

Roy Vickers

The Gospel of Social Discontent

Religious Language and the Narrative of
Christian Election in the Chartist Poetry of
Thomas Cooper, Ernest Jones and William
James Linton

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Abstract

Chartist poetry has received attention from critics on several key fronts, notably its political agendas, its literary development between the inception and demise of Chartism, and its relationship to canonical literature, particularly romanticism. This thesis focuses on the importance of Christianity to Chartist poetry. It assesses the symbolism of its Christian language, the role of religious discourses in the construction of Chartist cultural and political identity and subsequently the ways in which the audiences of Chartist poems are addressed. It focuses on poetry by three of the most prominent Chartist poets, Thomas Cooper, Ernest Jones and William James Linton, with respect to the operation of one specific Christian idea; the selection by God of an individual or group to a particular task or ministry, termed throughout this thesis the narrative of Christian election. This mythic structure provides a rich interpretive potential and is used by these writers in a variety of ways.

I explore the tensions between the religious connotations of Christian election and the radical-democratic resonances ascribed to it, with regard to two major aspects of that narrative. The first concerns how these Chartists came to understand themselves as poets, political leaders and visionaries. I argue that they all understood and represented to themselves their attainment of literary status by considering themselves elected as poets. The narrative of Christian election provided a way for them to legitimate themselves as poets, articulating through poetry their personal relationship with their literary influences. The second is to do with the literary and political objectives these poets imagined and set out to achieve. These poets wrote a 'theology of liberation' into their poetry that expressed how Chartist political and social goals could be attained. In so doing they wrote against the political quietism of orthodox religion, sought to raise the consciousness of the working classes and promoted the political destiny of the rank and file Chartists. The thesis also argues that Christian election provided a cultural and political model for rank and file Chartists that offered a structural and symbolic way of understanding the relationship between the individual, their allotted cultural and political tasks and the social body to which they were to contribute.

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Introduction

In 1832, the Reform Bill granted voting rights to elements of the middle-classes. It only partially fulfilled the democratic changes it seemed to promise, thereby mobilising oppositional feelings among the working classes and sympathetic radicals. Effectively the Bill was felt to endorse capitalist economics, redrawing tensions between the working classes and the bourgeoisie. The working classes were increasingly aware of the effects of industrialism on the growing urban populations and were dissatisfied with the political settlement made in 1832. The collapse of the economic boom of the mid 1830s, together with the inroads made by the Poor Law Commission into the north of England, invigorated a pressure politics intent on radically changing the settlement made by the Reform Bill.¹

Between 1837 and 1860, the Chartists campaigned, demonstrated and petitioned for the removal of the remaining inequities following the assent of the Reform Bill. Revising the political mandates and strategies of earlier radical movements, Chartists petitioned for votes for all men; equal electoral districts; abolition of requirements for MPs to own property; a salary for MPs; annual general elections and the secret ballot.² These principles were written into *The People's Charter*. In the late 1840s, Chartism came increasingly under state pressure to relinquish the mass platform as a political tool. As Margot Finn notes, Chartism instead increased its emphasis on 'education and propaganda in the radical press both to explain the past disasters of the movement and to ensure its future success.'³ This tactical change was not successful and following the European revolutions of 1848 and the disastrous submission of the last Chartist petition, Chartism waned.

As the work of Eileen Groth Lyon demonstrates, Chartism had a particularly Christian dimension.⁴ Indeed John Saville notes that the Chartist leader and poet

¹Paul Richards, 'State Formation and Class Struggle, 1832-48,' Philip Corrigan (ed.) *Capitalism, State Formation and Marxist Theory*, London: Quartet, 1980, pp.66-72.

²The radical prose of earlier figures such as Major Cartwright, advocating 'universal suffrage, equally diffused, annual elections and a ballot' was reprinted in Chartist publications. See for example *The Chartist Circular* no.5, 26 October, 1839, p.20.

³Margot C. Finn, *After Chartism. Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 85.

