correspondence that Reeves’ Association solicited to provide information against reformist activities around the country (7:20-1). The implication is that Burke, having abandoned the

Whigs, is now in cahoots with John Reeves, the “captain-Commandant of the spy gang,” as Coleridge called him (1:303), whose ultra-conservative Association was widely understood to be supported by William Pitt’s government.¹² Burke is dressed as a Jesuit priest, his purported Catholicism providing a visual link between the British Inquisition and its Spanish predecessor. Full of righteous indignation – indicated by the Great Seal hanging from his waist and his scowl – Burke brings his list to the tavern to inform against his former allies.

This reading of the print is, however, complicated considerably if we take into account the fact that the Crown and Anchor was the meeting place not only of Reeves’s Association, but also of the Whig Club from which Burke had resigned. The connection between the Whig Club and the Crown and Anchor had been exploited two days before the publication of Gillray’s print by Isaac Cruikshank, whose *Scene at the Crown and Anchor Tavern or a Crack in the Wig Club* (fig. 17) depicts Fox and Sheridan sitting behind a table in the tavern as a succession of club members, including Burke, throw their wigs into a pile saying, “We have erased our Names for ever from this Club, when the Artful & Ambitious designs of a Faction are carried on under a Mask of Prudential Reform & when the leading Members are Notoriously known to Carry on a secret Correspondence with the Avowed Enemies of the Constitution they Affect to Support & Defend it is high time for all prudent & real friends to that Constitution to leave them to their Just Punishment, the Contemp [sic] of all true Friends to their King and Constitution.” That the meeting at which Burke and his associates withdrew from the Club had in fact taken place at the London Tavern held no deterrent for Cruickshank, whose print indicates the extent to which Fox and his supporters had become associated with the Crown and Anchor, which since the 14th of

July 1791 anniversary dinner, had become a shorthand in the visual iconography of graphic satirists for radical Whiggish public discourse (Parolin 107).

Given the association of the Crown and Anchor with radical Whig politics and with Fox's republican sympathies in particular, the presence of the same tavern, now depicted as a site of reactionary conservatism, in *The Chancellor of the Inquisition Marking the Incurribles*, must give us pause. If we shift our attention from Gillray's representation of Burke to his depiction of the tavern, a circularity of referent becomes visible: having split with the Whig Club, which met at the Crown and Anchor, for the extremity of their attitude towards French republicanism, Burke now turns to conservative extremism, whose headquarters was the very same tavern. The print might now be read as a critique of the extremity of Burke's passions: Burke may have swapped his allegiance to Fox for a Reeves-like loyalism, but the forms of Crown and Anchor politics, whether radical or conservative are, in their excess, ultimately the same.

Given Burke and Fox's diametrically opposed views on the war with France, and the political disparity that this difference of opinion exposed, by 1793 a Whig party split had become inevitable. Ever since 1790 Burke had consistently voted with Pitt's government but he continued to sit with the Whigs, and maintained his membership in the Whig Club on the grounds that "the Party" had deserted him and not the other way round (Werkminster 8). Although the resignation of the conservative Whigs from the Club was by this point largely a symbolic gesture, it is nevertheless significant that the form the gesture took was a separation from the Whig Club and the tavern-based sociability through which Fox entertained his political allies, holding the loose coalition together. The seceding members suggested that it was no longer possible even to dine

together with Fox, acquaintance with whom now had to be disowned, so offensive were his principles.

While the split among the Whigs had a much longer and more complex history, a pretext was found in a Whig Club resolution that was passed in early 1793. In November 1792, apprehensive of growing domestic unrest, the King used his executive privilege to assemble the militia and, as the law dictated, subsequently recalled parliament after a lengthy prorogation. At the reopening of parliament on 13 December, the King's speech drew attention to the "seditious practices" which had, he claimed, been checked since his May Proclamation, but which had recently been renewed with even greater fervor. "A spirit of tumult and disorder (the natural consequence of such practices) has shown itself in acts of riot and insurrection," the King claimed, which proceeded from a design to "attempt the destruction of our happy constitution, and the subversion of all order and government" (*Parl. Hist.* 29:1556-7). Declaring a preference for remaining neutral with respect to the internal affairs of France, the disturbances on home soil suggested that as Burke had predicted a spirit of republicanism was now sweeping Europe, and was threatening Britain's stability. As the House of Commons debated the implications of the King's speech, Fox proposed a series of motions intending to calm the hysteria, denying that there was an insurrection in Great Britain, declaring that it was the responsibility of the Commons to ascertain whether the alarmist actions of the King were in fact justified, and reminding members of the House that it was the government's duty to "employ every means of negotiation consistent with the honour and safety of this country to avert the calamities of war." Fox's speeches were once again seized upon by his opponents, who portrayed him as in favor of French republicanism and fomenting a spirit of rebellion at home. In a letter to Burke, for

example, Edmund Malone described Fox's oration as "the most dangerous speech that was ever uttered in parliament" (*Burke Correspondence* 7:323).

In January 1793 Fox was forced to publish his conciliatory "A Letter From the Right Honorable Charles James Fox To The Worthy and Independent Electors of the City and Liberty of Westminster." The letter was designed to explain his position on France to his constituents, and to counteract the distortions that were circulating in the press. "To be the object of calumny and misrepresentation, gives me uneasiness" Fox wrote. "But I am informed that I now labour under a misfortune of a far different nature from these, and which can excite no other sensations than those of concern and humiliation. I am told that *you* in general disapprove of my late conduct" (1-2). Fox was genuinely concerned about the consequences of the "misrepresentations" in the press. The publication of the letter was just one of a series of attempts to salvage his reputation in the face of hostile personal attacks, which also included a rallying of his supporters at the Whig Club. At 4pm on 20 February an extraordinary meeting of the Whig Club was held at the Crown and Anchor to discuss the motion, "That this Club do express their decided approbation of the principles and arguments contained in the Letter from the Right Hon. CHARLES J. FOX to the WORTHY and INDEPENDENT ELECTORS of the City of WESTMINSTER, and do return him their cordial thanks for the same" (*Morning Post* 9 Feb. 1793). At the Crown and Anchor meeting a resolution was passed to demonstrate the Whig Club's full support of Fox. The resolution stated:

That this Club think it their duty at this extraordinary juncture, to assure the Right Hon. Charles James Fox, that all the arts of misrepresentation which have been so industriously used of late, for the purpose of calumniating him, have had no other effect upon them, than that of confirming, strengthening, and increasing their attachment to him. (*Morning Chronicle* 6 Mar. 1793)

Ultimately it was this resolution that became the pretext over which the Whigs were to split. A faction within the Whig Club consisting of Burke's allies – including William Windham, Sir Gilbert Elliott and Burke himself – held a meeting on 28 February at the St Alban's Tavern on St Alban's Street off Pall Mall, a symbolically significant meeting place which had housed meetings of the Whig Club in less contentious times, when Burke was a contented participant. The attendees at the meeting drew up a carefully worded letter of resignation from the Whig Club objecting to 20 February resolution on the grounds that it did not express mere “personal respect” for Fox, which they would have endorsed, but suggested instead an unequivocal endorsement of Fox's policies:

Combining the words of the Resolution with the circumstances in which the Club was assembled, and more particularly with the Letter of Mr. Fox to his Constituents, with reference to which the Meeting was expressly called, and the Resolution must, no doubt, be considered as tendered to him; it conveys, in our apprehension, a warm and unqualified approbation of Mr. Fox's political conduct and sentiments during the present Session of Parliament. If it should be thought capable of any other interpretation, it cannot be denied that it is also liable to that which we have mentioned; and we are of opinion that the World is not likely to understand it in any other sense. (Burke *Correspondence* 353-5).

The secession letter makes it clear that the meaning of the resolution was dependent not only on the words, but on the context in which the words were said, “the circumstances in which the Club was assembled.” Convening a meeting at the Crown and Anchor in support of Fox's letter to his constituents was itself understood to be inflammatory. Moreover, the intended meaning of the resolution was less the cause of concern than the way that “the World” was likely to understand it. In effect, the secession letter made it clear that it did not greatly matter what Fox did or said, or what he intended by his words and actions. Fox now had a reputation for

supporting French republicanism, so any sign of solidarity with Fox, and any meeting in the Crown and Anchor, amounted to an endorsement of France. Misrepresentation and calumnies in the press had determined the way that words and meeting places could be understood.

The letter was signed by all members present, left at the St Alban's Tavern and the London Tavern (at which the next meeting of the Whig Club was scheduled) to receive further signatories, printed in the public newspapers, and sent to the secretary of the club (*Morning Chronicle* 4 Mar. 1793). The ministerial newspapers were beside themselves. The *True Briton*, which had begun publication on 1 January 1793 under the editorship of *Sun* editor John Heriot, printed the letter of resignation in full. Directly underneath the letter was the commentary "*The Wig Club having lost, at one cut, eighteen of its most ornamental Curls, is now degraded to a mere Scratch, with a Tyburn Top*" (6 Mar. 1793).¹³ On 17 March Isaac Cruickshank drew on the same familiar pun in his "A Scene at the Crown and Anchor Tavern or a Crack in the Wig Club" which reproduced many of the calumnies and misrepresentations that lay at the heart of the Whig party split. As debates raged about what could and could not be said in print about the lives and opinions of public men, Cruickshank gleefully reproduces the misrepresentations and calumnies that Fox was worried had left his reputation in tatters, and which Burke and his followers had avoided mentioning in their carefully worded resignation letter.

Given this context, and when compared to Cruickshank's print, what is most striking about Gillray's *Chancellor of the Inquisition* is its tameness. It is remarkably restrained. While the Tory papers and other satirists such as Cruickshank were delightedly mocking the chaos in the Whig party and reveling in the battering Fox's reputation was undergoing as leading members of his own party deserted him, Gillray produced a relatively dignified portrayal of Burke, outside

the Crown and Anchor. *The Chancellor of the Inquisition* is a considered composition, a careful caricature that aspires almost to portraiture. While in *The Hopes of the Party* Gillray had rendered the Crown and Anchor with the sketchiest of lines as if the regicidal passions the print represents will not allow for careful illustration, the later image depicts the tavern with intricate hatching and cross-hatching, creating a sense of light and shade, from the graded darkness that Burke's shadow casts on the ground behind him to the complex directions of light reflected by the glass above the tavern's door. Here the tavern appears not as a caricature of hellish revolutionary energy, but as an impregnable bastion of institutional propriety – everything that Gillray had previously thought it was not.

This dramatic shift in representation is no doubt partly a result of the appropriation of the site by John Reeves's Association, but the shift in presentation should also be seen as a response to the new pressures under which satirists were operating. In the context of the events that led to the split in the Whig party, and the debates over the damage that libels and sedition could cause to the peace of the nation, *The Chancellor of the Inquisition* can be read as an image that pointedly avoids any accusation of misrepresentation. The signage of the tavern, which marks it as an unequivocal site of loyalism in defiance of its former reputation as a site of Whiggish excess, also shows it to be a site that determinedly avoids the pitfalls of libelous implication. The careful realism with which Gillray depicts Burke and the entrance to the tavern provides an index of the pressures exerted on representations of the tavern at a time when fears of libel and sedition threatened to paralyze the circulation of opinion. The Crown and Anchor is no longer a site of dreaming, but of literal-minded realism. *The Chancellor of the Inquisition* reveals the need for

The regicide is imagined only through the codified symbol of a broken crown that surmounts a lamp hung outside White's. Given these manifestations of political pressure in graphic satires, which were, it seems, largely immune from the legal repercussions that were experienced by the authors of seditious writings, (Gatrell 483-494; Wood 59) it is perhaps not surprising that when Crown and Anchor appears in the novels of the period – as it does in Elizabeth Inchbald's *Nature and Art* (1796) – it appears only fleetingly, with little apparent significance. With the political and aesthetic contexts discussed in this chapter in mind, however, it becomes possible to understand these fleeting mentions as sideways glances at ideas that writers were otherwise forced to suppress.

Inchbald's tavern politics

In January 1794 the actress, playwright, novelist, and reformist Elizabeth Inchbald completed a draft of her second novel, the name of which at this point was "A Satire on the Times." A variation on the Rousseauian theme of the noble savage, the central drama of the novel surrounds the "natural" education of young Henry Norwynne who, having been brought up by his father in West Africa, is immune to the prejudices of the "artful" learning his cousin William has received in England's finest educational establishments, which are shown to do little more than indoctrinate their subjects in the tenets of aristocratic privilege. Young Henry's natural wisdom is exhibited through a series of linguistic confusions that, as Shawn Lisa Maurer has shown, provide both humor and a critique of the ideologies embedded within the language of privileged society (Inchbald 20-3). "Young Henry had an incorrigible misconception and misapplication of *words*," the narrator archly reports. "He would call *compliments*, *lies* – *Reserve*, he

would call *pride – stateliness, affectation*—and for the words *war* and *battle*, he constantly substituted the word *massacre*” (63). By exposing the artificiality of the systems of belief that underpin fashionable London behavior, these linguistic confusions argue for simpler, more “natural” language and mode of living.

This sustained attack on the emptiness of the culture of privilege receives an early manifestation at the novel’s opening, which is concerned with the older generation of Norwynnes, also called William and Henry. Employing the familiar opposition of the wholesome simplicity of small town life versus the corrupting excesses of the metropolis, Inchbald’s narrator relates how, on the death of their insolvent shopkeeper father, the two brothers travel from their native town to London “in the hope of procuring a scanty subsistence” (41). Despite their eagerness to work for a paltry sum they encounter a series of setbacks that prevent them from finding regular employment, until Henry discovers he can make a living playing the “fiddle”:

No sooner was it publically known that Henry could play most enchantingly upon the violin, than he was invited into many companies where no other accomplishment could have introduced him. His performance was so much admired, that he had the honour of being admitted to several tavern feasts, of which he had the honour to partake without partaking of the expense. He was soon addressed by persons of the very first rank and fashion, and was once seen walking side by side with a peer (43).

Inchbald’s meaning, and one of the central preoccupations of the novel, is signaled by the vacillation between the terms “fiddle” and “violin.” What was regarded by the unfashionable Henry as mere fiddle playing – an accomplishment so lightly regarded that it took him over a year starving in the London streets to remember it – is raised to the status of Art by the arbitrary tastes of the fashionable set who frequent the taverns at which Henry now plays the “violin.” The point is emphasized by Inchbald’s repetition of the word “honour” – Henry “had the *honour* of

being admitted to several tavern feasts, of which he had the *honour* to partake” (emphasis added) – a term whose heavy irony provides an early indication of the value the novel will place upon the fashions of the gentrified clientele that Inchbald imagines frequenting the tavern. True honor, Inchbald suggests, is found not in the corrupting fashions of elite tavern-goers, but in the humbler needs and desires of those who have not been corrupted by the luxuries of the *beau monde*.

Of the several generic taverns at which Henry performs, one is singled out by name: the Crown and Anchor, from which Henry purloins a “handful of almonds,” “some delicious fruit,” and “a bottle of claret” for his starving brother after a concert (43-4). Drawing on the tavern’s history as a concert venue (it’s likely that Inchbald has the Anacreontic Society specifically in mind), the Crown and Anchor is at face value a straightforward emblem of the frivolous luxury to which Henry has been granted access through the purely coincidental fact of his ability to play the fiddle. Yet the decision to name the Crown and Anchor – the only tavern that Inchbald names in the novel – must have been influenced by the tavern’s notoriety, and suggests a more complicated attitude towards tavern sociability than might at first appear. As a person who lived and worked in London, and as a friend of radicals such as William Godwin and Thomas Holcroft, Inchbald would have known that the tavern was at the epicenter of debates about the French Revolution, the rights of man, and the freedom of the press. Her disavowal of the tavern in the novel in fact represents a complicated position towards elite masculine conviviality, the radical movement, and the government’s repressive measures against seditious and treasonable practices.

By presenting the tavern as a concert venue and a site of aristocratic patronage, Inchbald harkens back to the tavern’s earlier associations with music, entirely erasing the reputation as a

site of political discourse – either radical or loyalist – presenting it instead as a site of non-verbal, and hence non-threatening performance. In some respects, this is a strategy familiar to romantic-period texts. By representing the Crown and Anchor’s artistic functions, Inchbald avoids a direct political engagement: the site of politics is rendered as a site of aesthetics and thus its threat is diffused. But in fact, Inchbald’s novel presents a more complicated variation on this familiar theme, in part because *Nature and Art* has a strong political and moral vision. Despite the suppression of the tavern’s political reputation, its role in the novel is far from apolitical – it remains part of the critique of the hollow culture of privilege that surrounds the ruling classes. As such, it plays an important role in the text as an indicator of the novel’s engagement with London’s social life. The Crown and Anchor emphasizes that the world of *Nature and Art* is not intended to be a hermetically sealed system of fictional references with no existence outside of itself, but a novel that explicitly engages with the cultural landscape of the metropolis. By suppressing the political associations of the tavern Inchbald avoids direct engagement with the controversial politics associated with the tavern, while simultaneously signaling her political intent. So if Inchbald’s depiction of the Crown and Anchor disavows its radical reputation, it is not because Inchbald was not committed to progressive politics, but because the government’s campaign of prosecution for libel and sedition made it dangerous for middle class writers with literary ambitions to articulate those commitments.

That questions of libel and sedition were prying on Inchbald’s mind as she wrote *Nature and Art* is indicated by an episode in the novel involving a wig – a symbol that was often mockingly associated with the Whigs. Having been informed that wigs are worn “to give an importance to the wearer” (58), young Henry enters his uncle’s dressing room and, upon seeing a

wig on a table, “appeared at a loss which of the two he should bow to” (61). Henry’s naivety once again provides a foil to expose the vanity of aristocratic materialism, but the generic comedy of the social satire is given a unexpectedly pointed contemporary relevance through the episode’s concluding metaphor. “Henry was awed by the dean’s tremendous wig,” Inchbald writes, “as much as Pater-noster Row is awed by the attorney-general” (64). Paternoster Row was a lane to the north of St Paul’s Cathedral that had formerly been the home to numerous stationers and booksellers specializing in the sale of religious texts, but which had by the eighteenth century taken a distinctly secular turn. In the 1790s it was the home of G.G. and J. Robinson, who had published Inchbald’s *A Simple Story* in 1791, and would publish *Nature and Art* as well as Thomas Holcroft’s plays. The radical bookseller H.D. Symonds, who sold Charles Piggott’s *Jockey Club*, and the second part of Paine’s *Rights of Man*, was also based on Paternoster Row. The shop of Joseph Johnson, who published Blake, Godwin, and Wollstonecraft among others was in nearby St Paul’s Churchyard. It was, in short, the spiritual home of radical publishing. The awe that Henry feels in the presence of the wig is likened to the awe that the radical booksellers felt under the legal proceedings of the attorney general, who was responsible for bringing the trials for treason and sedition to court. Both, Inchbald suggests, have been struck mute.

Immediately following this pointed comparison, Inchbald relates an episode in which Lady Clementina, the wife of the elder William, returns home from her morning round of visits in tears. “Three ladies accompanied her home,” Inchbald writes, “entreating her to be patient under a misfortune to which even kings are liable, – namely, defamation” (66). The tears have been occasioned by a newspaper report that has accused her of “playing deep at my own house and winning all the money” (67). Lady Clementina is unclear about what she is most offended

by, the accusation that she plays cards at her own house, that she gambles, or that she cheats. She is, she insists, totally innocent—when she does play at home, it is true that she is apt to win, but she does so merely for “amusement,” not for money. Irrespective of which part of the accusation offends her most, it is clear that her reputation has been destroyed. Echoing the distinction between sedition and treason that was drawn upon in the May 1793 John Frost trial, William exclaims, “I can forgive a falsehood *spoken*—the warmth of conversation may excuse it—but to *write* and *publish* an untruth is unpardonable—and I will prosecute this publisher.”¹⁴ A neighboring bishop, who calls frequently on the older William for help writing and publishing tracts that he hopes will earn him fame, is also present. Upon reading the offending paragraph he too exclaims, “it is a libel, a rank libel, and the author must be punished” (67).

Inchbald’s episode suggests that prosecution for libel results from the shallow obsession with reputation that is another of the absurd learned behaviors of the privileged. Yet again, young Henry is on hand to expose the vanity of Lady Clementina’s distress that the libel will go down to posterity. “Comfort yourself, dear madam,” Henry says, hoping to offer her consolation. “Perhaps after ages will not hear of you; nor even the present age think much about you” (67). The point of the satire is that Lady Clementina, the daughter of a poor Scotch earl, is of trifling significance; her reputation is of no consequence to anyone but herself.

Ultimately, it is revealed that the article refers not to Clementina after all, but to Lady Catherine Newland, who shares her initials. When confronted with the fact that Lady Catherine never plays, the writer responsible for the accusation explains that he would never have printed the accusation if she did: “Though we must circulate libels, madam, to gratify our numerous readers, yet no people are more in fear of prosecutions than the authors and editors; therefore,

unless we are deceived in our information we always take care to libel the innocent—we apprehend nothing from them—their own characters support them—but the guilty are very tenacious.” The writer concludes that he would never dream of libeling Lady Clementina.

The episode presents a complicated view the alleged libels and sedition that were a national obsession as Inchbald was writing in 1793. In the first instance, Inchbald suggests that the vogue for prosecution at the smallest slight – whether true or false – meant that authors and editors are “in fear of prosecution”—an oblique reference to the litigious environment under which literary production took place. At the same time, she suggests that the public appetite for scandal and gossip were such that writers deliberately produced libels, but in such a way that they would not risk prosecution.

While we need not accept these imaginative fictions as relating directly to Inchbald’s own situation, it is hard not to equate this assessment of literary production to the composition of the novel, which Inchbald claimed was written in such a way as to avoid accusations of libel or sedition. In an undated letter to William Godwin, with whom she had shared an early draft, Inchbald confessed that she had “Newgate before [her] eyes,” as she wrote, and had toned down some of her more egregiously political impulses (*Nature and Art* 159).¹⁵ Inchbald’s letter to Godwin mentions in particular the character Lord Rinforth (who would eventually become Lord Bendham), an avaricious lord of the bed-chamber to the king. Inchbald says that this character was intended to represent “his Most Gracious Majesty, George the 3rd,” and indeed the published version (the early draft has been lost) of the novel describes Bendham as a creature formed by “imitation—a borrowed character—a character formed by reflection,” and as the lord of the bed-chamber it is the king’s behavior that he mirrors. According to her letter to Godwin,

with the specter of Newgate before her Inchbald “dressed him in some virtues,” but still intended Rinforth to be recognizable as the King, if only by reflection, and was disappointed that Godwin had not picked up on the likeness. As Lady Clementina’s companions point out, even kings can be subject to defamation – though the wise author of such libels might be well advised to conceal their intentions with a mask of fictionality.

After showing the manuscript of the 1794 draft to William Godwin, Thomas Holcroft, and George Hardinge, the novel’s release was delayed until 11 January 1796, when it was published in an altered form by G.G and J. Robinson. The reason for this delay is unknown, though it is frequently supposed that Inchbald herself suppressed the novel until a more politically expedient time (Maurer 16). Given Holcroft’s arrest in May of that year and subsequent detainment in Newgate as one of the men accused of imagining the king’s death this caution was by no means unfounded, though as several critics have pointed out the novel’s conclusion (at least of the published version) was far from radical.

At the end of *Nature and Art* young Henry Norwynne settles down to a quiet domestic life with his long-time lover, Rebecca, and his father, whom he has rescued from West Africa. The novel preaches the necessity of inuring oneself to poverty in ways that resemble nothing so much as Hannah More’s biblical directive to “study to be quiet, work with your own hands, and mind your own business” (*Village Politics* 24). Young Henry reflects that he has experienced “more real pleasure at work with my fellow labourers, and in this cottage than I ever beheld, or experienced, during my abode at my uncle’s; during all my intercourse with the fashionable and the powerful of this world” (153). This capitulation at the novel’s conclusion into a rural idyll far removed

from the economic realities of poverty has perplexed many commentators on the work, several of whom have attempted to account for the peculiarity of the novel's ending.

Writing in 1976, Gary Kelly asserted that there was reluctance on the part of "literary Jacobins" to risk "direct political engagement" (112). More recently critics have found this view condescending and have attempted to insist that Inchbald, and the other radical intellectuals who published novels which set out to transform England's social faults, do not, in fact, pull their punches but have a consistent aesthetic vision. Maurer, for example, suggests that the "disjunctive parts" of *Natures and Art* are not contradictory but "are inextricably bound by Inchbald's penetrating critique of language" (21). Sandra Sherman, meanwhile, has attempted to account for the peculiarity of the novel's ending by insisting that Inchbald is disinterested in economic matters. Buttressing her claim with H.T Dickinson's suggestion that the Jacobin project was parliamentary, not economic reform Sherman suggests that the novel's ending only seems to "endorse economic conventions that earlier chapters...attack," but in fact demonstrates a perfectly consistent depiction of the poor as objects for sympathy who lack the "ability or authority to take hold of their affairs" (256).

Though admirable in their attempts to reclaim Inchbald's reputation, assessments that insist on the coherence of *Nature and Art* risk erasing the pressures under which Inchbald worked. There are undeniably a number of problems with Gary Kelly's argument – not least of which is his suspect gendering of attitudes towards the French Revolution, so that Inchbald's retreat into a pastoral idyll was "a woman's solution towards the ills of the age." Nevertheless, I see no reason to question the central insight, that in the novels written by bourgeois radicals in the mid-1790s, there is a repeated pattern of a moral vision that collapses at the novels' conclusions. Where I

would differ from Kelly, however, is in the reasons behind this capitulation. While Kelly ascribes the cause to disillusionment with the French Revolution in the face of Robespierre's Reign of Terror (the familiar story of the early Romantic period), there is little evidence to suggest that this was Inchbald's abiding preoccupation, whereas there is ample evidence to suggest that she was writing under conditions that she felt placed limits on what she could say. The collapse of Inchbald's political vision has, I would suggest, far more to do with the immediate circumstances in England, where the repercussions of the French Revolution seldom correlated directly with events in France.

It is not my primary concern here to insist on Inchbald's inconsistencies, but there is a danger that by denying the contradictions in Inchbald's narrative we risk losing sight of the extent to which remarkable cultural and political pressures shaped the novel into its particular form – pressures which, it seems to me, Inchbald was careful to allude to in the text itself. The endorsement of domestic quietude at the novel's ending is consistent with the reformists' belief in the destructiveness of social aspirations, while it simultaneously acknowledges the position that Inchbald herself has been forced to assume as a writer whose freedom to participate openly in the public sphere has been drastically curtailed. Given the pressures under which Inchbald was writing, it is far from surprising that the contentious space of the Crown and Anchor is alluded to only briefly, but this does not mean that the allusion should be overlooked. It operates as a shorthand for the possibilities and potentialities that could not be expressed. The Crown and Anchor is a site of illicit ideas, of the imagination curtailed, and of stifled dreams; it operates as a shorthand for the sentiments which could no longer be openly discussed.

In *Imagining the King's Death*, Barrell argues that one of these consequences of the legal assault on constitutional liberties that took place in the 1790s was the redefinition of the imagination. The explicitly political understanding of the imagination that was so fundamental to the treason trials was necessary for the rejection of politics in the Coleridgean formulation of the imagination as a benign creative force. The government's campaign against sedition and treason thus makes possible – indeed necessary – a new understanding of literature as an imaginative art that can articulate truths that are not bound to a volatile political situation. The tavern, associated with the vulgar pleasures of the body rather than the pleasures of the imagination, and bound up with the political debates of the 1790s thus has little relevance to the Romantic imagination as it has been traditionally understood, a point that I will return to in my discussion of Wordsworth in the next chapter. For now though I want to conclude my discussion by returning to the passage from Leigh Hunt that I discussed in my introduction, as – attentive readers will recall – it mentions both the London Tavern and the Crown and Anchor by name, of which we are now in a better position to provide an account.

Hunt invokes the London Tavern and the Crown and Anchor in order to emphasize their insignificance when compared to the powerful effect that Shakespeare's Boar's Head has in the mind:

But who knows not Eastcheap and the Boar's-head? Have we not all been there time out of mind? And is it not a more real as well as notorious thing to us than the London tavern, or the Crown and Anchor, or the Hummums, or White's, or What's-his-name's, or any other of your contemporary and fleeting taps? (23)

As I argued earlier, Hunt's claim that the imagined tavern world of Eastcheap is timeless, and that the physical world of the London taprooms in 1819 is fleeting and relatively insignificant is a

characteristically Romantic gesture. But it is a gesture that can only be understood in the context of the controversies that surrounded these specific taverns in the decades before Hunt was writing. The taverns that Hunt mentions and dismisses as insignificant because “contemporary and fleeting,” were despite their respectability the most “notorious” and politically controversial taverns of the day. For Hunt to assert that the Boar’s Head was more “notorious” than the Crown and Anchor was indeed a bold claim, intended to assert the superiority of the literary imagination over the political imagination. But the taverns that Hunt invokes in service of his argument disprove the assertion even as it is articulated. Hunt names these taverns precisely because of their reputations, because taverns that Hunt’s audience could read about every day in the newspapers, and that had a textual life beyond their physical existence. They, like the Boar’s Head, serve powerful symbolic functions that exceed their material presence. For all his intentions to the contrary, Hunt cannot help reinscribing the political imagination associated with the tavern into the literary imagination that tries, but fails, to transcend it. Literature and politics refuse to be so easily separated.

Chapter 4

Silencing the Alehouse Ballad

In his “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads*, William Wordsworth famously described poetry as the “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” an assessment which seems at first to privilege the immediacy and extemporaneity of poetic expression. The poet, Wordsworth claims, “endowed with a more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature and a more comprehensive soul” is naturally equipped to channel spontaneously his powerful feelings into verse. Shortly thereafter, however, Wordsworth contradicts his initial claim in an equally celebrated passage:

I have said that Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it has its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility: the emotion is contemplated till by a species of reaction the tranquility gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. (407)

Poetry, it emerges, is not spontaneous or extemporized after all, but a product of the passage of time; the powerful feelings that once overflowed are recalled, mediated, and reconstructed at a safe temporal distance.

