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## “STUDY TO BE QUIET”: HANNAH MORE AND THE INVENTION OF CONSERVATIVE CULTURE IN BRITAIN

BY KEVIN GILMARTIN

Although not as widely known and anthologized as *Village Politics*, Hannah More's 1795 *History Of Tom White the Postilion* and its sequel, *The Way to Plenty*, are in many respects more typical of the kind of writing through which her Cheap Repository Tracts (1795–1798) achieved a leading role in the antiradical and antirevolutionary campaigns of the 1790s.<sup>1</sup> For this reason, *Tom White* can provide a useful preliminary map of More's reactionary fiction, and of the challenge it presents to our understanding of the literary history of Romantic-period Britain, particularly the impact that reactionary movements had upon cultural politics in an age of revolution. The *Tom White* series is typical, to begin with, in its heterogeneous narrative form (the dialogue of *Village Politics* is less characteristic of More's work), and in the pressure it brings to bear upon the social world More believed her readers inhabited. Like many of the Cheap Repository Tracts, *Tom White* serves up a moral parable that rests, in the first instance, upon a precisely situated sense of rural virtue:

Tom White was one of the best drivers of a post-chaise on the Bath road. Tom was the son of an honest labourer at a little village in Wiltshire: he was an active industrious boy, and as soon as he was old enough he left his father, who was burthened with a numerous family, and went to live with farmer Hodges, a sober worthy man in the same village. He drove the waggon all the week; and on Sundays, though he was now grown up, the farmer required him to attend the Sunday-school, carried on under the inspection of Dr. Shepherd, the worthy vicar, and always made him read his Bible in the evening after he had served his cattle; and would have turned him out of his service if he had ever gone to the ale-house for his own pleasure. (5:219–20)

While a sober employer and the weekly round of labor and piety would seem to be adequate security for Tom's virtue, the attractions of the nearby “Bath road” soon lure the young hero from the simple

discipline of the wagon to a more glamorous career as a postchaise driver, and from there to the Black Bear public house and a litany of corrupt habits: “oaths and wicked words,” “drunkenness,” “fives, cards, cudgel-playing, laying wagers, and keeping loose company” (5:221–24). Taverns and public houses, strung out along the avenues of transport and communication that linked village and metropolitan life, occupy a critical position in the distinctive cultural geography of the Cheap Repository Tracts. In the Black Bear of reality and imagination, the residue of morally offensive popular recreations catalogued in *Tom White* met emerging patterns of popular literacy and radical organization, which More had noticed earlier in *Village Politics*, in the form of the “mischief” introduced by the Painite Tim Standish when he threatened to “corrupt the whole club” at the Rose and Crown tavern (1:347).<sup>2</sup> For this reason, antipathy to the plebeian tavern underworld provided More with a ready meeting point for her own evangelical moral reform project and the more narrowly political campaigns of loyalist organizations like John Reeves’s Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers.<sup>3</sup> If Tom White’s departure from village honesty begins at the Black Bear, it culminates at another public house, when a “foolish contest” among the young post-chaise drivers to see who “would be at the Red Lion first—for a pint” (5:225) ends in catastrophe. Tom emerges from the wreck with a broken leg and a chastened conscience, and the period of his recuperation at a London charity hospital brings to a close the tract’s initial sequence of lively incidents, opening up a very different narrative and spiritual “space for repentance” (5:230). As his early Sunday School education returns to him with the added force of experience, “Tom began to find that *his strength was perfect weakness*,” and remorse quickly yields conversion and reform. From London, he retraces the course of his decline, returning first to the Bath road, where as “*careful Tom*” (5:235) he “soon grew rich for one in his station” (5:235), and then “to his native village” (5:235), where he purchases a farm and marries “a young woman of excellent character, who had been bred up by the vicar’s lady” (5:238). By the end of the first part of the tract Tom has returned to Dr. Shepherd’s fold and become the respectable Farmer White.

Thus far, the parable of fall and redemption that forms the core of *The History of Tom White* only implies the range of moral categories and social controls that More would extend to her characters and her readers, yet this is by no means the end of the story. Like most of the ballads, tales, hymns, and allegories that she published over the

course of a counterrevolutionary decade, *Tom White* is informed by the serial design of the Cheap Repository, and as the second part, *The Way to Plenty*, more closely engages the immediate famine conditions of 1795, narrative assumes a more heterogeneous form.<sup>4</sup> The ordered plot of the first part—circular in structure, focusing on the spiritual development of an individual, and punctuated by scriptural quotations and pious reflections—gives way to a less coherent series of separately titled episodes: “The Roof-Raising,” “The Sheep Shearing,” “The Hard Winter,” “The White Loaf,” “The Parish Meeting,” “Rice Milk,” “Rice Pudding,” and “A Cheap Stew.” The first of these programmatic incidents opens with a perfunctory gesture towards Tom’s life and narrative continuity—“Some years after he was settled, he built a large new barn” (5:249)—but subsequent transitions from section to section convey the tract out of the timeless world of the moral parable, and into a more immediate and circumstantial present day. “The Hard Winter” brings the reader down to “the famous cold winter of the present year, 1795,” and “The White Loaf” then explores the consequences of that disastrous season within the context of a government and social hierarchy contending with unprecedented economic distress and popular discontent:

One day, it was about the middle of last July, when things seemed to be at the dearest, and the rulers of the land had agreed to set the example of eating nothing but coarse bread, Dr. Shepherd read, before sermon in the church, their public declaration, which the magistrates of the county sent him, and which they had also signed themselves. Mrs. White of course was at church, and commended it mightily. Next morning the Doctor took a walk over to the farmer’s, in order to settle further plans for the relief of the parish. (5:265–66)<sup>5</sup>

Eventually, the narrative energy derived from a tale of Tom’s spiritual fall and redemption dissipates entirely, and is replaced in the climactic “Parish Meeting” episode by the polemical force of Dr. Shepherd’s spirited harangue against the prevailing “*bad management*” of cottage households, apparently the real reason for popular distress (5:271). As the logic of the tract becomes increasingly programmatic and pedagogical, More exercises her remarkable powers of discursive assimilation, taking on everything from actual public resolutions about poor relief to Mrs. White’s “dainty receipts” (5:277) for rice milk, rice pudding, and cheap stews and soups (5:268–69). The nominal hero of the tract series increasingly yields the foreground to his wife and Dr. Shepherd, and in the final episodes he

must literally “beg leave to say a word to the men” (5:278) in order to advance community reform. Ironically, his address to the men neither reaffirms the centrality of his experience nor reclaims his patriarchal authority, but instead provides clear evidence of the way that feminized controls upon household management, the central issue in the tract’s denouement, will dissolve the moral risks of his own masculine domain: “If you abstain from the ale-house,” he tells the assembled men, “you may, many of you, get a little one-way beer at home” (5:278). In gesturing from public house to private home, Tom also makes explicit the political stakes of moral reform. His claim that “the number of public houses in many a parish brings on more hunger and rags than all the taxes in it” (5:279) is a calculated refutation of the radical view that popular misery resulted from the excessive taxation required by corrupt government.

What More has done in the second half of *Tom White*, through the collaboration of vicar, housewife, and husband in organizing locally what the “magistrates” and “rulers of the land” have determined nationally, is to shift her writing away from the narrative conventions of a moral parable, and towards a dense fictional representation of her own public enterprise.<sup>6</sup> Plot gets subordinated to schematic treatments of the material and institutional conditions for moral reform, nowhere more clearly than in the recipe sections (“Rice Milk,” “Rice Pudding,” “A Cheap Stew”) with which *Tom White* concludes. Put another way, where the first part of the tract explored Tom’s moral and spiritual experience, with only passing attention paid to the institutional agents (schools, publishers, associations, hospitals) conditioning that experience, the second part is concerned above all with the social mechanisms that frame Tom’s newly acquired agency in determining the experience of others, an agency that is increasingly shared out to his wife and the vicar. In More’s fictional universe, this condition of having acquired moral influence over the lives of others turns out to be the surest index of individual regeneration. To be sure, the concern for personal agency in *Tom White* does sometimes mystify the institutional operations of the Cheap Repository and the Sunday school movement by fictionally privileging less formal networks for communication and social change. The recipes and household tips that achieve mass circulation through this tract are passed along more casually within it: “I shall write all down as soon as I get home,” Dr. Shepherd announces in response to Mrs. White’s domestic advice, “and I will favour any body with a copy of these receipts who will call at my house” (5:277). The tract closes, too, under the

nostalgic sign of a popular proverb that valorizes individual initiative and inherited wisdom: “Let us now at last adopt that good old maxim, *every one mend one*” (5:282). Yet as so often in More, such gestures towards the authority of the past and the integrity of the individual or local are overwhelmed by the emphatic positioning of her characters within the present framework of an aggressive national movement to reform the social order. The maxim about individual initiative may be old, but its adoption would evidently count as an innovation, since it is “now at last” achieved through the collaborative and institutionally orchestrated work of the narrative agents of moral reform.

The shift from conventional parable to a more ambitious fictional synthesis of the whole machinery of moral reform involves More in a complex and frankly promotional set of references to her own activity. In lending its support to an evangelical campaign against luxuries like white bread in periods of distress, *Tom White* indexes More’s other printed works: “Our blessed Saviour ate barley bread, you know, as we are told in the last month’s Sunday reading of the Cheap Repository, which I hope you have all heard” (5:270). There is more subtle evidence, too, of the way that informal practices and haphazard village conversations about moral propriety might assume a more organized and disciplinary form, quite unlike the fantasy of a world remade through a casual call at the vicarage for a neighbor’s recipe. Dr. Shepherd’s “common custom” (5:239) of visiting the celebrations that follow a wedding ceremony, for example, is recommended as a form of community surveillance, since “the expectation that the vicar might possibly drop in, in his walks, on these festivities, often restrained excessive drinking, and improper conversation” (5:239–40). Evangelical enterprise surfaces as a form of discipline again later in the tract, when those cottagers “who wished to buy” rice at the “reduced rates” made possible by subscription “were ordered to come to the farm on the Tuesday evening” for a ritual disbursement. The shift here from the volition of the poor (“wished”) to the command of the wealthy (“ordered”) indicates with unusual clarity how middle-class provision worked to establish material incentives (in this instance, cheap rice) which, if accepted, implied a form of consent to the revised social hierarchy that Dr. Shepherd and the Whites embody. This glimpse into the contractual foundations of a political economy of charitable relief vividly confirms Dorice Elliott’s argument that More treated charity as a form of exchange, in which the female philanthropic benefactor acquires “the right and responsibility . . . to superintend those she relieves.”<sup>7</sup> The stakes of any

transaction between provider and consumer of relief rise further still when we learn that “Dr. Shepherd dropped in at the same time” as the rice was distributed, no doubt by design, so that “when Mrs. White had done weighing,” the ritual of elite provision can be reinforced by a pastoral harangue about domestic management (5:269). The “fresh subscription” for poor relief promised at the end of the tract guarantees that an updated contract between rich and poor will be renewed, its disciplinary clauses formalized by a strict “rule of giving” which, in effect, punishes the unregenerate by exclusively rewarding those of steady habits: “We will not give to sots, gamblers, and Sabbath-breakers” (5:279).

These interventions in the moral comportment of the poor may seem remote from the political considerations familiar to readers of *Village Politics*, but More makes it clear throughout *Tom White* that there is a direct link between political unrest and the complaints that “Amy Grumble” and other characters raise (to no effect) against the discipline of a new domestic economy. Dr. Shepherd begins his climactic sermon on diet and household management with a sharp warning about “idle, evil-minded people, who are on the watch for the public distresses,” so that “they may benefit themselves by disturbing the public peace” with “riot and drunkenness” (5:269). Rice pudding may seem a feeble hedge against Jacobin revolution, but More and her collaborators firmly believed that political unrest is what happens when people are not careful about what they eat. Her tales of domestic improvement were clearly meant to inoculate the poor against revolutionary discontent, although, once again, they mystify the process in order to deflect the perception that the author might be conducting a revolution of her own: the ambitious and highly mediated designs of the Cheap Repository are represented within *Tom White* by relatively informal modes of community intercourse. Rather than appending the final sequence of recipes to the tract in the form of a list, as she sometimes did, More works to integrate them into the narrative, through the device of a spontaneous village discussion inspired by the vicar’s carefully staged reprimands about luxury.