⁴Eileen Groth Lyon, *Politicians in the Pulpit: Christian Radicalism in Britain from the Fall of the Bastille to the Disintegration of Chartism*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, p. 192.

Thomas Cooper had gained his prominence during the 'stirring years of Chartism' by offering a 'gospel of social discontent' to his audiences, a discourse that after Chartism was difficult to re-style in the new political climate of the 1860s.⁵ This thesis examines the cultural and political function of religious imagery and symbolism in the poetry of three Chartist leaders and poets: Thomas Cooper (1805-1892), Ernest Jones (1819-1869) and William James Linton (1812-1897). It focuses particularly on the operation of one specific idea, the narrative of Christian election. This can be broadly defined as: 'The act of choice whereby God picks an individual or group out of a larger company for a purpose or destiny of His own appointment.'⁶ The election narrative can prescribe a very close relationship between God and the individual subject. It can also create a collective identity, articulating the sense of salvation shared among a chosen remnant. In the Old Testament, the selection of Abraham and his descendants for admission into the land of Canaan made a close connection between a chosen people and their land, their 'inheritance'.⁷ The New Testament opens up the Abrahamic covenant to include the gentiles in Pauline Christianity: 'if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'⁸ The election narrative, as used by the poets discussed in this thesis, emphasises the lineage and ancestry of the Judaic tradition, and personal faith as a means of finding a place within a wider Christian family. Both facets of the election narrative carry individual and collective meanings that circulate in Christian traditions.

There has also been critical interest in the romantic and political contexts of Chartist poetry since the mid-1950s with the publication of Yuri Kovalev's *Anthology of Chartist Literature*.⁹ Major critical attention from within English Studies began with Martha Vicinus's literary survey of nineteenth-century working-class writing, *The Industrial Muse*. It devotes a chapter to Chartist literature and focuses on Cooper, Jones, Linton and also Gerald Massey.¹⁰ Several studies have already examined the three poets in this thesis and indicated (but not thoroughly explored) the Christian

⁵ John Saville, (ed.) Introduction, Thomas Cooper, *The Life of Thomas Cooper, Written by Himself*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1971, p.9.

⁶ J.D. Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962, p. 357.

⁷ Numbers 34:2, *The Holy Bible*, King James Version.

⁸ Galatians 3:29, *Holy Bible*.

⁹ Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, Moscow: 1956

aspects of their literature. Both Percy Bysshe Shelley and Ernest Jones, as Bouthaina Shaaban observes, shared a belief in Christian ethics, but rejected its institutions.¹¹ Timothy Randall's broad survey of Chartist literature, setting out the cultural contexts of its production, argues that the idea of Chartists as a chosen people in exile was a common theme in Chartist prison poetry.¹² Isobel Armstrong notes how the balladic and hymnal qualities of Chartist communal singing act as a means of fashioning 'a genuinely social rhetoric of community defiance'.¹³ In short, the religious paradigm of Chartist poetry examined in this thesis has been nominally observed but not thoroughly explored by critics to date.

The first historical study to assess the importance of Christianity to Chartism was Faulkner's 1916 work *Chartism and the Churches*, focussing on Chartist attitudes to the church and the latter's general hostility to Chartist political initiatives.¹⁴ Edward Royle's pioneering studies published in the 1970s trace the importance of Christianity to nineteenth-century radicalism. Though the emergence of secularism heralded the subsequent revival of socialist politics in the late nineteenth-century, Chartism itself was only tangentially connected to freethought.¹⁵ In her study of the Christian dimensions of Chartist protest, 'Christianity in Chartist Struggle,' Eileen Yeo remarks that 'from the earliest days of the movement, a body of radical Christian beliefs was clearly in evidence and already well authenticated by struggle.'¹⁶ The occupation of churches by Chartists between 1838 and 1842 indicates how strongly the Church was associated more with benefiting its officials and its rich patrons, than with ministering to 'the people.' Religion was a vital component of working class life that was seldom

¹⁰ Martha Vicinus, *The Industrial Muse: A Study of Nineteenth Century British Working-Class Literature*, London: Croom Helm, 1974, pp. 96-112.