Jon Mee has discussed this curiously unspontaneous spontaneity as a response to anxieties surrounding the idea of dangerous “enthusiasm” as a source of poetic inspiration. Questioning Shaun Irlam’s sense that enthusiasm emerges fully rehabilitated in the “Preface,” Mee points out just how fractured and fragmentary Wordsworth’s enthusiasm is, and contends that the “origin of poetic composition is in the restorative bringing together of what passion has momentarily threatened to blow asunder” (*Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation* 219). For Mee, Wordsworth’s

recuperation of enthusiasm as a legitimate source of poetic inspiration is made possible by locating potentially volatile enthusiastic passion in the past in order to ensure that its energies have been properly rechanneled and regulated into poetry.

This account of Wordsworth's unspontaneous spontaneity locates the disjunction between poetry and passion in the figure of the poet – the author must suppress his own enthusiasm in order to produce good poetry. But here I want to build on Mee's argument by suggesting Wordsworth's desire to distance poetry of "true value" from spontaneous and extemporized verse also served important formal and generic functions. By locating emotion in the past Wordsworth distances his poetry from a tradition of balladry that emphasized powerful feelings experienced in the present. The excitement generated by ballads, I will argue, was located in the singer or singers and in those who heard the song, not in the author. We have already seen that in the 1780s political ballads by writers such as Captain Morris were intended to incite the auditor into action through the performance of song, and were written to exploit the excitability of people in physical proximity who had gathered together in order to drink and sing. In the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth and Coleridge attempted to ameliorate the threat of balladry by divorcing the genre from the site of performance. By insisting on "powerful feelings" experienced in the past they mapped out a new kind of poetic pleasure, diffusing the political threat of convivial singing while retaining the excitement necessary to produce quality poetry.

The tradition of political balladry, which was closely associated with the taverns and alehouses where they were most often performed, was one of the primary means of distributing political messages in the late eighteenth century. In chapter one I showed how in the 1780s under Charles James Fox, political singing was a central and often admired component of Whiggish tavern culture, which cut across divisions of sex and class, to unite ballads hawkers, middle-class

gentlemen and the ruling elite in a poetic tradition that was designed invoke laughter and to spur its hearers to vigorous and immediate action. In the 1790s, however, the tradition of political balladry came under increased suspicion, culminating perhaps in the Treason Trials of 1794 in which the practice of singing became associated unambiguously with Jacobinism and the dangerous vigor of revolutionary violence.

In recent years critics have begun to explore the tradition of political balladry that I am describing. Following E.P. Thomspon's *Witness Against the Beast*, Simon Bainbridge, James Epstein, Anne Janowitz, Iain McCalman, Jon Mee, and Michael Scrivener have associated political balladry with a specifically radical and plebeian politics centered around the members of the London Corresponding Society – John Thelwall, Thomas Spence, and Thomas Evans notable among them. But here I want to suggest a much wider political context for the production of political balladry. The radical political ballads of the 1790s borrowed from earlier, more elite traditions of convivial singing, and were not a specifically plebeian form as they have been often presented. But neither were they restricted to the radical community and indeed there were numerous attempts to produce specifically conservative ballads to combat the problem of loose, immoral singing.

In this context Wordsworth's unspontaneous spontaneity in the "Preface" reads less like an attempt to rehabilitate poetic inspiration, however fractured, than as an attempt to avoid associations with the performance of balladry which reveled in spontaneity and vigor. At a time when conservative writers such as Hannah More and James Plumptre were beginning to organize a more coordinated mission to counteract the exhortations to action articulated in British song, Wordsworth's "Preface" attempts to distance the *Lyrical Ballads* from the more volatile associations of radical ballads on the one hand, and from the serious piety of loyalist

ballads on the other. The publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* might then be understood not as instigating a literary revolution, but as a distinctly moderate form of balladry. The *Lyrical Ballads* may have offered a democratic vision of rural characters who had often been overlooked in earlier poetry, but by locating spontaneity in the past it did so while simultaneously suppressing physical assembly and convivial pleasure.

My emphasis here on an oral and aural tradition is intended to challenge assumptions about balladry that often equate an oral tradition with a problematic “popular” audience.¹ There remains a tendency, inherited from eighteenth-century ballad collectors like Thomas Percy, to sentimentalize the ballad as an organic effusion, whose origins are obscure having been passed down from generation to generation through oral communication. Ballads are, in this view, the collective voice of a vernacular tradition. While it is not my intention to deny the existence of such a tradition, this persistent fantasy of a collectively produced vernacular poetry has obscured a substantial quantity of ballads written by individual identifiable authors for specific occasions and identifiable ends. This is not to say that I am hostile to the notion of a collectively produced poetry – far from it – but I want to make the point that the collectivity of ballads exists as much in its communal performance, and particularly in its reception, as in its authorship. My interest here is in the way audiences reacted to ballads of various kinds, and in the complex interactions between the “elite” and “popular” culture and between performance and text. In such a context to speak of distinct “bourgeois” and “plebeian” public spheres is reductive, indeed unhelpful, as it can potentially blind us to important connections and disjunctions between groups who forge alliances and antipathies based on something other than status or class. That a pervasive, thoroughgoing questioning of inherited assumptions about wealth and status occurred in the period is undeniable, and indeed was doubtlessly the cause of much of the transcultural adoptions

and lendings that I am describing. To assume that this questioning of class structures determined the use or avoidance of traditional forms, however, is a oversimplification of a much more complicated matrix of allegiances and hostilities. My task here will be to map some of these more complex interactions between politics and form, and in so-doing I want to consider anew the revolutionary nature of Coleridge and Wordsworth's poetical experiment, by bringing into focus the way the *Lyrical Ballads* suppressed the importance of convivial assembly to the rural characters whose experiences the poets claimed to champion.

Lyrics or Ballads?

In a generally favorable review of the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, John Stoddart took exception to the title of Wordsworth and Coleridge's collection for two reasons. Firstly, there were many compositions in blank verse that were not lyrical. Secondly, and more importantly for my purpose, the title was a tautology: "For what Ballads are not Lyrical?" he asked (404).² The word "lyric" had not yet developed its modern sense of words to a popular song, the etymology of the term, however, which associates poetry with the music of the lyre, makes it clear that lyrics, as with ballads, had their origins in musical performance. The distinction between the two, as Stoddart's objection suggests, has little to do with the generic properties of each, which are both forms of metrical composition written in short stanzas that are suitable to be sung, and everything to do with their relative status. Lyrics were associated with elite forms of expression whereas ballads were considered a vulgar form, associated with the people. Marilyn Butler has argued that "by adding the implicitly genteel 'Lyrical' to the plebeian 'Ballad'," Wordsworth and Coleridge signaled a change of direction for English radical poetry (12-13). But the class designations of genteel and plebeian poetry were not as stable as Butler suggests. As Stoddart's

review implied, in a culture where the ruling classes were known for singing ballads at their convivial meetings such a distinction had been rendered almost meaningless. Captain Morris's ballads were frequently discussed in terms of the felicity of the poet's "lyric muse." Indeed, in a retrospective written in 1822 John Timbs tellingly described Captain Morris as "the author of some of the finest *lyrical ballads* in our language" (*Picturesque Promenade* 210, emphasis mine), a verdict that may have been informed by Wordsworth and Coleridge's collection of that name, but which aptly described the kinds of poetry that Morris had been producing since the 1780s, which straddled the elite world of the lyric and the plebeian world of the ballad without apparent contradiction.

Whether the term "lyrical ballad" was a contradiction, a tautology, or an entirely unexceptional generic description is significant given the claims frequently made for the revolutionary nature of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's collection, and its monumental position in the canon of British poetry. Ever since Hazlitt's assertion that Wordsworth's muse "is a leveling one" that "proceeds on a principle of equality" (130), itself a highly provocative and potentially ironic statement, scholars have sought to locate the ways in which Wordsworth's poetical experiments participated in the revolutionary spirit that, according to Hazlitt, characterized the spirit of the age. Butler's suggestion that the collection's title erases distinctions between elite and popular poetry is important because it understands the poet's radical commitments to be asserted in the very title of the collection, and thus challenges the long-standing understanding of the collection as a retreat from radical politics into poetry. Wordsworth and Coleridge's poetic revolution, the story goes, was produced by their increased disillusionment with political revolution, which by the end of the 1790s could no longer be idealistically celebrated. Butler's claim for the collections' title, however, recently echoed and developed by Saree Makdisi (*Making*

England Western), is that political and aesthetic revolutions cannot be so easily separated. The poetic innovation of the *Lyrical Ballads* and the promise of social equality implied by the title was an explicitly political gesture. By challenging the contention that the collection's title was a contradiction, I do not mean to suggest that there is no connection between political and aesthetic revolution. But I want to argue that the nature of those political and aesthetic commitments can be productively finessed by setting the *Lyrical Ballads* in the context of other political ballads, and the debates over the politics of balladry.

Contentious singing in the LCS

In an introduction to his collection of "Specimens of Songs Sung About the Streets of London," Francis Place, the former Secretary of the LCS, reflected back on the change in street balladry that had occurred since his own youth:

It will seem incredible that such songs should be allowed, but it was so. There is not one of them that I have not myself heard sung in the streets as well as at Chair Clubs, Cock & Hen Clubs & Free & Easys... It must not be supposed that they were sung only in the places which I have mentioned, they were sung in all parts of the town. There were probably a hundred ballad singers then for one now. (BL Add MSS 278825 fo. 144)

Place's concern is to emphasize just how widespread the practice of ballad singing was in the 1780s, to mark out precisely how far history has progressed by the time he was writing in 1819. In doing so he provides a topography of where the songs were performed. They were, he says, "bawld about the streets, and hung against the walls," but they were also heard in the clubs and societies which met in the taverns and alehouses of the metropolis. Indeed his knowledge of these songs came from the 1780s when his father had been the publican of the Kings Arms, a few yards away from the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand.

Some of these songs sung by the respectable tradesmen who spent their evenings in my fathers parlour, were very gross, yet I have known the parlour door thrown wide open, that whoever was in the bar and the Tap room might hear every word. They were sung with considerable humour by men who were very much excited; every one within hearing was silently listening, and at the conclusion of the song expressed their delight by clapping their hands and rapping the tables. (*Autobiography* 58-9).

Place traces a hierarchy of decency based on the spatial configurations of the public house (fig. 19). In the privacy of the parlour, frequented by “respectable tradesmen,” Place suggests, there was a tacit agreement that “very gross” songs might be sung with at least a degree of propriety. In the bar and tap room, however, an intermediary zone straddling the privacy of the parlour and the public space outside the public house, it is more shocking that these songs might be overheard. More shocking still is that they could be heard in public outside the house. Place makes clear that this hierarchy is firmly established at the time when he is writing in 1819, but was altogether lacking in the 1780s when the parlour door might be “thrown wide open” thus entirely undermining the purpose of the doors which he assumes were designed to divide up the interior space.

This developing sense of the distinction between public and private space, which he understands not as a binary, but a spectrum, registers in Place’s account as a change in the distribution of sound. Place traces the pathways of the songs as they travel from the relative privacy of the parlour into the more public tap room where the performances can be overheard by “silently listening” guests in the tap room.³ The performers are notable for being “very much excited,” a phrase that suggests both the vigorous manner in which the songs were performed, and the volume with which they were “bawld.”

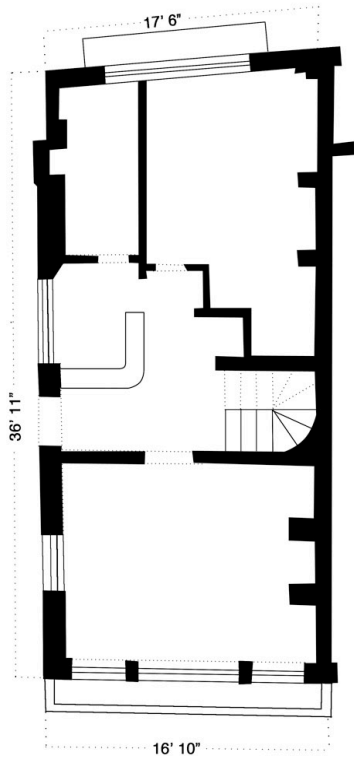


Figure 19: Plan of ground floor of Kings Arms Public House on Arundel Street, where Place grew up, adapted from a plan of the properties on the London Estate of the Duke of Norfolk, Arundel Castle Archives PM1 90. In his Autobiography Place describes the parlour at the front of the house as “a square room, the door was in the middle of one of the sides and the fire-place in the middle of another side.” The taproom was the larger of the two rooms at the back of the house (37-8).

This “excitement” might helpfully be glossed by reference to another of Place’s observations about the performance of “flash songs” in the 1780s. Recording the words to “Sandman Joe,” a ballad about a poor sand seller who finds an escape from the hardships of poverty through gin and sex, Place offers a number of hints about the way in which the ballad might have been performed. At the end of the poem he writes the following note:

It was usually for a long time on Saturday nights – sung in an open space at the back of St Clement’s in the Strand at the front of an alehouse door called the Crooked Billet by two women who used to sham dying away as they concluded the song – amidst roars of Laughter. (BL Add. MSS 2785 fo. 154)

In addition to this note, Place’s handwritten transcription reveals far more than the austere black type of printed versions of the song. Here, for example, is how he transcribes the final chorus:

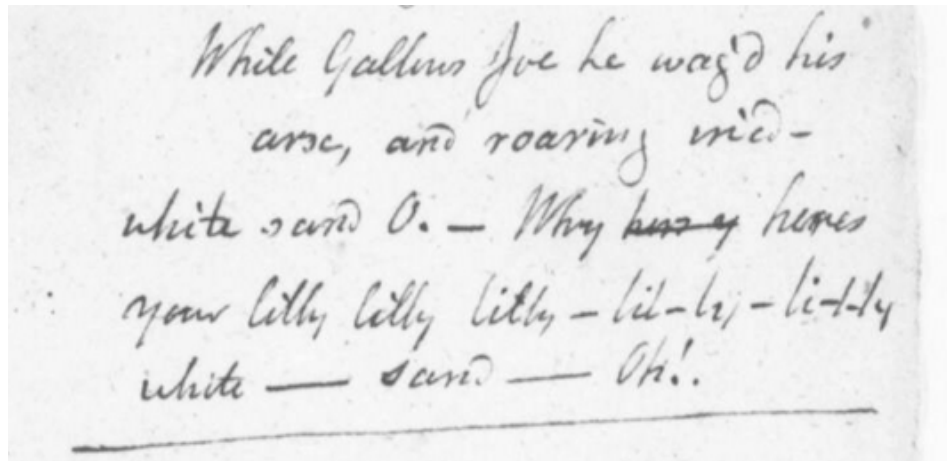


Figure 20: Place's handwritten transcription of the final verse of "Sandman Joe."
British Library Add. MSS 27825 fo. 154.

Place's euphemistic "dying away," combined with the exclamation points, dashes, and repetitions of his notation make it clear that the "white sand" mentioned in each chorus was understood as rather a different substance – and offers a glimpse of the raucous manner in which the song might have been performed. The song's appeal evidently lay in the opportunities the song – and the repetition of the chorus – afforded for boisterous reenactment of Joe's escalating ardor.

The obvious but important point that Place continually makes about urban balladry is about their noise. In the 1780s the flash songs he records were "bawld about the streets," raucously roared in the doorways of alehouses, and excitedly sung in parlors to be overheard in tap rooms. They are loud, spontaneous performances that provoked hand clapping, table rapping, and roars of laughter in the street, but which by 1819 had been, if not entirely extinguished, certainly dampened.

Place goes on to suggest that this sudden transformation in urban street balladry was a result of various causes including a "more active police" and the activities of the Crown and Anchor Society:

John Reeves and his associates, together with the magistrates, extinguished them. The association printed a large number of what they called Loyal songs, and gave them to the ballad singers; if any one was found singing any but loyal songs, he or she was carried before a magistrate who admonished and dismissed him or her, they were then told they might have loyal songs for nothing, and that they would not be molested while singing them. Thus the bawdy songs, and those in praise of thieving and getting drunk were pushed out of existence. (BL Add MSS 27825 fo 144)

What interests me about the activities of John Reeves's Association, however, is the continuity it assumes between political verse and bawdy verse. Place was right. The Association had an explicit policy of replacing bawdy songs with loyalist songs, as did Hannah More's Cheap Repository Tracts, and the Society for the Suppression of Vice in later years. But the proclaimed purpose of Reeve's Association was not the suppression of vice, but the suppression of sedition. The stated intention of the Society, according to their own resolutions was to suppress "seditious publications" and the opinions "conveyed in the terms—the Rights of Man—Liberty and Equality—No King—No Parliament" (*Proceedings* 1-2).⁴ The suppression of non-political bawdy songs was the result of an association of sedition with moral depravity, so that all "loose behavior" was rendered republican.

In his survey of various conservative anti-vice societies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Alan Hunt suggests that the association of loose morals with political radicalism was part of a wide-ranging critique of conventional Anglicanism that required little more than periodic church attendance (70). While this was no doubt the case, this link was made possible by the distinction between manly vigor and unmanly reticence that the Whigs had made part of their political philosophy in the 1780s. Thanks to Fox's early support of the French Revolution, and Pitt's support of George III's fears about it, the vigor of Whiggish tavern conviviality became associated with revolutionary excess, while Pitt had become a figurehead for loyal sober-

mindedness. John Reeves's Association, which had been supported by Pitt's government, was primarily concerned with the "mischievous Opinions" of the middling and lower orders – with the London Corresponding Society their most visible opponent. The sociable rituals established and made respectable by the Whigs, but now associated with French sympathy, set a pattern on which more obscure clubs and societies modeled their own gatherings, as the selling of one of Captain Morris's ballads at a meeting of the LCS makes clear.⁵

While the LCS occasionally had recourse to songs by well-known poets such as Morris, most of the songs that circulated among its members were written by members of the society, such as Robert Thompson, John Matthews, William Hamilton Reid, Thomas Spence, Thomas Upton, and John Thelwall, specifically for performance at society meetings. Nevertheless, song as a vehicle for expressing political sentiment was contentious among LCS members, despite the fact that their publications included the political songs sang at their large general meeting at the Crown and Anchor (*LCS* 2:337).⁶ As Mary Thale has pointed out, many of the spies that infiltrated the LCS (Taylor, Groves, Nodder, Gosling, Metcalfe, and Powell) mentioned singing at LCS meetings, always with the insinuation that such practices were seditious (*Selections* xxv). Indeed, an early internal debate among LCS members involved the use of LCS funds to print a song by one of the Society's founding members. In September 1792, the LCS general committee had found it necessary to severely reprimand the members of divisions 1, 2 and 9 for ordering the printing of the song "God Save The Rights of Man" by Robert Thompson, to be paid for by society funds. These three divisions, which all met at the Unicorn on Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, included many of the founding members of the society, including Thomas Hardy. Thompson himself served on the general committee, having recently taken over as the delegate for division 5, and was later described as one of three men deserving special notice for giving

“vigour to the infancy to the Society,” along with Maurice Margarot and William Gough. The three men were, the 1796 “History of the Society” says, “indefatigable in their exertions in visiting and instructing new divisions” (*LCS* 3:221). Thompson, an auctioneer by profession, was particularly vigorous, a quality that translated to his songs, which possessed “a lively poetical genius,” and which the early LCS members particularly admired. “God Save the Rights of Man” consisted of eight stanzas to be sung to the tune of “God Save the King”:

God save – “The Rights of Man!”
Give him a heart to scan
Blessings so dear!
Let them be spread around,
Wherever man is found,
And with his welcome sound
Ravish his ear!

See, from the universe
Darkness and clouds disperse;
Mankind awake!
Reason and Truth appear,
Freedom advances near,
Monarchs with terror hear –
See how they quake!

Sore have we felt the stroke;
Long have we bore the yoke;
Sluggish and tame:
But now the Lion Roars,
And a loud note he pours;
Spreading to distant shores,
Liberty’s flame! (*Tribute to Liberty* 9-11)

The song emphasizes the aurality of radical culture, making it clear that when freedom first dawns on mankind – a category that for Thompson included women, but not monarchs – its chosen medium would be sound, not text. The blessings of the rights of man will first ravish man’s ear, and man will then respond with correspondent “roars” and “loud notes” so terrifying that monarchs will quake when they hear them.⁷ The form of the song enacts the spread of freedom that it describes, exhorting its participants to make the sounds that will wake the people and establish political equality. Through their singing, “the rude savage host” will awaken their fellow men and, by sheer force of numbers, will guarantee freedom.

Thompson’s poetry is, as the LCS ‘History’ suggests, indeed lively, and “God Save the Rights of Man” does not shy away from asserting its vigor to the point of violence:

Godlike, and great the strife
Life will indeed be life,
When we prevail:
Death in so just a cause,
Crowns us with loud applause,
And from tyrannic laws,
Bids us – all hail!

If the song stops short of explicitly advocating killing kings it certainly assumes that force will be necessary to end the reign of monarchs, establish men’s rights, and ensure that men can have of a life worthy of the name. But once again, this spread of liberty through violence is figured through sound, as the penultimate verse, rendered in italics in the 1793 printing, makes clear:

*FAME! Let thy Trumpet Sound,
Tell all the World around,
Tell each degree:
Tell Ribbands, Crowns and Stars,
Kings, Traitors, Troops and Wars,
Plans, Councils, Plots and Jars,*

FRENCHMEN are FREE.

The song adapts the traditional trope of fame as a trumpet to the political cause of the French Revolution so that the news of the fall of the French monarchy is spread around the world through music. The trumpet “tells” other monarchs and tyrants of events in France, warning them that the spirit of liberty is spreading like a contagious song in which all mankind might ultimately join. The final quatrain of the stanza, with its inventory of traitorous persons (and their metonymic equivalents) who should be wary of the coming revolution, is a thinly veiled threat that crescendos through a list full of trochaic fricatives and plosives, enacting the violence of sound. By the time the first verse is recapitulated at the end of the song, the “welcome sound” of rights, which “ravish [man’s] ear” has been revealed as the “loud applause” at the news of monarchs falling, dislodged from their thrones by the magnitude of the roar of a global population that has awoken to the sounds of liberty.

Thompson’s song is not just an expression of support for the French Revolution, nor does it merely express a desire for the overthrow of monarchy – a treasonable offence. What it claims is that sound, and music in particular, is the agent by which a global revolution can be brought about. The song is at once propaganda for the revolution, and the weapon by which the revolution will be achieved.⁸

The general committee’s decision to reprimand its members for ordering the printing of Thompson’s song was no doubt partly to do with the negotiation of authority in the rapidly expanding society, establishing that the general committee had sole jurisdiction over the society’s collective funds. The problem with the order to print the song, however, was not purely a question of the financial threat to the society’s administrative functioning. The law that was passed stated that “no Delegate, nor member of this Society do presume to *publish* or send to any

news paper, any letter or writing communicated to the Society, by any individual or society, unless by an express order from the Committee under the penalty of expulsion” (Thale *Selections* 19, original emphasis). The wording of the law makes clear that the committee’s concern was as much about the question of unauthorized *publication* – making ideas that were expressed in the society’s ostensibly private meetings public. At issue in the unauthorized publication of the song was the question of how the LCS wanted to present themselves in public, how much “vigor” they should be seen to possess, and in particular what happened to the song in the transition from performance into print. Given the account that the ‘History’ provides of Thompspon’s early influence in the society, it is likely that Thompson’s songs were performed, if not during, then after the close of business of early meetings and applauded for their “vigor.” Ironically, for a song that claimed that sound was the chief weapon in the revolutionists’ arsenal, “God Save the Rights of Man” could be tolerated in performance, but was deemed too dangerous as a printed text.

Liveliness and vigor, which had been so important in establishing the society in the first place, had initially been thought necessary to the society’s mission. These were, after all, precisely the qualities for which Captain Morris had been widely praised during the 1784 election, his manly vigor providing the impetus for an equally vigorous political campaign. In their “Address to the Inhabitants of Great Britain on the Subject of a Parliamentary Reform” Margarot and Hardy had similarly regarded vigor as an essential component of political debate, arguing that universal suffrage and annually elected parliaments would bring to an end the abuses that prevailed in the British Government and restore the Constitution to its “pristine vigour and purity” (*LCS* 1:4). The healthy functioning of the political domain, in other words, depended on its vigor.

What some regarded as a healthy vigor, however, others might regard as violence and the LCS understood that they had to tread the line between violence and vigor very carefully (Cobbett *State Trials* 24: col. 775). According to the “History of the Society,” Thompson’s “lively poetical genius...did not exactly accord with the calm prudential principle on which the Society was instituted” (*LCS* 3: 221). The vigor that could be admired behind the closed doors of LCS meetings could not be condoned in public by a society whose survival depended upon their ability to demonstrate their prudence. By the end of 1792 Thompson had fled to France, leaving behind his wife and three children.⁹

The controversial status of political ballads at LCS meetings became a central issue during Thomas Hardy’s trial when, Florimand (or Lorriman) Goddard was cross-examined by the prosecution. Goddard was a close friend of Hardy, and regularly attended meetings of Hardy’s division, number 2, which met at the Unicorn in Covent Garden, one of the divisions responsible for the order to print Thomspon’s ballad.¹⁰ In giving evidence in Hardy’s defense, Goddard insisted on the lawfulness and propriety of the meetings he attended, claiming that Hardy was a “remarkably peaceable” man, and a “great friend to peace and order,” and that the object of the LCS was exclusively reform in the House of Commons and had no views respecting the house of Lords or the King (*Genuine Trial* 2:216-222)¹¹ Goddard claimed he knew nothing about pikes or the arming of the LCS, that everything that was transacted by the LCS at general meetings at the Globe Tavern and Chalk Farm was “peaceable” and lawfully conducted.

When he was interrogated about the songs that were sung at LCS meetings, however, Goddard found it much harder to paint a consistently innocent picture of the society. When the prosecution asked the rather leading question “You sing songs sometimes, don’t you, in the society?” Goddard answered with a flat-out denial, “No, not in the society,” an answer that

maintained that singing played no part in society meetings, but did not deny that songs formed a larger part of LCS culture. His answer, however, was hard for the prosecution to believe, and the Attorney General John Scott followed up with the rather incredulous “How came it that you never sung in the society?” to which Goddard innocently answered, “I don’t know; songs were not in general introduced.” Already, however, there was a noticeable slip in Goddard’s evidence. From initially stating that there were no songs sung at meetings, Goddard had already back-pedaled to saying that there were no songs “in general” introduced. The Attorney General, continued to hector Goddard about singing: “I hope songs were not sung at your dinner?” he asked, as if such a practice would be damning evidence against the LCS, at which point Goddard had to concede that at LCS dinners (such as the one at the general meeting in the Globe tavern on 20 January 1794) songs were indeed sung.

Things got even trickier for Goddard once he was asked about specific songs. When asked if he knew Thompson’s “God Save the Rights of Man,” he replied that he had heard of it, but had never sung it himself, and could not, when requested, repeat a verse of it.¹² He was then asked about a song with a chorus “Plant, plant the tree, fair freedom’s tree.” Goddard suggested that the Attorney general seemed to know it better than he did, cleverly implying that if knowledge of a song was evidence of treason, the Attorney General himself had better watch out.¹³ Nevertheless Goddard was keen to create the impression that singing was not part of the LCS culture. In his very denials Goddard seemed to suggest that there was, in fact, something untoward in the practice of ballad singing. When pursued about his knowledge of “Plant, plant the tree” Goddard tried the same tactic he had used for Thompson’s song, suggesting that he might have known about the song, but he could not remember hearing it performed. He replied, “I cannot recollect that I have heard it sung, and I may have heard many songs.”¹⁴ Again

Goddard suggests that songs may have been sing by LCS members, but never as part of official society business. Goddard confirmed this when asked for a fourth time about “Plant, plant the tree,” (evidently a subject of some importance to Scott’s case). He replied, “I have never heard the song sung in my life. There were a number of people used to come with songs that did not belong to the society.” Goddard’s concern was to maintain the innocence of the LCS – understandably enough given that his friend Hardy was facing the death penalty, not to mention the very real possibility of all LCS members being rounded up if the trials had secured convictions for Treason. And it is clear that he believed the best way to establish that innocence was to disavow the singing of ballads. The notion that songs might have a special license to articulate ideas in a hyperbolic fashion, a central assumption of many of the political ballads of the 1780, or that an enjoyment of the sentiment of the lyrics might not translate directly into political action, is never called into question.

Scott’s line of questioning then shifted to the songs of John Thelwall, about which Goddard was far less reticent. He had, he said, all of Mr. Thelwell’s songs and “never thought there was any harm in them.” Scott, once again, claimed to be incredulous: “Do you mean to swear that you thought there was no harm in Thelwall’s songs?” The Thelwall songs in question were “News from Toulon; or The Men of Gotham’s Expedition,” “A Sheepsheering Song”, and “Britain’s Glory, or The Blessings of a Good Constitution, A Song,” which were printed together on a single sheet, and which, after his acquittal, Thelwall reprinted in his journal *The Tribune*, in order to demonstrate their innocence.¹⁵

Michael Scrivener finds a “hint of Regicidal violence,” in the “Sheepsheering Song” but most of the violence of the song is directed against the people, not the king (119-20). The song’s structuring metaphor is a comparison of farmers’ sheep sheering to statesmen fleecing the rural

and urban populace. It is the government that is understood to be sheering the innocent people of Britain, not the other way around. The song's conclusion, which assumes the first person plural voice of "British *Sans Cullottes*," proclaims a willingness to vindicate freedom or die, but the "dauntless zeal" of this defiance is non-specific, suggesting rather that the British people will have to face violence, rather than actively pursue it as a policy. As Thelwall himself pointed out in the *Tribune*, the prosecution's strategy was to imply that Thelwall's songs were more violent than they were by associating them indiscriminately with other songs, such as "God Save the Rights of Man" or "Plant, plant the tree," that promoted a much more aggressive resistance to tyranny. Knowing that he was being watched by the government, the zeal of Thelwall's songs was much more carefully finessed to avoid accusations of revolutionary violence.