The culmination of *Tom White* in a systematic reform of cottage management, which aligns Mrs. White’s domestic expertise with Dr. Shepherd’s pastoral authority, and with a “public declaration” about diet issued by “the rulers of the land,” provides compelling evidence for the case made by a number of feminist scholars that More’s decisive intervention in British society was to advance responsible

household management, a feminized version of the ancient model of *oikonomia*, as the central principle for the management of national affairs.<sup>8</sup> When these principles of reform are applied to domestic matters, as at the close of *Tom White*, they often arrive under the nostalgic sign of restoring lost or corrupted household practices, in part to mitigate the challenge that a new feminine authority posed to masculine conventions about politics and public life. Yet there were limits to More's accommodating spirit, and in the last analysis the Cheap Repository made little real effort to represent household reform as the recovery of some past phase of cottage life. In the sequence of tracts that opened with *The Cottage Cook, or Mrs. Jones's Cheap Dishes*, the recently widowed middle-class reformer, Mrs. Jones, determines "that baking at home would be one step towards restoring the good old management" (4:342) among local cottagers, which would in turn allow the community to negotiate a period of high food prices without popular unrest.<sup>9</sup> However, because "the new bad management" has left most cottages without ovens, Mrs. Jones procures subscriptions for "a large parish oven" (4:342), and the result looks less like a restoration of the old order than the introduction of a new system of central community provision: "To this oven, at a certain hour, three times a week, the elder children carried their loaves which their mothers had made at home, and paid a halfpenny, or a penny according to their size, for the baking" (4:347–48). Breadmaking now begins in the privacy of the laborer's cottage, but is completed within the institutional framework of middle-class moral reform. This hybrid ritual (public and private, common and elite) may seem curious, but it is typical of the way female evangelical enterprise participated in "the inevitable re-negotiation of the apparently fixed public/private, male/female division," by intruding its own quasipublic operations into the domestic life of the poor, and by inventing collective rituals which drew that life out into a public arena, making the manners and habits of ordinary subjects regularly available to the inspection and supervision of their superiors.<sup>10</sup>

If the proper management of the domestic household was More's model for national affairs, this was in part because the cottage or home (stipulated now as an observable domain) seemed to her the safest place for labor and leisure. The consumption of alcohol provides a revealing case in point: recall the suggestion in *Tom White* that men who ought to "abstain from the ale-house" might with less risk "get a little one-way beer at home." As she and her fictional proxies moved outside the domestic sphere and targeted riskier

public habits, their interventions became more aggressively revisionist and controlling, without even modest gestures towards the authority of the “good old.” Here we can usefully return to the career of Tom White himself. I have so far emphasized the way the second part of the tract loses interest in his life and departs from the conventions of a redemption narrative in order to encompass wider institutional and material considerations (in the form of recipes, sermons, speeches, publications, and subscriptions). Yet the first part of the tract is by no means innocent of the collective conditions for individual development. The role of Tom’s Sunday school education in his conversion provides the occasion for the tract’s first openly self-promotional gesture, as the author interrupts the tale to call the reader’s attention to this “encouragement . . . for rich people to give away Bibles and good books” (5:230). And while a lineage of rural virtue is no doubt the point of Tom’s first appearance, as “the son of an honest labourer at a little village in Wiltshire,” this rural world has from the outset been penetrated by the enterprising spirit associated with “the Sunday-school, carried on under the inspection of Dr. Shepherd.” The entire course of the conversion narrative is determined by More’s commitment to cosmopolitan middle-class enterprise as a remedy for the moral lapses of the rural poor. For while the tale is mapped along the metropolitan “Bath road,” it is nevertheless clear that moral development cannot simply be gauged by proximity to village or city. Far from marking the depth of corruption into which the hero falls, the metropolitan center serves as a pivot for recovery, since the “space for repentance” lies in “one of those excellent hospitals with which London abounds” (5:226, 230).<sup>11</sup> If the Bath road transmits the vices associated with the Black Bear and the Red Lion, it is also a conduit for the evangelical enterprise and charitable capital that flow throughout the narrative. For More, redemption and corruption both depend upon national and local relations. When he returns at last to the village of his birth, Tom does not discover the untainted source of his own virtue, but rather a profoundly compromised social order upon which to unleash his own newly acquired zeal for reform. Before yielding the stage to the collaborative enterprise of Mrs. White and Dr. Shepherd, Farmer White undertakes his own vigorous campaign against the residual evils of rural popular culture:

He had sense and spirit enough to break through many old, but very bad customs of his neighbours. If a thing is wrong in itself, (said he

one day to farmer Hodges,) a whole parish doing it can't make it right. And as to its being an old custom, why, if it be a good one I like it the better for being old, because it has the stamp of ages, and the sanction of experience on its worth. But if it be old as well as bad, that is another reason for my trying to put an end to it, that we may not mislead our children as our fathers have misled us. (5:248–49)

There can be no more compelling expression of the way moral principle trumps historical process in More's fiction. Far from offering a reliable guide for human conduct, the pattern of inherited transmission so venerated by Edmund Burke threatens to "mislead" past, present, and future generations alike.<sup>12</sup> The "Roof-Raising" and "Sheep Sheering" episodes that occur in the early phases of the second part of the tract are suffused with Farmer White's iconoclastic determination "to break through a bad custom," and in each case the communal traditions of "ribaldry, and riot, and drunkenness," associated with the agricultural calendar, give way under his strong hand to more "orderly and decent" invented traditions of collective psalm singing and sober feasts for the poor (5:249–61).<sup>13</sup> It is this aggressive revisionism, rather than any simply nostalgic or conservative response to radical innovation, that distinguishes the political project of the Cheap Repository, and links its treatment of a public, masculine sphere of alehouses and barn raisings with the feminine domain of housekeeping and domestic management.

#### I. THE POLITICS OF REACTIONARY ENTERPRISE

As counterintuitive as it may seem, the recognition that More, one of Britain's leading reactionary propagandists, shared Tom White's reformist determination "to break through many old, but very bad customs," can usefully enrich and complicate our understanding of the cultural impact of conservative movements during the extended crisis that has been termed Britain's "long counterrevolution."<sup>14</sup> It has broad implications, too, for Romantic literary studies, where the principle of a "revolution controversy" staged around the writings of Burke and Thomas Paine has long been used to reconstruct a political spectrum in which the conservative position was primarily defensive, traditionalist, exclusionary, and tied to an organic vision of history and society that resisted wholesale strategies of revision—in a word, Burkean. A number of historians have called this approach into question, pointing out that the principles we tend to associate with Burke's position in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* were

by no means typical of antirevolutionary thought and action in the period.<sup>15</sup> Reactionary movements involved a wide and often contradictory array of positions and initiatives, few of which display a sustained interest in organic community or customary transmission. And these movements merit the attention of literary scholars not because they allow us to readily translate a political crisis into rhetorical or aesthetic terms (another liability of fixing upon Burke's heady prose), but rather because of the way that key elements of British culture in the Romantic period—education, domesticity, sociability, print, piety, criticism—were reimagined and refashioned as part of a supposedly native English or British reaction to the French Revolution and domestic radical protest. To be clear, my point is not that we should substitute More for Burke as the avatar of reaction in Britain; the cultural field is too uneven to be represented by any single writer or activist. Yet More's career does usefully shift our attention away from the twin poles of a reconstructed debate (Burke/Paine), which never really occurred in the way we tend to imagine, and towards a set of literary texts, whose remarkable conditions of production suggest not abstract ideological positions but the social and cultural conditions under which political expression and persuasion actually took place.<sup>16</sup> As More herself observed, the French Revolution occurred at a time when "an appetite for reading had, from a variety of causes, been increased among the inferior ranks in this country," and the Cheap Repository was designed "to supply such wholesome aliment as might give a new direction to their taste, and abate their relish for . . . corrupt and inflammatory publications" (5:vii–viii). If, for Romanticist readers, the language of this passage brings to mind William Wordsworth's 1800 preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, where voracious reading habits and revolutionary upheaval also threaten "the present state of the public taste in this country," this unexpected intersection of two very different literary careers should encourage us to reconsider the Cheap Repository as the most institutionally ambitious, and arguably the most influential, of the many Romantic-period efforts to create the taste by which a new literature was to be enjoyed.<sup>17</sup>

Mark Philp has recently recast the political crisis of the 1790s by offering a more complex account of the antirevolutionary position. Philp associates More's Cheap Repository and John Reeves's Loyalist Association with a "vulgar conservative" movement that rejected Burke's position that "the vulgar were the object of conservative thinking, not intended participants in it," and set out instead from an

assumption that conservatives had no choice but to address the popular political audience brought into being by the radical press and radical organization. In becoming involved in “a project of popular instruction profoundly at odds with their original intent and their professed commitment to the status quo,” these “vulgar” or popular reactionaries violate our received understanding of the conservative position in an age of revolution: “To pursue this course was to transcend Burke for, both in forming the Association movement and in subsequently developing a literature designed for the lower orders, loyalists breached the traditional boundaries of the political nation and thereby advanced a process of mass participation which they had come into existence to prevent.”<sup>18</sup> With this revisionist framework, Philp reminds us that revolutionary crises tend to transform the political field rather than simply exacerbate existing tensions, and he offers a useful position from which to consider the aggressive revisionism of More’s *Tom White*. The historical ironies at work in a transgressive reactionary culture become more complicated still if we recall that the Cheap Repository was part of a tradition of Christian moral reform that went back to the late seventeenth century and culminated in the 1780s, before the French Revolution had its galvanizing impact upon British radicalism. While there may be little reason to worry here about transgressing one of Romantic studies’ more peculiar yet enduring fictions (“1789”), it does seem curious that reactionary enterprise should, in this instance, precede the revolution.<sup>19</sup> In her careful study of the development of late eighteenth-century moral reform movements, Joanna Innes offers one clue to this puzzle by invoking an earlier revolution: in her account, evangelical initiatives like the Society for Carrying into Effect His Majesty’s Proclamation against Vice and Immorality, founded by More’s friend William Wilberforce in 1787, were in part a result of “the complex effects of the disastrous American war,” including economic dislocation, the spiraling cost of poor relief, and a perceived degeneracy in the upper classes and the nation’s political leadership. Like Philp, Innes is concerned to show that the moral reform projects of the 1780s, which included the Sunday school movement and prosecution societies directed against a host of petty public vices, were not particularly retrospective nor suspicious of change; instead, they were part of a “patriotic, improving, moralizing” campaign of “project-oriented association,” which understood itself progressively, as “helping to create the social and institutional framework within which a more virtuous society might henceforth take

shape.” Evangelical enterprise was self-conscious enough about its own improving energy to assume a kind of tactical caution where this seemed warranted, in ways that help account for More’s decision to present the feminine enterprise of Mrs. White as an alliance with the Anglican Church (Dr. Shepherd), which aimed to enforce directives issued by the state (the “public declaration”). Wilberforce and his associates in the Proclamation Society proceeded cautiously, after cultivating the support of government ministers and the church hierarchy, and in fact they secretly engineered the royal proclamation to which they claimed to respond. All this was designed to remove a “lingering taint of Puritanism and social subversion” and “make the cause of moral reform *respectable*,” and to fend off conservative critics who argued that responsibility for morality and public order belonged to “Church and State” rather than private individuals or self-constituted societies.<sup>20</sup> Evidently, the conditions for a paradoxically reactionary progressivism predated 1789. Elite anxieties about any activity, however disciplinary its professions, that was conducted outside the established boundaries of the political nation did not have to wait upon the French Revolution, with its forcible linking of political change with new forms of social organization.

It is worth being clear about what I take to be the political dimensions assumed by a tract like *Tom White* when it seeks a wholesale reform of rural popular culture, replacing the festive and sometimes prodigal traditions of communal life with more sober and frugal practices dictated from above. In a provocative article, Susan Pedersen has challenged the tendency among historians to understand the Cheap Repository in narrowly political terms, as an assault on Painite radical discourse and the London Corresponding Society. Her argument is compelling in many respects. There is ample evidence that, in their formal features and appearance, the Cheap Repository Tracts sought to imitate, and thus supplant, a vast body of popular chapbook and broadsheet literature, which had long been treated with suspicion by evangelical reformers, for reasons of moral comportment that have little to do with the rise of radical reform. According to Pedersen, Cheap Repository ballads that do follow a narrow anti-Jacobin model are exceptional cases:

When one confronts the Cheap Repository as a whole, the political explanation becomes inadequate. Although the political content of “The Riot” is clear, this often-quoted ballad is one of the relatively few explicitly anti-Jacobin tracts in the Cheap Repository and is

virtually lost among the reams of Sunday readings, allegories, and little moral tales that attack vices ranging from drunkenness to superstition and that defy a simple political explanation. . . . The tracts were thus less an attack on Tom Paine than on Simple Simon: in their content they made a point-by-point critique of the perceived norms of popular culture as revealed by contemporary chapbook literature.<sup>21</sup>

The point is an important one as a corrective to casual assumptions that *Village Politics*, written and published two years before the institution of the Cheap Repository, became the template for More's later work, and as a reminder of the cultural density of her work, its effort to bring about a wholesale transformation of the labor, learning, leisure, piety, and domestic affairs of the common people. However, it does not follow, as Pedersen implies, that a political understanding of More's work needs to be reductive in its grasp of her assault on popular literature and culture, nor is it the case that the political and moral aims of the Cheap Repository were essentially distinct. On the contrary, as Gary Kelly has argued in a compelling account of the Cheap Repository's campaign against unregenerate forms of chapbook literature, More was convinced that "the shoots of 'Jacobinism'" had their "roots [in] popular culture."<sup>22</sup> There is ample evidence, too, for Olivia Smith's observation that popular educators like More and Sarah Trimmer made no effort to distinguish between "political quietude and religious learning as reasons for teaching the poor."<sup>23</sup> Campaigns to reform the residual elements of a licentious popular culture, and to prevent the spread of an emerging radical culture, were linked, above all, by their fierce determination to impose habits of subordination and discipline upon the lowest orders of society. Even if we accept Pedersen's point about the relatively few Cheap Repository Tracts that make Painite radicalism their primary target, the pervasiveness of More's anxiety about revolution is evident when we see how even a less stridently political work like *Tom White* was still haunted by the threat of "evil-minded people" who would foment "riot" and disturb "the public peace."