¹¹ See Bouthaina Shaaban, 'Shelley's Influence on the Chartist Poets, with Particular Emphasis on Ernest Charles Jones and Thomas Cooper,' D.Phil., Warwick, 1981, pp. 217-218; pp.256-260.

¹² Timothy Randall, 'Towards a Radical Democracy,' D.Phil. University of Sussex, 1994 p.82

¹³ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry. Poetry, Poetics and Politics*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 193. See also Timothy Randall, 'Chartist Poetry and Song,' Ashton, Fyson & Roberts (eds.) *The Chartist Legacy*, Rendlesham: Merlin, 1999, p. 173; Eileen Groth Lyon, *Politicians in the Pulpit*, p.205; Ulrike Schwab, *The Poetry of the Chartist Movement A Literary and Historical Study*, London: Kluwer, 1993, pp.101-107; 130-133; Philip Collins, *Thomas Cooper, the Chartist: Byron and the 'Poets of the Poor'*, Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1970, p.11.

¹⁴ Harold Underwood Faulkner. *Chartism and the Churches A Study in Democracy* (1916), London, Frank Cass & Co., 1970.

¹⁵ Edward Royle, *Radical Politics 1790-1900 Religion and Unbelief*, London: Longman, 1971, p.64; *Victorian Infidels. The Origin of the British Secularist Movement*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974, p. 137.

¹⁶ Eileen Yeo, 'Christianity in Chartist Struggle 1838-1842,' *Past and Present*, no. 91, May 1981 p. 110.

attuned to middle-class religious ideals. As Martin Hewitt notes, the ‘antiwealth communalism of scriptural Christianity’ took precedence over ‘the obedience and worldly satisfaction which organised religion proclaimed.’¹⁷

Chartists from both the leadership and the rank and file supporters often revised Christian ideas and symbols, turning them into signs that acted as models of political conduct. As David McNulty notes, Christian notions of attaining just reward were a ‘spur to political efforts’. Christianity was a ‘source of the determination to overcome’ political obstacles.¹⁸ The Chartist banners made by the rank and file of the movement, used in Manchester between 1838 and 1842, often carried messages that were anticlerical, advocating religious liberty.¹⁹ Hugh McLeod observes how Scottish Chartists made their religious inheritance relevant to their immediate political situation. They considered themselves ‘the authentic practitioners of the principles of social justice proclaimed by the Old Testament prophets, and of the equality of all mankind taught in the New Testament.’²⁰

The prevalence of Christian discourses among the working classes enabled the Chartist leadership to weave it into their speeches. Gentleman leaders and orators, as John Belchem and James Epstein observe, used the language of Christianity and echoed ancient libertarian traditions in order to ‘confront authority and power as they were constituted and to suggest a reordering of political authority.’²¹ Christian principles were deployed by Chartist leaders as a way of consolidating and organising collective dissidence, articulated through anticlerical narratives, but also tapping into the Christian narratives that constructed the everyday experience of the working classes, rather than through institutionally legitimised beliefs. Christian language was therefore a common currency among both the rank and file and Chartist leaders, providing both with a familiar and ready-made language ripe for subversion, by

¹⁷ Martin Hewitt, *The Emergence of Stability in the Industrial City: Manchester, 1832-67*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996, pp.120-121.

¹⁸ David McNulty, ‘Working Class Movements in Somerset and Wiltshire 1837-1848,’ D.Phil. University of Manchester, 1981 p.180.

¹⁹ One banner had the motto ‘God and our rights’ painted on one side, another called for ‘More pigs and less parsons’. See Paul A. Pickering, ‘Appendix C: The Chartist Banners’, *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford*, London: Macmillan, 1995, pp. 214-216.