After questioning Goddard about Thelwall's songs, Scott returned to the subject of Thompson's "God Save The Rights of Man," a printed copy of which he presented to Goddard and told him to "Look at the song and see if you have ever seen it before." Goddard responded "I am no ballad singer. Which song do you mean?" This is a strange response that is difficult to make sense of in Sibley's transcription of the trial.¹⁶ Clearly Goddard wants to depict himself as more respectable than a ballad singer, but his claim not to be able to identify the song by its written transcription suggests illiteracy – he can only recognize the song when the title is spoken out loud. This, however, makes little sense given his earlier claim to own all of Thelwall's songs, or indeed, his profession, which required him to set text in the production of medals. But regardless of the peculiarities of the interaction, what Goddard's comment draws attention to are the roles of aurality and text in plebeian radical culture. Literacy among LCS members was high, but not universal, and the society relied on oral transmission, not only to avoid leaving a written trace of their proceedings, but also to accommodate those who could not read and write.

What interests me in particular about Scott's cross-examination is the way that Goddard assumes the prosecution was most concerned about the *performance* of songs in LCS meetings. To admit that he knew of the songs, but had not *heard* them suggests that Goddard thought that songs were more dangerous when sung, but that as texts they carried no threat. The prosecution, however, was more interested in the printing of songs, and their existence as text. Scott was happy to drop the question of whether the songs had been performed at LCS meetings – it was enough to know that the printed sheets had circulated among LCS members. His final question to Goddard makes this point clear: "I must ask you this question before you go: look at that *paper*, and tell me if that was *printed* by the order of the London Corresponding Society" (222, my emphasis). Unsurprisingly, Goddard denied all knowledge of the printing of "God Save The Rights of Man." He had never been a member of the LCS general committee, he claimed, and was not privy to such information. This was, however, entirely beside the point. The important point for Scott was the theater of producing a piece of paper in court, and thereby linking the LCS to the production of violent text in the minds of the jury. Scott hoped to secure Hardy's conviction by demonstrating that the LCS was a consortium of low, violent types, who were quite capable of harboring seditious and treasonable intentions. It didn't much matter if the songs were sung before or after the official close of LCS business, or at all. Despite Goddard's continued insistence on the lawful propriety of the LCS meetings, he had unwittingly helped Scott establish that songs of a violent nature had circulated among the milieu in which Hardy participated.

Thomas Erskine shared Goddard's assumption that singing was more dangerous than printed text. He interrupted Scott's cross-examination to ask why the prosecution should consume the court's time with Goddard's opinion of a song. The presiding judge, Lord Chief Justice James Eyre, answered, "If the song is proved to be sung in the society, it is proper to be

asked. He [Goddard] said that all the proceedings there were peaceable and orderly; therefore there can be no objection to asking the question.” Eyre’s answer suggests that he believed the singing of the song would be inimical to “peaceable and orderly” behavior, and Erskine agreed that there could be no objection if it had been sung in the society, “but it was not proved that it was sung there.” The discussion between Eyre and Erskine emphasizes that for them the important question was whether seditious songs had actually been sung as part of the official business of the LCS. They, like Goddard, assumed that the ideas contained in a performed song might be much more dangerous than a series of marks on a page, because they could be more widely understood, and because the powerful feelings generated by performance might translate into action more readily than the inert ink of black type.

Anxieties over the danger of oral communication were particularly a concern when discussing the plebeian world of the LCS. Elsewhere in the period the hierarchies of text and spoken words are reversed. In the trial of John Frost, for example, written words were understood to be more serious (treasonable) because they were by their very nature premeditated, whereas spoken words (sedition) could be spoken in states of heightened emotion, or in Frost’s case while drunk, and may not have carried the same intent ascribed to writing. But this logic was precisely the reason why, in the specific case of the LCS, spoken words were of greater concern. If written down, thoughts were calmer, more orderly – their emotions were mediated by the passage of time, and could be recollected in tranquility. On the other hand, one could never be sure of what a drunken mob might be capable.

Purifying Singing

While the fear of the Jacobin threat unquestionably had a considerable influence on the way that song was regarded, the reaction against singing in the 1790s was not simply a conservative reaction to the use of song in radical culture. Rather, it was part of a much more complex conversation about the role song might play in the development of a national identity for modern Britain. The Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers had undertaken a program of replacing not just seditious ballads, but all “loose” ballads with their own loyalist songs. As a letter written to Reeves indicates, this was not merely an attempt to rid the streets and alehouses of immoral tendencies, but a much more aggressive policy of loyalist indoctrination:

It occurred to me that any thing written in voice [verse?] & especially to an Old English tune...made a more fixed Impression on the Minds of the Younger and Lower Class of People, than any written in Prose, which was often forgotten as soon as Read... By printing copies of the inclosed, as Common Ballads, and putting them in the hands of individuals; or by twentys into the hands of Ballad Singers who might sing them for the sakes of selling them. I own I shall not be displeas'd to hear Re-echoed by Every Little Boy in the Street during the Christ.^{mas} Holidays. –

Long may Old England, Possess Good Cheer and Jollity

Liberty, and Property, and No Equality. (BL Add. MSS 16919 fo. 45)

Just as in the 1780s, when the political efficacy of singing was widely acknowledged, so too in the 1790s ballads were understood as an effective means of dispersing conservative ideology.

Balladry had long been used as a means of distributing news of national importance, and even in an age of increased literacy with a burgeoning newspaper market, song remained the quickest and most effective way of broadcasting messages. Roy Palmer suggests that the ballad tradition died out at the end of the nineteenth century because it had been superseded by “the spread of cheap newspapers for information and music-hall songs for entertainment” (1). Cheap newspapers, including many aimed specifically at a popular audience, however, had been around

for the best part of a century and had co-existed with ballads. The evolution of ballads into music-hall entertainments, on the other hand, involved a process of moving the ballad tradition inside, in confining public singing within architectural limits, thereby cleaning up the public spaces of the streets. From this perspective it should be seen as a development of the growing spatialization of private and public realms that we have already encountered in Francis Place's comments on flash ballads. Earlier conservative attempts to clean up street balladry, however, had not yet developed the ideologies of publicity and privacy that underpinned later attempts to sequester balladry indoors. Instead they were intended to tackle the problem of loose morality in the streets.

In his introduction to *A Collection of Songs, Moral, Sentimental and Amusing*, the playwright and clergyman James Plumptre described a Road to Damascus moment, while reading one of Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*. An encounter with "Mrs. H. More's Dialogue on 'The Duty of carrying Religion into our Amusement,'" was, he claimed, "the first occasion of my thinking seriously" on the subject of the corrupting nature of popular ballads (lxxvi). The dialogue, which appeared initially on its own before becoming the sixth part of *The Two Shoemakers*, consists of a conversation between Will Simpson and his master, Mr. Stock. Stock arrives at work to find Will singing a well-known ballad:

Since life is no more than a passage at best,
Let us strew the way over with flowers. (More *Works* 5:205).

Will congratulates himself for absorbing the lessons of the previous parts of *The Two Shoemakers* and singing what he regards to be an innocent song, with no profanities or wicked words. Stock, however, points out that it is not only words that we should be wary of, but thoughts too. The song, Stock says, advocates the wicked sentiment that we should make merry because life is short,

a philosophy that runs against the teachings of St. Peter the Apostle, who preached “because the end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” Stock goes on to close read numerous popular ballads, including one he claims he overheard at an alehouse the previous night, pointing out that they all advocate greater licentiousness on the grounds that time is short, a notion that is directly at odds with Christian doctrine:

Such sentiment as these songs contain, set off by the prettiest music, heightened by liquor, and all the noise and spirit of what is called jovial company, all this, I say, not only puts everything that is right out of the mind, but every thing that is wrong into it. Such songs, therefore, as tend to promote levity, thoughtlessness, loose imaginations, false views of life, forgetfulness of death, contempt of whatever is serious, and neglect of whatever is sober, whether they be love-songs or drinking-songs, will not, cannot be sung by any man or woman, who makes a serious profession of Christianity. (5:218)

As presented in the *Two Shoemakers*, the problem with popular balladry is explicitly in the conditions of their performance. By themselves the words of the songs are bad enough, but their tendency to promote unchristian behavior is as much a product of the pretty music, and “all the noise and spirit of... jovial company.” In the presence of such boisterousness, Stock points out, it is impossible to think of the stoical sobriety and watchful restraint encouraged by protestant teaching.

The Cheap Repository Tracts are littered with alehouses, which are consistently depicted as sites of temptation that will lead More’s characters into godless activities and, in the case of *Village Politics*, seditious behavior. The Black Bear and Red Lion in the *The History of Tom White*, the Rose and Crown in *Village Politics*, the Greyhound in *The Two Shoemakers*, and the nameless alehouse that the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain refuses to allow his son to fetch beer from on a Sunday, are just a few of the public houses in the better known Tracts, linking rural communities with metropolitan excess. As Kevin Gilmartin has pointed out, “taverns and public houses,

strung out along the arteries of transport and communication that linked village and metropolitan life, occupy a critical position in the distinctive cultural geography of the Cheap Repository Tracts” (*Writing Against Revolution* 56). According to the Cheap Repository Tracts the excess and vanity of metropolitan life infects the moral climate of the nation, as rural alehouses began to ape the debauched rituals and behaviors of metropolitan life, so that the Rose and Crown is understood as a faded copy of the Crown and Anchor. All public houses are assumed to operate along similar lines. Their ballads, fuelled by alcohol, promote improperly regulated, spontaneous behavior.

Mr. Stock’s diatribe against the levity promoted by popular balladry affected Plumptre so profoundly that he undertook to provide the population with a collection of songs that they might sing with impunity, and which would carry serious Christian morality into the everyday lives of the people by replacing impious songs with more wholesome fare. Plumptre’s introduction to his collection repeats a familiar story that was frequently rehearsed in the early years of the nineteenth century. The British people were drunk and they sang too much, a dual problem that contained its own solution.

Drinking and singing were so inextricably intertwined that it was clear that reform of one would necessarily reform the other. For Hannah More and James Plumptre the wicked *carpe diem* sentiments expressed in ballads encouraged drinking, and so by exchanging the corrupt ballads for Christian and loyalist songs the problems associated with drinking could also be addressed. The magistrate Patrick Colquhoun agreed, writing in his *Treatise on the Police of the Metropolis*, “even the common Ballad-singers in the streets might be rendered instruments useful under the controul of a well-Regulated Police, in giving a better turn to the minds of the lowest classes of the People” (348).

The distinctive feature of conservative schemes to transform balladry, such as those devised by More, Plumptre, and Reeves, was that rather than trying to abolish the culture of singing, or restricting the influence of ballads by confining them indoors, these reformers worked to bring about a transformation of already existing forms in their own territories. The effort to reform working-class sociability took the shape of an aesthetic and ideological revolution, not a restriction of singing or drinking. As G.H. Spinney noted, the purpose of the Cheap Repository Tracts was to “meet the enemy on his own ground by the production of tracts and broadsides, in outward appearance as nearly as possible resembling the chapman’s wares, at a competitive price,” thereby attempting to outsell the street ballad (298-9, 309). The success of the tracts was, according to Henry Thornton’s estimates, “exceedingly great, about two millions having been printed within the year, besides great numbers in Ireland” (*Cheap Repository* n.p.).

As Anna Blanch has recently discovered, the author of the final section of the *Two Shoemakers* that inspired Plumptre was, in fact, not Hannah More as Plumptre believed, but William Gilpin. Better known for his writings on the picturesque, Gilpin was also the author of numerous sermons and religious pamphlets including several tracts for the Cheap Repository. Gilpin and More shared the common project of instigating a moral revolution by reforming the tastes of the population. In his *Moral Contrasts* Gilpin compares the pious son of a farmer, Mr. Willoughby, with the dissolute Sir James Leigh, in a way which explicitly linked morality to taste. “Of taste, in any shape, except the most gross and sensual, Sir James Leigh had no idea” (55), we are told, where grossness and sensuality are simultaneously aesthetic and moral categories. Gilpin proceeds to catalogue Sir James’s failings in some detail. He was illiterate, ignorant of science, his knowledge of polite arts was superficial, and his conversation insipid. As a direct consequence of

his ignorance few people “who had the least pretension, either to taste, or reading, or virtue, or anything commendable, ever came near him.”

For Gilpin, “taste” and “virtue” are naturally aligned. Both are products of a wholesome, religious education, something that Gilpin believes cannot be achieved in conventional educational institutions. Willoughby’s father was afraid of sending his son to a public school, or to university, and was afraid too of allowing his son to travel, which similarly encouraged vice and excess. Willoughby was instead given a reclusive education at the hands of a pious neighboring clergyman, of whose learning Willoughby’s father was assured. Someone, that is, rather like Gilpin himself. Willoughby consequently lived as hospitably as any gentleman in the country and made many improvements to his surrounding community, yet by “cutting off all needless expences, and by introducing strict economy into such expences, as he thought needful, he not only lived within his income; but he had laid by two, or three thousand pounds, as a little fund against emergencies” (45).

Sir James Leigh, contrastingly, is sent to a public school, where he gains a fashionable knowledge in the art of spending. He then attends university, where he becomes increasingly profligate, falls in with bad company and is sent abroad to break his connections before it is too late, and proceeds on a tour of Europe, visiting brothels, gaming houses, and theatres. On returning home, deprived of the friends that refined moral tastes would have furnished, Leigh’s company consists of spendthrifts, gamblers, and profligates. The conversation of these men, we are told, is limited, and Gilpin itemizes the distasteful topics of conversation that inevitably result from deficient education:

Their table conversation was commonly made up of the occurrences of the last horserace—the last cock-fight—or the last hunting match—perhaps at what tavern such a dish was best dressed – or where the best wine of such a kind was sold. The brothel too

was a common theme among them. And all this conversation was larded with oaths—prophaneness—and obscenity. Loud debates too on these important subjects would often ensue—many clamouring at once—while others were singing filthy songs and catches—till, as the hour grew late, and bottle after bottle had been called for—all this horrid din sunk by degrees into the beastly stupidity of intoxication. (56-7)

Gilpin provides a catalogue of the associated evils of impiety: sports, gambling, taverns, food, wine, illicit sex, swearing, singing, and stupidity are fused together in a riotous debauch of tasteless profanity.

Gilpin's moral contrasts are hardly subtle, nor are they particularly new. The evils of taverns and drinking songs were longstanding targets of sermons at least as far back as the puritans. What *is* new, however, is the explicitness of the connections between morality, taste, and economics in Gilpin's paradigm. The economic argument, that profligacy leads to waste, while industriousness leads to plenty, is fully integrated into the moral argument so that fiscal comfort is equated with spiritual comfort, and wealth becomes a Christian virtue. Rather than providing spiritual insurance in the afterlife Gilpin's morality provides more immediate dividends, both for the individual and for the nation. Hard work and fiscal conservatism become the founding principles of a religiosity that provides moral instruction while simultaneously supporting national economic growth. All of which is seamlessly incorporated into an aesthetic argument: the ability to judge what is tasteful, or what is worth evaluating, is founded upon Christian principles, which are themselves constructed to conform to economic imperatives. Drinking songs become associated with a profligacy that is both immoral and unpatriotic. They become a casualty of the effort to articulate a national agenda that offers moral imperatives in support of capitalist ideology.

Not all conservatives agreed about the best way to achieve this revolution in manners, however. For Reeves and More it was a straightforward matter of replacing impious ballads with Christian songs, hymns and psalms, but Plumptre advocated a more measured approach. Citing the second part of More's story of *Tom White*, in which Tom, now a successful farmer, holds a traditional sheep-shearing feast for his neighbors, workpeople, and the old and infirm poor of the community, Plumptre complains that it is unrealistic to expect that such a feast might be celebrated by singing the sixty-fifth psalm:

Desireable as I should think it to have our Sheep-shearings and Harvest-homes conducted in such a way as that a Psalm might be sung at them without profanation, yet from what I have myself seen of such meetings, I should scarcely think it desireable or practicable. The introducing cheerful proper songs seems to be a middle step, and might be the means of purifying singing, and in time lead to so desireable an end. (xlii-xliii)

Plumptre worries that the introduction of psalms at festivals where drinking inevitably occurs might lead to the abuse of such holy sentiments, and recommends that gentlemen and gentlemen farmers should promote the singing of "the harmless jest and the cheerful song" among labourers, by which means the "mirth of the evening might be prolonged, and the circulation of liquor impeded" (xlii).¹⁷ In an attempt to moderate the severities of More's project, and to retain a sense of "mirth" even among religious people, Plumptre advocates the composition of new, morally improving songs, and edited versions of existing ballads with the impiety removed. Among his collection is a series of drinking songs that celebrate drinking, but only up to a certain point and no further:

I love my friend, I love my lass,
I like to toast them in my glass;
 But 'tis not this alone:
For temperance surpasses wealth,
And while I drink another's health,

I'll not destroy my own. (257)

Indeed, the notable thing about Plumptre's songs is the way they attempt to rechannel the energies of conviviality to serve Christian morality, through proper regulation. "Is it that the use of liquor and singing is incompatible with innocence, that men cannot be 'merry and wise?'" Plumptre asks. "Or is it that the use is grown into abuse and that we do not take care to regulate these things?" (vi-vii). Plumptre's intervention into the ballad debates of the 1790s was to uphold conservative religious ideology, while retaining convivial mirth.

An 1808 article on "National Odes" in *The Satirist* similarly questioned the effectiveness of replacing existing songs with Christian piety. The article, which argues for the "magic power of song" to inspire loyalty and patriotism among the people, concludes with an anecdote intended to question More's methods and confirms Plumptre's sense that a middle way might, in fact, be best. The anecdote relates how a clergyman overhears a cobbler reciting a song that mocks men of the cloth. The clergyman rebukes the cobbler, and after a lengthy harangue and the gift of a crown-piece the cobbler promises to sing psalms after the model of More's *Tom White*. A few days later the priest returns to the cobbler's stall only to hear the cobbler singing the notoriously bawdy ballad "The Black Joke."¹⁸ When the priest challenges the cobbler about his broken promise the cobbler returns the crown-piece he was given, crying out:

"There your Honour! 'twould have ruined me shortly. Would your honour believe it, though I got up an hour sooner, I was three whole days mending two pair of shoes to
"All—peo-ple—that-a-at—on—yearth do-oo dwell"
whereas, with *Morgan Rattler*, or *the Black Joke*, or any of them there quick sort of tunes, do you see, I knocks them off cleverly in a couple of hours (244-5).¹⁹

The anecdote suggests that the "magical" power of song lay not so much in its ability to effectively convey ideology, as More and Plumptre had both assumed, but in its ability to

motivate vigor. The author of the *Satirist* article suggests that, rather than being antithetical to productivity as More and Plumptre argued, singing vigorous songs provided a helpful soundtrack to labor, which rather than distracting workers, spurred them on to greater industriousness and hence strengthened the national economy.

Such vigor might not necessarily be deemed unpatriotic, and the author of the *Satirist* article insists not only on his own loyalty (“I am not the vile democrat,” he insists, “that rudely and swinishly grunt my discontent as seeing merit of any kind honored with reward”), but on the intrinsic value of song to national identity:

Perhaps there never was (assuredly there does not now exist) a nation more zealously attached to its Odes, of all sorts, than Britain: and, for my part, Mr. Satirist, I shall not hesitate to express my full and firm conviction, that to these animating effusions is, in a very great degree indeed, to be attributed that inflexible spirit of loyalty, valour, of clemency, and of patriotism, that blazes so intensely in the bosoms even of our most illiterate and thoughtless vulgar.” (244)

Like Colquhoun, More, and Plumptre, the author of the article understands that singing can be utilized as a tool for encouraging patriotism among the vulgar, but here it is a task that is presented as a *fait accompli*. The people are already loyal, the author claims, as demonstrated by the zealous patriotism he witnessed when the news of Nelson’s victory over the French at the Battle of the Nile (1798) reached British shores, news which inspired the singing of “God save the king, “Britons strike home,” “Conquer to Save” and “Rule Britannia” at Drury Lane Theatre, where the author was in attendance as the news was announced. “I was exulted as much at thus witnessing the sublimity of the national feelings, thus wound up to the highest pitch of enthusiasm.” It was truly, the author declares, “the *national triumph* of MIND.”

The Satirist article quotes directly from Gilpin’s section of the *Two Shoemakers*, arguing that ballads were not nearly as seditious as the tract made out, and suggesting that convivial singing in

fact served loyalist national agendas. Those sentiments which Colquhoun, More, and Plumptre had wanted to inculcate through the distribution of loyalist song were, according to the author, assisted by the patriotism that war with France had inspired. For *The Satirist* article, song inspires “sublimity” which encourages an enthusiasm that is itself an expression of the triumph of mind, a marriage of Enlightenment principles with Romantic enthusiasm. The energy and vigor of ballads, which in the middle of the 1790s had become associated with revolutionary violence, had by the end of the century been at least partially reclaimed for loyalist ends. While I don’t mean to suggest that *The Satirist* was in any way typical – it was just one voice in an ocean of opinion – it nevertheless calls into question the easy association between ballads and radical politics which has been used to argue for the political commitments of Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads*.

Wordsworth’s silent ballads

My earlier suggestions that there was nothing very innovative about the genre of the *Lyrical Ballads* draws on a venerable line of scholarship that has questioned the legitimacy of Wordsworth’s assertion in the “Preface” of the revolutionary nature of his own poetical experiment, inaugurated by Robert Mayo’s survey of contemporary magazine poetry. Mayo concluded that Wordsworth’s claims for the novelty of the *Lyrical Ballads* were highly exaggerated, and that an examination of the broader poetic field reveals a host of “bereaved mothers and deserted females, mad women and distracted creatures, beggars, convicts and prisoners, and old people of the depressed classes, particularly peasants.” More recently, Scott McEathron has developed Mayo’s argument, setting the *Lyrical Ballads* in the context of a long established tradition of what he calls “peasant poetry,” a highly popular genre written by autodidact

laboring-class poets who were celebrated as “natural geniuses.” Dating back at least to Queen Caroline’s patronage of Stephen Duck, and including poets such as Ann Yearsley, Robert Burns, James Hogg, and Robert Bloomfield, this genre, which frequently depicted such rural characters as appear in the *Lyrical Ballads*, and was written in the language of common men, had become stale to the point of ridicule. Wordsworth’s contribution to this tired authenticity *topos*, McEathron argues, was to present rusticity from the perspective of a series of gentlemen narrators, which, far from “breaching the fortress of elite literature” assaults class boundaries in the other direction “invading the demographic domain of peasant writers” (4).

As I have been describing, however, the so-called “peasant poets” who had been adopted by a middle-class audience were not the only ones to write ballads. Indeed, there was a tradition of ballad performance that was alive and well and which formed a central component of the tavern conviviality of the elite as well as the alehouse sociability of autodidact rustics and urbanites. This tradition was certainly not tired. It remained suspiciously vigorous, though it was becoming increasingly the subject of middle-class attention as conservative writers undertook the project of cleaning up the manners and morals of the people.

The innovations of the *Lyrical Ballads* are then revealed less in the subject matter of the poems, or in Wordsworth’s adoption of the language of the common man, than in the way Wordsworth understood the effect that a poem might have on the reader. Given the contexts of balladry that I have provided here, what is most remarkable about the *Lyrical Ballads* – and Wordsworth’s “Preface” in particular – is how moderate Wordsworth appears, and how careful he is to negotiate a place for ballads (the language of the common man) between the discourses of revolutionary energy on the one hand, and the language of counter-revolutionary conservatism on the other. This space opens up through Wordsworth’s strategy of insisting on deep thought

and the deferred pleasures that poetry might afford – his insistence on unspontaneous spontaneity, or “emotion recollected in tranquility.”

The “Preface” begins by discussing precisely the kind of “pleasure” that readers might elicit from the poems:

The First volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

The point of the experiment, Wordsworth claims, is to ascertain “the sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure” a poem might produce. In the light of the kinds of responses to ballads I have been discussing – the “mirth and hilarity” produced by Captain Morris’s obsceno-political ballads discussed in Chapter 1, and the revolutionary zeal conjured in the songs of the LCS – this careful measurement of the quantity and quality of pleasure that might be garnered from poetry probes rather delicately the decency of readerly pleasure. Wordsworth and Coleridge’s experiment (at least as it is presented in the “Preface”) attempts to map out a new kind of response that is at a clear remove from the excesses of political ballads, but is nevertheless dedicated to “pleasure” and not to the serious pieties of conservative balladry.

Wordsworth goes on to argue that “all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings,” but not before he has positioned these powerful feelings in opposition to one of the critical commonplaces of the day:

I cannot be insensible of the present outcry against the triviality and meanness both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions; and I acknowledge that this defect where it exists, is more dishonourable to the Writer’s own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time that it is far less pernicious in the

sum of its consequences. From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished by at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*.

The “present outcry” that Wordsworth identifies complains of the triviality of both “thought” and “language,” precisely the concerns of Gilpin’s contribution to the *Two Shoemakers*. (As we have seen, Mr. Stock points out to Will Simpson that it is not enough merely to avoid “wicked words” but the ballad singer should be ever cautious to avoid “wicked thoughts” too.)

Wordsworth acknowledges that while the *Lyrical Ballads* could be confused for the ballads that conservative writers had begun to attack, they are, in fact, quite different. He agrees with the line of reasoning that suggests that the introduction of wicked thoughts and sentiments into metrical composition reflects badly on the character of the Writer, precisely the line of argument made by Gilpin, when he complained of the “loose profane and corrupt songs” of a fashionable author and singer of songs, identified as Charles Dibdin (More *Works* 5:218).

Accusations of “triviality and meanness” were leveled against many kinds of poetry in the 1790s, and I do not mean to suggest that Wordsworth had Gilpin’s tract specifically in mind when he wrote the “Preface,” but these widely circulating complaints against the “low” and “mean” thoughts articulated in popular ballads are surely a relevant context for understanding how Wordsworth constructs the poetic field into which he saw the *Lyrical Ballads* intervening.

Wordsworth distinguishes the poems of the *Lyrical Ballads* from trivial and mean songs by claiming for his poems a “worthy *purpose*” (original emphasis), suggesting that his poems are intended to *do* something worthwhile. Unlike the popular ballad tradition, which, as Gilpin had argued, merely encourages “levity, thoughtlessness, loose imaginations, false views of life” the *Lyrical Ballads* are intended to have a purpose. In an attempt to differentiate his *lyrical* ballads from loose profane and corrupt songs, Wordsworth implicitly aligns himself with conservative

attempts to reform the manners and morals of the people, to clean up the triviality and meanness of thought and expression in balladry.

Rather than replacing the songs with hymns and psalms that might circulate with less morally devastating effects among the country's lower classes, however, Wordsworth offers poems that participate in the traditions of balladry, but which increase their sophistication by encouraging their readers to think:

For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; but though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility had also thought long and deeply.

Valuable poetry is the product of long and deep thought, of emotion that has been through a process of mediation and meditation and distilled into a poetic form. Such an assessment, of course, denies the validity of any kind of occasional verse, written for the moment in response to immediate political circumstances. Moreover, it discounts the value of any ballad that makes a virtue of its direct unmediated effusiveness, the kind of poetry that was elsewhere celebrated for its ability to produce vigor. Though Wordsworth writes with a "purpose," and is affected by powerful feelings, his "purpose" is not the vigor of political ballads, his powerful feelings are not the excitement generated by convivial ballads. Rather than political activism, his "purpose" is pedagogical. The lowly subjects are occasions for elevated reflection, and thus posit the notion that the pleasure gained from the poems might be a cerebral pleasure, which is neither the mirth and hilarity of vigorous tavern and alehouse meetings nor the piety of conservative writers who wish to suppress pleasure in favor of productivity.

The deep thoughts that distance the Poet from the spontaneous excitement of the moment are calculated to provoke a corresponding response in the reader, who registers the

calming effect of time on the poet, and recognizes that the powerful feelings have undergone a transformation to become purposeful and worthy of consideration. The subject of the poems, Wordsworth explains, is important because “the human mind is capable of excitement without the application of gross and violent stimulants.” This is almost the language of the Cheap Repository Tracts, which repeatedly insist on the consequences of the stimulating effects of alehouse conviviality to the moral wellbeing of the individual and the nation. There is however, a key difference. Wordsworth, like Plumptre before him, remains committed to the importance of “excitement.” Rather than avoiding stimulation at any cost as More and Gilpin had advocated, Wordsworth wants to retain excitement and rechannel it into the project of deep thinking. Wordsworth’s “Preface,” that is, reclaims the excitement that had previously been associated with the stimulating effects of conviviality to serve a new poetics of interiority.

From this perspective Robert Mayo’s claim that Wordsworth’s poetic experiment merely replicated the rural figures that were familiar tropes in the magazine poetry of the day misses the point. The revolutionary nature of the *Lyrical Ballads* was not in the choice of subject matter so much as in the way it reclaimed for poetry an energy that was exciting, without being stimulating, and moral, without being pious. Wordsworth develops the notion of “deep thought” as a quality essential to poetry in order to distinguish his ballads from the frivolities of alehouse ballads on the one hand and the pious invasions into the routines of daily life on the other. The development of Romantic subjectivity might then be understood as produced by the necessity of navigating a path between the Scylla and Charybdis of revolutionary zeal and sanctimonious loyalism.

The casualties of Wordsworth’s insistence on the need for “deep thought” in poetry, however, are the locations in which communities gathered to sing and act. If the poems

themselves were written for a purpose, Wordsworth took care to establish that the purpose that he had in mind was not the vigor of conviviality, but a disembodied purpose, divorced from the communities in which ballads were typically sung, and relocated onto the page and into the minds of readers. Given the natural association of singing with the alehouse in conservative attempts to reform the manners and morals of the people, it is remarkable that there is not a single mention of alehouses, ale, beer, inns, or taverns in the whole of the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. For all Wordsworth's claim in the 'Advertisement' that the collection is an experiment "to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure" (47), the *Lyrical Ballads* had to wait until its second edition for an alehouse – the site most frequently associated with the conversations of the lower classes – to make an appearance.