To return to Pedersen's own useful, but too strictly dichotomous, shorthand, the point would seem to be to understand the way that longstanding middle-class suspicions of the popular chapbook culture of Simple Simon assumed a new urgency under the new conditions introduced by Paine. More was certainly not unique among evangelical activists, in her conviction that the available principles and institutions of moral reform could be mobilized against a Jacobin

political challenge.<sup>24</sup> For her sense of the close relation between the two campaigns, we have no less an authority than the prefatory Advertisement to the Cheap Repository Tracts in the 1801 edition of her works:

To improve the habits, and raise the principles of the common people, at a time when their dangers and temptations, moral and political, were multiplied beyond the example of any former period, was the motive which impelled the Author of these volumes to devise and prosecute the institution of the Cheap Repository. This plan was established with an humble wish, not only to counteract vice and profligacy on the one hand, but error, discontent, and false religion on the other. And as an appetite for reading had, from a variety of causes, been increasing among the inferior ranks in this country, it was judged expedient, at this critical period, to supply such wholesome aliment as might give a new direction to their taste, and abate their relish for those corrupt and inflammatory publications which the consequences of the French Revolution have been so fatally pouring in upon us. (5:vii–viii)<sup>25</sup>

This manifesto neatly expresses the historical paradox of a reactionary campaign “to improve” a nation under siege from “vice” and “discontent” alike: the dangers faced by the common people of Britain over the course of a revolutionary decade were both “moral and political,” and the Cheap Repository’s effort to “counteract” this twin threat could, in More’s own analysis, be understood only within the precise framework provided by “the consequences of the French Revolution.”<sup>26</sup> It does not diminish More’s counterrevolutionary credentials to concede that this argument had a kind of commercial value in advancing the circulation of Cheap Repository Tracts. She was shrewd enough to see that the immediate crisis of the 1790s promised to expand the constituency for existing evangelical campaigns to reform the manners and morals of ordinary British subjects: elites, who, in the past, saw little to fear in the excesses of tavern culture, and even disparaged the likes of Tom White and Mrs. Jones for their incursions upon British liberty, might now be recruited to a campaign to put down public houses if they could be convinced it might limit the venues for Paineite radicalism.

The historical tensions at work in an improving campaign of conservative enterprise tend to confirm Christine Krueger’s recent account of a politically “complicated—and sometimes contradictory” More, and to recall, too, Philp’s point about a vulgar conservatism that unwittingly “mirrored radicalism’s transgression of the traditional

boundaries between the elite and the common people.<sup>27</sup> In projects like the Cheap Repository and the Loyalist Association, responsibility for social order tended to migrate back and forth between the government and the public sphere, as political initiatives, once reserved for the state and church, were absorbed into new or expanded civic institutions and voluntary practices. This shift precipitated structural changes that were, in important respects, modernizing and arguably progressive, even where they involved disciplinary mechanisms directed against the new political claims of the working poor. Ironically, the threat of working-class revolution authorized middle-class innovation: Mrs. White assumed new forms of social and political authority so that Amy Grumble would not. To be clear, this claim about the enterprising spirit of counterrevolutionary culture need not be apologist. Conceding that More worked to create a different future for Britain, rather than recover some ancient past or secure the present, does not mitigate the fact that she vigorously opposed the extension of basic political rights that would soon be taken for granted, and that she supported a vision of social order which granted the middle and upper classes extraordinary powers of surveillance and control over the vast majority of ordinary British subjects, whose inferior status was emphatically ratified in the process. Indeed, approaching conservative enterprise as a social fabrication should reinforce, rather than diminish, our sense of its transforming impact upon British culture and society in the Romantic period, by reminding us that, in the crisis atmosphere of the 1790s, it was never enough to mobilize existing social and cultural resources, nor to remind disaffected subjects of their stake in an available constitution. Instead, a vast amount of political and cultural work—new work—was required to secure loyal opinion and turn back the radical challenge. In this sense, I would distinguish my treatment of the Cheap Repository from that of a number of feminist scholars who have argued, each in distinctive ways, that More's effective redefinition of the possibilities available to women, in her own career and in her influence on others, meant that her project was essentially liberating rather than reactionary or disciplinary in nature. She was, in Anne Mellor's provocative phrase, a "revolutionary reformer."<sup>28</sup> The Hannah More presented here is a more compromised though, I hope, no less complex figure, a reformer no doubt, but in important respects, a reactionary as well. While I share an interest in the transforming cultural work of the Cheap Repository and have learned a good deal from these feminist scholars about

More's attention to women's work and her provocative redefinitions of gender, domesticity, education, and public life, it seems to me crucial that we not lose sight of the ways in which the evangelical enterprise of middle-class women imposed an astonishing range of social, political, and religious controls upon the behavior of men and women alike, and insisted, above all, upon the rigorous subordination of the lower orders.<sup>29</sup>

## II. CIRCULATION, MEDIATION, AND SOCIAL ORDER

Critics interested in recovering More's didactic fiction for literary history have tended to stress that these tracts were "drawn from life," and have identified her as a "pioneer social novelist" with an abiding interest in the concrete experience of the rural poor: "Here are hard facts and hard lives," Mitzi Myers has written, "vigorous, racy dialogue and homely domestic detail."<sup>30</sup> While this approach does help situate the Cheap Repository with respect to literary tradition, particularly the rise of a socially reformist strand of realist fiction, it risks overlooking crucial features of More's project.<sup>31</sup> Myers has herself observed that, in "transcribing her society's exigent problems into fiction," More's tracts "curiously mingle shrewdly observed social documentary and idealistic moral fable."<sup>32</sup> If fantasy and didacticism inevitably enter the equation, it is also true that the presence of vernacular fact can easily be exaggerated; I am not persuaded, for example, that we have the authentic "language of rat catchers, fortunetellers, post-boys, and shoemakers" in any of these tracts, rather than a middle-class evangelical fantasy about the way such language might be recuperated for respectable society.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, categories like fact and experience were central to the British rejection of French Revolutionary theory in this period, and it would be a mistake to reproduce them uncritically in accounting for an antirevolutionary discourse.<sup>34</sup> More typically treated available facts about social conditions as a corrupt and dangerous raw material, to be reworked and reformed through narrative devices that are clearly driven more by her own aims and desires, than by any scrupulous fidelity to the way that individuals in the position of her characters might actually have thought and felt. Though sometimes eager to pass off their version of English social life as an available fact, More and her collaborators were an ambitious set of reactionary speculators, actively scripting and marketing their cultural revisions in ever more complex formal and institutional terms. It is this urge to deploy fiction as a means of reworking fact, rather than any scrupulous

realism, that seems the chief characteristic of the literature of evangelical moral reform. Indeed, few of the many reformist enterprises at work in the period were so fully expressed in fictional form, and for this reason, we are unlikely to find another category of Romantic-period literary texts that so insistently coordinates a set of fictional representations with a credible design for social and cultural practice. To read the Cheap Repository Tracts is to discover a project for social change as thoroughgoing and closely reasoned as anything in Jeremy Bentham or Robert Owen, expressed in ballad meter and narrative form.

The Cheap Repository Tracts are important, then, for the way they incorporate within a fictional frame the entire evangelical project for intervening in the life and literacy of the rural poor, a project which sought to reinforce its ambitions in the sphere of manners and morals with a wholesale effort to change the way that printed texts were distributed to and consumed by ordinary readers. More's prose consistently thematizes her effort to replace the haphazard channels through which print culture unevenly penetrated the English countryside with a controlled national economy of provided texts, and to discipline the irregular reading practices of the working poor by subjecting them to the direct supervision of Sunday schools and related institutions for adult literacy and piety. Here, the enforcement of new relations of obligation and subordination was crucial. Pedersen has suggested that "the real success of More's tracts is to be found less in their conversion of the poor than in their effective recruitment of the upper class to the role of moral arbiters of popular culture," and while this approach should not distract us from the way that calculations about poor readers continued to figure in the production of these tracts, it does call attention to the crucial role that elites played in the Cheap Repository, as "moral arbiters," financial supporters, and avid readers.<sup>35</sup> In exploring the social work these tracts imagined and performed, we need to keep in mind the multiple audiences they addressed, and the way the expectations of those audiences came to be incorporated within a fictional frame.<sup>36</sup> Where, for example, didactic literature had long invoked experience as the arbiter of proper conduct, the errant youths and wayward rustics of the Cheap Repository are typically rescued, not by any internal exigencies of plot, but rather by the endless supply of proxies for More that circulate through her prose. Tom's conversion experience in the London hospital is typical in this regard: remorse becomes reform only through his decision to send home "for his

Bible and Prayer book, which . . . had been given him when he left the Sunday school,” and the whole episode becomes a rhetorical occasion to encourage “rich people to give away Bibles and good books,” and to celebrate the charity available in “a christian country, where the poor, when sick, or lame, or wounded, are taken as much care of as any gentry” (5:227). The “space for repentance” that Tom discovers in London has been constructed for him by others, not least his author, in the form of Sunday schools, charity hospitals, and Cheap Repository Tracts. In this way, More fictionalized not just the “hard facts and hard lives” of the rural laborer and smallholder, but the way those facts and lives were being mediated and transformed by the incursion of characters like Farmer White and the widow Mrs. Jones of the *Sunday School* series, whose experience in putting down public houses, setting up Sunday schools, reforming popular morals, gathering subscriptions, and combating the indifference of residual elites, closely followed More’s own operations as recorded in her letters and memoirs.<sup>37</sup>

Put in terms of the approach to More’s work not as realist fiction but as “popular propaganda for the poor,” an interpretive tradition forcefully restated by Robert Hole in his recent edition of More’s work, the Cheap Repository Tracts gather a certain formal complexity from their dual attempt to show plebeian readers that revolution along French lines is a bad idea, while persuading middle-class supporters and subscribers that More and her associates represent the most effective machinery for securing England against revolution from below.<sup>38</sup> If, under the pressure of self-promotion, these tracts sometimes become what Patricia Demers terms a “self-referential exercise,” the metafiction at work involves not so much reading about reading (an aesthetic staple), but rather a more rigorous exercise in reading about how reading can secure social order, through disciplinary measures imposed upon the irregular forms of literacy associated with residual popular culture and with an emerging, collective working-class radicalism.<sup>39</sup> Although its propagandistic designs were often quite crude, evangelical discourse developed increasingly sophisticated and reflexive strategies of self-representation, through complex narrative interpolations of its own conditions of production, and through the careful orchestration and layering of implied audiences. More’s impoverished readers met other impoverished readers who reformed their habits and improved their condition by reading Cheap Repository Tracts, in part so they could then lay out the few spare pennies that virtuous habits afforded in the purchase of new

tracts; more affluent readers were presented with challenging yet finally reassuring case studies of the way their own commitment to the Cheap Repository, as advocates, subscribers, and distributors, could produce a tractable labor force and neutralize the threat of popular insubordination. Men, women, and children; the propertied and the dispossessed; the rural gentry and the provincial middle class; schools, homes, churches, and shops; public and private spaces—all were knit together by the cooperative activity of reading and circulating a literature of evangelical reform. In this way, More's fiction normally acknowledged the work that had to be done to counter revolution, and avoided the stunning inconsistencies evident in some of the more secular anti-French propaganda of the early 1790s, where hearty rustics blustered about their native resistance to Paineite principles. In the words of the first meeting of John Reeves's Loyalist Association, "the *new lights* and *false philosophy* of our pretended Reformers . . . can have no influence on the good sense and gravity of Britons, who have been used to the enjoyment of true Liberty."<sup>40</sup> If so, one is inclined to wonder, why the massive outpouring of antirevolutionary propaganda? More's project was less inconsistent, though more complex and potentially compromised, since it tended to concede that the revolutionary desires of the people could only be suppressed through the reactionary enterprise of their betters.