²⁰ Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, London: Macmillan, 1984, p.48.

²¹ John Belchem & James Epstein, ‘The Gentleman Leader Revisited,’ 22, no. 2, May 1997, p.185.

which Chartist politics were justified on religious grounds, in speeches, tracts, poems and prose fictions.

Eileen Yeo first highlighted the importance of Christianity to the articulation of political deliverance in Chartism, applying to it the phrase 'the theology of liberation'.²² It was when 'reading the theology of liberation that is being developed...in Latin America' that Yeo felt she was 'penetrating more deeply into the Chartist cast of mind.' In other words, salvation through humankind's 'active consent' to God's will was understood as a covenant between God and humankind.²³ This 'theology' encoded Chartism's political objectives, foregrounding the enduring sense of social justice and responsibility that was required of the ordinary Chartist supporter. The Bible gave early Chartist supporters and leaders like J.R Stephens their political language. Texts such as the book of Exodus provided 'an exemplary evocation of bondage and oppression' and were 'a clear sign that political and social liberation is God's overriding will, which needs the active consent of human agents to be accomplished.'²⁴

Although Christianity is a recognised influence, the major context in which Chartist poetry has been examined is romanticism. The most recent of such studies is Anne Janowitz's *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*. It devotes chapters to Cooper, Jones and Linton's poetry within a specific poetic genre, paying particular attention to 'romantic lyricism'.²⁵ Janowitz argues that in the analysis of radical poetry in the romantic tradition, the focus of attention on the relationship between individual and collective identities can inhibit our appreciation of the historically constructed interdependency of those two categories. The danger is that we might mistake this relationship for 'what look to us like mutually exclusive claims of self and community.'²⁶ Her solution is to assess the effect on individual and collective identities produced in the encounter between print and oral culture. Janowitz argues that the meshing of the differing strictures and language patterns in both these forms

²² Eileen Yeo, 'Chartist Religious Belief and the Theology of Liberation,' in, J. Obelkevich, L. Roper & R. Samuel (eds.), *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, London: Routledge, 1987, p.410.

²³ Eileen Yeo, 'Chartist Religious Belief,' p.410.

²⁴ Eileen Yeo, 'Chartist Religious Belief,' p.414.

²⁵ See Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 141-142.

produces the 'social and personal functions articulated at the macro-level of poetic thematics.'²⁷ Energised by the productive tensions between the oral and written traditions, political dissidence found expression and validation, and sought to consolidate itself throughout the nineteenth century. Though the relationship between individual and collective identities articulated in Chartist poems may be analysed within a romantic tradition, this thesis argues that the Christian dimensions of Chartist poetry also construct and relate individual and collective identities.

Although a sense of mystical vision was ascribed to the romantic poets, from its early days, the Victorian period was an era of earnestness in which vocations were ardently, yet respectably pursued. Geoffrey Tillotson notes that: 'The sense of mission, of being born to have a big effect on one's fellows, was strong.'²⁸ It was a sentiment not confined to middle-class culture. Chartism's emerging self-educated intelligentsia, among them the autodidact Thomas Cooper, the radical artisan William James Linton, and the gentlemanly leader Ernest Jones, took up the task of detailing and circulating its ideas and objectives, drawing on long reading traditions in which Milton, Bunyan, Byron, and Shelley largely figured. Cultural growth through acquired literary knowledge was seen as a mainspring to political activism, fostering qualities such as the personal discipline needed for self-improvement, a drive that was also inspired by Nonconformist faith, and sometimes accompanied by initiatives such as temperance.²⁹ Their Chartist poems produced highly-charged political alternatives to the politically quietist publications that, as Richard Altick observes, were put out by middle-class religious societies and their relentless censorship campaigns.³⁰

The Chartists, heirs to the radical tradition of post-Napoleonic activism, showcased the procedural reforms contained in *The People's Charter* in meetings and classrooms up and down the country, echoing the practices of the Methodist Connexions. Eileen Yeo notes how religion provides 'a permanent language for liberation struggles wherever they may occur'. Yeo also notes that one of the most accessible forms of

²⁶ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p.12.