Wordsworth's antipathy for the bustle of the metropolis, expressed most famously in his descriptions of Bartholomew Fair in Book VII of the *Prelude* has been well-documented (Changler and Gilmartin 3-5; Makdisi *Romantic Imperialism* 23-44). Despite acknowledging the glamorous appeal of London's pleasure gardens and the possibility of the urban sublime, Wordsworth ultimately flees London at the end of Book VII, the constant assault of sensory stimulation proving too much to bear, its stimulants overwhelming what could possibly be contained, controlled and rendered into an aesthetic experience. But London is not the only metropolis in the *Prelude* that appears over-stimulating. Revolutionary Paris is similarly presented as raucously cacophonous, threatening to overwhelm the senses. Here, in an echo of Burke's descriptions of revolutionary France, Wordsworth associates the metropolitan crowd with revolutionary excess and with the institutions that encourage purposeless noise:

...In both her clamorous Halls,
The National Synod and the Jacobins,

I saw the Revolutionary Power
Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms;
The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge
Of Orleans; coasted round and round the line
Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,
Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk
Of all who had a purpose, or had not;
I stared and listened, with a stranger's ears,
To Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild! (348)

Taverns are integrated into a list of the “worst and best” that France had to offer, associated with the brothels, gaming-houses and shops. These metropolitan institutions are characterized above all by noise, and associated with “hawkers and haranguers, hubbub wild.” An exciting cacophony that ultimately must be overcome.

As James Chandler and Kevin Gilmartin have pointed out, the over-stimulating excess of the metropolis was also invoked in the “Preface” to the *Lyrical Ballads*, which was similarly distrustful of the effects of metropolitan stimulants on sensibility (15). Wordsworth lists a series of causes “unknown in former times” that have blunted the “discriminating powers of the mind.” Among these causes are “the increasing accumulation of men in cities, and the “craving from extraordinary incident” to which the “literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves.” Wordsworth makes it clear that the rural settings of the *Lyrical Ballads* are a direct challenge to the kinds of urban aesthetics whose craving for stimulation had, he felt, eroded the tastes of the nation. The absence of alehouses in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* might then be seen as symptom of Wordsworth's desire to avoid the cheap stimulations of drinking which, in the structuring myths of the metropolis, had become associated with the artificial stimulants, frivolities, and violence of the town, and which, in More's Tracts and elsewhere, had been extended to the alehouses of rural communities.

When an alehouse is introduced into the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, it makes its appearance in a telling manner. In “The Two Thieves, Or the Stage of Avarice,” which depicts an elderly thief and his grandson in broadly sympathetic terms, an alehouse is mentioned in the poem’s opening framing device:

Oh now that the genius of Bewick were mine
And the skill which He learn’d on the Banks of the Tyne;
When the Muses might deal with me just as they chose
For I’d take my last leave of both verse and of prose.

What feats would I work with my magical hand!
Book-learning and books should be banished the land
And for hunger and thirst and such troublesome calls
Every ale-house should then have a feast on its walls.

The Traveller would hand his wet clothes on a chair
Let them smoke, let them but not a straw would he care,
For the Prodigal Son, Joseph’s Dream and his Sheaves,
Oh what would they be to my tale of two Thieves! (335-6)

The alehouse is portrayed not as a site of ballad singing, oral culture, or even rustic community, but as a rest stop for solitary travellers who stop by to dry out their clothes. While resting, the hypothetical wanderer might admire the narrator’s equally hypothetical woodcuts, which, like a rustic equivalent of Hogarth’s moral journeys, depict the progress of an elderly thief, though with altogether more ambiguous message.

The opening to “The Two Thieves” claims (somewhat disingenuously perhaps) that the visual arts are superior to text. If the poet had the skill of Thomas Bewick his woodcuts would be able to speak more directly to the viewer who might, it is implied, be illiterate and to whom a well-executed series of images can have as much moral force as bible stories (the Prodigal Son,

Joseph's Dream), or any amount of book-learning. This is a typical example of the democratizing tendency present in many of the *Lyrical Ballads*, which seeks to render the common man and the rustic poor as complicated human subjects, worthy of the middle-class reader's attention, and looking for the hidden ambiguities and depths in the ostensibly simple routines of everyday rural existence. This democratic appeal, however, is made possible by the silencing of another of the traditional forms of alehouse community and communication, the broadside ballad, a form that traditionally combined woodcuts with poetry, intended to be sung aloud.

The history of the alehouse, as Peter Clark's study makes clear, is coterminous with the history of the broadside ballad. From at least the turn of the seventeenth century ballads were pasted to the walls of alehouses to assist with community singing, and as such they frequently reflect back concerns appropriate to alehouse conviviality and drink (155, 198, 276). At numerous points in his study Clark uses alehouse ballads to establish historical facts about alehouses and, alongside legal documents, ballads provide one of the primary archives for understanding the social and cultural aspects of alehouse conviviality, and of the everyday lives of the lower strata of society before the nineteenth century more generally (83, 95, 205, 288). More recently Beat Kümin and B. Ann Tlusty have pointed out the historical utility of ballads, and suggest that literary studies might provide a useful hunting ground for establishing the social and historical significations of public houses (11). Printed alehouse ballads, that is to say, convey the histories of the non-elite rural and the urban communities.

Furthermore, these repositories of historical information transmit their messages in both text and verse, as the most common form of broadside ballad between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries consisted of a ballad's text surmounted by a woodcut illustration. As Simone Chess has pointed out, scholars have frequently dismissed these illustrations on the grounds of

both quality and relevance. Pictorial woodcut carvers of the early modern period, similar to the copperplate engravers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, were considered derivative commercial producers, not “original artists” (Knapp 158-60). Meanwhile, the same woodcuts, which were expensive to produce, were used to illustrate a variety of ballads and had only slender relevance to the text. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, as Samuel Pepys noted, the practice of adorning broadside ballads with illustrative decorations began to diminish, but it never entirely died out, and underwent a revival at the end of the eighteenth century as printing technologies improved and a new visual culture emerged. The nineteenth-century street ballads of the Catnach Press and John Pitts, for example, were heavily illustrated with simple designs that called to mind traditional woodcut prints, and explicitly signaled their participation in a tradition of balladry that combined image and text.²⁰ While most of the political ballads that circulated among LCS members were printed as text only, other political ballads of the late eighteenth century similarly signified their participation in the broadside ballad tradition through illustration. R. Hawes’s *Libertas Dei Gratia, or the Proclamation of Liberty* is illustrated with simple designs and patterns that appropriate the traditions of broadside woodcut illustration for explicitly political ends (fig. 21). An undated printing of Captain Morris’s “Baby and Nurse” appears underneath an illustrative visual satire that draws on the early modern practice of woodcut illustration while updating it to accommodate the late eighteenth-century taste for satirical prints (fig. 22). By presenting the alehouse as a kind of art gallery where the narrator-poet might hang woodcuts, Wordsworth draws attention to the possible value of woodcut illustration but, by privileging the woodcut over the text, he deprives the common man of a speaking and singing voice.

Indeed, many of the rural characters Wordsworth depicts in the *Lyrical Ballads* are mute. Their actions and speech are reported rather than rendered in their own words or else they utter simple repeated phrases, as in “We are Seven” or “The Thorn.” These examples of rural characters whose voices are silenced or attenuated indicate a problem Wordsworth struggled with as he compiled subsequent editions of the *Lyrical Ballads*. His desire to speak in the simple language of the “common man” battles with his desire to represent the impenetrable complexity of rural characters. Or to put that another way, despite his democratic political convictions, Wordsworth is suspicious that the words of rural characters might be incommensurate with the rich inner lives he wants to portray them as possessing.

Though by no means a systematic pattern – there are several poems in which rural characters speak in the first person – the haunting muteness of rural characters was a feature of several poems in 1798 edition, most notably in the startling silence of Simon Lee whose tears and reported thanks are intended to be more eloquent, ambiguous and complex, than any direct speech could be. Given Wordsworth’s claim that the *Lyrical Ballads* was intended to be written in the language of the common man, the frequency with which the common man is denied a voice is remarkable. This was an aspect of the poems that he continued to struggle with in the revisions he made for subsequent editions. In the 1798 edition, “Old Man Travelling; Animal Tranquility and Decay, A Sketch” concluded with the old man speaking back to the narrator, correcting the notion of “long patience” and peace earned through age that the poem had projected on to him, explaining that he is going to see his son who is dying in hospital. For Scott McEathron, the poem gains its meaning from the disjunction between the narrator and the poet, “In suggesting that even a narrator who wishes to portray rustic dignity can get it wrong, the poem stands as a vigorous self-critique of Wordsworth’s own impulse to represent the rural poor.” The stunned

silence on the part of the narrator at the end of the poem, in this reading, becomes a powerful emblem of the shame and embarrassment of misplaced judgment and of the hazards of projecting pastoral fantasies onto human subjects. By focusing on the gap between the poet and his narrators McEathron provides a compelling reading of the *Lyrical Ballads* that exonerates Wordsworth from the charge of appropriating the ballad form from rural peasants who should, more “authentically”, be the authors of such balladry. For McEathron, Wordsworth does not appropriate the tradition of “peasant poetry” that he traces from Stephen Duck, through Anne Yearsley, Robert Burns, James Hogg, John Clare to the “Farmer’s Boy” Robert Bloomfield; rather, he seeks to complicate it by drawing attention to the problems of the authenticity *topos* and questioning the motivations of his gentlemanly narrators who have varying degrees of “social sympathy” with the rural characters they represent.

McEathron’s argument is entirely convincing for the 1798 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, but fails to account for the subsequent changes Wordsworth made to “Old Man Travelling.” In the 1800 edition, the old man now longer speaks to the narrator directly – his words are rendered instead as reported speech, paraphrased by the narrator.¹ In later editions the Old Man’s words are erased entirely, and we are left only with the narrator’s misjudged depiction of an old man merging with the landscape without any corrective explanation. The complications are erased and the reader is encouraged to understand the man as an authentic and mute feature of the rural landscape. In “Old Man Travelling,” as with several other poems in the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* the rural characters appear complicated, contradictory, and morally ambiguous, but silent, deprived of a voice.

One explanation for this silence might be the repeated invitations to the reader to “think” found throughout the *Lyrical Ballads*. As Michael Gamer and Dahlia Porter have noted, the

collection is preoccupied with thought, with the words “think,” “thinking,” and “thought” occurring 73 times in the 1798 edition and 140 times in the 1800 edition (21). In the longer narrative poems thought is frequently channeled through the landscape, such as in Tintern Abbey’s description of the landscape as “A motion and a spirit, that impels All thinking things / All objects of all thought.” In shorter poems such as “Anecdote for Fathers,” “The Foster-Mother’s Tale,” “Lucy Gray,” “Simon Lee,” and “We Are Seven,” the reader is encouraged to reflect upon the events related in the poems. In the case of “Simon Lee,” the narrator breaks off from its narration in order to address the reader directly:

What more I have to say is short,
I hope you’ll kindly take it;
It is no tale; but should you think,
Perhaps a tale you’ll make it. (97)

By handing over narrative authority to the reader, who is encouraged to form the raw materials of the poem into “a tale,” the narrator attempts to train the reader to engage actively with the descriptions of the poem, rather than relying on the speaker for narrative gratification. The reader of the *Lyrical Ballads* is constantly being exhorted to think beyond the passive pleasures of wonder and sentimentality that might provoke an immediate, physical response, and is encouraged instead to reflect on the meanings that might be drawn from the poems. The appropriate response to these ballads is not a vigorous political campaign, or the seizing of power from a tyrannical state, but a meditative reflection on the emotions provoked by the poems, pondered in serene tranquility. The thoughts that the poems provoke might be political in nature – thoughts perhaps of the hidden complexities of rustic folk, and of social injustices – but the poems’ provocations are undisputedly incitements to thought, not action. Their political spirit is

importantly indirect, and properly regulated to avoid the violent confrontations that were understood to be an aspect of alehouse gathering.

In arguing that Wordsworth rewrote the ballad form to avoid the violent and radical associations of the alehouse, I do not mean to reinscribe conservative depictions of alehouse sociability or to imply that rustic communities were uniformly drunk, raucous and constantly singing bawdy and seditious songs. In one sense Wordsworth's severing of his rural characters from the alehouse could be seen as an important intervention in depictions of rural Britain, liberating rural characters from their inevitable association with drinking and singing, which consigned them to the category of unproductive subjects in need of improvement. In this sense the *Lyrical Ballads* anticipate Francis Place's arguments that the laboring part of the population were not nearly as drunk and debauched as they were often represented to be, but lived much richer, and more productive lives (*Improvement of the Working People* 5-6). What I am arguing, however, is that alehouse singing and balladry was a central component of the British popular culture. By ignoring the alehouse and the performance of ballads and transforming the form into a vehicle for thought rather than action, Wordsworth's moderation – his careful avoidance of political extremes – contributes to the silencing of the popular poetic inheritance.

The attempt to navigate a path between too much energy on the one hand, and sanctimonious piousness on the other, resulted in a poetics that retained the excitable emotions of ballads, but diffused their threat with the passage of time and the mediation of thought. If the ballad's gratifications were to be deferred, however, they could no longer function as a shared communal experience. Their effects would become less dependent on aurality, or on the printed ballads that were pinned to alehouse walls, straddling orality and text. The *Lyrical Ballads* referred

to such multimedia phenomena, but would stress the necessity of remaining at a distance from such stimulating effects, and would themselves rely solely on print.

Attempts to silence bawdy communal singing were not entirely successful, and, as we will see, many of the flash songs that were sung in the 1780s and 1790s continued to be performed in notorious supper rooms like the Coal Hole and the Cider Cellars. The campaigns to transform the morals and manners of the working people did, however, articulate for the first time moral codes that became more widely adopted in the nineteenth century. Central to this codification of morality was an increased preoccupation with the moral dangers of the alehouse, which over the course of a few decades became obsolete, merging with taverns and gin palaces to become the pub as we would now recognize it. Among the casualties of this transformation were the broadside ballads which once adorned alehouse walls. They disappeared, replaced by ornate mirrors that assisted in the lighting and surveillance of public house patrons, preventing them from gathering unobserved in dark holes and corners to talk sedition (Girouard 160-178). Rather than the black type of ballads that encouraged loose behavior pub-goers might now catch a glimpse of their own reflections and be reminded of how they looked to the watchful eye of the landlord. In the architectures of the public house, as in the *Lyrical Ballads*, interiority takes the place of communal singing.

Chapter 5

Anacreontics and Anachronism

While on a tour of Ireland in 1825, Sir Walter Scott wrote to his friend Mr. Morritt, full of sanguine hopes for Irish improvement:

Every thing is mending – the houses that arise are better a hundredfold than the cabins which are falling – the peasants of the younger class are dressed a great deal better than with the rags which clothe the persons of the more ancient Teagues which realize the wardrobe of Jenny Sutton, of whom Morris sweetly sings

One single pin at night let loose

The robes which veiled her beauty.

I am sure I have seen with apprehension a single button perform the same feat and when this mad scarecrow hath girded up his loins to run hastily by the side of the chaise I have feared it would give way and that then as King Lear's fool says we should all be shamed. But this, which seems once to have [been] generally the attire of the fair of the Green Isle, probably since the time of King Malachie & the collar of gold, is now fast disappearing and the habit of the more youthful Pats and Patesses is decent and comely. (*Letters* 9:196)

The contrast that Scott draws between the older, pre-modern “Teagues,” and the “habit of the more youthful Pats and Patesses” reveals the interdependence of the aesthetic, economic, and moral aspects of “improvement” in the civilizing mission of modern imperialism.¹

Scott, perhaps recalling that Captain Charles Morris was born in Ireland, cites Morris's poem for its realistic depiction of the wretched clothes of an older generation. The “younger class” of Irish, however, have rejected such ugly poverty, subscribing instead to emergent values of decency and comeliness. By aligning “Jenny Sutton” with the indecent and uncomely tastes of a previous era, and with a pre-modern temporality that hasn't changed since the time of King

Malachie, Scott consigns Morris's verse to a way of life that has ceased to have relevance in the improving, civilized world of the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century.

This shift in cultural values that Scott sees encoded in the clothing of the Irish people is reflected too in the verse that he cites, which is tellingly truncated, severed from its original context. Morris's original stanza reads:

One single pin at night let loose
The robes which veiled her beauty
Then down she lay for public use
To ev'ry man on duty. (*Songs* 9th ed. 51)

The final couplet of the quatrain is hardly relevant to Scott's argument and so it is not surprising that it is omitted. But this is precisely the point. Morris's bawdy verse has by 1825 ceased to be relevant. Occasional lines must be severed from their original setting, heavily recontextualized to conform to modern sensibilities.

"Jenny Sutton" was one of the poems that at the time of the 1784 Westminster Election was said to lend "a kind of relish" to the Duchess of Devonshire's canvassing efforts on Fox's behalf (Hartley 255). The song depicts in traditional ballad form the life of a poor woman bought up in a workhouse who transcends her humble origins by achieving notoriety through her sexual activities. It charts her progress from the parish workhouse through her discovery of sex, to her ability to oblige her customers regardless of their sexual whims:

Her body was a lott'ry fair,
To prick where'er it pleas'd you:
In ar__se, or c__t, or mouth, or ear,
She ev'ry way would ease you.

Like "the Plenipotentiary," which I discussed in Chapter 1, "Jenny Sutton" derives a great deal of its force from the incongruities between graphic depictions of sex and educated learnedness,

exhibited through mock-heroic classical allusion, such as its opening comparison of Jenny to Julius Caesar:

Her hand, like Caesar's, grasp'd at all,
Till Envy mark'd her station;
Then, like great Caesar, did she fall
By foul assassination !

Also like “the Plenipotentiary,” the song closes with an invitation to audience members to “Come, charge your glasses” in celebration of its subject, inscribing the song into the rituals of convivial practice:

A bumper let our fingers thus
High raise to her perfection;
For Jenny's finger oft for us
Raised many a stout erection!

This framing certainly offers further opportunities for bawdy humor, but it also presents Jenny's life in the form of an elegy, simultaneously celebrating and mourning the life of the prostitute with a sympathy that belies its status as a bawdy drinking song. Despite the objectifications of the female body, the ballad simultaneously acknowledges the hardships associated with Jenny's poverty, and affords her an unexpected degree of dignity:

The parish'd rear'd her, till she knew
For what her parts were able:
Away from workhouse then she flew,
And quarter'd in a stable.

An empty stall supply'd a bed;
A dung-heap was her bolster;
The gin and cheese on which she fed
She kept within a holster.

Scott's invocation of the song into his letter describing an older generation of "Teagues" suggests that he recognized it as a sympathetic portrayal of poverty, but by the 1820s it had nevertheless come to seem a relic of a more barbarous age, a reminder of a time before the morals and manners of the metropolis had been improved. Scott's point is how shocking it is that this description from the 1780s might still be relevant to describe the attire of the Irish people in the 1820s. He remains optimistic, however, that modernity had rushed in with the Act of Union, and that Irish barbarism would soon be extinct. London had, Scott implies, undergone the same transformations that he now saw belatedly taking place in Ireland. Bawdy drinking songs that took pleasure in the sufferings of others, however sensitively they were portrayed, no longer had a place in the modern metropolis.

Nevertheless, Scott's citation of "Jenny Sutton" acknowledges the lasting legacy of Morris's earlier bawdy verse in spite of its conscription into a backward, pre-modern era. While the tenor of Morris's verse is antithetical to the improvement narratives to which Scott was committed, Scott still knows Morris's poem. Moreover, he can assume that his correspondent will know the poem, and catch the glancing irony of his sketch of Morris "sweetly" singing. Morris indeed, seems to have been a favorite of Scott, who quotes his verse approvingly several times in his letters, including in a letter to Maria Edgeworth, suggesting once again the association of Morris with Irish identity.²

By 1825, however, Morris had long since renounced his former career as a writer of obscene, political, and obsceno-political songs, and was busily trotting out much more conventional fare such as "To Sir Walter Scott, Bart.," a response to Scott's 1822 poem "Farewell to the Muse." In his poem Scott had vowed to give up writing poetry, and to meet no more his "Queen of Numbers." Morris answered by urging his "dear friend" to "suspend thy

plan, / Resume the poet, and forget the man,” arguing that Scott owed it to Britain to continue writing verse:

Alas! this land, once famed for song divine,
Scarce holds a bard, or hears a flowing line;
Three names alone forbid the race to cease,
And the three kingdoms own – just one apiece. (*Lyra Urbanica* 2:320-323)

Morris does not name the other national bards who keep Britain’s rich tradition of song alive (though Byron and Moore are surely the most likely candidates). He does, however, recognize the importance of songwriting to the construction of a modern Britain, and in particular to a united Britain, whose “three kingdoms” are allowed to be distinct, but whose unity is a measure of its modernity (Wales’s claim to an independent identity is disregarded despite Morris’s own Welsh heritage). With such a saccharine endorsement it is hardly surprising that Scott remembers Morris singing sweetly. What is perhaps more revealing is that Scott never quotes from these later polite poems that had been written after Morris had refashioned himself as a writer of lyrics appropriate for a more civilized age, and whose politics and vision of Britain conformed much more closely to Scott’s own. Rather, it is the earlier drinking songs that Scott draws upon, suggesting that even among active campaigners for a modern, civilized, and unified Britain such as Scott, there remained a place and an affection for the bawdy verse that had by the 1820s become an embarrassment.

In this chapter I want to consider what happened to the convivial legacies of the late eighteenth century by returning to Captain Morris, who – against all odds, and in spite of his frequently indifferent health – survived the various pressures exerted on a life dedicated to conviviality, and continued writing what he called “social effusions” into the 1830s. My interest here, however, is less in the ideological battles of radical and counterrevolutionary culture that I

discussed in the previous chapter than in the contradictions and temporal dislocations that resulted from the consignment of conviviality into a barbarous past. The fact that Morris was still alive, copiously producing poetry in a variety of genres, was an inconvenient obstacle to the modernizing narratives that patriotic Britons – Francis Place, Walter Scott, and Morris himself among them – liked to tell of their national development. By the 1820s Morris was an unfortunate anachronism, a remnant of the convivial past that had lived too long.

Morris is, of course, far from the only artist who had established an early reputation only to be left behind by evolving tastes, but Morris's case is particularly remarkable because Morris himself was complicit in these ideologies, he presents himself in the poems as being too old, out of date, and unfashionable. Moreover, one gets the sense reading his later poems that his faded relevance is not merely a question of the ephemerality of fame, but of a much more acute sense of embarrassment about the poetry of his past. Just as he had been interpellated into the ideologies of Whiggish conviviality in the 1780s, so he thoroughly bought into the modernizing narratives of the nineteenth century, and understood that the excesses in which he once indulged – and of which he continued to be a figurehead in the popular imagination – were incommensurate with modern British identity. Yet, while he had been interpellated into a modernity that distinguished itself by acknowledging the pre-modern barbarism of his art, he continued to write drinking songs that sought to justify and explain the indulgent practices of the past. This tension in his poetry between apologetic repentance and nostalgia for the pleasures of conviviality that have become an embarrassment is, I want to suggest, a peculiarly Romantic form of anachronism, a product of the period's reflexive engagement with the comparative historicism that also produced works such as Scott's historical novels and the numerous reflections on "the Spirit of the Age." But it suggests too, that the old convivial mirth of the late

eighteenth-century did not succumb so easily to the pressures of emerging Victorian ideology. The narrative that Place tells in his collection of ballads, that the eighteenth-century tradition of flash and bawdy verse had been destroyed by a new emphasis on productivity and cleanliness – a narrative that finds echoes in Vic Gatrell’s discussion of the *City of Laughter* – tells only part of the story. For all the ostensible triumph of Place’s verdict that the laboring parts of the population had successfully cleaned up their act, in his desire to record and preserve the bawdy songs which he thought had been flushed out of existence, Place nevertheless reveals a lingering sense that there was something in the ballads worth recording. In his later verse Morris similarly acknowledged the problems of his earlier compositions and lifestyle, but nevertheless continues to celebrate aspects of convivial culture, justifying and defending convivial practice even as he offers his apology.

Morris’s career, his poems, and their reception offer an opportunity to reconsider what is in many ways a familiar trope of Romanticism – that of intoxication. Pointing out that M.H. Abrams began his career with a book about opium usage, Clifford Siskin wrote in 1988 that accounts of the Romantic period are “unavoidably dependent upon an discourse of addiction” and that a catalogue of the characteristic behaviors of Romanticism might include: “to explore mind, to undergo epiphany, to alter vision, to dream dreams, to intensify imagination, to heighten depression, to suffer ecstasy, to fragment experience, to burn out—to flower lyrically and then wither” (183). Abrams’s strategy, Siskin implies, was to depict the Romantic imagination as a kind of drug, though as Anya Taylor has pointed out, this language of intoxication encompasses also the effects of wine. When Keats calls for a draught of vintage, or when John Clare instructs us to “Push round the glass fill it up to the top,” or when Thomas Moore demands that we “Wreathe the bowl / With flower of soul,” it is wine and punch that are

understood to stimulate the imagination. In the quarter century since Siskin provided his catalogue, however, our understanding of the Romantic imagination has changed considerably. We are now much more likely to ground it in the material and political issues of the day. The imagination has been demystified, deintoxicated, and rendered as a more pragmatic response to the contingencies of history.

But as James Chandler reminds us in *England in 1819*, history itself is not a fixed set of temporal coordinates, but a series of frequently ideologically motivated constructs. Indeed, literary criticism's predominant mode of historical enquiry – which Chandler calls “comparative contemporanities” – was itself a product of the Romantic period's intense engagement with its own historical situation. As John Stewart Mill put it, “The idea of comparing one's own age with former ages, or with our notion of those which are yet to come, had occurred to philosophers; but it never before was the dominant idea of any age” (28). Chandler argues that the dominance of this new obsession with comparative historicism resulted “in the emergence of a new conception of anachronism, now understood as a measurable form of dislocation” (107). It is precisely this form of dislocation that appears in Scott's association of Morris with an underdeveloped Ireland, the same “necessary anachronism” that according to Lukács is crucial to the construction of Scott's Waverley novels.³

As Scott's association of Morris with Ireland suggests, this new form of anachronism is not just a philosophical development, however, but one that shaped everyday experiences of perceiving the world. Chandler's discussion of anachronism might be helpfully supplemented by Valerie Rohy's conception of anachronism in *Anachronism and Its Others*, which understands anachronism as the inverse of Lee Edelman's notion of reproductive futurity, the social mythology figurally linking temporal movement toward the future with heterosexual fecundity.

Anachronism, for Rohy, disturbs linear unidirectional “straight time,” exposing the assumption of “naturally” occurring heteronormative temporalities (x). Rohy’s primary engagement is with the way that anachronism links the discourses of racism and homophobia in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century America, but she traces the development of a biological language of anachronism to the late eighteenth century when Johann H.F. Autenreith linked the “adult African” to the “embryonic condition of the European” (Rohy 3). Rohy’s discussion shows how imperialists explained their superiority over colonial sites through a putatively scientific language that connected ethnic and geographic disparity to corresponding temporal disjunctions. Anachronism’s “measurable form of dislocation” might then be understood as a product of an imperialist discourse that claimed European modernity as normative, and posited less “developed” sites as evidence of superiority of the colonial power.

Temporal disjunctions do not map neatly onto geographical dislocations, however, and relatively proximate sites might be understood as just as atavistic as distant others. Certain areas within Europe—like Ireland—might be just as primitive as remote continents. And, as Saree Makdisi has recently argued, even within the metropolis itself the underdeveloped, poor could be seen occupying regions as primitive as the most barbaric regions of the globe (*Making England Western*). The civilizing mission of imperialist nations involved a process of developing a series of behaviors that might be accepted as appropriate to modern civilization, but there was no pre-existing notion of normativity. Rather, what one encounters in the discourses of “improvement” in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is an ongoing and highly unstable matrix of ideas about the configuration of the modern subject and its relationship to time and space. Atavism was not the exclusive domain of the poor, the ethnic other, or the queer – whether in London or elsewhere. The developing discourses of modernity, shaped by an increasing

awareness of Britain's position within a global community, could render even formerly polite metropolitan behaviors barbaric.

Convivial rituals were frequently depicted as indices of anachronism, revealing how modern productivity might be contrasted with the barbarous drinking practices of a previous age. Morris makes visible the remarkable suddenness of this perceived break with the past, and the intensity with which it was felt. The association between drinking and barbarity was the cause of considerable crisis for convivial poets, who had long assumed that wine provided the inspiration necessary for poetic expression, but who now were dangerously close to being rendered obsolete.

Captain Morris and the Beef-Steaks

Sir Walter Scott's association of Morris's bawdy verse with a pre-modern past is a telling assessment of the reputation of Morris's obsceno-political ballads in the 1820s, but it was a view of bawdiness that Morris himself had come to share. While Morris wrote a large number of well-known obscene songs to entertain Fox's supporters at Whig political dinners 1780s these songs typically addressed the political controversies of the hour, and were by their very nature ephemeral. Once the scandals and controversies of the 1784 Westminster election had died down, Morris set about reconfiguring his reputation, expunging his more obscene compositions from the collections of his verse published by Ridgeway and Lewes and focusing his attentions instead on what he called "social effusions." Morris, in other words, attempted to improve his reputation by becoming a respectable composer of drinking songs.

While the obscene political ballads of the 1780s made him notorious, it was as a writer of anacreontics that Morris secured a more lasting fame, establishing himself as the most skillful exponent of convivial poetry who other similar artists, such as Charles Bannister, Charles Dibdin,

Charles Dignum, William Hewardine, James Hook, John Johnstone, could only hope to emulate. These other pretenders to Morris's crown were often actors and playwrights at Drury Lane and Covent Garden, who would also perform at pleasure gardens such as Vauxhall and Ranelagh, and would also frequently entertain gentlemen at tavern clubs like the Humbugs or Anacreontics. Dibdin, perhaps the most successful of these men, opened his own theatre, the Sans Souci which was first located at 411 Strand, directly opposite Thelwall's Beaufort Buildings, where it was rumoured Dibdin received four hundred pounds a year to "disseminate loyalty and cry down democracy," directly challenging Thelwall, something Dibdin himself strenuously denied (Dibdin 4:6). Morris, however, was exceptional in his ability to sustain a career as a writer and performer at convivial clubs without also having theatrical ambitions, being instead financially dependent upon the patronage of people like the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Norfolk. The Duke of Norfolk, apparently as the urging of the actor John Kemble, gave Morris a house in Brockham Green near Dorking in Surrey. The Prince, meanwhile, was rumoured to have conferred an annuity of two hundred pounds on him (Dexter, 37-8). The convivial societies in which Morris performed were crucial to his ability to attract the patronage of the wealthy and thus guarantee his livelihood as poet. One of the societies at which Morris, the Duke of Norfolk, and the Prince of Wales habitually met, was the Sublime Society of Beef-Steaks.