The heterogeneous structure of the two-part *Tom White*, with its opening narrative of fall and redemption, followed by a sequence of more discrete programmatic episodes, certainly yields something less than seamless fiction. Yet taken together, and considered in relation to More's wider project, the series does represent an impressive attempt to comprehend, in fictional form, the whole evangelical reform of manners. This comprehensive scope was a chief feature of the Cheap Repository. If the economy of the evangelical penny tract was by definition marginal, and its target audience impoverished, More's expectations for it were never modest, and she later boasted of having circulated over two million tracts within the first year of the establishment of the project (5:viii). There is ample evidence within these tracts, and in the letters and memoirs that surround them, of her restless campaign for increased subscriptions and more extensive circulation, and her ambition was evidently contagious; the Religious Tract Society, founded on More's model within a year of the formal termination of the Cheap Repository, accounted for sales of more than four million tracts by 1808, and ten million by 1824, and the group maintained a regular catalogue of hundreds of tracts in a

variety of formats and series throughout the early decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> Historians have long recognized More's achievement as a watershed event in the history of print, since it was through the Cheap Repository "that influential middle-class Englishmen got their first experience in the mass production and distribution of reading matter."<sup>42</sup> Yet the tension between the announced modesty of the project ("cheap") and its immodest ambitions could only be managed through the commercial sleight of hand that allowed tracts nominally priced at "one penny" to be distributed, in fact, through massive charitable subsidy and bulk sales. The peculiar print economy that resulted generated further tensions. Just as Tom White's reform left him eager to reform others, so the print economy of the Cheap Repository was an endless exercise in self-propagation, which seemed always to risk exhausting its own resources. Following the example of the widow Mrs. Jones, who "took care never to walk out without a few little good books in her pocket to give away" (4:333), rich and poor alike were expected to devote every spare moment, and every spare penny, to the circulation and consumption of a literature of moral improvement. Evangelical principles of thrift, vigorously recommended to the poor within these tracts, were simultaneously unraveled from without, as extravagance became the hallmark of a system of charitable provision that sought to direct an endless flow of excess capital from the rich (as cash subscriptions) to the poor (as printed texts).<sup>43</sup> Where the Cheap Repository did extend to elites the rigorous frugality it preached to the lower orders, the aim was often to shore up the economic foundations of charitable provision: *Hints to All Ranks of People*, for example, advised the wealthy to divert their resources away from "vanity" and "luxury," and bring about a "reduction in your whole establishment," in order to create "a regular fund for your future charity" that would find its natural outlet in supporting Sunday schools and Cheap Repository Tracts.<sup>44</sup>

Given this comprehensive design upon reading audiences ("*All Ranks of People*"), and the sheer scale of the publishing enterprise, one of the most striking rifts within the Cheap Repository involved the tension between a desire to incorporate every reader and every text within a single print economy, and an insistence that differences of privilege and function within that economy be strictly enforced. While More proved remarkably dexterous at orchestrating multiple forms of address within individual texts, she could not help but respond to market conditions that tended to exacerbate social and literary distinctions. In early 1796, in order to continue to reach both

elite and ordinary readers, she reorganized the Cheap Repository as a series of octavo (rather than duodecimo) tracts in two formats, distinguished by their paper quality and price structure. Profits from the more expensive version were used to subsidize the distribution of cheaper editions, reinforcing the different roles played by different sorts of readers, and suggesting as well the circular structure of a print economy of charitable provision.<sup>45</sup> As this formal development indicates, the project was proving more successful on the supply than on the demand side of the equation. While concrete evidence about the operation of the Cheap Repository is thin, and invariably compromised by self-promotion, it does seem clear that More's spectacular ability to enlist the support of elites (at one point subscriptions had to be declined) was not met by a similar success in securing the interest of ordinary readers. At first, the tracts were nominally priced at a penny or halfpenny each, with discounts for bulk sales to two kinds of purchasers: wealthy supporters who were encouraged to give the tracts away; and hawkers and chapmen who were offered a financial incentive, in the hope that they would substitute the Cheap Repository for their existing canon of vulgar popular literature. Yet as G. H. Spinney has observed, despite a "vigorous campaign . . . to induce the smaller booksellers and hawkers" to stock the tracts, a substantial portion of the achieved circulation was simply "given away at charity schools, workhouses, hospitals, prisons, and various institutions." "It is hard to say what proportion was bought directly from hawkers by the poorer people, but it was probably not very high."<sup>46</sup> Elite provision, through subscription and subsidy, proved the most effective means of circulating a literature of moral reform, and this made the recruitment of middle-class and gentry support a critical element of the project. More's class-inflected versioning of the tracts, which included annually compiled volumes that could be bound for libraries, and octavo booklet versions of broadside ballads, was meant to exploit their appeal among elite readers, whose motivations for purchasing tracts on their own behalf were no doubt complex. Beyond their direct interest in a literature of moral reform which regularly addressed their own condition, and their desire to support a reactionary enterprise that promised to secure their own privileges, there was surely some comfort to be found in More's vision of a secure and just social hierarchy in which the responsible stewardship of elites consistently met with grateful deference from below.

Whatever the relative successes of her project, More later confirmed that social distinction was among its premises when, in the

1801 edition of her works, she sorted her longer narrative tracts into two separately titled volumes, *Tales for the Common People* and *Stories for Persons of the Middle Ranks*, and congratulated herself on the opportunity this afforded to present “an enlarged and improved form” of her work (4:iv). Editorial confidence aside, this was a deeply imperfect gesture, its discrete categories undermined by More’s enduring evangelical vision of shared obligations in an interdependent social order.<sup>47</sup> To begin with, this collected edition of her works was beyond the economic reach of common readers, and, in this sense, the volume of *Tales for the Common People* was, in effect, redirected to middle- and upper-class audiences at the very moment it was conceived in a lower-class form. Further, while some tracts fell naturally into the “common” or “middle” category, and while a third rubric, *Ballads and Tales*, was created to pick up some of the most demotic short works, the distinctions in play were far from clear, in part because More’s imagination finally refused to separate the work of capturing the attention of poor readers, enlisting the support of their superiors, and reforming the lives of both. *Tom White* was included in the *Tales for the Common People*, although, as we have seen, its various episodes address a range of audiences: if Tom’s early life is a parable for common readers about the dangers of corrupt habits, it also signals elites about the importance of subsidizing moral reform; and the more episodic second half comprises domestic guidelines for the ordinary cottager and a handbook for the middle-class moral reformer. More implicitly conceded the flaws in her categories when she prepared the *Sunday School* series for her collected works: the first two tracts, *A Cure for Melancholy* (the revised version of *The Cottage Cook*, with its practical coda of recipes and domestic advice removed) and *The Sunday School*, were placed in the volume for the “Middle Ranks,” while “the Second Part of the Sunday School,” the two-part *History of Hester Wilmot*, fell into the volume “for the Common People,” with a note directing readers back to “the preceding volume” (5:283).<sup>48</sup> In one sense, the editorial logic here was clear enough: the opening pair of tracts considers the induction of Mrs. Jones, “the widow of a great merchant” (4:325), into the reformist enterprise of organizing charity schools, putting down public houses, and regularizing the habits and morals of the common people; while the second part addresses the impact one of these Sunday schools has in reforming Hester Wilmot, the daughter “of parents who maintained themselves by their labour” (5:283). Yet in all the essentials of idiom, presentation, and format that mark

class-specific address, the tracts are indistinguishable, and each one involves narrative and thematic elements designed for both common and middle-class readers. For example, the initial account of Mrs. Jones's activity in *A Cure for Melancholy* contains a long didactic section ("The Informer") targeting ordinary readers, in which a blacksmith is painstakingly disabused of his popular prejudice against informing on corrupt tradesmen. And *The History of Hester Wilmot* subsequently unfolds at some length Mrs. Jones's strategy for persuading Rebecca Wilmot to allow her daughter to attend the Sunday school, an episode that makes sense primarily as a model for other middle-class reformers who must contend with the resistance of unregenerate cottagers. Again, More's narrative tracts are distinguished by their effort to serve up a world in which every class of reader joins together as both agent and effect of the shared enterprise of evangelical reform.

### III. PRINT AUTHORITY AND THE MEDIA OF MORAL REFORM

The willingness of the Cheap Repository to measure its success in the proliferation of millions of printed tracts invites a more pointed interrogation of the whole tract system. Who or what ensured the value of all of this printed material? And particularly for elites who were enjoined to participate as subscribers and distributors, and who therefore lent their credit to a network of effects they could not possibly witness, where was the guarantee that any of this reading material did any good in the world? In an era in which the threat of a French invasion had compelled Britain after 1797 to suspend specie payment, and thus to undertake an anxious, extended experiment with a currency not guaranteed by gold, these questions may have acquired an added urgency, since any scheme for unlimited textual production and circulation risked playing into anxieties about an inflationary currency unmoored from intrinsic standards of value.<sup>49</sup> If pressed for some guarantee of the credit of the entire system, the Cheap Repository had an advantage over its equally prolific but relatively secular counterpart, Reeves's Loyalist Association, where the production of counterrevolutionary propaganda often stood in tension with a blunt insistence that the British constitution was invulnerable to any challenge. By contrast, More's evangelical version of a counterrevolutionary project not only assumed the corruption of human nature and the imperfection of human institutions, but it could invoke the primary authority of scripture to underwrite its own print enterprise. Even the formal tendency of evangelical discourse

to stray from narrative into catalogues of scriptural reference can be taken to confirm the fundamental authority of the Bible in the formation of these tracts. This was, as Robert Hole has indicated, a position with deep political implications: for all her evangelical leanings, More shared with her Anglican establishment friends like George Horne, Bishop of Norwich, a “politico-religious” commitment to “the divine authority of the established order” in church, state, and society, which “not only provided them with a Biblical foundation of political obligation, it also sanctified the existing social hierarchy as the work of Divine Providence.”<sup>50</sup>

Yet as the Cheap Repository perfected a system of charitable provision that multiplied titles, editions, and series, and as it seconded the manageable convention of scriptural allusion with a more unruly network of references to other Cheap Repository Tracts (later editions of these works often display the further accretion of such promotional self-reference), there was a danger that the project might appear to supersede, rather than simply reinforce, the original authority of scripture. It is not surprising, then, that More was not consistent in her treatment of Biblical authority. “The grand subject of instruction with me is the bible itself,” she once assured a correspondent, and while this claim was meant to reassure supporters that Sunday-school literacy would not exceed the limits of Christian piety, it seemed to indicate that scripture could by itself produce orderly, submissive, and industrious subjects.<sup>51</sup> Recommending the Bible to her readers in the opening paragraph of *The History of Hester Wilmot*, More’s narrator reflects that “it is a pity people do not consult it oftener. They direct their ploughing and sowing by the information of the Almanack, why will they not consult the Bible for the direction of their hearts and lives?” (5:284). Yet despite this confidence in scriptural sufficiency, More was keenly aware that available forms of piety and loyalty were not adequate grounds for antirevolutionary culture, and she spent her career supplementing the Bible as moral almanac with an elaborate system of prayers, catechisms, schoolbooks, devotional tracts, and pious tales and ballads, along with supervised reading practices to manage textual reception. The title character of *The Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain*, a two part Cheap Repository Tract of 1795, strikes his wealthy interlocutor, Mr. Johnson, as remarkable for having generated a whole program (More’s own) of loyalty, subordination, temperance, and industry “without any kind of learning but what he had got from the Bible”; and while Johnson readily endorses the Shepherd’s resistance

to the “new books” and “new doctrines” of “those men who are now disturbing the peace of the world” (evidence again of the political dimensions of Biblical authority), he wonders aloud whether this simple rustic is eccentric in his desire “to make scripture a thing of general application” (5:9, 50).<sup>52</sup> It comes as no surprise, then, that the Shepherd himself reinforces some portion of Johnson’s concern when he indicates that scripture can easily become the source of moral and doctrinal error, especially among ordinary readers: “I always avoid, as I am an ignorant man, picking out any one single difficult text to distress my mind about, or go build opinions upon, because I know that puzzles and injures poor unlearned Christians” (5:46). More to the point, the Shepherd’s isolated piety turns out not to derive from scripture alone. When Mr. Johnson later visits the Shepherd’s cottage, he discovers that “a large old Bible” is the most “reverently preserved” of the few possessions “inherited from his father” (5:37–38). Yet this patriarchal transmission from the past has been supplemented by More’s own recent print interventions: “On the clean white walls were pasted, a hymn on the Crucifixion of our Saviour, a print of the Prodigal Son, the Shepherd’s Hymn, a *New History of a True Book*, and Patient Joe, or the Newcastle Collier,” all broadsheet tracts that were “printed for the Cheap Repository, price 1/2 d. each,” as the author duly reminded readers in a promotional footnote to collected editions of her work (5:37–38). This gesture towards her own activity registers both the Cheap Repository’s compulsive self-referentiality, and the inflationary pressures of a print economy of charitable provision: though “large” and “old,” and “reverently” passed from generation to generation, the Bible is neither sufficient nor complete, and cottage literacy and discipline are instead vividly framed by More’s own publishing enterprise.