²⁷ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p.12.

²⁸ Geoffrey Tillotson, *A View of Victorian Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978, p.24

²⁹ Martyn Lyons, 'New Readers in the Nineteenth Century,' G. Cavallo & R. Chartier (eds.) *A History of Reading*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999, pp.337-340

³⁰ Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900*, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1957, p. 104

'self-provision' available to Chartism was by making it a participatory and educationally inspired movement in the style of the radical Methodist classes.³¹ More generally, Linda Colley emphasises 'just how important Protestantism was in shaping the way that ordinary Britons viewed and made sense of the land they lived in'.³² In the early nineteenth century, social fears about the growth in urbanisation and the depopulation of the countryside were represented using apocalyptic discourses. As Andrew Sanders points out, the messages of millenarianists and schismatics resonated in the minds of 'the rapidly expanding, disorientated urban proletariat...the often distressed agrarian population [and in] the political (and notably Chartist) ideas which have since almost exclusively engaged the interest of historians.'³³ This is evident in the poetry of the Sunderland Chartist George Binns. In his 1840 poem, 'Flowers and Slaves,' he contrasted an idyllic natural scene with a monstrous industrial landscape. His poetry employs a Christian idiom in which nature is godly and industry is Satanic:

The god of love seem'd joying o'er
His wondrous works before us,
And Nature seem'd to own his power
In universal chorus.

The idyllic scene is suddenly and brutally interrupted when 'There burst upon my pallid sight / A nation's lamentation':

The demon groan of ghastly want,
Like Etna's muffled thunder
Was rumbling in its hollow vault
To tear restraints asunder.³⁴

Similar oppositions between the agrarian and industrial landscapes can be seen in Ernest Jones's early Chartist poetry, discussed in chapter 3.

³¹ See Eileen Yeo, 'Chartist Belief,' p.414; 'Practices and Problems of Chartist Democracy,' in James Epstein & Dorothy Thompson. (eds.) *The Chartist Experience*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 351-352.

³² Linda Colley, *Britons Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, London: Pimlico, 1994, p. 331.

³³ Andrew Sanders, 'Dickens and the Millennium,' in John, Juliet. & Jenkins, Alice. (eds.) *Rethinking Victorian Culture*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000, p. 83.

³⁴ George Binns, 'Flowers and Slaves,' Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, Moscow: 1956, p. 66.

Christian imagery and symbolism was used by both the better known Chartist poets, and a host of others that remain less well-known or anonymous. Many of the poems in Yuri Kovalev's survey *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, contain a wealth of religious language, often drawing from (among other influences) Methodist hymnody.³⁵ In the anonymous poem 'Upas-Tree,' this poisonous tree contaminates 'the British Soil'. It retards 'the growth / Of life within its shade'. The poem calls on 'Heaven' to 'cleave it to its root', making way for humankind to 'rear fair Freedom's tree, / And all partake its fruit.'³⁶ Though the poem echoes the planting of liberty trees by French radicals in the 1790s, it anticipates a heavenly intervention that will begin the process whereby the liberation of the people may be achieved. The narrator in 'Address to the Charter' notes that 'Hope's echoes still sound' above the head of the worker, despite being 'crushed beneath the rod'. Moreover, these echoes are 'Reflected high from God.'³⁷ In 'To the Sons of Toil,' the narrator questions how cruel oppressors could 'dare to change / The equal laws of God?'³⁸