The Beef-Steaks were formed in 1735 by the celebrated harlequin John Rich at the Covent Garden theater, where they met each Saturday to eat, drink, sing, and toast.⁴ Among its many illustrious members, gathered from the worlds of theater and politics, were William Hogarth (one of the original members of the society), George Coleman (elected 1767), the Earl of Sandwich (1761), the Duke of Norfolk (1779), Samuel Johnson (1780), H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (1785), H.R.H. the Prince of York (1790), John Kemble (1805) John Cam Hobhouse

(1824), and Francis Burdett (1825). Boswell who visited the Society in November 1762 described the gathering in his *London Journal* in terms that recall the liberties assured to convivial gathering in the 1760s. The meeting took place in a “handsome room”, Boswell says, where “we had nothing to eat but beefsteaks, and had wine and punch in plenty and freedom. We had a number of songs” (51-2). And indeed, the society was founded on the twin principles of Beef and Liberty – the connection between these two seemingly disparate pleasures cemented and mythologized through song.

The Beef-Steaks were unusual among societies of its kind in that (excepting a brief period at the Lyceum Tavern) it did not meet in a tavern, though many of their rituals were derived from tavern convivial practice.⁵ Like many such clubs its rituals were meticulously regulated, its rules keenly observed. Membership was restricted to twenty-four members, with each member taking it in turn to act as President, for which honor the member was allowed to invite one guest as a visitor, and was permitted to supply and cook the beef. The beef was broiled on the Society’s grid iron at two o’clock on the day of the meeting, with the table cloth being removed at half past three. The members were supplied with an initial quantity of liquor but once the meeting had begun no more could be ordered without a majority vote, and none could be ordered after six o’clock. Wagers were permitted on two conditions: that they were accepted with the words “Done, it shall be deemed a wager laid,” and that any money lost should be paid to the Treasurer for the use of the Society (Arnold, xiii-xvi). Morris was elected as a member on 14 February 1785, and it was for this highly exclusive group, of which he was widely held to be the life and soul, that his most celebrated drinking songs were written.

Unlike Morris’s bawdy drinking songs that we encountered in Chapter 1, which were inscribed into the rituals of masculine sociability by proposing a drink at their conclusions, his

social effusions for the Beef-Steaks specifically reflected on convivial drinking practices. Among Morris's most celebrated compositions for the Society was "The Fancy-Stirring Bowl," written in around 1787, which understands the punch bowl as a spur to the fancy:

When the fancy-stirring bowl
 Wakes its world of pleasure,
Glowing visions gild my soul,
 And life's an endless treasure;
Memr'y decks my wasted heart,
 Fresh with gay desires,
Rays divine their heat impart,
 And kindling hope inspires.

CHORUS.

Then who'd be grave,
When wine can save
The heaviest soul from sinking,
And magic grapes
Give angel shapes
To every girl we're drinking? (*Songs* 24th ed. 5)⁶

Like Boswell's theorization of drinking in "the Hypochodriack," Morris's anacreontics are fully aware of both the pleasures and pains of drink. "The Fancy-stirring Bowl" articulates a sense of loss and regret at the passing of youth, the punch bowl propels the speaker into a "world of pleasure," that it always forced. The "glowing visions" and "rays divine" of punch are balanced against the "wasted heart" of sobriety and old age from which they offer an escape. The escape, however, is purely illusory, and the question posed by the chorus, rhetorical. Fully conscious that wine's "magic grapes" can in no way compensate the heaviest soul, the chorus asks "Who would be grave?" The answer is everyone. Wine may be able to defer reality for a while but the

pleasures it inspires are always recognized as illusions, just as the girls toasted in amatory songs are understood to be idealized projections of real women transformed by wine's magic into angels.

As Marty Roth has noted, anacreontic poetry usually understood that wine's primary psychological function was to free us from care, but rarely were drinking songs so fully cognizant of the world that was being held off as they were in Morris's lyrics (321). The gilded world that wine inspires is so evidently illusory that Morris's verse reads more like a melancholic resignation to the ills of life than a celebration of drinking. This ability of anacreontic verse to transcend its genre, to reflect not only the pleasures of drinking, but to inscribe those pleasures within a broader and more complex ontology was central to the "reasoning cast" ("Hypochondriack" 177) of English drinking songs, by which the poetry sought to establish the importance of convivial gathering to polite metropolitan society.

Even those discerning souls who objected to Morris's early obsceno-political ballads might still appreciate the sophistication on display in his drinking songs. "Capt. Morris has on many occasions written songs in a spirit truly classical," wrote Joseph Dennie in 1807. "He displays a fertile invention and a great command of imagery. A tone of almost unrivalled gayety pervades his Anacreonticks. It is deeply regretted that, like the libertine Rochester, he should ever employ and exhaust his fine genius in writing verses for the bagnio." The article concludes with Dennie's verdict that "The Fancy-Stirring Bowl" was an "honourable exception to the smutty strains" that Morris produced elsewhere (153). These social effusions, far from being understood as scurrilous or obscene, were expressions of a highly regulated and elegant civility, and Morris's performances of them a testimony to his refined tastes – even if these tastes were unevenly deployed.

From the 1790s onwards Morris cultivated the “truly classical” spirit of his poetry, distancing himself from the obscene and political balladry for which he had first become known. This refashioning involved his increasing commitment to a poetics of ageing. No longer the fount of mirth and hilarity, in his anacreontic compositions Morris began to engineer through his verse a reputation as a fond old man wistfully looking back on his days of carousing, but now burdened by a world of care. (Morris, born in 1745, was already in his forties when he wrote the “Fancy-Stirring Bowl,” at a time when the average life span was around forty years of age; that he managed to survive a further fifty years seems to have surprised everyone, not least himself).⁷ In one such anacreontic, “Ad Poculum,” for which he was awarded the Gold Cup for Poetical Composition by the Harmonic Society of Bath in June 1800, Morris urges his cup to revive the fancy with which he claims he was blessed in his youth (*Evening Mail*, 11-13 Jun. 1800):

Come, thou soul-reviving CUP,
And try thy Healing Art;
Light thy Fancy’s visions up—
And warm my wasted heart!...

In thy fount the LYRIC MUSE
Ever dipp’d her wing,
ANACREON fed upon thy Dews,
And HORACE drain’d thy spring!
I, too, humblest of the train,
There my *spirit* find,
Freshen there my languid brain—
And store my vacant mind! (*Whitehall Evening Post*, 10-12 Jun. 1800)⁸

Morris, now in his fifty-fifth year and fully assured of his poetic abilities and of his place in literary history, situates himself with the humble caveats expected of polite civility in a classical tradition of lyricists, claiming that the same cup which inspired Anacreon and Horace has also

stimulated his Fancy and inspired his own poetry. The focus here, however, is on the ability of the soul-reviving Cup to overcome the vacancies that age has brought to his mind. Morris presents himself as being on the point of death, pleading with his cup to provide him with one final burst of pleasure:

When, blest CUP, thy fires divine
Pierce thro' Time's dark reign,
All the Joys that once were mine
I snatch from DEATH again.

The fancy that the cup inspires is a product of youth, but rather than being associated with enthusiastic giddiness and regrets of passion insufficiently regulated, the fancy becomes a means to remember youthful energies, staving off the despair that accompanies age. For Morris the fancy was always the source of his lyrical compositions (the word occurs nearly two hundred times in the *Lyra Urbanica*), but he never once used the word “imagination.” He made no claims for his poetry’s ability to create, idealize and unify but modestly, politely, described his poems as the “trifling scraps of my humble Muse” and as “convivial effusions” which “the good-humoured world has been pleased to admit as a lively help to the social glow of the table and the friendly hilarity of life” (*Lyra Urbanica* 1:v). Morris’s understanding of the fancy offers an intriguing alternative path for the recuperation of poetic inspiration in the aftermath of 1790s radicalism. Where Wordsworth’s “emotion recollected in tranquility” sought to render the enthusiasm of poetic inspiration safe by placing it in the past, Morris suggests that poetic fancy can be useful in the present, without challenging nineteenth-century propriety, if it is understood as a balm to age. Inspiration need not be sober, Morris suggests, providing its intoxications are regulated by the maturity of old age.

In another of the anacreontics Morris wrote for the Beef-Steaks, “Sound Philosophy” (see Appendix) Morris further develops the persona of the ageing bacchanal, whose use of wine fends off the ravages of aging. In this song Morris offers a defense of drinking across eight stanzas each of which offers “a reason fair / To fill my glass again.” The verse begins with the lively spirit typically associated with drinking songs, recalling the descriptions of mirth and hilarity for which Morris was formerly known:

I've oft been ask'd by prosing souls,
And Men of sober tongue
What joys there are in draining bowls,
And tipping all night long;
But though these cautious knaves I scorn,
For once I'll not disdain,
To tell them why I drink till morn,
And fill my glass again. (*Sound Philosophy*)⁹

Soon, though, the song assumes a much more melancholy tone as Morris once again recollects his years as the life and soul of the Metropolis:

In Life I've rung all changes through,
Run every pleasure down,
'Mid each extreme of folly too,
And lived with half the town;
For me there's nothing new or rare,
Till wine deceives my brain
And that I think's a reason fair,
To fill my glass again.

There's many a Lad I knew is dead,
And many a Lass grown old,
And as the lesson strikes my head,
My weary heart grows cold;

But Wine awhile drives off despair,
Nay bids a hope remain,
Why that I think's a reason fair,
 To fill my glass again.

The pose of the ageing bacchanal allows Morris to recognize the reputation for lewd revelry he developed in earlier years while simultaneously distancing himself from it, claiming that he has become more respectable with age. Importantly, however, he doesn't apologize for his earlier bacchanalian ways, claiming instead that they stirred his fancy, and hopes that his continued use of wine can help him recapture the liveliness he was known for in his youth.

Morris's ability to introduce serious darker notes into the drinking song was greatly admired by Thomas Moore. In an essay on song written for the 1841 edition of his works Moore singles out Morris as the exception to the lamentable state of "English poesy," which he regards as having divorced poetry from its musical origins. According to Moore, Morris, like Robert Burns, had an ear for music, and Moore cites the two stanzas from Morris's "Sound Philosophy" quoted above as examples of Morris's expertise in "that lighter kind of pathos, which comes... like a few melancholy notes in the middle of a gay air, throwing a soft and passing shade over mirth." It was to this instinctive talent for understanding the musical aspects of poetic composition that Moore ascribed his own success: "I only know that in a strong an inborn feeling for music lies the source of whatever talent I may have shown for poetical composition; and that it was the effort to translate into language the emotions and passions which music appeared to me to express, that first led to my writing any poetry at all deserving of the name" (5:xiv).

Poetic inspiration in Moore's account results from the wordless – and apolitical – "emotions and passions" of music, which it is the poet's job to render into words. Moore's association of "emotions and passions" with a natural "inborn feeling" rehearses the Romantic

myth of the poetic genius whose verses derived naturally from a heightened sensibility, which I have argued was in part a reaction to the dangerous immediacy of the vigorous emotions and passions of politics. Moore's association of Morris's verse with a natural, bardic sensibility attempts to recuperate Morris's reputation from the excesses of metropolitan conviviality with which he had always been linked, inscribing him instead into a tradition of national bards, including such poets as Burns and himself, whose drinking songs should be understood as the product of a natural inclination towards musicality. The attempt, however, was futile. Morris did not fit the mould. His ambiguous nationality meant that he could not easily be claimed as a national hero as Moore and Burns had been (Morris was born in Ireland to Welsh parents and spent much of his life in England), but more importantly, as someone who had made his name living and working in London, he had no function as a mediator between the English and the other nations in a united Britain, offering local knowledge to a metropolitan audience and forging a stronger Britain, as Scott had claimed for himself (Frey 89). As early as 1806, Morris had recognized that his time had passed, that the friends he had once caroused with were grown old or dead and that the way of life he had come to symbolize in the popular imagination was, as Scott would later recognize, an anachronism. He had successfully written himself out of history.

He nevertheless remained committed to the culture of conviviality that had, he felt, been replaced by the austerity of modernity. He continued writing social effusions especially for the Beef-Steaks, of which he remained a member until 1831, though his later poems contained the increasingly resigned tone of one who recognizes that the fashionable world had evolved and he no longer had a role to play. When he finally retired Morris commemorated the event with a final song, "A Parting Word," addressed "to my beloved brethren of the old beef-steak society" (see appendix).

The poem protests the “dull languor of mortal decay,” which by now Morris had been protesting for almost half a century. For all the poem’s heartfelt gratitude to a society that he had sedulously attended for forty-six years, it is hard to take the invocation of the “world’s cares” too seriously after so many repetitions. What is remarkable about Morris’s late lyrics, however, are the tensions still present in the language used to describe earlier forms of convivial merriment. In “A Parting Word,” for example, Morris admits that “Too long I, perhaps, like the many who stray, / Have upheld the gay themes of the Bacchanals’ day,” but rather than renouncing these “gay themes” he offers thanks for the pleasures they have afforded him. The verse has an oddly prayer-like quality, acknowledging that good health is the “best blessing of God,” and that “Holy Patience” has provided respite in adversity. While Morris acknowledges that his past has been “moral mix’d,” he nevertheless says that he has found in his chosen lifestyle “more delight” and “more comfort” (with its heavily Christian connotations) than most people. Morris attempts in this song to bring together the ideologies of conviviality with the ideologies of the state religion, so that his ability to “sing gay strains” is a direct result of God’s blessings of good health. The “fancy” too, the faculty which, stimulated by wine, was responsible for poetic effusions within his mythology, assumes the capacity to admonish, its failures reminding Morris that life is not all “a game of light Folly,” but has its sober aspects too. “A Parting Word,” attempts to smooth out the incompatibility of Anacreontic poetry with early nineteenth-century Anglicanism: it explores the limitations of convivial philosophy while nevertheless remaining committed to the importance of “concord and mirth.” By the 1830s Morris admits the errors of his past but cannot help repeating them, apologizing for the earlier excesses of his drinking songs in yet another drinking song.

The poignancy of the poem’s final “farewell” is not simply the sense of personal loss of an old bard retiring from a life that has long sustained him. It results rather from Morris’s

recognition that with his retirement a way a life dedicated to convivial pleasure has been brought to an end. The “Bacchanals’ day” is over, and a new era has begun. For all Morris’s well-intentioned wishes to the contrary, “The bright social circle” could never continue to flourish in “concord and mirth” without its laureate. The Beef-Steaks limped on for several more decades without him, but the account that Walter Arnold gives of the society’s final years before it was finally abandoned in 1867 characterizes the society as “sepulchral” (37). The song’s “Farewell,” literally the parting word of the song’s title, is the adieu of a particular vision for what society could have been like if the principles of conviviality had not lost out to the proprieties of modernity. As Morris said in another of his late songs, “The Muse sits in smiles ‘midst this legion of frowners” (*Lyra Urbanica* 2:279).

The Death of The Tavern

“A Parting Word” was not, in fact, to be Morris’s final song for the Beef-Steaks. Rather, like an ageing rock star’s never-ending farewell tour, Morris kept producing more and more lyrics bidding his friends adieu. For his ninetieth birthday in 1835 the Beef-Steaks presented him with a commemorative silver bowl and invited him back for one more song, for which he produced “Verses, Occasioned by an Earnest Request from the Member of the Beef-steak Society, to Captain Morris,” in which he once again invokes the spirit of friendship and wine to restore life’s youth, and to turn “a grave aged man to a merry old boy.” Morris produced a series of lyrics, such as “The Veteran’s Consolation,” “In An Alarming Illness,” and “Envy Defied,” in which he reflects on retirement, the fading power of fancy in age, and the passing of a way of life to which he was earnestly committed. Among these late verses, however, “On the Destruction of the Star

and Garter in Pall Mall and the Demolition of Carlton Palace,” stands out as a eulogy on the death of an institution with which he had at one time been associated (see appendix).

The Star and Garter was located on the south side of Pall Mall, perhaps London’s most exclusive street. Running parallel to the south of Piccadilly, at the turn of the nineteenth century Pall Mall linked St. James’s Palace, the home of George III, to the Prince of Wales’s Carlton House. In addition to the royal residences on Pall Mall were also The Royal Academy, the Royal Hotel, Sir John Soane’s Buckingham House, the Royal Opera House, the Smyrna Coffee House, the Coca Tree Club, as well as the tavern that had been acquired by William Almack in 1759, which eventually became Almack’s, Boodle’s, and Brooks’s clubs.¹⁰ The Star and Garter Tavern (at numbers 94-5, present day number 100) was on the south side of the street, and backed onto the gardens of Carlton House. The tavern’s proximity to his palace made it a frequent resort for the Prince of Wales, who established his own club here, under the name the “Je ne Scai Quoi Club.” This club met on the second Monday of each month and was distinct from the other clubs we have encountered in that there were no shifting roles; the Prince was always in the chair, and Captain Morris (who often went under the name “Charles Morrice” in these more elevated circles, as his extant letters to the Duke of Norfolk held at Arundel Castle attest) was always the secretary, and no other positions existed. “The club dinners,” the *Sporting Magazine* reported in 1795, “as may be supposed, are in every respect adequate to the consequence of the members which compose it. Two courses and a desert of the choicest viands and wines of the first growth and quality” (83-4). The musical entertainments consisted of catches and glees performed by professional singers, many of whom had made a name for themselves at the Anacreontic Society, such as Johnstone, Bannister, Sedgwick, and Dignum. And of course, Captain Morris was called upon to perform at the whim of the other members.

Morris, as a lowly gentleman in the company of Dukes and Lords, was frequently teased by the other members. On one occasion, according to an anecdote reported in the *World* from January 1793, the Prince of Wales called upon Morris to hand over the list of club members so that he could strike off the name of the disgraced Duke of Orleans. Col. St Leger, however, opposed the Prince's motion, as the act of handing over the list was "deemed too great an honour to be bestowed upon so execrable a character" as Morris. After these shenanigans the prince and his company "sat late, and the whole evening was a continued effusion of mirth and loyalty" (*World* 31 Jan. 1793).

Morris had celebrated the area around Pall Mall in a well-known verse from 1797, called "Town and Country" (see Appendix). The song began by ostensibly praising rural comfort, comparing it favorably with London where, "I never knew what I'd be at, / Enraptured with this, and enchanted with that." The Country, contrastingly "sets all matters right, / So calm and composing from morning to night." As the poem proceeds, however, the allures of the country – "an ass on a common, a goose on a green"; "a pig on a dunghill, or crow on a tree" – seem increasingly banal, and the confusing cacophony of London comes to seem an attractive stimulation. The poem ultimately concludes with a celebration of the varieties of Metropolitan life:

Then in town let me live, and in town let me die;
For in truth I can't relish the country, not I.
If one must have a villa in summer to dwell,
Oh, give me the sweet shady side of Pall Mall! (*Songs* 24th ed. 54-6)

The wonderfully oxymoronic, alliterative phrase "the sweet shady side of Pall Mall" was understood in the nineteenth century as one of Morris's most notable contributions to the world of letters, so well-known had it become. But the phrase does not merely recast the metropolis as

superior to the quiet of rural retirement, but more particularly suggests that in the bustle of town life a person of execrable origins might wind up mingling among royalty and aristocracy in the exclusive taverns and palaces of Pall Mall. It is a poem, in fact, with a strangely democratic message. Rather than celebrating the rural retirement that had become an established theme in British poetry, Morris reverts to the earlier conception of the town as a place of exciting novelty found in countless restoration and eighteenth-century dramas.¹¹ Morris suggests that such a retreat as the country is a recipe for boredom, in part because the limitations of sociability there, where a person's influence is correspondingly restricted: "In the country you're nailed, like a pale in your park, / To some stick of a neighbour, cram'd into the ark." In London, however, it is easy to "visit and meet, / Gay pleasure's the theme, and sweet smiles are our treat." While, as usual, the emphasis in Morris's poem is on the lightness, and gaiety of the town, it is clear – given the invocation of Pall Mall at the song's end – that the pleasures he has in mind are those of consorting with the politically influential aristocrats of the fashionable parties of the metropolis. By 1797 Morris may have stopped writing the explicitly partisan political satires with which he first made his name, but his songs remained far from apolitical. Rather, he casts doubt on the wisdom of retirement from the political sphere into rural solitude. In London, Morris suggests, the dense networks of sociable interaction make it possible for an execrable character of obscure origins to achieve considerable political influence – even with the future King.

When the Prince Regent was finally made king in 1821, George commissioned a commemorative performance of Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part 2*. Central to the George's understanding of the play was Hal's rejection of Falstaff, which he felt offered a powerful message about his transformation, when he had become Regent, from giddy licentiousness to a life of dutiful responsibility. The play was intended as an apology of sorts for his earlier reputation as a

rakish drunk, and a promise to the people that he, like Henry, would continue take his responsibilities seriously, despite his checkered past.¹² Nineteenth-century accounts of Morris's life frequently accepted this narrative, casting Captain Morris in the role of Falstaff, the bosom-companion whom the Prince has to renounce in order to assume his official responsibilities. In a review of Morris's *Lyra Urbanica* in 1841, for example, *Blackwood's* reported that "Morris was a Whig, but he was a generous and rational one; and he could see and honour the public spirit with which the Regent preferred the people to a party, and abandoned the worthless companions of his idle hours when he was called on to fulfill the duties of a throne." ("Lyrics" 53).

Morris's gracious acceptance of his rejection by his patrons, however, is called into question by a story reported by Byron in a letter to Thomas Moore in 1813:

I must tell you a story. Morris (of indifferent memory) was dining out the other day and complaining of the Prince's coldness to his old wassailers. D'Israeli (a learned Jew) bored him with questions — why this? and why that? 'Why did the Prince act thus?' 'Why, sir, on account of Lord —, who ought to be ashamed of himself?' — 'And why ought Lord — to be ashamed of himself?' 'Because the Prince, sir...' — 'And why, sir, did the Prince cut *you*?' — 'Because, G-d d-mme, sir, I stuck to my principles.' — 'And *why* did you stick to your principles?'

Is not this last question the best that was ever put, when you consider to whom? It nearly killed Morris. (1:245)

Byron's letter is fascinating, not only because it describes a far more acrimonious separation between Morris and the Prince Regent reported elsewhere, but because it reveals that even Byron — not known for his aversion to convivial mirth — understood Morris's manners as relics of a previous era. The repeated "Sir"s of Byron's letter offer a parody of bombastic eighteenth-century speech patterns that in the conversational tone of his letter ("I must tell you a story") marks Morris's blustering pomposity as out of touch with the more casual manners of the early

nineteenth century. Byron's story suggests that the principles that Morris adheres to are so entirely out of touch with modern sensibilities that they are principles no longer worth observing. But there is also in Byron's story a hint of approval for Morris, prompted no doubt by his correspondent, Thomas Moore's, known admiration for his lyrics. The joke is less at the expense of Morris, whose absurd principles seem to delight Byron, as at the stupid questions of D'Israeli (Isaac, presumably), who doesn't understand that asking Morris why he sticks to his principles could be the cause of offence.

John Thelwall, too, understood that Morris's dependence upon aristocratic patronage indicated that his way of life was out of touch with modern civilization. Among the manuscripts recently discovered by Judith Thompson at Derby is an outline for an epic poem that Thelwall had at least partially completed, offering advice to young poets. Included in the draft is a section about Captain Morris who is upheld as an example of the dangers of patronage. Thelwall claims that Morris was promised much but hastily forgotten by his patrons, thus providing a helpful warning to younger poets that they should adhere to properly modern economic models to be successful at their art.¹³

It was no doubt the memory of his earlier evenings in the company of the Prince of Wales at the Star and Garter that prompted Morris's oddly formal Ode on its destruction. In the poem Morris presents the tavern as a location where "Wit and Wisdom mingled grave and gay, / And Reason Revell'd with Fancy's play." The poem argues that the kind of wit that was experienced in the tavern was not incompatible with more serious pursuits of state. In the Star and Garter tavern "Mirth, enthroned in splendor, held her reign / And Royal voices echo'd still her strain." In the tavern public duty and private pleasure mingle as Mirth is personified as a monarch, so that the Royals with whom Morris associates in the tavern – both the future George IV and his

younger brother the Duke of York, another member of the *Je ne Scai Quoi* Club – are identified with Mirth, while simultaneously acting as her subjects, echoing the strains established by her rule. Mirthful songs and tavern conviviality remain for Morris essential characteristics of state power.

The destruction of the Star and Garter is, in the poem, symbolic of the death of the convivial spirit that had enabled the mingling of poet and patrician, state business and mirth. The poem is also, however, profoundly interested in space and in the ghostliness that results when a space that has once been energized by conviviality lies empty:

All hid, all hush'd, — no vestige left to tell
Where Mirth thus honour'd rose, or where it fell:
Bare to the desert air now stands the space
Long fill'd with classic taste and fashion'd grace.

The sense that the vacated space has been impoverished by the tavern's destruction is all the more emphatic because of the poem's association of the tavern with pleasure. What has been destroyed is not merely the materials out of which the tavern was made – though confronting the “crumbling ruins” and “dusty walls” is itself a reminder of the material basis for the tavern's revelry – but Mirth itself.

At several points Morris addresses the tavern directly, in his repeated “farewells,” and in his addresses to “thy crumbling ruins, once so famed and fair” and to the space of the street:

And, as I range the town, I, sighing, say,
“Turn from Pall Mall: that's now no more thy way;
Thy once-loved 'shady side,' oft praised before.
Shorn from earth's face, now hears thy strains no more;
And where thy Muse long ply'd her welcome toil,
Cold Speculation barter's out the soil.” (*Lyra Urbanica* 274)

The personification of the tavern and of Pall Mall are awkwardly formal poetic gestures that since the demise of convivial singing have become the tools he must employ for his lyrical effusions. In many ways these attempts at polite poetic diction are entirely unexceptional, and the poem draws on the conventions of a well-established poetic genre that meditate on ruins (including, for example, “Tintern Abbey,” “The Ruined Cottage” “Kubla Khan,” “On Seeing the Elgin Marbles”). It draws too on a tradition of British elegiac poetry that apostrophizes the dead as if they were living. (Compare, for example, Morris’s “What art thou now?” addressed to the ghostly absence of the tavern, with Hamlet’s address to the Yorik’s skull, “Where be your jibes now?”).¹⁴ The stilted formality of these conventions feels awkward in the hands of poet who was celebrated for his spontaneous vigor. But Morris’s employment of these conventions also suggests a desire to engage with the tavern as an entity that is more vital than a mere physical structure, as if the tavern were lingering on beyond its demolition. The institution continues to exist beyond the destruction of the building, but the tavern’s demolition is symptomatic of the fading vitality of the series of practices that constituted the institution.

What is perhaps most remarkable about the poem, however, is the extent of Morris’s identification with the space of the tavern. He does not merely address the destroyed tavern as a living entity, but in the poem’s final lines the poet merges with the tavern, the dust of its ruins becoming the dust to which he will return himself:

Thus sinks the scene – thus proud emotions rest,
That fondly warm’d so long my flatter’d breast;
And now, to ease with sad regrets that rise,
All-soothing Hope in cold oblivion lies;
Let me forget, then, till that fatal day
That sweeps my time-worn frame, like thine, away;
For soon, alas! My aged fabric must,

Struck by Fate's hammer, drop, like thine, to dust.

As with many poems about ruins, the destruction of the building provides Morris an opportunity to reflect on the passage of time, human mortality, the leveling effect of death (the ruins “teach the high how low they soon may lie”). The spirit in which this is told, however, is not one of sober philosophy but a much more despairing sense of finality. Unlike many of the better known “romantic ruins” – which were frequently ancient buildings which had long been in ruins and which catered to the taste of gothic antiquity, the Star and Garter was a building that within recent memory had been lively and vivacious. The tavern's destruction is a testimony to the speed of change in tastes, morals, and manners. Allied with Morris's own death, the destruction of the tavern represents the end of the mirth and revelry with which they had both been associated, an ending brought about by a sudden and unaccountable revolution in taste.

Lyrics of the City

During the 1830s in his retirement at Brockham Lodge, Morris, “having been much urged much by [his] friends and well-wishers to publish the little worthless productions of [his] pen,” gathered together all of his compositions which might pass for polite poetry into a two-volume collection, eventually published as the *Lyra Urbanica*. This collection, as Morris himself explained in the preface, contains “but little of what so long employed my pen, namely, party and politics.” Such poems were “withheld from the public eye,” he said, in part because they were obscene and would now be “fitter placed in the fire than in the press” and in part because they were ephemeral. “Many of these trifling compositions,” Morris wrote, “turning on the political events of the hour, would lose much of their little pretension to notice, from the fugitive and temporary

nature of the subject” (1:iv). Poetry fit to print, Morris assumes, should partake of a universalism that transcends the moment and appeals to readers across time. His “satirical scraps” may have made him famous, but did not attain the timelessness to which he – and many others in the early nineteenth century – felt poetry ought to aspire. His earlier political verse, in other words, was too embedded in its moment. It had become untimely precisely because it was too much in time.

Though heavily edited, Morris admits that the songs that do appear in the collection still occasionally suffer from an “air of locality and temporary application.” Such local relevance is, he confesses, “a defect which unavoidably attaches to the pen that writes *for the day*” (original emphasis), a description that applies, he humbly admits, to his own pen. The ephemeral nature of his verse is the source of considerable anxiety for a writer in his nineties who is assiduously attempting to shape his legacy (1:vii). Morris is incessantly aware of the fact that his poetic output, even when expunged of its more outrageous lyrics, is untimely and incompatible with modern tastes.