This episode suggests why the broadsheet ballad was such a critical element of the Cheap Repository. Affixed as they are to “the clean white walls” of the cottage interior, these single sheet tracts offer a private, domestic, and orthodox response to the disruptive public handbills of popular radical culture. The configuration of the Shepherd’s (nominally) private space would surely have allayed conservative anxieties about the emergence of a plebeian public sphere, to which More’s Sunday schools were sometimes felt to contribute, by containing the counterrevolutionary version of that sphere within the four walls of a cottage and limiting it to provided texts. In the same way, the Shepherd’s reclusive scripturalism—“my bible has been meat, drink, and company to me” (5:12)—releases

him from the debased political sociability of the tavern and street assembly. While the domestic sphere is privileged here and throughout More's prose as an antidote to radical publicity, she could not ignore the other spaces in which her readers lived and worked, and the Cheap Repository issued similar monitory print instruments for other arenas of common life: *The Loyal Subject's Political Creed; or, What I Do, and What I Do Not Think*, appeared in broadsheet form with an engraving that suggested tavern reception, and *The Apprentice's Monitor; or, Indentures in Verse, Shewing What They Are Bound to Do* was printed with the indication that it was "[p]roper to be hung up in all Shops"<sup>53</sup> (figure 1).<sup>53</sup> Broadsheet tracts of this kind are figures of surveillance, too, scrutinizing and judging the homes and workplaces of the poor as surely as Johnson and other privileged characters in the Cheap Repository eavesdrop on the conversations, prayers, quarrels, and recreations of ordinary people. If the political inscription of the Shepherd's interior cottage walls by Cheap Repository publications seems to turn what we expect of the period's mapping of public and private space inside out (or outside in), it is important to recognize that in some sense privacy is no longer at issue here, since this potent intersection of the domestic and the political, the very faultline along which More conducted her own career, was wholly managed and provided for the Shepherd by his superiors. The collaborative surveillance of Mr. Johnson and the Cheap Repository Tracts effectively eliminates any credible sense of cottage privacy.

There may be no more perfect figure for the circumscribed life More would grant to her reformed subjects than the Shepherd's legible cottage, a domestic arena for ordinary literacy that is clearly meant to dissolve the heady public challenge of radical protest. Yet the design of the work as a whole suggests that there is a deeper irony at work in the circular narrative logic by which this cottage interior becomes available to elite scrutiny and oversight. The first part of the tract, leading up to the climactic visit to the cottage, closes upon an internalized sense of pious wonder at the very existence of so remarkable a figure of rural devotion as the Shepherd: Mr. Johnson has "found abundant matter for his thoughts during the rest of his journey," and is determined to seek out the Shepherd's "poor hovel" upon his return from his present journey (5:31–32). When Johnson finally does enter the cottage, however, it turns out that the only real cause for introspective wonder is that he has "found" nothing new at all, but instead confronts modes of piety and discipline that he and the class he embodies have scripted in advance, in the form of

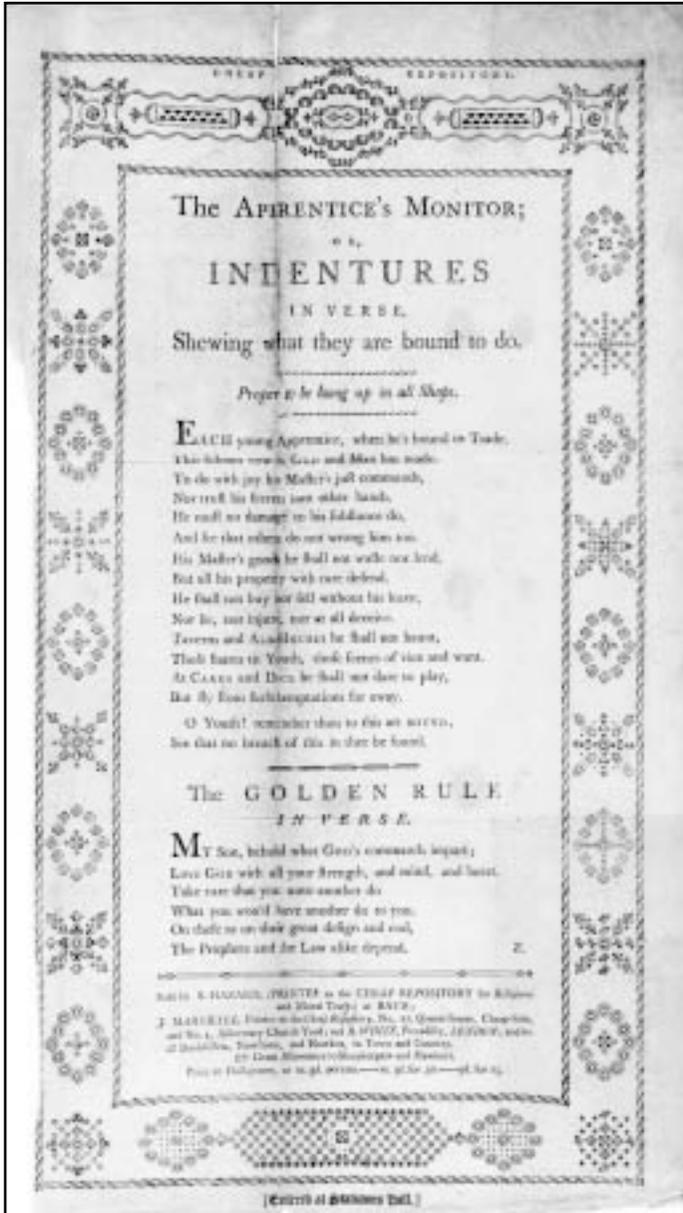


Figure 1. *The Apprentice's Monitor; or, Indentures in Verse* (1795). This item is reproduced by permission of the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

“Patient Joe” and other Cheap Repository Tracts. Johnson’s odyssey across the “vast plains of Wiltshire” is in this sense a journey of self-discovery, its possibilities (if not its privileges) as limited as the four walls of the Shepherd’s cottage. As in *Tom White*, the rural cottage is not the isolated repository of indigenous virtue or loyalty, but rather a conduit through which the commercial enterprise of evangelical reform can be made to flow. If my emphasis so far has been on the complex structure of the Cheap Repository Tracts, this pattern of elite self-discovery in the work of evangelical reform—to say nothing of a subtitle like “What I Do, and What I Do Not Think”—provides a salutary reminder of the predictability and crude directness with which evangelical enterprise would finally dictate and manage popular consciousness. More often sought to assuage elite fears that access to literacy would radicalize ordinary readers, by insisting that the course of reading in her Sunday schools was limited to the Bible and simple devotional works. Her aim was to control the potential range of discursive effects by making children and the laboring poor consumers but not producers of the written word: “My plan for instructing the poor is very limited and strict. They learn of week-days such coarse works as may fit them for servants. I allow of no writing.”<sup>54</sup> Taken alongside the narrative pattern by which characters like the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain discover their own beliefs in texts produced for them by others, this partial dispensation of literacy indicates just how straightened and eviscerated were the forms of agency made available to the poor by More and her collaborators.

Nostalgic fantasies of an embedded rural virtue do appear in the Cheap Repository, but they prove to be no match for More’s aggressive revisionism. Indeed, the local or natural in its received form was consistently reworked by More as the product of her own national mission. If the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain is initially recommended to the reader for his rural isolation and embeddedness (a kind of found object), he becomes too perfect a facsimile of More’s own reactionary ethos to be allowed to work away in this obscurity. Just as his tale is designed to reach far beyond his remote Wiltshire home, and just as that home discloses evidence of the impressive reach of the Cheap Repository, so the Shepherd himself is finally enlisted in a national campaign of disciplinary literacy. The attitude of pious repose at the close of the first part of the series suggests that there must be a sequel, and the second part closes on a more characteristic sense of practical action, as Johnson joins “an excellent institution in London . . . called the Sunday-School Society” (5:62) in

subsidizing a school for the poor under the Shepherd's supervision. Even the reward of virtue, that eternal theme of didactic fiction, gets filtered through More's concern for education, publication, and revision: already shown to be a product of "new books," a category he seemed to disown, the Shepherd is finally extricated from his naive scripturalism and fantastic isolation in order to be incorporated into an advanced economy of reactionary print culture. As Smith has suggested, the Shepherd's foundation in a real historical figure, David Saunders, who set up a school on his own initiative and was likely paid by his students rather than by outside benefactors, offers a rare opportunity to gauge precisely how More's supposed literary realism was betrayed by her insistence that "the poor exist to be saved by the upper classes."<sup>55</sup> As the agent of this rescue mission, the mobile "charitable gentleman" (5:1), Mr. Johnson, becomes the key figure in refashioning the real as evangelical fantasy. Like the campaign for moral reform, and like the author he represents, Johnson operates without regard for existing geographical boundaries and social hierarchies, through the protean movements of charitable capital and middle-class philanthropy. Title page images reinforce this by consistently distinguishing Johnson's superior position on horseback from the Shepherd's firm grounding in local circumstance (figure 2). Interestingly, the agent of charitable enterprise acquires his leverage upon the real through a certain personal dislocation: introduced as a traveler, he is distanced from the natural world by an attitude of "serene contemplation" (5:2), and from the social world by an assumed elevation that authorizes the skeptical interrogation of his inferiors. Responding to the Shepherd's initial professions of piety with the reflection "that no one should be too soon trusted, merely for having a few good words in his mouth," Johnson is rewarded throughout his inquiries by due gestures of subordination: "Indeed I am afraid I make too bold, sir, for it better becomes me to listen to such a gentleman as you seem to be, than to talk in my poor way: but as I was saying, sir, I wonder all working men do not derive as great joy and delight as I do from thinking how God has honoured poverty!" (5:6, 9–10). The subsequent discovery of the inscribed cottage walls suggests the ultimate priority of the printed rather than spoken language ("a few good words in his mouth") as evidence of interior spiritual disposition. It also confirms that the Shepherd's bold talk about contentment was all along a subordinate form of listening, since anything the Shepherd has to say turns out to be the predictable echo of a script that Johnson and his allies circulated in advance.

CHEAP REPOSITORY.

T H E

Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain.



Sold by. J. MARSHALL,

(PRINTER to the CHEAP REPOSITORY) for Moral and Religious Tracts, No. 17, Queen-street, Cheap-side, and No. 4, Aldermary Church-Yard, Bow-Lane, and R. WHITE, Piccadilly, London.

By S. HAZARD,

(PRINTER to the CHEAP REPOSITORY) at Bath; and by all Bookfellers, Newsmen and Hawkers, in Town and Country.

*Great Allowance will be made to Shopkeepers and Hawkers.*

PRICE 1d. each, or 4s. 6d. per 100.—2s. 6d. for 50.  
1s. 6d. for 25.

[ Entered at Stationers Hall. ]

Figure 2. *The Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain* (1795), title page. This item is reproduced by permission of the Department of Special Collections, Young Research Library, UCLA.

The Cheap Repository could not have been more deliberate about its departure from localized, contained, or nostalgic approaches to managing the lives of the working poor in the face of revolutionary challenges. The ballad poem *Dame Andrews*, a 1795 Cheap Repository broadsheet that was not written by More, provides a vivid case in point. The opening lines are firmly embedded in a local community—"Near Lechlade Town, in Glostershire, / Upon the Banks of Thame"—but the narrative then conveys its heroine through a series of "mishaps" that require outside intervention. As the impoverished Dame Andrews prepares to feed her children their last loaf of bread, she hears a noise at the door, significantly not a knock, but the rattling of one "who tried to move the pin." Again, the Cheap Repository rescues the dispossessed by opening their private lives and domestic circumstances to the inspection of their superiors. Anticipating relief from a "friendly neighbour," Dame Andrews finds instead a women "lately come / Within this town to live," who turns out emphatically to be a neighbor of another kind—"A friendly Neighbour sure it was!"—by virtue of her willingness to reward virtue by enlisting it in the cash nexus of evangelical reform: "I an offer to you make / My Schoolmistress to be; / To teach poor children and for this, / You shall be paid by me."<sup>56</sup> The double substitution here is crucial: as the condition for neighborhood shifts from proximity to charitable motive, so a recruitment to evangelical enterprise replaces bread, alms, or respectability as the reward of virtue. This conscripting mode of recompense allowed More and her collaborators to legitimate their own ambitions by representing the indigenous pious poor and the mobile, reformist middle class as interdependent social forces and reciprocal narrative effects.<sup>57</sup> It also sustained the pattern by which a print economy of charitable provision managed its own inflationary pressures by channeling redundant energy (and money) back into further charitable enterprise. The fact that episodes of this kind of reward often occur in a sequel, or in the later phases of a multipart publication, suggests an important formal consideration: Cheap Repository narrative tended to secure converts to the endless, serial task of moral reform at precisely that point where its own publishing operations were supplemented through the device of the sequel or final part.<sup>58</sup> Where conservative reactions to radical protest in this period often involved grub street nightmares of an exploding print culture, the evangelical economy of print sought to allay such fears by demonstrating an unlimited capacity to recycle its own boundless energy as a disciplinary mechanism.<sup>59</sup> Crudely put, to convert the

Shepherd of Salisbury Plain is not to diminish by one the total number of souls to be saved in the world, but rather to multiply by the number of students enrolled in his school the available audience for Cheap Repository Tracts.