At times the organisational structure of Chartism, employing peripatetic lecturers and speakers to spread its message, finds comparison with the missionary acts of the apostles. In 'One and All,' the narrator encourages the audience addressed to act collectively and elect representatives who could lead the Chartists to their political rights, furthering their cause on an international stage: 'Let us free our native isle...And send apostles o'er the world / With the Chartist flag unfurl'd.'³⁹ 'To the Poets of America,' similarly supports collective action, but also highlights individual conscience. The narrator encourages every member of its audience to act as an apostle, to come to their sense of political duty: 'Wake in your might! that earth may see / God's gifts have not been vainly given.'⁴⁰ Despite the deliberate political focus of Kovalev's anthology⁴¹, the Chartist poems contained therein indicate the importance of religious language as a literary and political strategy. Clearly the

³⁵Y. Kovalev, (ed.), *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, passim; Y.K. Kovalev, 'The Literature of Chartism,' *Victorian Studies*, vol. II, 1958, p.120.

³⁶ Anon. 'Upas-Tree,' Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.43.

³⁷ E.C.H. 'Address to the Charter,' Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.47.

³⁸ A.W. 'To The Sons of Toil,' Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.49.

³⁹ F. 'One and All,' Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.54.

⁴⁰ W.B. 'To the Poets of America,' Y. Kovalev (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.64.

⁴¹ An observation made by Brian Maidment in *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, (Fyfield edition), Manchester: Carcanet, 1992, p.24.

prophetic discourses that conditioned radical activity were indebted to the influence of the Bible on the British working-class consciousness.

Clearly many Chartist poets, as well as those discussed in this thesis, used the narrative of Christian election to address audiences using what these poets considered commonly held Christian values, enacting and confirming a sense of social power in the audience addressed. In Ernest Jones's 'A Song for May,' Chartists are encouraged to recognise that 'God made earth an earth for freemen: / Thou! be worthy of thy God!'⁴² The poem echoes Owen Chadwick's observation that religion provided a language that could represent each person as a member of a common community, secured by virtue of particular forms of social continuity at the level of the family unit, such as the reverence of ancestry.⁴³ Indeed the notion of lineage and tradition is fundamental to Chartist political identity. James A. Epstein notes that from the Reform Bill crisis to the end of Chartism, radical politics did at times conflate 'political and social claims on historical precedent and the predominance of closely related strategies of constitutionalist action' with ahistorical Paineite notions of natural rights. Indeed the basic incompatibility between the two trends was often lost.⁴⁴ This was largely because of the desire of Chartists to seek a body of legal precedents or fundamental principles by which their political activity could be justified. As John Saville notes, Thomas Cooper lectured on subjects such as Saxon history, in which he addressed issues such as 'Alfred and his glorious philanthropy' and 'our ancient democratic institutions'.⁴⁵

Cooper, Jones and Linton not only make bold statements about the conduct of their fellow Chartists in their poetry. They also at times represent themselves as elected missionaries to particular cultural and political objectives, as individuals charged with a particular purpose or duty: a sensation that they sought to instil in their audiences through their poems. For example, Linton's 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised No. IX,' may on one hand be read as the thoughts of a narrator thinking or speaking in isolation, making it seem self-addressed. On the other, it may be a confrontational

⁴² Ernest Jones, 'A Song for May,' Y. Kovalev (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.146.

⁴³ Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 113-114.

⁴⁴ James A. Epstein, *Radical Expression. Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790-1850*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p.9.

address to the reader: 'Why are white foreheads bow'd with shame, / And infant backs with toil? / Why is strong-sinew'd Honesty / Trade's ignominious spoil?'⁴⁶ Consequently, it is necessary to read Chartist poems as dialogic, whereby two or more distinct voices and modes of address may be discerned in the same utterance.⁴⁷ In other words, Chartist poems often re-enact the calling of the poet as a cultural and political leader, recognising and heeding the poet's election as a missioner to their literary and political objectives.