In his preface to the *Lyra Urbanica* Morris makes excuses for those aspects of his oeuvre that nineteenth-century readers might find distasteful. At times, he says, his verse mocks “Wisdom” and “Reason,” by which he carefully explains he does not mean “the sound perfection of the understanding, or that just and moral excellence of the human mind, -- but that affected sage formality, and disheartening monitory dulness, which the sour and saturnine moralist is ever opposing to mirth and recreation” (1:vii). Morris, clinging steadfastly to the importance of mirth, maintains that he is entirely of a mind with nineteenth-century fashions. He admires as much as anyone the moral dictates of the present century, but he reminds his readers that celebrating wine does not necessarily imply loose morals:

As it will be seen, perhaps, that I make the quickening inspiration of wine the awakening cause of the heart's worthiest emotions and sweetest gratification, I must here, in vindication, remark, that it is from a wish to give the pensive, gloomy, world-worn breast a more gay and vivid perception of the fair side of human condition, and waken it to a brighter aspect of Nature, that I recommend the depressed spirit a sip in the care-repelling fountain; but not to dim the brightness produced from the sparkling drop, by the heavy clouds of intemperate stupidity. (1:viii)

Morris claims that he is “a professed enemy to all excess, and abuse of the human faculties.” He revolts, he says, “at the sottish stupidity and debasing shame and would fly the brutal influence as I would a contagion” (1:viii-ix). As a votary of mirth and pleasure, he is required to despise debauchery because it is accompanied by precisely those kinds of misery that convivial pleasure is intended to disperse. This attempt on Morris's part to accommodate nineteenth-century notions of drinking to the philosophy of the convivialist is notably consistent with the views expressed by Boswell in his Hypochondriak column on drinking in 1780. While it was no doubt an occupational hazard, drinking to excess was never part of convivial philosophy; indeed, it prided itself on the decorous restraint which distinguished civilized, polite society from the unregulated excessive passions of the barbarous and brutal. To be a true convivialist, Morris claims, one needs to be vivid, alert, and bright, and not dulled by the drowsy numbness of debased stupidity.

Despite his avowal that “an air of locality and temporary application” was a “defect” in poetry, his social effusions continued to celebrate the quick-witted civility that responds spontaneously to the moment. Even on the page, rather than performed in a tavern, their convivial nature constrained Morris's lyrical effusions to an unfashionable poetic temporality.

After his death, Morris's widow attempted to sell the manuscripts of the *Lyra Urbanica* to John Murray, the publisher of (among many others) Austen, Byron, Moore and Scott. Knowing

him to be an admirer of Morris's verse, Murray asked Thomas Moore to look over the volumes, an invitation which Moore recollected in his journal:

Murray mentioned to me his having two MS volumes of Captain Morris's songs sent to him by the widow, with a view to publication; all *proper*, for a wonder. I had not the least notion he had written so many produceable lyrics. Said that the widow indulged in most extravagant notions of what she was to make by them; talked of 10,000! Asked me should I like to look over them, and I said, Yes, very much. (7:246)

Even for such an admirer as Moore, it is a wonder that Morris should have written so much "proper" verse. But just because the poetry was "produceable" did not mean that it should be produced. Two days later Moore recorded his impressions of the verse that Murray had shown him. "Certainly, in the immense heap which the two MS. volumes contain, I found none but the few already known to me that were at all worth saving from oblivion, and this I told Murray in returning them."¹⁵ By attempting to conform his poetic practice to the tastes of the nineteenth-century Morris had, in fact, alienated the readers who most admired his work. Moore's journal makes it clear that while in public he claimed to value Morris for his ear for music, in reality the verses that Moore enjoyed the most were the obscene lyrics, for which, like Scott, he remained attached despite his recognition that such verses were no longer seemly. The *Lyra Urbanica* were neither wantonly outrageous nor timeless, and offered little of value. Murray took Moore at his word and declined Mrs. Morris's offer of publication.¹⁶

Despite his low opinion of the verses in the volumes, Moore nevertheless took the opportunity of reading over the manuscripts to record some of his favorite lines from Captain Morris's manuscripts. He transcribes into his journal lines from several poems including several verses from "Town and Country" which he describes as Morris's "excellent mock praises of a country life." He praises too a song written during the Napoleonic Wars called "France, Russia,

and Germany” which Moore claims “he had forgot, but which for its rhythmical adaption of the words to the air is wonderful.” Another, “Life’s A Fable,” he records claiming he “thought [it] worthy of transcribing for old recollection’s sake.”

Moore’s comments on the manuscript insist that these verses belong in the past. Even when he writes admiringly of them he claims that it is only for the sake of the recollection, for his previous enjoyment of them, not for any pleasure they might offer up in the present. The only poems Moore judges to be worth saving from oblivion are the verses that he already knew, and whose pleasure belonged to history. He records the lines from “Life’s a Fable” not because he wants to preserve them for the future, but for “old recollection’s sake.” It is an odd locution that positions Morris’s poetry into what might be understood as a second-order memory. Moore’s “old recollection” suggests the memory of a memory, as if the purpose of recording Morris’s words is to conjure not the past, but the memory of the past’s memory, as Moore attempts to reconstruct the memories of a previous self – the one, perhaps, that had written a collection of erotic anacreontics which had themselves been prompted by Morris’s well-known explorations of the genre.

Moore’s conscription of Morris’s verse into a second order memory was doubtless prompted by the fact of Morris’s (eventual) death. Looking over the manuscripts written in Morris’s hand, Moore would no doubt have experienced the ghostliness of the archive, that haunting spectrality of holding in one’s hands the material traces left behind by the admired dead. But his verse has been cast into the past long before Morris had died, despite the continued admiration of the most esteemed writers and tastemakers of the day. These expressions of admiration – in Scott’s and Byron’s letters and Moore’s journal – are notably private. A taste for Morris’s verse had become a guilty pleasure, something that could be acknowledged between

literary friends, but rarely announced in public. This was also the implication of Morris's preface to his collection. The poetry, he insists, is perfectly compatible with contemporary tastes, but his efforts to control his legacy reveal a profound anxiety that his poems would fade into obscurity.

Morris need not have been so pessimistic about his cultural legacy. At about the same time that he was gathering together his social effusions into a respectable collection of "produceable" lyrics, his reputation enjoyed a remarkable renaissance in an unsolicited quarter. Beginning in the early 1830s a variety of London publishers including William West revived the tradition of the "Convivial Songster" begun by John Fielding in 1782. These publishers began to print a large (and therefore presumably popular) quantity of small chapbooks containing the words to a variety of songs that were sung in regency and early-Victorian Supper Clubs.

George Speaight first discovered the remarkable collection of songbooks published by William West held at the British Library when he was working on toy theaters (another business in which West was involved), and he published a small selection of his findings in *Bawdy Songs of the Early Music Hall*. These songs, which were collected into volumes with names like *The Ri-Tum Ti-Tum Songster*, *The Frisky Vocalist*, *The Luscious Songster* and *The Cuckold's Nest*, originated in the "song and supper" rooms that came into popularity in the early nineteenth century. The supper clubs were noted for their food, their singing, and for their hours – remaining open throughout the night. Three houses in particular are repeatedly referred to in the song collections as the venues in which many of the songs were performed, and which enjoyed particular popularity: the Cider Cellars in Maiden Lane, the Coal Hole in Fountain Court, off the Strand, both managed in the 1820s and 1830s by William and John Rhodes, and Offley's in King's Street, Covent Garden.¹⁷ "The clientele for these establishments," Speaight claims, "was exclusively male and was largely drawn from the ranks of wilder journalists, lawyers soldiers, and young Corinthians."

Taking his language from the flash vocabulary which had been associated with the London underworld for centuries but made newly visible by the enormous popularity of Pierce Egan's 1821 *Life in London*, Speaight describes a milieu of university bucks and rollicking blades singing capital ditties and rummy songs.¹⁸

This was, Speaight observes, the Metropolitan scene familiar to William Makepeace Thackeray in his early years, and fictionalized in *The History of Pendennis* and *The Newcomes*. Pendennis, Thackeray writes, spent his youth reading the poetry of Byron and Moore (61) and translating the odes of Anacreon (61), before moving to London, attending "a hundred queer London haunts," and consorting with "coalheavers in their tap-rooms" (324), a lightly coded reference to the Coal Hole. Pendennis attends the "Fielding's Head," a fictionalized version of the song and supper club venues, in which "eminent lyrical talent" was displayed before the public on a nightly basis (326). Like the Rhodes brothers, Cutts, the landlord of the Fielding's Head, was among the chief vocal performers at the meetings, whose songs, Thackeray writes, "were of what may be called the British Brandy-and-Water School of Song... songs in which pathos and hospitality are blended, and the praises of good liquor and the social affections are chanted in a baritone voice" (326). These are recognizably the same qualities that were admired by eighteenth-century convivialists, and defended by Morris in his social effusions. For Thackeray, however, recalling the conviviality of the 1830s, these qualities are no longer cause for national pride but associated with "queer London haunts." The anachronistic convivial practice of the supper clubs disturbs linear, unidirectional "straight time," to borrow Rohy's phrase, exposing the assumption of "naturally" occurring heteronormative "improving" temporalities.

The collections of bawdy songs published by West and found by Speaight in the British Library have been recently supplemented by Patrick Spedding and Paul Watt's four-volume *Bawdy Songbooks of the Romantic Period*. This collection includes over a thousand songs sung at supper clubs, and gives a much more thorough insight into the conviviality of the 1830s and 1840s, making available the songs collected not only by William West, as Speaight had done, but also by several other publishers including Dugdale, Duncombe, and Metford. Among the songs advertised as favorites at the Coal Hole and collected in these convivial songsters were the songs of Captain Morris, who was sufficiently popular that he gave his name to one of the collections (*Capt. Morris's Songs. A Very Capital Collection of Bacchanalian, Amatory, and Double Entendre Songs* [1840?]), and was mentioned – sometimes spuriously, I suspect – as the author of numerous individual songs, especially in the chapbooks published by Metford. Among the songs that Metford rescued from oblivion were some of Morris's early bawdy lyrics like "The Tree of Life," which appeared in *The Fake Away Songster, A Capital Collection of Regular Good Songs* [1840?], but they included too the much more polite reflections on drinking practices of his later career, including "Sound Philosophy," which was included in *The Rum Ti Tum! A Favourite Collection of Amatory, Bacchanalian and Laughable Songs*, "The Fancy Stirring Bowl" which was included in *Capt. Morris's Songs*, and "The Triumph of Venus" which appeared in *The Fake Away Songster*, with the description "A favourite Song, sung at the Cider Cellars."

This vast repository of late Georgian and early Victorian song is a testimony to the remarkable flattening of distinctions between songs that were at one point considered quite different. Here songs sung at the aristocratic convivial societies like the Beef-Steaks are printed alongside flash songs bawled outside the Crooked Billet by drunken women. "Sandman Joe" is printed here alongside the classical anacreontics of Morris in a jumble of flash songs and polite

poetry that conflates all convivial singing together, but without observing the distinctions of the sliding scale between polite anacreontics and bawdy verse, as the Anacreontic society had done. Convivial singing as a is celebrated in these collections, the specific content of the songs mattering less than the increasingly subversive activity of indulging in homosocial pleasure at song and supper clubs.

In his 1828 *Etymological Compendium*, William Pulleyn described the Coal Hole as a “well known site for midnight gossiping. Here the most celebrated comedians have long entertained their private convivial friends after they have delighted the town. Here, too, certain poets, painters, sculptors, musicians, and other ingenious wights who prefer late hours, a smoaky room, and hilarity, to the sober comforts of domestic home, waste the night in glorious independence” (227).¹⁹ Pulleyn’s description evades moral judgment of the Coal Hole in a highly unstable cocktail of praise and scorn, as it ventriloquizes both the admiration for its “glorious independence” and the sneers of those who regard the time “wasted.” As such it provides a helpful survey of the prevailing opinions of the Coal Hole which was, John Timbs claimed, one of the earliest of the “night taverns” (*Club Life of London* 2:182).²⁰ The assumption has always been that these were taverns of ill-repute. Iain McCalman, for example, describes the collections of convivial songs published by West, Dugdale, and Duncombe as “designed to entertain the rough or bohemian groups of servicemen, journalist and sporting bucks who frequented seedy nightspots like the Cider Cellar and Coal Hole” (224). But in fact, many contemporary descriptions insisted on the respectability of the gatherings and are clear to point out the distance between the buckish gentlemen who gathered for convivial pleasure at the Coal Hole and Cider Cellars and the laboring poor who got drunk in the gin palaces and alehouses which had become a national preoccupation during the debates surrounding the 1830 Beer Act (Harrison 64-86).

In 1802, Feltham reported that the Coal Hole, listed under the category of “Eating Houses West of Temple Bar,” was “frequented by gentlemen in that neighborhood,” where the term “gentlemen” is intended to signify the tavern’s relatively elite status (357). According to Leopold Wagner, “both the Coal Hole and the Cyder Cellars... preserved the utmost respectability” (31). Edmund Yates, in his recollection *Fifty Years of London Life*, insisted that the supper-and-singing-taverns “were always respectably conducted” (107-8). And in *Tavern Anecdotes*, William West, one of the publishers responsible for the renaissance of convivial songsters, described the Coal Hole as follows:

This house is situated on the south side of the Strand, near to the Savoy, and is much frequented by theatrical gentlemen after their hours of exhibition upon the stage... It was at this house that “The Wolves” held their club, the leader or patron of which was Kean, the actor. So disorderly and uproarious, however, was this society, that it became a nuisance even to a Coal-hole, and it was accordingly broken up. (155).

This account might be partially responsible for the Coal Hole’s reputation as a “seedy nightspot,” but West’s point is that “The Wolves” was closed down because it was too disorderly. Even though Edmund Kean was one of the best-known actors of his day, the club had to be shut down because its rowdiness was not appropriate to the high tone of the tavern. Just because the Coal Hole was open late at night and catered to gentlemen who preferred to sing into the small hours, it should not be assumed that it was necessarily “unrespectable.”

Aside from its associations with song and supper clubs, the Coal Hole also enters the annals of literary history for an entirely different reason. Fountain Court, in which the Coal Hole stood, was the home of William and Catherine Blake from 1820-7. According to Alexander Gilchrist’s *Life of William Blake*, during one period Blake “for two years together, never went out at all, except to the Corner of the Court to fetch his porter” (259-60). Traditionally understood as a

sleepy, forgotten backwater, from which Blake himself rarely emerged, Angus Whitehead has painstakingly reconstructed the courtyard in which Blake lived demonstrating that it was, in fact, a community “thriving with social and commercial activity (878).” Whitehead describes the Coal Hole, at number 16, as a “large pub in the northeast corner of the court (874)” whose main entrance was in the court itself, just a few yards from Blake’s front door, attracting a large number of customers into Fountain Court from the Strand, thus disproving the impression suggested by Gilchrist, and perpetuated in numerous biographies since, that William and Catherine Blake had retired to a relatively quiet life in a forgotten cul-de-sac of the city. Whether or not the Cole Hole was indeed the corner house from which Blake collected his porter, as seems probable (and as Whitehead assumes), Blake would inevitably have been familiar with the songs sung there and later published by Dugdale, Duncombe, Mitford, and West. More importantly, however, Blake’s closeness to the Coal Hole suggests the remarkable proximity of the world of the radical plebeian artisans with which Blake is often associated to a “respectable,” gentlemanly and commercial crowd.

The frequent association of the Coal Hole and Cider Cellars with a disreputable roughness projects back on to these establishments a series of assumptions about moral values and respectability that had not yet attained the cultural hegemony that scholars sometimes assume. Consider, for example, Iain McCalman’s description of the area at the back of St Clement’s church off the Strand, where *The Coal Companion* and *Cider Cellar Songsters* were published. In the 1830s, McCalman says, the Society for the Suppression of Vice and the police, forced “pornographers to cluster in professional ghettos” including one centered around Holywell Street and Wych Street, where Dugdale worked (at number 37 Wych Street). “These were the kind of milieux that William Dugdale charted in his first obscene publication *Yokel’s*

Preceptor, an underworld directory of smut shops, brothels, thieves' dens and gambling hells" (218)." Recall that the area McCalman describes – the same area where Francis Place remembered hearing "Sandman Joe" performed to the delight of the assembled crowds outside the Crooked Billet – was directly across the Strand from the Crown and Anchor, in which politicians, amateur musicians, and respectable gentlemen (and occasionally ladies) of diverse stripes gathered. To reiterate what I argued earlier in a different context, respectability and morality do not map cleanly onto geographical space. What was apparent in James Boswell's Hypochondriak column of 1780, which attempted to trace a map of global civility based on national drinking habits, is equally true of more local topographies.

The Chartist writer and journalist Thomas Frost, who worked as an apprentice to Dugdale at 37 Wych Street offers a description of the area from the time when he worked there:

Turning into Wych Street, we passed through a dark and narrow passage on the north side, and into a dirty little yard, at the rear of which was a dingy and dilapidated building, the ground-floor of which was closed, and a room above was approached by wooden steps from the outside. Following my conductor up the steps, I entered a dirty, cobwebby room, in which seven or eight composers were at work, and was introduced to the overseer, who immediately assigned a frame to me. (52-3)

According to Frost the area is "dirty," "dingy," and "dilapidated," all of the qualities that one would expect to find in the narrow, dense network of streets of the London underworld in the early decades of the nineteenth century. These were the areas that would be systematically expunged throughout the century as urban planners like John Nash and the London Metropolitan Board of Works built large wide avenues such as Regent's Street and Shaftsbury Avenue, which could speed up traffic, let in light, and also had the added benefit of flattening the seedier passages and rookeries where undesirable populations resided, and which had proven

hard to police. Wych Street and Holywell Street lasted longer than most, however, surviving until 1899 when the area was bulldozed to make room for the Aldwych Theatre. The relative longevity of the Wych Street “ghetto” suggests that it was considered less of a problem than other areas, such as St. Giles, through which Shaftesbury Avenue was built in 1877, or the area around Soho, which was carved up by Regent’s Street, built in 1811, cutting through the seventeenth and eighteenth-century street plan with the intention of drawing a “line of Separation between the inhabitants of the first classes of society and those of the inferior classes” (Barrell *Spirit of Despotism* 25-6).

As Thomas Frost comments, the dinginess of the streets and passageways around Wych Street and Holywell Street did not necessarily mean they were frequented only by the poorer parts of the population:

I remember a correspondent of the *Times* stating, during the political excitement of 1848, that, judging from the contents of Dugdale’s window, the literature of the working-classes was a *mélange* of sedition, blasphemy, and obscenity. The grounds upon which the conclusion was arrived at that the works there displayed constituted the special literature of the working-classes were not stated; but it is obvious that working-men do not buy guinea books of erotic engravings, imported from Paris, such as were more than once seized on Dugdale’s premises. That these were purchased by wealthy sinners may be inferred both from the price and from the influences brought to bear upon the Home Office when Dugdale, after being repeatedly prosecuted and convicted, was at length sentenced to two years’ imprisonment. (54)

The phenomenon of “wealthy sinners” frequenting the Wych Street pornographers could be understood straightforwardly as an example of hypocritical gentlemen who ought to know better, spending money on illicit desires in the anonymous streets of the smut shops, carrying out in secret what they are ashamed to admit in public. Alternatively we could see in this conjunction of

wealthy sinners, obscenity, and urban space a much more complex interaction between metropolitan respectability and the narratives of modernity.

McCalman's pioneering work on the radical underworld challenges us to take seriously the importance of the more hidden and obscure domains of metropolitan life. This aspect of McCalman's work has been taken up more recently by Daniel Tiffany, whose *Infidel Poetics* draws on McCalman's work in order to theorize the pleasures of obscurity in poetics and the correlation between obscure communities and the obfuscating obscurity of "cant" language (178-187). Both McCalman and Tiffany, however, revel in a highly emotive language of subterraneanism that frequently reinforces the values of hegemonic nineteenth-century culture that they seek to critique. That Dugdale was a pornographer who ran a smut shop is confirmed by the fact of his arrest and imprisonment for selling "obscene" materials (Fraxi 127), and no doubt Dugdale's customers included those who enjoyed the subversive nature of material which they understood to be obscene. But in a culture whose values had so dramatically changed over just a few decades, it is also probable that Dugdale's customers included those who did not regard these materials as obscene, but as perfectly consistent with polite values that, as the career of Captain Morris suggests, had until recently been taken for granted. Indeed, the Wych Street smut shops, and the supper clubs whose songs they sold attempted to construct a version of respectability that still had space for the convivial values that just a few decades before had been lauded as admirable freedoms. The narrative of an underworld of ultra radicals whose political and cultural beliefs had been driven underground into a shadowy, obscure ghetto of illicit alehouses, thieves' dens, and smut shops participates in a metaphoric of verticality that undervalues the cultural and political work that the supper clubs and smut shops were performing. They were not hidden and obscure, but located at the very center of one of the

busiest commercial thoroughfare in London, offering an active, visible resistance to state attempts to police morality.

To return once more to James Chandler's discussion of temporal displacement in *England in 1819*, the new conception of anachronism in the late Romantic period, he argues, was understood as a "measurable form of dislocation," where the spatial aspects of "dislocation" are central to the improvement narratives of modernity. Anachronism coexists chiasmatically with anachronism; to be out of time is also, crucially, to be out of place. The imagined primitivism of ethnic others described, for example, by Boswell was predicated on their geographical distance, but this logic obtains equally in reverse; all things that might be considered primitive could be designated a zone outside of the modern city. For Sir Walter Scott, Captain Morris's bawdy lyrics belonged to a previous era and therefore are associated with Ireland rather than the metropolitan center. The supposed barbarity of drinking songs consigned them to a place in history, and to an area outside the metropolitan center in regions below, beyond, and irrelevant to the modern urban experience. The taverns in which drinking songs were performed remained a material, visible reminder that modernity was never modern.

APPENDIX

A SELECTION OF SONGS BY CAPTAIN CHARLES MORRIS

THE COALITION SONG¹

If you my good friends will not think the joke stale
But patiently sit and attend to my tale
At the Joke I'm persuaded no party will spurn
But Pittites and Foxites will smile in their turn.
Derry down, &c.

As the Sun rules by Day and the Moon rules by Night
From whence comes diurnal and nocturnal lights
If one in the way of the other but trips
He that plays least in sight is prounc'd in eclipse.
Derry down, &c.

But our rulers of states are of quite different kind
As they shine or wax dim not by motion but wind
Mere Candles in fact which I'll prove beyond doubt
For a puff blows them in or a puff blows them out.
Derry down, &c.

Two Rivals who long like two link boys in spite
Had puff'd and blown hard to quench each other's light
As they'd fain be thought stars why like stars to a tittle
We'll call one the great Bear the other the little.
Derry down, &c.

The great Bear had long like a huge comet blaz'd
And with such a long train that all eyes were amaz'd
But while puffed up with pride he defy'd every rub
He at last was blown out by the breath of a Cub.
Derry down, &c.

Ursa minor thus made Ursa major give way

¹ [Captain Charles Morris] "The Coalition Song Sung by Mr Dighton at the Anacreontic Society" London: J. Fentum, [1783]. British Library Music Collections H.1652.pp.(17.)

And a new constellation at Court took the sway
‘Till a sudden eclipse turn’d the table once more
And the cub was blown out as the bear was before.
Derry down, &c.

Both parties now finding contention in vains
Quoth the great Bear let int’re rest make one of us twains
Coalition at once our promotion secures
So if you’ll blow in my Candle I’ll blow in yours.
Derry down, &c.

A match quoth the Cub and I hold it no osin
Since we both were puff’d out to puff each other in
So here hoes my dear Lord – there you see I can do it
And so can I too Charles – Sic lux et lux suit.
Derry down, &c.

Now shining like twin stars call’d POLLUX and CASTER
They thought cheek by jowl they cou’d brave all disaster
‘Till an East India blast which their skill could not weather
Like two farthing rush light blew out both together.
Derry down, &c.

‘Tis thus the state Candles are in and out blown
And they puff out a Brother’s to keep in their own
Yet some had much better be Darken’d outright
Than have all that they’ve done in the dark brought to light.
Derry down, &c.

For ‘tis whisper’d that they have blown out each spark
Because secret influence does best in the dark
So they’ve blown out the Candles and muzzled the Bears
The better to grope their way up the Back stairs.
Derry down, &c.

Now if any this way into favour have stole
And have blown out the Candles to finger the Cole
Why ‘tis fear’d by the steps they may take in their turns
That we shan’t have a Coal or a Candle to burn.
Derry down, &c.

As for me, I’m a Taper that’s just brought to light
I’m a Taper in size but small Candles burn bright
And if kept up by you to the last inch I’ll blaze
Then I’ll stick on a Saveall and expire in your praise.
Derry down, &c.

THE BABY AND NURSE²

MOTHER *Buckingham*, plagu'd with a troublesome *Brat*,
Which she could not keep quiet, nor this way, nor that,
Put the Boy out to nurse, with one *old Goody DAY*,
And charg'd her to give him *all Things* his Way.

Derry down, &c.

It happen'd one Morn, as to Market Nurse went,
With the *Child* in her arms, on some unknown intent,
The Boy saw a *Parliament-Man* toss'd in Air,
And has cry'd ever since to ride in the *fine Chair*.

Derry down, &c.

My dear *Harry*, says Nurse, if you be a good Boy,
You shall not, sweet Babe, be depriv'd of the Toy;
Not a Moment was lost—of the *Chair* she made sure,
Then *Bearers* she straight set about to secure.

Derry down, &c.

She flew to Bolt, D'Oyley, Priapus, and Stultas,
And begg'd they would carry this poor *Non-adultus*;
“*By the great God of War*,”—said this blustering Gang,
“We'll do't—and as Staves-men have *R*——, *Blow*, and *Fang*.”

Derry down, &c.

Thus all things were ordered when *Nurse* in some fright,
For the safety of *Harry*, concludes it is right,
To consult *Doctor PLEBES*—so his Judgment demands,
On her Purpose of trusting the *Child* in *such* Hands.

Derry down, &c.

The *Doctor* to see this spoil'd *Child* went at length,
To examine its Faculties, Powers, and Strength;
He asks it some Questions—*Nurse* sees his mistake,
And cries, “*Doctor*, alas!—My dear Babe *cannot speak*.”

Derry down, &c.

Old Galen the star'd the Boy full in the face;
The Child turn'd aside with a *vacant Grimace*;
“Ods Bobs!” exclaims *Squire Toes*, “I'll to the *Dule*,
“If this Bantling of yours does not prove a d—d *Fool!*”

² [Morris, Captain Charles.] *The Baby and Nurse*. [London]: no printer, n.d. Oxford University, Bodleian Vet. 85 d.118 (1). Print.

Derry down, &c.

Bust as I'm now here, and many ne'er call again,
Before I depart, I'll just look at his *Brain*,"
He stretch's the *sutures*—and looking in full,
"Good Heavens," he cried—"What a *poor empty skull!*"

Derry down, &c.

"Pray *Nurse* take the *Child*, put him instant to bed,
"And let not his riding e'er trouble your head,
"Twill so him much harm—Then you've chosen, egad!
"The worst crew you could find to support the poor land."

Derry down, &c.

"*Nurse* flew in a passion—old *Plebs* she abus'd,
And swore, that he basely her *Baby* had used;
That all his advice was *ill-naturd'dly* meant,
And that *Harry* should ride, be what might the event.

Derry down, &c.

So the chair was prepared, and brought forth in a minute,
And the *Child*, finely dress'd and bedizen'd, plac'd in it;
The bearers then hoisted it on to their shoulders,
Midst the hisses and groans of ten thousand beholders.

Derry down, &c.

Now up goes *young Master*, aloft in the Air,
He grinn'd, and look'd pleas'd—though he trembled with fear,
Again he's toss'd up—and each Time *Nurse* would call,
"Gad's blessing light on it – take care to don't fall" [sic].

Derry down, &c.

But, as *old Nick* would have it—the next toss she found,
(Whate'er was the Cause) brought her *Bairn* to the ground,
And so *hard* was the fall, it was thought by most Men,
That the poor little Creature *would ne'er ride again*.

Derry down, &c.

It recover'd, however, in process of Time,
And to absolute Honours attempted to climb,
For he oft heard his *Nurse* say, that PITT was a Brat,
Who wanted *young Play-mates*—and such Stuff as that.

Derry down, &c.

So when my *Lord Sheffield* vacated his Seat,
Nurse thought with the Place *her dear Harry* she'd treat,
And *Hal* had been told, that this Son of great *Chatham*,
Dealt in *Gingerbread Cakes*, so he long'd to be at 'em.

Derry down, &c.

Some sensible neighbours, who well knew the *Child*,

Advis'd *Nurse* to give up a Project so wild,
But the *obstinate Baggage* no Reason would hear,
And to all their good Counsel she turn'd a deaf ear.
Derry down, &c.

Now the Time of Election came quickly about,
Nurse started her *Bantling*—her *old Friends* call'd out—
And treating the Town in a Manner uncivil,
Vow'd the *Child* should be *Member*—in spite of the D—l.
Derry down, &c.

Mother Buckingham came with a great Store of *Cash*,
To lay out in Gew-gaws, Flags, Trumpets and Trash,
And told Goody Day to buy Breeches and Coats,
To give those in return who would give *Hal* the *Votes*.
Derry down, &c.

“Moreover,” says she,—“purchase *Scribblers* and *Puffers*,
“For though Want of high boasting a Cause often suffers;
“Let them picture our Harry, as wonderful wise!
“And to carry a Point—let them stick at no lies!”
Derry down, &c.

Of Conduct so *impudent* seldom we hear,
And the *insult* was such as no *Briton* could bear;
Great Discontent rag'd—and high Murmerings rose,
'Till SIR THOMAS came forward, this *Child* to oppose.
Derry down, &c.

No sooner the *Baronet's* Name was declar'd,
That a *Patriot Band* in the City appear'd,
And in the most laudable praise-worthy Manner,
Enlisted themselves—under LIBERTY'S BANNER.
Derry down, &c.

A Panic straight seiz'd on the *Buckingham Host*,
Nurse—*Baby*—and *Gossips*, now saw all was lost,
Old Madam retreated to B——g to mourn,
And *Nurse* may soon weep over—poor Harry's Urn.
Derry down, &c.

Thus the Dreams of *Ambition* shall constantly flee,
Thus *Britons* oppress'd—shall *resist*, and be FREE!
Thus *Virtue* shall triumph—and we—one and all,
To Liberty rise—by a proud Faction's fall.
Derry down, &c.

BILLY'S TOO YOUNG TO DRIVE US³

If life's a rough journey as moralists tell,
Englishmen sure made the best on't:
On this spot of the earth, they bade liberty dwell,
While slavery holds all the rest on't;
They though the best solace for labour and care,
Was a state independent and free, Sir;
And, this thought, tho' a curse that no tyrant can bear,
Is the *blessing* of you and me, Sir.
Then while through this whirlabout journey we reel,
We'll keep unabus'd the best blessing we fell,
And what ev'ry turn of the politic wheel—
Billy's too young to drive us.