The final fact or frame of reference in the Cheap Repository is not the natural resistance of British common life to moral degradation or French revolutionary theory, but rather an ongoing project of revisionist intervention in the life, labor, and learning of the common people. Feminist scholarship has alerted us to the way that More's position as a woman activist and writer informed her qualified commitment to progressive improvement, and it is important to see as well that her willingness to innovate, and to make the counterrevolutionary project a reinvention of popular culture, was predicated on her Christian understanding of a fallen human nature, and the meliorative view of history this implied.<sup>60</sup> If she did not share the deep traditionalism of Burke, More answered what she took to be a Jacobin spirit of perpetual revolution in pursuit of utopian perfection with a more skeptical view of history. Gratification was deferred to the next life (especially for those who found few privileges in this one), and the world became a scene of permanent reformation, potentially limited only by the nightmarish fear that human corruption or Paineite revolution might somehow triumph. This perspective is succinctly expressed in the preface to the 1801 edition of her works:

The well intentioned and well principled author, who has uniformly thrown all his weight, though that weight be but small, into the right scale, may have contributed his fair proportion to that great work of reformation, which will, I trust, unless a total subversion of manners should take place, be always carrying on in the world; but which the joint concurrence of the wisdom of ages will find it hard to accomplish.  
(1:xix–xx)

More's skeptical "trust" about the inveterate challenges she faced was vividly confirmed when the Cheap Repository Tracts were reprinted and made available again during the renewed unrest of the 1810s and 1820s. Revisions that accommodated present conditions, and present enemies like Henry Hunt, signaled a tactical awareness that protean antagonists and the contingencies of history dictated against a fixed or retrospective reform project.<sup>61</sup> The improving energy and incessant meddling of More and her heroines, who were "always carrying on in the world," was a function of this commitment to permanent

reformation, a commitment she projected onto her readers, as readers, laborers, and moral subjects. The serial production of the Cheap Repository Tracts, formalized in May 1795 with the monthly issue of tracts in three distinct formats (one moral tale, one devotional “Sunday Reading,” and one broadside ballad), went some way towards countering the perceived dominance of popular periodical forms by the radical press, what Burke termed the seditious “battery . . . of continual repetition.”<sup>62</sup> Yet More’s higher purpose was to use these regular addresses to readers, along with the Sunday school movement and other charitable incursions into the rhythms of ordinary life, as a means of integrating subordinate forms of work, worship, literacy, and domesticity so densely that each individual life became one “daily lesson of instruction,” leaving no inroad for revolutionary “subversion.”<sup>63</sup>

The coordination of reading and conversation with other daily routines was important enough to More that it often served as a framing device for her printed tracts, in title page images that represent pious conversation during labor or leisure, and in titles like *Sunday Reading. On Carrying Religion into the Common Business of Life. A Dialogue between James Stock and Will Simpson, the Shoemakers, as they sat at Work*, to which More later added a sequel: *On the Duty of Carrying Religion into Our Amusements*. These two dialogues formed the last two parts of a six-part series, *The Two Shoemakers*, and in that capacity they drew a particularly suffocating web of daily routine and pious literacy around a more straightforward narrative of spiritual redemption. Introduced on the title page of the original tract by a simple engraving showing two shoemakers conversing as they work, and by a series designation (“Sunday Reading”) that situates reception within a similar framework of routine piety (figure 3), the pattern of integration was systematically intensified throughout the text. “James Stock [the master], and his journeyman Will Simpson, . . . resolved to work together one hour every evening, in order to pay for Tommy Williams’s schooling” (5:185), and these sessions become an occasion for pious conversation about pious conversation, during which the master doubly secures his “good-natured” (5:186) but “ignorant” (5:186) assistant’s renunciation of tavern sociability: the arguments against corrupt habits advanced in the dialogue are seconded by the fact that labor and conversation leave no time for dangerous leisure. Meanwhile, all three figures contrive to support the crippled James Stock, who in turn “requited their kindness, by reading a good book to them whenever they would

CHEAP REPOSITORY.  


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 SUNDAY READING.  
 O N  
**CARRYING RELIGION**  


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 INTO THE  
**Common Business of Life.**  
 A DIALOGUE between JAMES STOCK and WILL  
 STIMPSON, the Shoemakers, as they sat at Work.



SOLD by J. MARSHALL,  
 (Printer to the CHEAP REPOSITORY for Religi-  
 gious and Moral Tracts) No. 17, Queen-Street,  
 1 Cheapside, and No. 4, Aldermay Church-Yard,  
 and R. WHITE, Piccadilly, LONDON.  
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 Great Allowance will be made to Shopkeepers  
 and Hawkers.  
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 Or 4s. 6d. per 100.—2s. 6d. for 50.—1s. 6d. for 25.  
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Figure 3. *On Carrying Religion into the Common Business of Life* (1796), title page. This item is reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

call in; and he spent his time in teaching their children to sing psalms or say the catechism" (5:184). The sequential order of a six-part narrative tract like *The Two Shoemakers* allowed More to unfold these ambitions on a broad canvas, but the same effect could be achieved in a more condensed form through the allegorical design of a short ballad poem. In *Turn the Carpet*, Dick the restless weaver has been misled by the high "price of meat" (1:287) and "the rich man's state" (1:287) to doubt God's providence, but his contentment is restored in pious conversation with his fellow weaver, John, and then secured through a conceit drawn from the very fabric they have been laboring to produce. "My own carpet sets me right" (1:290), Dick exclaims, after John has compared "the whole design" (1:289) of an inscrutable providence with the two sides of a carpet: "This world, which clouds thy soul with doubt, / *Is but a carpet inside out*" (1:287–90).<sup>64</sup> Once again, More's own authority is never far from the surface. As the weaver discovers a rationale for piety in the material upon which he works, so the author discloses her own craft in a dense figure that draws together her interests in legibility, in the social work of allegorical representation, and in a selective accessibility of design: like many of the Cheap Repository Tracts, this legible carpet displays different meanings when read from different perspectives. Should her patrons worry that all this busy piety might distract the laboring classes from their real purpose in this world, working for their superiors, More orchestrated multiple audiences by identifying reading and pious conversation as activities that could be managed in "little odd ends and remnants of leisure" (5:297), without compromising the productivity of a laborer, servant, or child. In the second part of *The Sunday School* sequence, Hester Wilmot has been enrolled in the school set up by Mrs. Jones, but she is forced to read under the watchful eye of an impious mother who "hated the sight of a book" (5:297). Her recourse is "to learn out of sight" (5:297) and "to steal time from her sleep" (5:297), in order that she "would not neglect the washing-tub, or the spinning-wheel, even to get on with her catechism" (5:298). For the benefit of reluctant parents, cautious patrons, and the unconverted poor alike, More invested Hester's expedient with the force of principle: "It was no disobedience to do this, as long as she wasted no part of that time which it was her duty to spend in useful labor" (5:297–98).

The full range of Cheap Repository narrative certainly complicates the impression, derived largely from *Village Politics*, of More as a narrow anti-Painite polemicist. At the same time, an appreciation of the literary complexity and cultural density of her later work can enrich our understanding of *Village Politics*. This widely reprinted dialogue was arguably her most influential fiction, and in many ways it provides the clearest index of the range of her ambitions, and of the contours she would assign to plebeian life and literacy. From the outset, the conversation “between Jack Anvil, the Blacksmith, and Tom Hod, the Mason” is very much a case of village politics, firmly embedded in English rural life and vernacular idioms, and pitched against the cosmopolitan abstractions of French “*organization* and *function*, and *civism*, and *incivism*, and *equalization*, and *inviolability*, and *imperscriptible*, and *fraternization*” (1:324). Paine’s *Rights of Man* has intruded upon this world, via the intoxicated political sociability of the Rose and Crown tavern, but the radical challenge remains an alien language, both in its French associations and in its remoteness from the concrete experience of village life: the deluded Tom Hod can articulate his discontent only by “*looking on his book*” (significantly, the dialogue’s first stage direction), and Jack Anvil, who secures the loyalist half of the conversation, considers it “a good sign” that “you can’t find out you’re unhappy without looking into a book for it!” (1:323–24). More’s effort to weave her later Cheap Repository Tracts into the rhythms of popular life is negatively anticipated here by an attempt to pry the revolutionary text away from the life and world of its audience. The revolutionary lexicon cited above (“*organization* and *function*, and *civism*, and *incivism*”) does not enter any real analysis of republican political theory, since Jack makes no effort to explain or demystify his terms. Instead, the simple act of reiterating the language of revolution within a village dialogue becomes an adequate critique, since the encompassing rhythms of vernacular speech serve to mark and cast out the supposed otherness of revolutionary discourse.

The initial act of the dialogue, Jack’s interruption of Tom’s reading, announces an evident ideological pressure in *Village Politics* away from printed texts and towards ordinary speech and the real world of things. Yet, as his alertness to “a good sign” indicates, Jack is nothing if not an expert reader of his world, and he shares his author’s skepticism that concrete facts or real experiences might by them-

selves counteract Tom's acquired disaffection. On the contrary, the fundamental aim of the tract, as its full title indicates, is to use the medium of cheap print to make local orthodoxy available on a national scale: *Village Politics. Addressed to all the Mechanics, Journeymen, and Labourers, in Great Britain*. Nor is More content with the well-fed, well-governed logic that informed much of the reactionary discourse of the early 1790s, and issued in such crude dictums as, "None but a fool would rebel against beef and pudding."<sup>65</sup> *Village Politics* is from the outset a text generated out of another text, and Jack's opening gambit, "What book art reading?" (1:323), is very much the author's own. The tract achieves its orthodox narrative trajectory not by departing from the revolutionary empire of signs for the loyal comforts of "beef and pudding," but rather by succumbing to the inexorable force of other texts and other discourses, which are taken to be more securely embedded in the village world. In a characteristic concession to elites more interested in plebeian industry than orthodoxy, More has Jack confess that his work leaves him "little time for reading," but he goes on to answer Paine's *Rights of Man* with Richard Allestree's *Whole Duty of Man*, and to delineate a series of oral and printed authorities—scripture, sermons, English law, popular songs and sayings, "a story-book from the charity-school" (1:330)—that leave the village so hemmed in by discursive orthodoxy that there is simply no room for radical expression. The local squire, Sir John, enters the dialogue first as an equal, in Jack's conventional anti-French boast about English equality before the law: "I may go to law with Sir John at the great Castle yonder; and he no more dares lift his little finger against me than if I were his equal" (1:327). Yet as the discussion proceeds, this leveling gesture loses its force, and the same Sir John becomes the upper limit in a discursive hierarchy that secures the village against revolution. His sayings are local legend, and versions of the formula, "Sir John, who is wiser than I, says," have persuaded Jack, as they will soon persuade Tom, that "the whole [French] system is the operation of fraud upon folly" (1:340–41). Even the private letters of the Squire contribute to a common network of loyal discourse, as his foreign correspondence filters out through his servants into the village, to expose the bleak reality behind a Jacobin lie: "'Tis all murder and nakedness, and hunger" (1:340).

If this last claim seems to offer a negative version of the material fact as antidote to revolution (French hunger rather than British beef), my point is to notice also the communicative circuit along

which More imagines that such disenchanting truths get transmitted, so that Tom can make them available to Jack and to the reader: “Sir John’s butler says his master gets letters which say” (1:340). This active exercise of counterrevolutionary orality and literacy, rather than any repressive prohibition of seditious texts, becomes the principal mechanism for contesting and defeating popular discontent in More’s fictional world. As if to confirm that the stakes here are dangerous reading practices, not dangerous texts, let alone the experience of poverty or injustice, the dialogue closes as Jack first dissuades Tom from burning the book he has agreed to disown—“let’s have no drinking, no riot, no bonfires” (1:348)—and then leads him off to the more important work of breaking up the tavern gatherings that have given rise to his phantom Painite discontent. The message is clear, and entirely consistent with More’s dual role as Sunday school educator and founder of the Cheap Repository: control how books are distributed and where they are read, and there will be less to fear from seditious writers and texts.<sup>66</sup> Tom’s rousing chorus of “[t]he roast beef of old England,” a blunt register of material satisfaction and fit accompaniment to a popular riot, gives way in the end to Jack’s less nostalgic and subtly revisionist, though still scriptural, motto: “Study to be quiet, work with your own hands, and mind your own business” (1:347–48).<sup>67</sup> The phrase belies the historical inertia of one of Jack’s own earlier anti-French dictums about liberty: “We’ve no race to run! We’re there already!” (1:335). Instead, “study to be quiet,” and work to acquire habits of contentment and subordination. For More, popular loyalty and civil order were neither given conditions nor available inheritances; instead, they had to be aggressively taught and actively learned, through the procedures developed in her educational and publishing schemes, and then relentlessly thematized in her fiction. Again, her willingness to innovate in order to preserve, and educate in order to subordinate, assisted a work like *Village Politics* from sedimenting as a reactionary canon. When it reappeared in 1819 as *The Village Disputants; or, A Conversation on the Present Times*, in an edition priced at “2d. or 25 for 3s. 6d.,” the text was revised to meet the distinctive challenge of early nineteenth-century radical reform: a batch of “fine new papers and tracts” replaced the work of Paine, footnotes indicated the latest improving tracts, and there were updated treatments of taxation, war debt, and female reformers.<sup>68</sup>

It is not easy to discover More’s own position in this impressive exercise in counterrevolutionary literacy and acculturation, since

*Village Politics* contains no real equivalent to such later authorial proxies as Mr. Johnson or the widow Mrs. Jones. In a sensitive account of the opportunities and challenges that this political dialogue posed for More as a woman writer, Krueger traces the submerged authorial presence to a “dialectical process” that “requires no privileged voice, no hierarchical relation between speaker and listener,” yet she observes too that the writer seems not yet to have discovered her distinctive rhetorical powers.<sup>69</sup> This was after all the first of More’s popular reactionary fictions; written at the encouragement of John Porteus, the Bishop of London, and brought out without the institutional benefit of More’s own Cheap Repository, it achieved its remarkable circulation within the advanced network of correspondence, association, and publication provided by John Reeves’s Loyalist Association.<sup>70</sup> In this context, informal nodes of rural gossip within the text are (like Dr. Shepherd’s casual conversations about housekeeping) mystified (re)presentations of reactionary transmission, a way of insisting that, as a source of knowledge about revolutionary France, loyalist association was structurally as well as semantically distinct from the radical corresponding societies. There were good reasons why, for all her discursive sophistication, More might want to obscure her own position as author at this early stage in her counterrevolutionary career: not only was she a women writing about public matters, through networks controlled by male authorities like Porteus and Reeves, but she was actively involved in forms of political association and textual production that could appear suspect in an era of acute anti-Jacobin sentiment. In the crisis atmosphere of the 1790s, Sunday schools were themselves suspected of French complicity, and even More was not immune to the paranoid response: the Blagdon controversy was triggered in 1800 when a local schoolteacher appointed by her was accused of Methodist subversions of the church establishment, and no less a counterrevolutionary authority than the *Anti-Jacobin Review* took a leading role in the print campaign against More and her supporters.<sup>71</sup>

Yet, despite the absence of a fully realized self-representation in *Village Politics*, the tract does contain a curious modal shift or rupture that seems to open up the space More would soon visibly occupy. Like much of her counterrevolutionary fiction, this dialogue refused any clear distinction between realistic and emblematic writing by assigning vernacular speech and vivid social circumstance to characters like Jack Anvil, Tom Hod, and Neighbour Snip. However, at the moment when the conversation takes a critical turn towards a

direct refutation of Paine's *Rights of Man*, the generic register shifts dramatically from the quasirealistic to the wholly allegorical. The figure of Sir John, elsewhere rendered in circumstantial detail (he receives letters, entertains visitors, cultivates a garden, and employs village children), becomes an emblem of something else, another "good sign," as Jack spins his refusal "to pull down yonder fine old castle" (1:329) and remodel it along French lines into an allegory of the "wisdom of [our] brave ancestors" (1:329) in respecting constitutional government, despite the occasional presence of "a dark closet, or an awkward passage, or an inconvenient room or two in it" (1:329). With this abrupt reminder that we are in the domain of fiction, sharply marked by Jack's formula, "I'll tell thee a story" (1:329), More enlists the hermeneutic skills of her reader and discloses the artifice of her own narrative design, and makes both indispensable to the work of counterrevolution. Sir John is reduced from a real source of gentry influence in the surrounding village, to a fictional vehicle for the author's more far-reaching professional intervention. Ironically, More's Burkean allegory of the uninterrupted transmission of authority becomes a discursive switch for authority to pass from Sir John's legendary and locally disseminated sayings, to her own recently scripted and nationally distributed texts. The point becomes even more striking if we consider Marilyn Butler's observation that the virtuous patriarch of *Village Politics* cloaks a female villain, the wife whose "fantastical" desire to do "every thing like the French" (1:329) precipitated the original demand for the destruction of the ancestral English castle.<sup>72</sup> In her fondness for luxury and leisure, this woman of doubtful authority contrasts unfavorably with More's own native industry and thrift. Yet if we recall Tom White's fierce determination "to break through many old, but very bad customs," and take seriously More's own reformist designs upon the existing social order, there is a sense in which the "fantastical" author of *Village Politics* succeeds in reconstructing "yonder fine old castle" where the misguided wife failed.

The crucial break at this point from vernacular dialogue to allegorical narrative again suggests the limits of an understanding of More's work as a variety of social realism: the object here, and in the Cheap Repository's many allegorical tales, was not the social texture of village life in 1793, but rather the ideological work done upon it by fiction. If there is an element of what Julie Ellison has called "aggressive allegory" in my reading of the way Sir John is transformed from local authority into national fable, the aggression is not difficult

to understand.<sup>73</sup> The rural gentry were frequently implicated in More's comprehensive assault on upper-class corruption, and they tended to figure as obstructions rather than allies in her letters and memoirs.<sup>74</sup> Sir John has his share of successors in More's fiction, but even those who are successfully conscripted for the work of moral reform tend to remain unimpressive or inconsequential figures. The widow Mrs. Jones, for example, succeeds in enlisting gentry subscriptions for her parish oven, but the motives at work are clearly demeaned: "Sir John subscribed to be rid of her importunity, and the squire, because he thought every improvement in oeconomy would reduce the poor's rate" (4:347). In subsequent Cheap Repository Tracts, as Gary Kelly has observed, "the real leader in rural society, the 'squire, is missing altogether," replaced by a "professionalized" evangelical clergy and an adjunct committee of women activists and "converted poor" who collectively figure forth More's own energy.<sup>75</sup> At one point in *Village Politics*, when Jack tries to invoke the charity of Sir John, and the employment created by his wife's extravagance, as a hedge against French leveling (a wholly conventional piece of reactionary political economy for the masses), Tom objects that "there's not Sir Johns in every village." The shift to emblematic status once again diminishes gentry authority, as one Sir John loses force in the absence of "Sir Johns." Faced with this challenge, Jack's only recourse is to change the subject: "The more's the pity. But there's other help. 'Twas but last year you broke your leg, and was nine weeks in the Bristol Infirmary, where you was taken as much care of as a lord" (1:338–39). The institutional associations at work in this abrupt shift from gentry provision to "other help" could not be more sharply drawn. A year later, the Prospectus to the Cheap Repository would invoke the same distinguished British practice of charitably subsidized "[h]ospitals, Dispensaries, and Humane societies" in order to fashion a legitimate genealogy for its own fabricated practices.<sup>76</sup> Sir John, the effective instrument of social order, fades from view as Tom and his creator turn away from the authority of the landed gentry in an isolated village, and towards the more modern, national, and centralized network of middle-class philanthropy and reactionary enterprise that the Cheap Repository would soon pioneer.

*California Institute of Technology*

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The tracts were published under these titles by the Cheap Repository in March and September of 1795; in the first collected edition of Hannah More's work, *The Works of Hannah More*, 8 vols. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1801), they were reprinted as *The History of Tom White the Post Boy. In Two Parts*. More's work for the Cheap Repository appeared in a dizzying array of editions and formats over the course of her life, and for the purposes of uniformity, I will refer to this 1801 Cadell and Davies edition (hereafter cited parenthetically by volume and page number), except where particular variations in content or presentation are relevant to my argument. I also refer to several Cheap Repository Tracts not written by More; since these were not collected in any uniform edition, I cite them in their original form. Such tracts were subject to More's approval and appeared under the Cheap Repository title, and can therefore be treated as integral to the project. For the authorship of the tracts, see G. H. Spinney, "Cheap Repository Tracts: Hazard and Marshall Edition," *The Library* 20 (1939-1940): 310-11.

<sup>2</sup> For the public house as "central transmitter of . . . plebian custom," see Mitzi Myers, "Hannah More's Tracts for the Times: Social Fiction and Female Ideology," in *Fetter'd or Free?: British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*, ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1986), 272. For the tavern in radical culture, see John Money, "Taverns, Coffee Houses and Clubs: Local Politics and Popular Articulation in the Birmingham Area in the Age of the American Revolution," *Historical Journal* 14 (1971): 15-47, and Iain McCalman, *Radical Underworld: Prophets, Revolutionaries and Pornographers in London, 1795-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), 113-27.

<sup>3</sup> Though widely applied to Hannah More by critics and historians alike, "evangelical" is in some respects an imperfect term. In using it, I accept Robert Hole's caution that, while the term usefully indicates her concern for personal salvation and her social activism with respect to slavery and poverty, it should not obscure her dislike for Methodism and her firm commitment to social hierarchy and the established church: "It does no harm to describe More as an Evangelical, so long as it is remembered that that is only a partial description. She was an Anglican with strong links with the orthodox mainstream of that church—influenced by the evangelical thinking of a wing of the church, but first and foremost a supporter of the Church Establishment." See Hole's introduction, *Selected Writings of Hannah More*, ed. Hole (London: William Pickering, 1996), xx-xiv.

<sup>4</sup> The precise circumstances of the title are glossed in later editions of More's work: "Written in 1795, the Year of Scarcity" (5:244). For an account of famine through the war years, see Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England, 1793-1801* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> *The History of Tom White, the Postillion. In Two Parts* (London and Bath, [no date]), 25. In the 1801 edition of her works, the word "present" was dropped from this phrase (5:261).

<sup>6</sup> In an intriguing discussion of providential causality in the Cheap Repository Tracts, Catherine Gallagher identifies what I take to be a related gap between the moral agency of More's characters and the narrative episodes they occupy, though Gallagher's concern is finally the priority of divine providence rather than the institutional framework within which moral reform occurs. "Even though the characters are portrayed as vigilantly active, their exertions are not the motors that propel the plot. These pious characters are eventually saved through their submissiveness, but their salvation usually falls outside the compass of the story's recorded events." See Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832–1867* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985), 38.

<sup>7</sup> Dorice Elliott, "The Care of the Poor Is Her Profession': Hannah More and Women's Philanthropic Work," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 19 (1995): 187.

<sup>8</sup> See Elliott, 194–95; Anne Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 2000), 28–32; and Kathryn Sutherland, "Hannah More's Counter-Revolutionary Feminism," in *Revolution in Writing: British Literary Responses to the French Revolution*, ed. Kelvin Everest (Milton Keynes, Eng.: Open Univ. Press, 1991), 53–61.

<sup>9</sup> In collected editions of More's work, the tract was renamed *A Cure for Melancholy: Shewing the Way to Do Much Good with Little Money*, emphasizing the way Mrs. Jones's introduction to evangelical enterprise corrects her excessive grief after the death of her husband; by contrast, the earlier title, consistently used for Cheap Repository editions beginning in early 1797, calls attention to the practical guidance contained in a closing section of recipes and domestic advice, removed in the collected *Works*.

<sup>10</sup> Sutherland, 27, 51. This formulation seems to me preferable to Mellor's more radical suggestion, in *Mothers of the Nation*, that More "erased any meaningful distinction between the private and the broadly defined public sphere" (31–32). To have obliterated this potent distinction would have been to risk sacrificing too much of the authority that could accrue to her from the kind of calculated revisions we witness in *The Cottage Cook*.

<sup>11</sup> The most comprehensive literary historical account of the association of virtue with the country and vice with the city is of course Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973). Given More's willingness to complicate the dichotomy (Tom White's conversion to virtue takes place in a London hospital), it is interesting that Williams, in his influential reading of the poem "London," credits one of her radical contemporaries, William Blake, with an aesthetic breakthrough that "decisively transcended" the "simplifying contrast between country and city," through a grasp of the urban experience as a comprehensive set of social relations (148–49).

<sup>12</sup> More does take her epigraph for volume 5 of the 1801 collected works from "Burke on the French Revolution," but it is significant that the passage she selects from the *Reflections* involves a discussion of the established church, and therefore presents Edmund Burke as the defender of faith rather than custom: "Religion is for the man in humble life, and to raise his nature, and to put him in mind of a state in which the privileges of opulence will cease, when he will be equal by nature, and may be more than equal by virtue." More has confused Burke's meaning, in part by shifting his concern for an established church to religion generally; for the original, see Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1987), 86.

<sup>13</sup> I borrow the notion of an invented tradition from *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983). In his introduction, Hobsbawm defines the concept (in part) as ritualized practices “which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1). On this last point, More is inconsistent, sometimes legitimating the manners and habits she fabricates as a restoration of “good old” practices, at other times proposing the more frank revisionism that Tom expresses here.