The car of Britannia we all must allow,
Is ready to crack with its load, Sir;
And wanting the hand of experience, will now
Most surely break down on the road, Sir;
Then must we poor passengers quietly wait,
To be crush'd by this mischievous spark, Sir;
Who drives a *damn'd job* in the carriage of state,
And got up like a thief in the dark, Sir.
Then while through this whirlabout, &c. &c.

They say that his judgment is mellow and pure,
And his principles virtue's own type, Sir,
I believe, from my soul, he's the son of a w—e,
And his judgment more rotten than ripe, Sir.
For, all that he boasts of, what is it in truth?
But that mad with ambition and pride, Sir,
He's the vices of age, for the follies of youth,
And a damn's deal of cunning beside, Sir.
Then while through this whirlabout, &c. &c.

The squires, whose reason ne'er reaches a span,
Are all with this prodigy struck, Sir;
And cry, "it's a crime not to vote for a man,
"Who's as chaste as a baby at suck, Sir;"
But pray let me ask, had his virtue prevail'd,
What soul wou'd to heaven come near, Sir?
Not one — for the whole generation had fail'd,

³ [Hartley, James.] History of the Westminster Election. 506-7.

And God's creatures had never been here, Sir.
Then while through this whirlabout, &c. &c.

It's true, he's a pretty good gift of the gab,
And was taught by his dad on a stool, Sir;
But tho' at a speech he's a bit of a dab,
In the state he's a bit of a tool, Sir;
For Billy's pure love for his country was such,
He agreed to become the cat's paw, Sir;
And sits at the helm, while it's turn'd by the touch
Of a reprobate fiend of the law, Sir.
Then while through this whirlabout, &c. &c.

Tho' reason united a North and a Fox,
The world of this junction complain, Sir;
But what's that to *his* who join'd with a pox,
To the cabinet pimp of the thane, Sir?;
Who sold to a highflying Jacobite gang,
The credit of Chatham's great name, Sir;
That, pleas'd we might hear a young puppet harangue,
While J—nk-us-n plays the old game, Sir.
Then while through this whirlabout, &c. &c.

They say his fine parts are a mighty good prop
To push up Britannia's affairs, Sir;
But we all of us know, tho' he *stands* at her top,
Her bottom will die in despair, Sir;
Then with freemen who on a fair bottom would tread,
Here's a toast that I'm sure will prevail, Sir;
BRITANNIA! And may he ne'er stand at her head,
Who never can stand at her tail, Sir!
Then while through this whirlabout, &c. &c.

THE PLENIPOTENTIARY⁴

The Dey of Algiers, when afraid of his ears,
A Messenger sent to our Court, Sir;
As he knew in our State that women had weight,
He chuse one well hung for good sport, Sir.
He search'd the Divan, till he found out a man
Whose b—ks were heavy and hairy;
And he lately came o'er from the Barbary shore
As the great Plenipotentiary.

When to England he came, with his p—k in a flame,
He shew'd it his Hostess at landing,
Who spread its renown thro' all parts of the town,
As a pintle past all understanding.
So much there was said of its snout and its head,
That they called it the Great Janissary;
Not a lady could sleep till she got a sly peep
At the Great Plenipotentiary.

As he rode in his coach, how the whores did approach,
And star'd as if stretch'd on a tenter;
He drew every eye of the dames that pass'd by,
Like the sun to its wonderful center.
As he pass'd thro' the town not a window was down;
And the maids hurry'd out to the area:
The children cry'd, "Look! there's the man with the cock!
That's the great Plenipotentiary."

When he came to the court, oh! what giggle and sport!
Such squinting and squeezing to view him!
What envy and spleen in the women were seen!
All happy and pleas'd to get to him!
They vow'd in their hearts, if men of such parts
Were found on the coast of Barbary,
'Twas a shame not to bring a whole guard for the King,
Like the great Plenipotentiary.

⁴ This is taken from the 9th edition of *A Complete Collection of Songs By Captain Morris* (London: J Ridgeway, 1788) 39-46. Later editions of Morris's verse, including those printed by W. Lewes (13th ed., 1793) and T. Sutton (24th ed 1802) omitted the more obscene lyrics such as 'the Plenipotentiary.' Ridgeway, characteristically, had no such qualms. His claim, made in numerous newspaper advertisements in 1787, that his were the only editions printed by the author's authority, suggests that Morris had sanctioned their inclusion in his collected works, but later changed his mind about the songs to which he was willing to put his name. See, for example, *World and Fashionable London Advertiser* 7 Nov. 1787.

The dames of intrigue formed their c—ts in a league,
To take him in turns like good folks, Sir;
The young misses plan was to catch as catch can,
And all were resolv'd on a stroke, Sir:
The cards to invite flew by thousands each night,
With bribes to his old Secretary:
And the famous Eclipse was not let for more leaps
Than the great Plenipotentiary.

When his name was announc'd, how the women all bounc'd,
And their blood hurry'd up in their faces,
He made them all itch, from the nave to the breech,
And their bubbies burst out of their laces.
There was such damn'd work to be f—d by the Turk,
That nothing their passion could vary;
All the nation fell sick for the Tripoli p—k
Of the great Plenipotentiary.

A Duchess, whose Duke made her ready to puke
With fumbling and frigging all night, Sir,
Being first for the prize, was so pleas'd with its size,
That she begg'd to examine its plight, Sir.
“Good God!” cry'd her Grace, “its head's like a mace!
“Tis as big as the Corsican Fairy!
“I'll make up, please the pigs, for dry bods and frigs,
“With the great Plenipotentiary.”

And now to be bor'd by this Ottoman Lord,
Came a virgin far gone in the wane, Sir;
She resolv'd for to try, tho' her c—was so dry,
That she knew it must split like a cane, Sir.
True it was as she spoke; it gave way at each stroke!
But oh! what a woeful quandary!
With one terrible thrust, her whole piss-bladder burst
On the great Plenipotentiary.

The next to be try'd was an Alderman's bride,
With a c— that would swallow a turtle;
She had horn'd the dull brows of her worshipful spouse,
‘Till they sprouted like Venus' myrtle.
Thro' thick and thro' thin, bowel deep he dash'd in,
Till her c—t frothed like cream in a dairy;
And express'd by loud farts, she was strain'd in all parts
By the great Plenipotentiary.

The next to be kiss'd, on the Plenipo' list
Was a delicate maiden of honour:
She scream'd at the sight of his p—k, in a fright,
Tho' she'd had the whole palace upon her.
“C—t J—s!” she said, “What a p—k for a maid!

“Do, pray, come look at it, Cary!
“But I will have one drive, if I'm ripped up alive
“By the great Plenipotentiary.”

Two sisters next came, Peg and Molly by name;
Two ladies of very high breeding;
Resolv'd one should try, while the other stood by,
To assist in the bloody proceeding.
Peg swore by the Gods, that the Mussulman's c—ds
Were as big as both buttocks of Mary!
Poll cry'd, with a grunt, "he has ruined my c—t,
With his great Plenipotentiary."

The next for this plan was an old Harridan,
Who had swallow'd huge p—ks from each nation,
With over much use she had broke up the sluice
'Twixt her c—t and its lower relation.
He had stuck her so full, that she roar'd like a bull;
Crying out she was bursting and weary,
So tight was she stuck by this wonderful f—k
Of the Great Plenipotentiary.

All heads were bewitch'd and long'd to be stitch'd;
Even babies would languish and linger:
And the boarding-school miss, as she sat down to p—ss,
Drew a Turk on the floor with her finger.
For fanci'd delight, now they clubb'd for a shite,
To f—g in the school necessary;
And the teachers from France f—k'd *a-la-distance*
With the great Plenipotentiary.

Each sluice-c—d bawd, who was knock'd all abroad
'Till her premises gap'd like a grave, Sir,
Hop'd luck was so thick, she could feel the Turk's p—k,
As all others were lost in her cave, Sir:
The nymphs of the stage his fine parts did engage;
Made him free of their grand seminary:
And the gentle Signors open'd all their back-doors
To the grand Plenipotentiary.

Then of Love's sweet reward, measur'd out by the yard,
The Turk was most blest of mankind, Sir;
For his pow'rful dart went home to the heart,
Whether stuck in before or behind, Sir.
But no pencil can draw this huge three-tail'd Bashaw!
Then let each c—t loving contemporary,
As cocks of the game, let's drink to the name
Of the great Plenipotentiary.

THE VIRGIN MINISTER⁵

Come then be silent,
And join in my ballad,
A better you never saw
Pinn'd on a wall;
Oh the subject won't hurt
Any nice lady'd palate,
Because it ne'er meddles
With ladies at all.
It is all of a sweet pretty
Well spoken gentleman,
Come to delude this
Lew'd world and its wife;
Oh, by c—t he's so chaste,
He won't trust his p—le man
Out of his hand
To save Venus's life.

Troth, and its right,
That the tool of a minister,
Ne'er should be manag'f
By hands but his own;
Then, tho' his labour is
By dexter or sinister,
Still it's all one
While he's working alone.
While he does for himself
Thus, without friend or neighbour,
He proves to the nation
Great prudence and thrift;
And while he own hand
Is employed in such labour
We are sure it will never
Be put to a *shift*.

Oh, they say he's so wise
He'd make Solomon wonder,
To a piece more complete
Nature ne'er put her hand;
Tho' I think for a piece
Nature made a damn'd blunder,
The creature could reason
Before it could stand.
To be sure a full knowledge

⁵ Captain Morris, *Complete Collection of Songs* 9th edition (London: James Ridgeway, 1788) 56-60.

Of state and mankind, Sir,
Is great piece of luck
When his age is so small,
For they say that experience
Was born in his mind, Sir,
Aye, and came to perfection
From nothing at all.

But mark what he did
For to get to his station,
He told a damn'd lie
In the ear of the king;
Then a shite on his name,
For I'm all for the nation,
So don't bother me
With the name of the thing.
His taxes now prove
His great love for the people,
So wisely they are manag'd
To starve the poor souls;
Sure the praise of the man
Should be rung in each steple,
That would rob them o'day-light,
Of candles and coals.
His delicate part must
Be tender and pure, Sire,
A rare stock of wisdom,
And pity has he,
That would put out the spark
That would comfort the poor, Sir;
Oh the devil put out
Such a patriot for me.

Then what's all the nonsense
And humbug about him,
His purity, chastity,
Virtue, and Pride,
Troth, in Ireland, we would
Be all apt to doubt him,
A man with virginity
Is all my *backside*.
Oh, burn your men, maids,
And each f—g—g pretender,
In stoical coldness,
And pitiful art,
Here's the lad, my brave boys,
With the nature that's tender,
And touch'd by the passions
That honor the heart.

A NEW SONG⁶

Sung at the Anniversary of Mr. Fox's Birth.

Well, now that the prospect of Britain's a blank—
No hope from her council's, or gold from her Bank;
When all the vile schemes of destruction and woe
Have come back on *ourselves*, that were meant for *our Foe*;

When projects of famine and fire have fail'd us,
And heaven's just wrath is entail'd on our guilt;
Shall we plunge further into chaos of sin—
That our children may bleed for the Blood WE have spilt?

CHORUS

Ah, no Britons; no—it cannot be so,
While there's justice ABOVE, and oppression BELOW!

When all scheme, all attempts, all delusions we've tried,
Have but blazon'd our folly and humbled our pride;
When the millions we've wasted in impotent aim
Are as barren of fruit as—*the Minister's frame*;

When danger is all that we've got by his measures,
And beggary all that he's bough with our gold;
Shall we now be bereft of the little that's left—
Till *we all*, like himself, to perdition be sold?
Ah, no Britons, &c.

When a train of bright glory unknown 'till our day
Lights the soldiers of freedom, like stars, on their way;
When torrents and floods, by a will from on high,
In ONE country *freeze up*, in ANOTHER *run dry*;

When equity's balance to slaves gives redemption,
And NATURE concurs to spread freedom and light;
Shall we wickedly strive to keep darkness alive,
That the blessing of heaven be hid from their sight?
Ah, no, Britons, &c.

⁶ This song first appears in the 1798, 15th edition of Morris's songs. Morris composed a number of songs for dinners celebrating Fox's birthday held each year at the Crown and Anchor.

When a visiting plague o'er our conquests is spread,
 'Till the earth we have seiz'd has scarce room for our dead:
Where army on army God's judgment defies,
 While pestilence swallows what madness supplies;

Where our gold and our blood alike wastingly vanish—
 The treasures of *Britain* sink dead as her sons,
Shall we drain our own State to make war against fate—
 And in HEAVEN'S OWN FACE, *plant our blasphemous guns?*
 Ah, no, Britons, &c.

When business of State's a mere *personal trade*;
 When the Senate is *bought*, and the people *betray'd*;
When baseness and pride, link'd in TYRANNY'S cause,
 Laugh *England* to scorn, and disfigure her laws;

When impudence, mockery, hate and defiance
 Is all that the people obtain for their pray'r;
Shall we crouchingly lie, and see *Liberty* die—
 The charge our brave ancestors left to our care?
 Ah, no, Britons, &c.

Around, while despair, disappointment, and hate,
 Sit moodily mourning the sins of the State;
When men, as they mute and disconsolate stand,
 Seem stunn'd with the fate that hangs over the land;

When all is debasement, depression and terror,
 And rotten corruption the bond of State;
We feel the sad times of a true fruit of our crimes—
 And a justice divine in the VENGEANCE OF FATE!
 Ah, no, Britons, &c.

When Britons to tame beasts of burden descend—
 When the more that's heap'd on 'em, the better they bend;
When lashes and loads have been laid on their backs,
 'Till the slaves are so sore they can't carry their packs.

When scourg'd by taxation and padlock'd by terror,
 Their tongues are tied up while they rifle their purse;
Be vex'd as we may, 'faith, one cannot but say,
 The burthen's WELL FITTED, and JUST is the curse!
 Ah, no, Britons, &c.

When a legion of soldiers keep watch o'er each town
 To strike the faint spirit of Liberty down:
When a merciless Statesman, sustain'd by the sword,
 Strides daring in arms, and makes a law a word;

When bold violation, back'd home by coercion

Leaves nothing but death or disgrace in our way;
Shall chains, or the grave—the sad choice of the slave
Thus blast the fair glorious of Runnymede's day?
Ah, no, Britons, &c.

Oh, no, gallant Britons! There lives in your breast
A spirit too long, and TOO BLINDLY suppress!—a
A spark of that flame your brave ancestor knew,
When they won back the land, and gave freedom to you!

And you gallant Britons, the treasure defending,
Shall yet for your sons the *blest legacy save*;
For the moment comes fast, when the die will be cast—
And the banner of Freedom TRIUMPHANTLY wave!
Ah, no, Britons, &c.

WHEN THE FANCY-STIRRING BOWL⁷

When the fancy-stirring bowl
Wakes its world of pleasure,
Glowing visions gild my soul,
And life's an endless treasure.
Mem'ry decks my wasted heart,
Fresh with gay desires:
Rays divine their my senses dart,
And kindling hope inspires.

Then who'd be grave,
When wine can save,
The heaviest soul from sinking;
And magic grapes
Give angel shapes
To every girl we're drinking.

Here sweet BENIGNITY and Love
Shed their influence round me,
Gather'd ills of life remove,
And leave me as the found me:
Tho' my head may swim, yet true
Still to NATURE'S feeling;
Peace and beauty swim there too,
And rock me as I'm reeling.
Then who'd be grave, &c.

On YOUTH'S soft pillow tender TRUTH,
Her pensive lesson taught me;
AGE soon mock'd the dream of YOUTH,
And WISDOM wak'd and caught me:
A bargain then with Love I knock'd,
To hold the pleasing GYPSEY,
When wise to keep my bosom lock'd,
But turn the key when tipsey.
Then who'd be grave, &c.

⁷ This song first appears in the 9th edition of Morris's Songs in 1788, where it appears under the title "Drinking Song." It circulates widely as "The Fancy Stirring Bowl" from around 1790, and it is under this title that it appears in the *Lyra Urbanica*, with a number of variants. This version is taken from *The Star and Evening Advertiser* 31 Oct. 1788, where it appears with the following note: "To prevent the PUBLIC from being imposed upon by the active circulation of several spurious copies of the following Song—artfully obtained—THE STAR presents it in a correct state from the very first authority. CAPTAIN MORRIS, the celebrated author of it, will thank us for our attention."

When time assuag'd my heated heart,
The grey-beard blind and simple,
Forgot to cool one little part,
Just flush'd by LUCY'S dimple.
That part's enough of beauty's type
To warm an honest fellow;
And tho' it touch me not when ripe,
It melts still while I'm mellow.
Then who'd be grave, &c.

Life's a voyage, we all declare,
With scarce a port to hide in;
Perhaps it may to PRIDE or CARE,
That's not the sea I ride in:
Here floats my soul, 'till FANCY'S eye
Her realms of bliss discover,
Bright worlds, that fair in prospect lie,
To him that's half seas over.
Then who'd be grave, &c.

SOUND PHILOSOPHY⁸

I've oft been ask'd by prosing souls,
And men of sober tongue,
What joys there are in draining bowls,
And tipping all night long;
But though these cautious knaves I scorn,
For once I'll not disdain,
To tell them why I drink till morn,
And fill my glass again.

'Tis by the glow my bumper gives,
Life's picture's mellow made,
The fading lights then brightly lives,
And softly sinks the shade;
Some happier tint, still rises there,
With every drop I drain,
And that I think's a reason fair,
To fill my glass again.

My Muse, too, when her wings are dry,
No frolic flights will take,
But round the bowl she'll dip and fly,
Like Swallows round a lake;
Then, if the nymphs will have their share,
Before they'll bless their swains,
Why that I think's a reason fair,
To fill my glass again.

In Life I've rung all changes through,
Run every pleasure down,
'Mid each extreme of Folly too,
And lived with half the town;
For me there's nothing new or rare,
Till Wine deceives my brain
And that I think's a reason fair,
To fill my glass again.

⁸ This song was also known as "Reasons for Drinking" and it appears as "The Toper's Apology," in the *Lyra Urbanica* (1:73-6). It was sung to the tune by Charles Dibdin. This version is taken from a print held at the British Museum, published by Laurie and Whittle in 1806, which has the subheading "Captain Morris's Celebrated Drinking Song. "And this I think's a reason fair, to fill my glass again. Sung by Mr Dignum, Mr Taylor and Mr Munden. (Tune of Jolly Dick the Lamp Lighter) (Never Before Published)." BM Sat 10676.

There's many a Lad I knew is dead,
And many a Lass grown old,
And as the lesson strikes my head,
My weary heart grows cold;
But wine, awhile, drives off despair,
Nay bids a Hope remain,
Why that I think's a reason fair,
To fill my glass again.

I find too when I stint my glass,
And sit with sober air,
I am pros'd by some dull reasoning Ass,
Who treads the path of care;
Or harder still am doom'd to bear,
Some Coxcomb's fribbling strain—
And that I'm sure's a reason fair
To fill my glass again.

Though, hipp'd and vex'd at England's state
In these convulsive days,
I can't endure the Ruin'd State,
My sober Eye surveys.
But through the bottle's dazzling glare,
The gloom is seen less plain,
And that I think's a reason fair
To fill my glass again.

But now I'll tell, to end my song,
At what I most repine,
This War, has been as other Wars,
No friend to good Port Wine;
For Port, they say, will soon be rare
As Juice of France and Spain,
And that I think's a reason fair
To fill my glass again.

TOWN & COUNTRY⁹

In London I never knew what to be at,
Enraptur'd with this! and enchanted with that!
I'm wild with the sweets of Variety's plan,
And life seems a blessing too happy for man
Derry down, &c.

But the Country, Lord help us, sets all matters right;
So calm and composing from morning to night;
O, it settles the spirits when nothing is seen
But an ass on a common, or goose on a green.
Derry down, &c.

In town if it rains, why it damps not our hope,
The eye has its range, and the fancy her scope;
Still the same tho' it pour all night and all day,
It spoils not our prospects, it stops not out way,
Derry down, &c.

In the country how blessed when it rains in the fields,
To feast upon transports that shuttlecock yields,
Or go crawling from window to window to see
A hog on a dunghill, or crow on a tree.
Derry down, &c.

In London how easy we visit and meet,
Gay pleasure the theme, and sweet smiles are our treat;
Our morning's a round of good humour, delight,
And we rattle in comfort and pleasure all night.
Derry Down, &c.

In the Country how charming our visits to make,
Thro' ten miles of mud for formality's sake;
With the coachman in drink, and the moon in a fog,
And no thought in our head but a ditch and a bog
Derry Down, &c.

⁹ The song first appeared in the 1797 14th edition of Morris's Songs. The text here is taken from the 24th edition, which has a few slight differences. It was included also in *Lyra Urbanica* under the title "The Contrast" (1:67-70). The Bodleian Harding collection has a 1796 printing of this song, under the title "Country and Town" published by William Holland (Harding B 38(4)). The Harding and Johnson ballad collections each have a copy of this song printed by Laurie and Whittle in 1807. This version of the song appears with the title "Country Life, Contrasted with the Pleasures of the Town," and contains additional stanzas written by William Hewardine and an illustration by Cruikshank. (Harding B 10(36); Johnson Ballads fol. 70.)

In London if folks ill together are put,
A bore may be dropt, or a quiz may be cut;
We change without end, and if happy or ill.
Our wants are at hand, and our wishes at will.
Derry Down, &c

In the Country you're nail'd like a pale in your part,
To some stick of a neighbour, cram'd into the ark;
Or if you are sick, or in fits tumble down,
You reach death ere the doctor can reach you from Town.
Derry Down, &c.

I have heard that love in a cottage is sweet,
When two hearts in one link of soft sympathy meet;
I know nothing of that, for alas! I'm a swain,
Who requires, I own it, more links to my chain.
Derry down, &c.

Your jays and your magpies may chatter on trees,
And whisper soft nonsense in groves if they please;
But a house is much more to my mind than a tree,
An for groves, O! a fine grove of chimnies for me.
Derry down, &c

Then in Town let me live, and in town let me die;
For in truth I can't relish the Country, not I.
If one must have a villa in summer to dwell,
Oh, give me the sweet shady side of Pall-Mall!
Derry down, &c.

A PARTING WORD ¹⁰

Adieu to the world! Where I gratefully own
Few men more delight or more comfort have known:
To an age far beyond mortal lot have I trod
The path of pure health, that best blessing of God;
And so mildly devout Nature temper'd my frame
Holy Patience still soothed when Adversity came.
Thus, with mind ever cheerful, and tongue never tired,
I sung the gay strains these sweet blessings inspired;
And, by blending light mirth with a moral-mix'd stave,
Won the smile of the gay and the nod of the grave.
But, at length, the dull languor of mortal decay
Throws a weight on a spirit too light for its clay;
And the Fancy, subdued as the body's oppress,
Resigns the faint flights that scare wake in the breast.
A painful memento that man's not to play
A game of light Folly though Life's sober day:
A just admonition, though view'd with regret,
Still blessedly offer'd though thanklessly met.
Too long I, perhaps, like the many who stray,
Have upheld the gay themes of the Bacchanals' day;
But at length Time has brought, what it ever will bring,
A shade that excites more to sigh than to sing.

In this close of Life's chapter, ye high-favour'd few,
Take my Muse's last tribute—this painful adieu!
Take my wish that your bright social circle on earth
For ever may flourish in concord and mirth;
For the long years of joy I have shared at your board,
Take the thanks of my heart—where they long have been stored;
And remember, when Time told my last passing-knell,
The “old bard” dropp'd a tear, and then bade ye – “Farewell!”

¹⁰ Captain Morris, *Lyra Urbanica*, 2:259-60.

ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE STAR-AND-GARTER TAVERN IN PALL MALL.
AND THE DEMOLITION OF CARLTON PALACE¹¹

Farewell for ever! – Thus, then, falls, at last,
The roof where all my proudest joys have passed;
Where Mirth, enthroned in splendor, held her reign,
And Royal voices echo'd still her strain:
That roof, where minds with Life's high polish stored
Still graces the banquets of her glowing board;
Where Wit and Wisdom mingled grave and gay,
And Reason Revell'd with the Fancy's play.
Farewell, farewell! A sad memento lie
How Fame's lost lustre dims the sorrowing eye,
And bids the heart, long cheer'd by Fancy's beam,
Sink in sad languor o'er the fleeting dream.

Again farewell! For ill my sight can bear
Thy crumbling ruins, once so famed and fair.
What art thou now? A heap or rubbish'd stone;
“Pride, pomp, and circumstance” for ever gone!
A prostrate lesson to the passing eye,
To teach the high how low they soon may lie.
Dust are those walls, where long, in pictured pride,
The far-famed *Dilettanti* graced their side;
And where so long my gay and frolic heart
Roused living spirits round these shades of art,
Sunk are they all, in heedless silence lost,
Or 'midst the flames, as useless refuse, cast;
All hid, all hush'd,-- no vestige left to tell
Where Mirth thus honour'd rose, or where it fell:
Bare to the desert air now stands the space
Long fill'd with classic taste and fashion'd grace.

Down falls the Palace too! – and now I see
The street, a path of deadly gloom to me:
And, as I range the town, I, sighing, say,
“Turn from Pall Mall: that's now no more thy way;
Thy once-loved 'shady side,' oft praised before.
Shorn from earth's face, now hears thy strains no more;
And where thy Muse long ply'd her welcome toil,
Cold Speculation barter's out the soil.”

Thus sinks the scene – thus proud emotions rest,
That fondly warm'd so long my flatter'd breast;
And now, to ease with sad regrets that rise,
All-soothing Hope in cold oblivion lies;

¹¹ Morris, *Lyra Urbanica*, 2:273-275.

Let me forget, then, till that fatal day
That sweeps my time-worn frame, like thine, away;
For soon, alas! My aged fabric must,
Struck by Fate's hammer, drop, like thine, to dust.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

¹ In addition to Sennett and Habermas, see also the book-length studies by Clayton, Cowan, and Ellis.

Articles connecting the coffeehouse to the public sphere are by now legion, but particularly influential for the present work are those by Downie, Klein, and Fraser.

² The presence of coffee at coffeehouses was no guarantee of sobriety. People could of course go from the tavern to the coffeehouse still reeling from the effects of the wine served in a tavern, but coffeehouses also often served wine – the case of Charles Pigott and William Hodgson, discussed by Barrell, offers an example of each. Pigott and Hodgson (both members of the London Corresponding Society) had been dining at the Kings Head Tavern in the Poultry before removing to the London Coffee House on Ludgate Hill where, in Barrell’s words, they intended “to read the newspapers over a few glasses of punch” (86). Despite the fact that alcohol was served in coffeehouses, it remains the case that the kinds of behavior expected from coffeehouse patrons was different from what one could expect of a tavern – indicated in this case by the fact that Pigott and Hodgson had planned to read the newspapers at the London Coffeehouse. For the large number of coffeehouses that advertised themselves as a “coffeehouse and tavern,” and for taverns that also had a coffee room, Bryant Lilywhite remains the indispensable source.

³ See, for example, Barrell *The Spirit of Despotism*, Connell and Leask, Epstein *In Practice*, Jon Mee *Conversable Worlds*, Parolin *Radical Spaces*, Russell *Women Sociability and the Theatre in Georgian London* to name just a handful of the book-length studies that have emerged in the wake of *Romantic Sociability*.

⁴ Boswell, never strong in arithmetic, miscalculated. The total was, in fact, £164, leaving £36 for coach-hire, diversion and the tavern.

⁵ Bills from two of Boswell's tavern dinners at the Club have survived from 1785. One cost 14s, the other £1-4-0 (Pottle 23 n.6).

⁶ For a discussion of the "masculine ethos of competition" in the conversation of Johnson's circle see Mee *Conversable Worlds* (90-100).

⁷ Pottle misidentifies this tavern as the Star and Garter in Pall Mall, but it was surely the Star and Garter on Five-fields Row in Chelsea, where Boswell had been watching Johnson, the famous equestrian perform. For Johnson's equestrian performances to the Cherokees at the Star and Garter in 1762, see Timberlake 139.

⁸ One conservative satire complains of the "Seminary of Eloquence in the Butcher-Row" where you have "laid out your Six pence in Porter, Lemonade and Oratory at the Robin-Hood." *St James's Chronicle or the British Evening Post* 6–8 Apr. 1762.

⁹ Thelwall attended meetings of the Society from 1783, when he was nineteen years old. After the society was closed down after the Royal Proclamation of May 1792, Thelwall attempted to move it to the Kings Arms Tavern in Cornhill, before it was driven out of existence entirely the next season. For Thelwall's own account of his involvement with the Society for Free Debate see the 'Prefatory Memoir,' of *Poems Written Chiefly In Retirement* (xxiii) and *Political Lectures* (iii); for the action of magistrates against debating societies see Thale "London Debating Societies" (62); for more recent accounts of Thelwall's involvement with the Society for Free Debate see Mee (153) and Epstein *In Practice* (100).

¹⁰ Felicity Nussbaum observes "Boswell kept memoranda, condensed notes, journals, and revised journals and then transcribed revised journals into *The Life of Johnson* – all varied discourses of a self perpetually in formation that adopts contradictory subject positions" (22).

¹¹ On 14 March 1787 an advertisement placed in *The Gazetteer and New Daily Examiner* mentioned that "The Managers heir [*sic*], with concern, that above a hundred Ladies and Gentlemen were prevented

getting in last Thursday for want of room; they must again beg the Ladies will make a point of coming early.”

¹² There are countless examples, but the one I have in mind is the argument proposed by J.A. Downie.

¹³ I am thinking here of Kenneth Burke’s discussion of the “representative anecdote” that is “supple and complex enough to be representative of the subject matter it is designed to calculate. It must have scope. Yet it must also possess simplicity, in that it is broadly a reduction of the subject matter” (60).

¹⁴ De Castro, Foster and Norman were all antiquarians who gathered extensive collections relating to taverns, inns, and coffeehouses. Frederick Crace (1799-1859) was a London-based interior designer who amassed a vast collection of maps, prints, and drawings relating to London. It was his ambition to provide an illustration of every major building in the city. Fortunately for my purposes he regarded taverns as major buildings and among the collection are plans and drawings of numerous taverns. Towards the end of his life Crace commissioned Thomas Hosmer Shepherd to draw old London buildings before they were destroyed. Among Shepherd’s drawings are a great many illustrations of London taverns of which we would otherwise have no visual record. The Crace Collection is now split between the British Library, which houses the maps and plans and the British Museum, which houses the prints and drawings.