<sup>14</sup> John Belchem, “Republicanism, Popular Constitutionalism and the Radical Platform in Early Nineteenth-Century England,” *Social History* 6 (1981): 4.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Gregory Claeys, “Republicanism Versus Commercial Society: Paine, Burke and the French Revolution Debate,” *History of European Ideas* 11 (1989): 313; Claeys, “The French Revolution Debate and British Political Thought,” *History of Political Thought* 11 (1990): 59–60; H. T. Dickinson, “Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism, 1789–1815,” in *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789–1815*, ed. Dickinson (Basingstoke, Eng.: Macmillan, 1989), 104–5; and see Pocock’s introduction to Burke’s *Reflections*, xl.

<sup>16</sup> For a critical treatment of the conventional idea of a revolution controversy, see Mark Philp, “Vulgar Conservatism, 1792–1793,” *English Historical Review* 110 (1995): 43–44.

<sup>17</sup> William Wordsworth, *Selected Prose*, ed. John O. Hayden (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1988), 280 (“the present state”), 284. For a similar conjunction between Wordsworth and the female moral reformers on matters of “colloquial but ‘correct’ style,” see Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 213–14.

<sup>18</sup> Philp, 44 (“vulgar conservative”), 44 (“the vulgar”), 44 (“a project”), 45 (“To pursue”). For the way Hannah More “distanced herself from Burke and his kind” on questions of chivalry and a romanticized gothic past, see David Simpson, *Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1993), 118.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Ryan makes a similar point with respect to organized Anglican opposition to the campaign against the political disabilities imposed upon Dissent; see *The Romantic Reformation: Religious Politics in English Literature, 1789–1824* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 21.

<sup>20</sup> Joanna Innes, “Politics and Morals: The Reformation of Manners in Later Eighteenth-Century England,” in *The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century*, ed. Eckhart Hellmuth (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1990), 60 (“the complex”), 66 (“patriotic”), 67 (“project-oriented”), 66 (“helping”), 84 (“lingering”), 84 (“make”), 75 (“Church and State”).

<sup>21</sup> Susan Pedersen, “Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century England,” *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986): 87.

<sup>22</sup> Gary Kelly, “Revolution, Reaction, and the Expropriation of Popular Culture: Hannah More’s *Cheap Repository*,” *Man and Nature* 6 (1987): 151.

<sup>23</sup> Olivia Smith, *The Politics of Language, 1791–1819* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 12.

<sup>24</sup> For the migration of Wilberforce’s Proclamation Society toward anti-Jacobinism in the late 1790s, see Innes, 100–1.

<sup>25</sup> In a letter of January 1796 to Zachary Macaulay, More described the Cheap Repository in terms that similarly insist upon an antirevolutionary vocation, at least with respect to the “horrid blasphemy” of infidel theory: “Vulgar and indecent penny books were always common, but speculative infidelity, brought down to the pockets and capacities of the poor, forms a new era in our history. This requires strong counteraction; I do not pretend that ours is very strong, but we must do what we can.” See William Roberts, *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*, 4 vols. (London: R. B. Seeley and W. Burnside, 1834), 2:458.

<sup>26</sup> It may be worth remarking here on my own use in this article of terms like “counterrevolutionary,” “reactionary,” “antiradical,” and “conservative” to describe More’s position. While such terms convey important features of More’s project, each risks some form of anachronism or imprecision, in part because they attempt to describe a position that was coming into being in the 1790s. In *From Jacobite to Conservative: Reaction and Orthodoxy in Britain, c. 1760–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), James Sack has written astutely about the “semantic problem” (2–3) posed by ideologies of the right in this period, and I follow his example in employing a range of imperfect terms.

<sup>27</sup> Christine L. Krueger, *The Reader’s Repentance: Women Preachers, Women Writers, and Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1992), 94–97; and Philp, 45.

<sup>28</sup> Mellor, 13; Krueger, 85, 112–15; Elliott, 179–204; Sutherland, 27–63; Myers, “Hannah More’s Tracts for the Times,” 264–84; and Myers, “Reform or Ruin: ‘A Revolution in Female Manners,’” *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 11 (1982): 199–216. For a less sympathetic feminist response, see Elizabeth Kowaleski-Wallace, *Their Fathers’ Daughters: Hannah More, Maria Edgeworth, and Patriarchal Complicity* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 56–93.

<sup>29</sup> Gallagher has written suggestively about the potential “friction” (40) between More’s commitment to a “rule of providential necessity” (38) and her effort “to portray people in all conditions of life as free moral agents” (38). If the latter concern does sometimes lend More’s servants and laborers a certain moral dignity, and even autonomy, Gallagher suggests a resolution of determinism and free will that finally reinforces subordination in divine as well as human affairs: “because the events of her plots are always traced to God’s will, the characters’ only morally permissible free act is the act of submission” (38).

<sup>30</sup> Mary Alden Hopkins, *Hannah More and Her Circle* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1947), 213; and Myers, “Hannah More’s Tracts for the Times,” 267 (“pioneer”), 267–68 (“Here are”).

<sup>31</sup> See Sutherland, 42–44, and Krueger, 95–96. While Krueger identifies this strand in the critical response to the Cheap Repository, her own work aims to complicate our understanding of More by attending to her early plays and to the later conduct books and essays directed at the middle and upper classes.

<sup>32</sup> Myers, “Hannah More’s Tracts for the Times,” 267. Kowaleski-Wallace has written suggestively about the elements of “fantasy” or “dream world” that suffuse More’s fiction, even where markers of the real are most in evidence (78–79).

<sup>33</sup> The quotation is from Myers, “Hannah More’s Tracts for the Times,” 268.

<sup>34</sup> For a compelling account of the long history of this confrontation between English fact and foreign theory, see Simpson.

<sup>35</sup> Pedersen, 109.

<sup>36</sup> Critics have frequently remarked on More's ability to manage plebeian and middle-class audiences simultaneously; see, for example, Krueger, 111, and Elliott, 184.

<sup>37</sup> For Mrs. Jones's "social service activities" as "a fictionalized account of the village welfare work of Hannah and [her sister] Martha," see Hopkins, 215–16.

<sup>38</sup> See Hole's introduction to *Selected Writings of Hannah More*, vii.

<sup>39</sup> Demers, *The World of Hannah More*, (Lexington: The Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1996), 114. For radical reading practices, see Kevin Gilmartin, *Print Politics: The Press and Radical Opposition in Early Nineteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 102–8.

<sup>40</sup> Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, *Association Papers* (1793), *Part the First: Containing Publications Printed by Special Order of the Society*, Number 1:4.

<sup>41</sup> See *An Account of the Origin and Progress of the London Religious Tract Society* (London, 1803), 6; *Report of the Committee of the Religious Tract Society* (London, 1808), 5; and *The Twenty-Fifth Annual Report of the Religious Tract Society* (London, 1824), xv.

<sup>42</sup> Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), 76.

<sup>43</sup> For More's "campaign against extravagant waste," see Mellor, 35–36.

<sup>44</sup> *Hints to All Ranks of People* (Bath and London, [1795]), 18–20.

<sup>45</sup> See Spinney, 303; Smith, 95.

<sup>46</sup> Spinney, 296, 309–10; see also Kelly, 154. My entire discussion of the formal features of these tracts is indebted to Spinney's account.

<sup>47</sup> For the evangelical view of "a Christian community in which all parts of society were bound together by mutual duty, obligation, and affection," see Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England, 1760–1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), 185.

<sup>48</sup> These can be found in *The Cottage Cook; or, Mrs. Jone's Cheap Dishes: Shewing the Way to Do Much Good with Little Money* (London, [no date]), 14–16.

<sup>49</sup> For a suggestive account of the shift to a nonconvertible paper currency in the work of nation making, see Jerome Christensen, "The Detection of the Romantic Conspiracy in Britain," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 95 (1996): 603–27.

<sup>50</sup> Hole, introduction to *Selected Writings of Hannah More*, xx.

<sup>51</sup> *Mendip Annals: Or, A Narrative of the Charitable Labours of Hannah and Martha More in Their Neighbourhood. Being the Journal of Martha More*, ed. Arthur Roberts (London: James Nisbet, 1859), 8.

<sup>52</sup> This part of the discussion does not appear in the original Cheap Repository version of the tract, and seems to have been introduced for the 1801 edition of More's works. It comes as an expansion of the Shepherd's response to Johnson's concern that he is perhaps "a little too cautious" (5:44), in refusing to send one of his sons for a mug of beer on Sunday.

<sup>53</sup> *The Loyal Subject's Political Creed; or, What I Do, and What I Do Not Think* (London, [no date]), and *The Apprentice's Monitor; or, Indentures in Verse, Shewing What They Are Bound to Do* (Bath, 1795). Neither of these works appeared in collected editions of More's work, although the latter tract was brought out under her characteristic signature, "Z."

<sup>54</sup> *Mendip Annals*, 6.

<sup>55</sup> Smith, 93.

<sup>56</sup> *Dame Andrews, A Ballad* (Bath, 1795).

<sup>57</sup> Of course the force of obligation moved primarily in one direction along the social hierarchy: “Indeed, the rich have been very kind,” Betty Plane observes at the end of *Tom White*, as the villagers gather under Dr. Shepherd’s direction to cope with the effects of the high price of provision, “I don’t know what we should have done without them” (5:280).

<sup>58</sup> Dorice Elliott has written perceptively about the way that More’s charitable enterprise, more broadly considered, sustained itself by generating obligations as well as further demands: “While the philanthropic act could fulfill the poor person’s need, it was necessary at the same time to generate a new need, which would require another philanthropic act.” See Elliott, 185–87.

<sup>59</sup> For conservative anxieties about the explosion of radical print culture, see Gilmartin, 68–69.

<sup>60</sup> For the importance of the fall and human corruption in More’s work, see Demers, 77–78, and Hole’s introduction to *Selected Writings*, xxv.

<sup>61</sup> For More’s participation in the later revival of the Cheap Repository, see Hopkins, 211–12.

<sup>62</sup> Burke, “Thoughts on French Affairs,” in *Further Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. Daniel P. Ritchie (Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1992), 215. For the serial publication of the Cheap Repository Tracts, see Spinney, 302; and Demers, 109.

<sup>63</sup> [Sarah More], *The Good Mother’s Legacy* (London, [no date]), 2.

<sup>64</sup> See Gallagher, for the contrast between this notion of obscure providential design and “the Deists’ Watchmaker God” (36–37).

<sup>65</sup> “Think a Little,” in Association for Preserving Liberty and Property against Republicans and Levellers, *Association Papers in Part the Second: Containing a Collection of Tracts Printed at the Expence of the Society* (London, 1793), Number 8:14.

<sup>66</sup> In fact, Jack associates severe censorship with the French Revolution rather than British reaction: “Why, Tom, only t’other day they hang’d a man for printing a book against this pretty government of theirs” (1:336).

<sup>67</sup> The New Testament text, itself revised and sharpened by More, is: “And that ye study to be quite, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you” (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

<sup>68</sup> *The Village Disputants; or, A Conversation on the Present Times* (London, 1819). A more expensive edition, containing other tracts addressing recent events, appeared under the title *Cheap Repository Tracts Suited to the Present Times* (London, 1819).

<sup>69</sup> Krueger, 108–9. More’s use of the dialogue form has drawn the attention of a number of critics: in “Vulgar Conservatism,” Philp discovers an active exercise of plebeian judgment in the conversation between Tom and Jack and claims this might have had unintentional radical effects (62–63); but in “Revolution, Reaction, and the Expropriation of Popular Culture,” Kelly is more skeptical and argues that More’s tententious use of dialogue tends to slip into catechism (152).

<sup>70</sup> See Spinney, 296.

<sup>71</sup> For the Blagdon controversy, see M. G. Jones, *Hannah More* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1952), 172–83; Demers, 106–9; and Myers, “‘A Peculiar Protection’: Hannah More and the Cultural Politics of the Blagdon Controversy,” in *History, Gender, and Eighteenth-Century Literature*, ed. Beth Fowkes Tobin (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1994), 227–57.

<sup>72</sup> *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy*, ed. Marilyn Butler (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), 179.

<sup>73</sup> Julie Ellison, "Aggressive Allegory," *Raritan* 3 (1984): 100.

<sup>74</sup> For More's critique of the upper classes, see Mellor, 18–21; Myers, "Hannah More's Tracts for the Times," 274–75; and Tobin, *Superintending the Poor: Charitable Ladies and Paternal Landlords in British Fiction, 1770–1860* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1993), 75–76, 86–89, 108.

<sup>75</sup> Kelly, 152.

<sup>76</sup> *A Plan for Establishing by Subscription a Repository of Cheap Publications, on Religious and Moral Subjects*, [no publication information], 1. For More's commitment to the "institutionalized philanthropy" represented by hospitals, schools, and orphanages, see Mellor, 27.