CHAPTER 1: CAPTAIN MORRIS IN FULL GLEE

¹ Mary Say took over the running of the *General Evening Post*, the *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* and the *Craftsman or Say’s Weekly Journal*, following the death of her first husband Charles Say in 1775. She continued to print all three newspapers, with varying degrees of autonomy, until her retirement in around 1810. For a discussion of the extent of the copyright owners control over the newspapers see Haig 276-80.

² In a more recent exploration of this poetic tradition Marty Roth cites an inscription on an Egyptian wine cellar from 2500 B.C. and a song from the *Kojiki*, an eighth-century Japanese chronicle, to demonstrate

that “given the antiquity and widespread distribution of drink poetry, drinking and intoxication may well be one of the founding subjects of lyric poetry” (318).

³ As Marty Roth has pointed out, the Greek poetry written on the subject of intoxication was never written by Anacreon, but the *Anacreontea* consists in a series of poems written by many different writers over several periods. At its very origins it was a false tradition (316-7).

⁴ Pitt’s mother was Hester Grenville who came from a powerful family that had controlled the two parliamentary seats for Buckingham throughout the eighteenth century.

⁵ I have been unable to identify “the Jest,” though I suspect it might be an alternative title for “The Coalition Song”, which suggests that despite rumors to the contrary, Fox was able to fund humor in the song which mocked his coalition with North.

⁶ Breeches, as Anna Clark has described, were an European symbol of male domination and political power (*Struggle For the Breeches*, 68-9).

⁷ Rowlandson, *Reformation – or the Wonderful Effects of a Proclamation!!!*; Gillray, *Presentation of the Mahometan Credentials*; Isaac Cruikshank, *A Peep at the Plenipo-!!!* and *A stroke at the Plenipo or Mary’s mistake*. G.

Cruikshank, *Interior View of the House of God*. See also the anonymous *Duchess’s First Levee*. In a letter to Wm. Stewart, Closeburn, dated “Ellisland, Wednesday evening,” Burns writes—“I go for Ayrshire to-morrow, so cannot have the pleasure of meeting you for some time, but anxious for your spiritual welfare and growth in grace, I enclose you the Plenipo. You will see another, the “Bower of Bliss,” ‘tis the work of a Rev. Doctor of the Church of Scotland. Would to Heaven a few more of them would turn their fiery zeal that way. There they might spend their holy fury, and show the tree by its fruits!!! There, the inbearing workings might give hopeful presages of a new birth!!!! The other two are by the author of the Plenipo” (“Original MSS of Robert Burns” 86-7). “The Plenipotentiary” did not make it into the earliest printed

volumes of the *Merry Muses*, but was first inserted in the Dublin edition of 1832, and included with most subsequent editions.

⁸ There were several competing collections of Morris's songs by various printers, including James Ridgeway, T. Lewis, George Peacock and T. Sutton. In advertisements Ridgeway proudly boasted that his was the only edition sanctioned by Morris. See the *World and Fashionable Advertiser* 7 Nov. 1787. There is an original song sheet in the Cambridge University Madden Collection (Microfilm Reel 12; Frame 8788). J. Fentum printed the lyrics along with the musical score, from his music shop on the Strand (*Collection of Favourite Songs*).

⁹ The MP in question was John George Lambton. A copy of this sheet is held in the British Library ("Great Plenipotentiary").

¹⁰ It is hard to date the song's composition with certainty, but the earliest references to it coincide with the Westminster Election in 1784. But even if the song was composed before that date, illicit sexual influence had been a common theme in the press at least since John Wilkes accused George III of appointing his mother's lover Lord Bute as prime minister. Nevertheless, the idea of "petticoat influence" seems to have consolidated around the figure of the Duchess of Devonshire who became a symbol for wider cultural prejudices.

¹¹ Morris delighted in showing off his classical learning, and frequently uses Latin expressions in his songs, as for example in the song "The Bundle of Proverbs" in which each stanza ends with a Latin motto. See *The Fal-lal Songster*, reprinted in *Bawdy Songbooks* 3: 18-19.

¹² I'm thinking here of John Barrell's discussion of the term "gentleman" in *English Literature in History*, in which he emphasizes that the gentleman was someone who "having no need to follow any determinate occupation, had the potential to comprehend them all" (33). Barrell's discussion is focused on the early part of the century, and he acknowledges that as the century proceeds the professional classes begin to

claim the kind of authority previously attributed to the disinterested viewpoint of the gentleman of leisure. I would want to add to Barrell's discussion that the claim to gentlemanly authority on the part of the professional classes could at times also displace the legitimacy of the landowner's claim to the term.

¹³ A program from October, 1786 offers a typical example. It began with a Haydn overture, followed by a Pleyel symphony, then a "quartetto" also by Pleyel. Johann Cramer then played a Mozart sonata, accompanied by his father, Wilhelm (Wilhelm was a famous violinist and chamber musician to the king; Johann, who was fifteen at the time, was to become a renowned piano player), followed by an oboe concerto performed by John Parke. Thomas Sedgwick then performed an air from Handel's oratorio, *Sampson*, and the concert was concluded by a Haydn Symphony. *General Evening Post*, 16-28 Oct. 1786. Haydn attended the Anacreontic Society in January 1789, at which he directed two of his own overtures. *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 23 Jan. 1789.

¹⁴ Accounts of Anacreontic meetings can be found in the journals of John Marsh, an amateur musician who occasionally performed at the Society in the 1770s (115-6, 253, 304, 400), William Parke a professional oboist (1:80-84), and R.J.S. Stevens an organist (24-8).

¹⁵ For an American perspective on Francis Scott Key's use of the song see Sonneck, Francis, Lichtenwagner, Kouwenhoven and Lawton, and Latimer 330-1.

¹⁶ This was an often reprinted song with numerous variations. I have used the version from the account of the society in the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser*, 22 Mar. 1780.

¹⁷ Thomas Simpkin, the vintner of the Crown and Anchor, who we will encounter again in Chapter 3, is mentioned by name in several reports of the proceedings of the Anacreontics. The *Public Advertiser* on 7 Oct. 1785, for example, wrote: "We cannot conclude without saying of Mr Simkins, that his dinner was excellent; and we sincerely wish, for his own credit, that his wine maybe as good throughout the season as it was on that day." See also *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 9 Dec. 1791.

¹⁸ John's descendent Henry Fentum carried on the family business and was still operating out of the 78 Strand shop in the 1850s (Kidson 46-7).

¹⁹ In the dying days of the Anacreontics, Thomas Simpkin, the proprietor of the Crown and Anchor, apparently took on the expense of the society himself to ensure its survival, presumably not entirely disinterestedly – its continuance was no doubt good for Crown and Anchor business (*Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* 9 Dec. 1791).

CHAPTER 2: EDMUND BURKE IN THE TAVERN

¹ For a helpful genealogy of studies of plebeian radicalism from E.P. Thompson, through Iain McCalman, to Kevin Gilmartin, see Benchimol (51-70).

² The phrase “radical underworld” is taken from McCalman. See also Kevin Gilmartin's phrase “the plebeian tavern underworld,” (“Study to Be Quiet” 494).

³ The full title Burke gave to the work when it was published reads: *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the Proceedings in Certain Societies in London Relative to that Event. In a Letter Intended to have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Paris. By the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*. I cite this work and others by Burke from his collected *Writings*.

⁴ There is some disagreement about the exact dimensions of the room. John Timbs records them as 80'(l) x 33'(w) x 30'(h) (Timbs 2: 274), while the *General Evening Post* of 25 Feb. 1794 listed them in 1794 as 80'(l) x 40'(w). For further illustrations of the interior of the London Tavern see *Illustrated London News* for the dates listed in the “References.”

⁵ “Caryatidæ” are carved human figures supporting the upper moldings of a building in place of columns.

⁶ For the importance of “flow” to eighteenth-century sociability and commerce, see Mee (26).

⁷ Plans of the Paul's Head Tavern in Cateaton Street, and the Thatched House Tavern on St James's Street, can be found in the Crace Collection of the British Library ("Plans").

⁸ For further descriptions of the tavern and its association with fine dining see *Epicure's Almanack* (36); West (99); and Hannay and Wills (73-77).

⁹ For a discussion of this work see Bickham (98-102). The tavern was particularly well-known for its turtle, which were kept in large tanks in the wine cellars, and served as callipee, calipash, or as soup (Farley 22-5; Hannay and Wills 74).

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¹³ Feltham's *Pictures* were published in the year preceding the year of the title, so *The Picture* for 1803, for example, was in fact published in 1802. The question of how frequently women attended taverns in the period is a vexed one, largely due to gaps in the historical record. My research into taverns confirms Gillian Russell's contention that there was a separation between male and female sociability in the period following the Wilkite scandal (6), and certainly there is little evidence of their participation in the politically-inflected "public meetings" for which the London Tavern was principally designed (although see *General Evening Post*, 4-6 Jul. 1776, for an important exception). There is evidence, however, that women frequently attended "entertainments" (most often balls) at the tavern in the 1760s and 1770s (see for example *Public Advertiser*, 10 Nov. 1768, and *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 18 Feb. 1769, *London*

Evening Post, 19-21 Mar. 1776), and if Feltham's suggestion that the London Tavern was suitable for the "accommodation of families" is to be believed, the lack of evidence for women's attendance at the tavern in the 1780s and 1790s might be a reflection of the newspapers' lack of interest in reporting on "private" affairs, while they assiduously reported on "public dinners." The tavern's association with a specifically masculine sociability, might then be a representational effect, rather than a historical reality.

¹⁴ Feltham's association of "taverns" with the fashionable and political London scene is typical, and is a holdover from the much stricter hierarchy of inns, taverns, and alehouses of the early modern period. While the practical distinctions between the various genres of public houses had certainly blurred throughout the eighteenth century, with both taverns (which had formerly sold mainly wine) and alehouses (which had formerly sold mainly ale) now serving a wide variety of drinks, the distinction between the *reputation* (i.e. the assumptions engendered in representations) of the relatively respectable tavern and the far less reputable alehouse remain broadly intact throughout the 1790s. Examples are too numerous to catalogue, but see Patrick Colquhoun's hierarchy of public houses in his *Observations and Facts Relative to Licensed Ale-houses* (4), or the statement by one of Robert Bage's protagonists who complains that the poor have "learned in an alehouse to imitate, at humble distance, the luxury of the tavern" (1: 82). For a history of the legal distinctions between various public houses see Hunter (65-82).

¹⁵ Several other older taverns, including the Thatched House Tavern, also had large assembly rooms added after the model established by the London Tavern. The Paul's Head, the only tavern other than the London Tavern which appears on both Roach's and Feltham's lists was an older tavern, records of which date back to the 1720s. Henry Angelo, a fencing master, lived at the Paul's Head from 1802, and described it as a "well-appointed tavern" (Angelo 2: 268). A floor plan of the Paul's-head, dated 1777, can be found in the Crace Collection at the British Library ("Plans,"), revealing it to be substantial (63'-33'), but smaller than the London Tavern, and subdivided into several smaller rooms. It silently disappears

from the *Picture of London* in the 1810s, but re-emerges as a radical assembly hall, in which the Friends of Richard Carlile met in 1822—though it is unclear whether this was the same building (Lillywhite 440-1).

¹⁶ Despite their much older history, taverns might be regarded as part of the “proliferation of conversational spaces” that Jon Mee suggests occurred in the later part of the eighteenth century. One effect of this proliferation was the suppression of older forms of sociability that no longer fit the vision of the metropolis as vigorous, respectable, and productive (81).

¹⁷ Merchants, Smith goes on to argue, can only operate in large towns such as London, because only in such places can the merchant find the “commerce,” “correspondence,” and “intelligence” needed for such an endeavor. The London Tavern, and the other new taverns were built to facilitate precisely these qualities.

¹⁸ *Lloyd's Evening Post*, 24-27 Feb. 1769.

¹⁹ For an alternative account of the Society for the Supporters of the Bill of Rights, see Black, (10-14).

²⁰ Contributions came from the West Indies and North America, as well throughout England (Brewer, 234).

²¹ “Porridge” connoted any soup or stew, not specifically the oatmeal breakfast matter currently associated with the word.

²² For Burke’s attendance at these meetings see *World* 20 Mar. 1789; *World* 15 Mar. 1790.

²³ As numerous commentators have pointed out, the indefinite article is important. Burke had in mind “a” particular multitude; he is not referring to “the” entire class of uneducated.

²⁴ The first use of “speculation” in this specifically financial sense listed by the OED is from 1774, but it was not yet sufficiently widespread to be included as a definition in the 1785 edition of Johnson’s *Dictionary*, which understands the term as a form of spectatorship or seeing, and provides six definitions, but none pertain to finance: 1. Examination by the eye; view. 2. Examiner, spy; 3. Mental view,

intellectual examination; contemplation. 4. A train of thoughts formed by meditation. 5. Mental scheme not reduced to practice. 6. Power of sight.

²⁵ For a broader context for Burke's "opposition to the methods of philosophical and scientific logic," see Simpson (19).

²⁶ For an earlier critique of Habermas along similar lines see Lyotard (60-7).

²⁷ At issue here is the definition of "public," which theorizations of the public sphere tend to associate with "openness," that is, available to all-comers irrespective of wealth and status. The tavern "public meetings," however, are far from "open" in this way, instead they are "public" in the sense that they are open to anyone who can afford the price of admittance—in effect monitoring who can have a say in those discussions. Burke meanwhile, understands "public" to refer to state power, and is at pains to point out the distinction between "public meetings," and political decision-making. Tavern meetings are for him meetings of private individuals who have no right to make public declarations on matters of national importance. For a discussion of the evolving meanings of "public," and the confusions this led to in the 1790s, see Barrell *Spirit of Despotism* (95-102).

CHAPTER 3: CROWN AND ANCHOR DREAMS

¹ As Barrell has discussed, the major east-west thoroughfares of London – the Strand, Oxford Street, and Holborn – connected the fashionable West End to the City, theaters, and courts in the east of the city, passing through an otherwise labyrinthine network of narrow lanes and alleys (Barrell, *Spirit of Despotism* 27).

² The land and tavern, as built by Simpkin, was conveyed to the Duke for £760, and then leased back to Simpkin for an annual rent of £28. Warne 162.

³ The *World and Fashionable Advertiser* reported in April 1787 that the room measured 87 x 75 x 35, and had cost Simpkin 7000l to build. *World and Fashionable Advertiser*, 17 Apr. 1787.

⁴ For plans of the tavern in 1852 see Warne 158. For a description of the interior of the tavern see Parolin 111-2, Chancellor 333-6, *Epicure's Almanack*, 115.

⁵ Three freehold farms were sold at the Crown and Anchor by auction on 10 December 1790. See *E. Johnson's British Gazette and Sunday Monitor*, 5 Dec. 1790

⁶ All information about club meetings has been gathered from newspaper reports and advertisements.

⁷ Between January 1790 and April 1793 the club met at the Crown and Anchor twenty-two times and the London Tavern seven times, so while it is not true to say that the Whig Club only met at the Crown and Anchor in the 1790s, there was a close association between the club and the tavern.

⁸ The *Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser* and the *Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser* frequently printed such "official" reports.

⁹ Rule XI states: "That the secretary shall remind every member by letter, of the day of each meeting, by sending the same addressed to his usual place of residence; and also shall summons extraordinary meetings in like manner from time to time, on receiving a requisition for that purpose signed by seven members at least" (*Whig Club v.*)

¹⁰ The list of stewards was as follows: William Bosville, Capt. Broome, John Barker Church, William Cunningham, John Fazakerly, John Hollis, John Jeffries, Robert Merry, James Milnes, Arthur Piggott, Nicholas Raynsford, Samuel Rogers, George Rous (who acted as chairman for the meeting), Samuel Shore, Richard Sharpe, Robert Slade, William Smith, Joseph Spurrell, Sir George Staunton, Samuel Toulmin, William Towgoc, Benjamin Vaughan, and Cecil Wray.

¹¹ Merry wrote an Ode for the anniversary dinner, which was set which was set to music by Storage, and performed by Sedgwick, with spoken parts declaimed by Seward (Mee, "Magician No Conjuror," 44).

Both Merry and Seward are reported to have been at both the Crown and Anchor and the Shakespeare's Head (often abbreviated to the "Shakespeare"), which were only around half a mile apart, leaving open the possibility that Tooke had joined them at both venues.

¹² For discussions of Pitt's involvement with the Association for Preserving Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers see Black 233-274, Duffy, and Gilmartin, *Writing Against Revolution* 38-9.

¹³ Grose defines Tyburn Top as "A wig with the foretop combed over the eyes in a knowing style; such being much worn by the gentlemen pads, scamps, divers, and other knowing hands." Francis Grose, *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, 2nd edn. (London: S. Hooper, 1788).

¹⁴ In the trial, treason was understood to be a more serious crime because it was premeditated (as all published text must be), whereas sedition was the articulation of "loose words," which may have been spoken in states of heightened emotion, or in Frost's case, while drunk, and may not have carried the same intent ascribed to written words (Barrell *The Spirit of Despotism* 83, 99)

¹⁵ Godwin records that he read "Inchbald's Romance" in his diaries on 27 and 30 January, 1794. He subsequently wrote a letter to Inchbald (again undated, but supposed by Pamela Clemit to have been written on 30-31 Jan. 1794) which suggests that the draft was unfinished at this point (Godwin *Letters* 94-5). He read the completed manuscript twice from 24 - 26, and from 27 - 30 December 1795 (*Diary* n.p.).

CHAPTER 4: SILENCING THE ALEHOUSE BALLAD

¹ For a recent discussion of the problems of the "popular" see Connell and Leask (3-48).

² My thanks to Michael Nicholson for drawing my attention to this review.

³ Elsewhere Place gives a detailed description of the layout of his father's house. The tap room "was a square room, the door was in the middle of one of the sides and the fire-place in the middle of another side. The benches were affixed to the sides They were covered with leather and stuffed, there were as

many mahogany tables as were necessary in front of the benches. A grate of a particular construction was made and the jambs of the chimney were cut away that the heat from the fire might not be obstructed.”

⁴ *Proceeding of the Associated for Preserving Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers*; No 1. (London: J Sewell, 1793) 1-2.

⁵ William Metcalfe’s final spy report from September 1794, just before he was revealed as a spy during the investigations into the Pop-Gun Plot, claims that Joseph Burks, the secretary of the LCS, sold a Captain Morris song at a combined meeting of divisions 6 and 11. The report does not mention the name of the song, and while many of his anti-Pitt compositions might have appealed to LCS sensibilities, Morris had recently written a number of ballads on the subject of the war with France, such as “A New Irish Song,” first published in October 1793 by the *Gazetteer and New Daily Examiner* in response to the defeat to the French in the Siege of Dunkirk. For Metcalfe’s report see Thale *Selections* 226.

⁶ In 1796 William Bosville paid for a printing of his “popular” song, “O’er the Vine Covered Hills,” with the music, to be attached to the second issue of the LCS Magazine. See report from spy Powell on the LCS Executive Committee, 9 Dec. 1796, PC 1/23/A38 quoted in Thale *Selections* 378. See also the ballad “On The French Revolution” (*London Corresponding Society* 3:182).

⁷ Thompson included sixty-three toasts in his *Tribute to Liberty* the third of which was “RIGHTS OF WOMAN!!!” which was behind only THOMAS PAINE!!! and “RIHTS OF MAN!!!” [sic]. Other toasts included “The female patriots of Great Britain.”

⁸ Thompson was not alone in his preoccupation with the revolutionary potential of song, indeed it was a common trope of revolutionary millenarianism. Thomas Spence’s “Jubilee Hymn” (1793) written to the same tune, similarly claimed the sound would be the instrument of revolution: “Hark! how the trumpet sounds! / Proclaims the land around / The Jubilee!.” Spence was arrested four times for writing of this

kind, in 1792, 1793 and 1801 for Seditious libel, and in 1794 for Treason. He was also arrested in 1798 for his involvement with the United Irishmen.

⁹ On the 24th of January 1793 a meeting of the general committee was interrupted by two gentlemen representing Mrs Thompson, whose house had apparently been searched in the night, asking for money that she felt she was owed, so she could pay off debts and join her husband in France. The committee decided it had no obligation to pay her money in its official capacity, although many of the members offered her assistance individually, and encouraged other divisions to do the same. Thompson published his *Tribune* the following year, and by 1796 was apparently a successful bookseller in France. The fate of his family, however, is unclear. See Thale *Selections*, 41-2, 44-5.

¹⁰ Goddard, an artist by trade, had been employed by the LCS to make medals celebrating the acquittal of Daniel Isaac Eaton for seditious libel. Eaton had been arrested in December 1793 for printing Thelwall's allegory "King Chanticleer," which depicted a cockerel running around with his head chopped off. Eaton had had been acquitted in part because the allegory never explicitly made the connection between the bird and George III, and so the defense, led by John Gurney, was able to subvert the indictment by implying that it was Attorney General who was guilty of seditious libel for imagining the cockerel to be George, which the author had, he claimed, never intended. This was seen as a major, though short-lived, triumph by the London radicals. See Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death*, 108-112; Barrell and Mee 1:259-322. Goddard's relationship with the LCS became fraught when he was involved in a dispute over payment for the die from which the medals were to be struck. Thale, *LCS Selections*, 154-5.

¹¹ The following account of the trial is based on Sibley's transcriptions, though I have also used Cobbett's *State Trials* where indicated. There are some substantial differences between these two transcriptions, a helpful reminder that we cannot take these as authentic or accurate accounts of court proceedings. Rather

they should be viewed as a kind of literary genre, by which radical ideas might be disseminated, motivated in part by the sympathies, and political convictions of the shorthand taker and publisher.

¹² In the version of the trial from Howell's *State Trials*, this becomes the more fulsome: "I cannot repeat a verse, or a line, or a syllable." (26: 977).

¹³ This joke makes more sense in *State Trial's* version, which quotes the whole chorus, as follows:

Plant, plant the tree, fair freedom's tree,
Midst dangers, wounds, and slaughter,
Each Patriot's breast its soil shall be,
And tyrant's blood its water.

For the whole song see Barrell *Imagining* 657-9.

¹⁴ This song was to become a key piece of evidence in the Trial of Robert Crosfield for his involvement with the "Pop-Gun Plot" in May 1796. See Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death*, 445-503, esp. 495-6. Barrell points out that among the song's admirers were William Pitt, and William Windham, who sang a stanza of it in the house of Commons, and that Hester Piozzi wrote an alternate, loyalist version. Barrell includes one version of the song as an appendix (p. 657-9).

¹⁵ Several copies of the three-song sheet can be found in the National Archives TS 24/3/169. For Thelwall's reprints see *Tribune* 1:166-8, 190-92, 338-340. The songs were discussed both in Hardy's and Thelwall's trial, but never read out in court, which Thelwall took to mean that the prosecution preferred to allow their notoriety to go unchallenged rather than actually reading them.

¹⁶ Howell's *State Trials* circumvents this problem by assuming that the prosecution's presentation of the printed text was in order to ascertain whether "God Save the Rights of Man" was one of the three songs by Thewall that Goddard owned. This, however, makes little sense in the context of a line of questioning

that had already discussed “God Save the Rights of Man” separately, with Goddard at pains to distance himself from the song, while professing ownership of Thelwall’s songs.

¹⁷ Notably neither More nor Plumptre advocates total abstinence from alcohol, but rather moderation, so that “drunken carousing” is forbidden in Tom White’s kitchen, but this only ensures that White has plenty of cider to offer the poor of the community on feast days.

¹⁸ This was the well-known song that Hogarth depicts a ballad singer reciting in the orgy scene at the Rose Tavern in *The Rake’s Progress*. “Joke” or “Joak” was an eighteenth-century word for vagina (Roberts 137-40).

¹⁹ “Morgan Rattler” was one of the flash songs that Francis Place mentioned in his “Specimens of Songs Sung about the Streets of London” Add MSS. 27825 fo.151, though he claimed to have forgotten the words. A version of the song, which tells the story of a poor man who gets robbed by a London prostitute, appears in Fairburn 1:430.

²⁰ This is amply illustrated by the nineteenth century ballads in the Madden Collection at the University of Cambridge, but see also Hindley.

¹ By the 1815 edition the old man’s speech is deleted entirely. See *Lyrical Ballads* 190, and Makdisi, *Making England Western*.

CHAPTER 5: ANACREONTICS AND ANACHRONISM

¹ Scott would later revise his opinion of Ireland: “There is much less exaggerated about the Irish than is to be expected. Their poverty is not exaggerated – it is on the extreme verge of human misery – their cottages would scarce serve for pig sties even in Scotland – and their rags seem the very refuse of a ragshop and are disposed on their bodies with such ingenious variety of wretchedness that you would think nothing but some sort of perverted taste could have assembled so many shreds together. You are

constantly fearful that some knot or loop will give and place the individual before you in all the primitive simplicity of Paradise.” (Scott *Journal* 20 Nov. 1825 3-4).

² Scott quotes Morris’s song “The Toper’s Apology” in a letter to Maria Edgeworth in 1815. He quotes the same poem in a letter to Lady Louisa Stuart in 1826. Scott, *Letters*, 4:31, 9:501.

³ Lukács’s draws his discussion from Hegel, who defines necessary anachronism as “The inner substance of what is represented remains the same, but the developed culture in representing and unfolding the substantial necessitated a change in the expression and form of the latter” (Lukács 61).

⁴ For recent scholarship on John Rich see Joncus and Barlow.

⁵ The society met in a back room of the old Covent Garden Theater until its destruction in 1808, whereupon they moved to the Bedford Coffee-house, then the Old Lyceum Theatre, then the Lyceum Tavern in the Strand, then the Bedford Coffee-house again until a purpose-built suite of rooms were built for the Society under a new roof put in at the Lyceum theater in 1838.

⁶ This was a much reprinted song, and there are several variations across numerous editions. This is the version to be found in the 24th edition, which for the sake of consistency will be the version I will cite throughout, unless otherwise stated. Compilers of Morris’s songs updated each edition with his most recent compositions, so generally speaking the later editions are the most complete. The 24th edition is, with the exception of *Lyra Urbanica*, the latest collection I have been able to locate, though several later songs circulated as individual prints. Morris’s bawdy verses, however, are often removed from later editions, so the earlier editions remain indispensable.

⁷ For details about life expectancy, see Wrigley. The figures for life expectancy are skewed considerably by high mortality rates, nevertheless surviving to the age of 92 demonstrates a remarkable resilience on Morris’s part.

⁸ This version of the poem was printed in the *Whitehall Evening Post* in celebration of Morris winning the Gold Cup. It is the earliest printing of the poem I have been able to find, though it was widely circulated afterwards. It appeared in a substantially altered form in Morris's *Lyra Urbanica*, under the English title "To My Cup." This version omitted the second stanza quoted above.

⁹ This song was frequently reprinted under the title "Reasons for Drinking." This version of the song is taken from a quarto droll that has an image depicting five well-dressed men sitting around a rectangular table. The print claims that the song was "Sung by Mr. Dignum, Mr Taylor & Mr Munden" to the tune of Charles Dibdin's "Jolly Dick the Lamp Lighter" and was the self-proclaimed first printing of the song. A colored impression of this print can be found in the Norman Collection in the London Metropolitan library. An alternative version of this song was included in the *Lyra Urbanica* (and reproduced in Arnold 51-3).

¹⁰ William Almack's club, known as "Almack's" began as a tavern in No 49 Pall Mall, in 1759 then expanded to include a private society next door at number 50. In 1765 this evolved into two clubs one of which met in the tavern, then moved to St James's Street in 1778, where it became Brooks's. The other, which met at number 50 became known as Boodle's. In 1764 Almack expanded into new buildings on nearby Kings Street, which became known as the Almack's Assembly rooms. As Gillian Russell has shown it is significant that when a Ladies Club was opened in 1770 it was at the Pall Mall address of Boodle's, at the heart of masculine political sociability, not in the Assembly rooms which were understood as more feminine (*Women Sociability and Theatre* 65-79). For the buildings of Pall Mall see *Survey of London: Vols 29 and 30*: 322-426.

¹¹ The classic study of this trope is of course, Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City*. For more recent discussions of romantic-period conceptions of the town-country dynamic see Chandler and Gilmartin and Barrell, "Rus in Urbe."

¹² The adaption was made by John Philip Kemble and the performance was given at the Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, on Monday, 25 June 1821.

¹³ My thanks to Yasmin Solomonescu for bringing this manuscript to my attention. For more on the Thelwall Derby manuscripts see Thomspson “Overlooking History”.

¹⁴ Yorik was, of course, similarly noted for his “infinite jest,” his “excellent fancy” and his “flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar.” *Hamlet* 5.1:73-86.

¹⁵ Entry from December 17, 1838. Moore, *Works*, 7:248.

¹⁶ They were eventually published as *Lyra Urbanica* by Richard Bentley in 1840. An intriguing note in the Richard Bentley Papers at the British Library indicates that in 1837 Bentley spent £5210 on acquiring “Capt. Morris Fresh Melodies &c adp^d by T Moore.” It is hard to draw conclusions from such a cryptic note but it seems possible that Moore acquired the still untitled manuscripts from Morris’s widow personally before selling them on to Bentley. It is also possible that Moore had a hand in preparing the manuscript for publication, though there is no record of this in his diary or letters. See British Library Richard Bentley Papers, Vol 6. Add MSS 46565 fo 22.

¹⁷ See, for example, *The Coal Hole Companion* and *The Cider Cellar Songster*. A little later was Evans’s *Supper Rooms*, extensively described by George Sala (330-44), and H. Scott (ch. 7).

¹⁸ In chapter 2 of *Life in London* Egan describes how hundreds of individuals in the Metropolis find their pleasure “in diving night after night into the Cellar to hear a good chaunt: although emitting volumes of smoke like a furnace, and crowded together like the Black Hole in Calcutta” (27-8). For an important reevaluation of Egan’s work see Dart (107-136).

¹⁹ William Pulleyn, *The Etymological Compendium, or Portfolio of Origins and Inventions* 2nd ed. (London: Tegg, 1830), 227.

²⁰ Some accounts of the Coal Hole claim that it opened in 1815, see for example W. Macqueen-Pope *The Melodies Linger On: the Story of Music Hall* (London : W. H. Allen, [1950]). It was however, listed in Feltham's *Picture of London for 1803* (see below), and probably opened in approximately 1801.

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