The individual objectives of Chartist poets are sometimes represented as paths created by earlier radical movements or recent political events for subsequent generations to follow. For example, Iota's 'Sonnets Devoted to Chartism III' is part of a sonnet sequence written in response to the Newport Uprising of 1839. In it, the narrator notes that 'Along this favourite walk was wont to wend / One of the noblest patriots of the age; / Each step I take reminds me of that friend.'⁴⁸ Walking that path memorialises the Uprising and symbolises the political trajectory of Chartism. The narrator follows in the footsteps of John Frost and his comrades, who are also commemorated in the personal act of writing poetry for a wider public audience.⁴⁹ Poets repay their election by fulfilling their personal calling to write poetry which, at the same time, makes available models of political conduct for their audiences to identify with that can feel equally as singular and unique to the reader. Chartist songs often appeared in poetry columns and constructed a collective identity for mass audiences through singing and recital.⁵⁰ Subsequently, these Chartist poets encourage their audiences to recognise and be inspired by both the message and the recognition of the poet's individual contribution to Chartism. The examples of singular and collective action encoded in the processes of writing poems and their anticipated reception sought to bring what Michael Sanders terms 'the moment of dialectal transformation' into being.⁵¹

⁴⁵ See John Saville, (ed.) Introduction, *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p.19.

⁴⁶ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised,' *The National. A Library for the People*, London: J. Watson, 1839, p.289.

⁴⁷ Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 45.

⁴⁸ Iota, 'Sonnets Devoted to Chartism,' Y. Kovalev (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.71

⁴⁹ John Frost was at the head of the Chartist columns that marched into Newport on November 4, 1839. See Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists. Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution*, Aldershot: Wildwood, 1984, p.79.

⁵⁰ For example, Edward P. Mead wrote songs set to popular tunes such as 'The Bay of Biscay, O!' and 'March to the Battle Field.' See Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, pp.92-94.

⁵¹ Michael Sanders, 'Poetic Agency: Metonymy and Metaphor in Chartist Poetry 1838-1852, *Victorian Poetry*, 39 (2), 2001, p.120.

Christianity is therefore important to Chartist poetry in two specific ways. Firstly its language and symbolism carried a political and emotional force that argued against the political quietism of orthodox religion. It sought to raise the consciousness of the working classes, highlighting the radical lineage and political destiny of the rank and file Chartists. John Belchem and James Epstein note that working people often understood the political meeting as a religious experience. The speeches made by gentleman leaders to 'the people' were often codified in such terms, giving their oratory a 'trans-class resonance' that was 'indicative of nineteenth-century radicalism, defining central continuities between popular radicalism, Liberalism and socialism.'⁵² Secondly, the election narrative in these poems rehearses the process whereby individuals felt themselves selected to fulfil a particular task or ministry, or elected to a chosen body of people, according to God's promise, or covenant.

The election narrative is related to the conversion narrative, as detailed by Regenia Gagnier in *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920*. It differs however, in certain important respects. Gagnier argues that the conditions under which working-class autobiographies were published had a profound effect upon those texts, producing distinct 'rhetorical genres' that both replicated and subverted the conditions of the hegemonic order in which they were produced.⁵³ Notable among the genres that encoded the working-class experience is the conversion narrative. In some instances working-class autobiographies reproduced middle-class notions of piety and devotion. Others fostered 'the dream of a pilgrim's progress' that offered salvation from the unremitting toil of a life of labour, endorsing the growth of Methodist-influenced working-class movements. Such religious ideas were part of the literary and cultural inheritance of the nineteenth century and were 'secularised by radical working-class writers.'⁵⁴ In the autobiographies that Gagnier analyses, writers such as Mary Saxby repent of their past sins and find a new relationship with God through Christ, entering a fresh state of being as a convert and turning decisively toward God. Their conversion is a unique event, a specific moment

⁵² John Belchem & James Epstein, 'The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman leader Revisited,' *Social History*, 22, no. 2, May 1997, p. 175.

⁵³ Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 151.

⁵⁴ Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities*, pp. 152-153.

at which, according to the Bible, they are ‘born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God’.⁵⁵ Certain Chartist poems do deploy the conversion narrative, albeit in a subversive manner, such as Ernest Jones’s ‘The Better Hope,’ discussed in chapter 3. The election narrative differs however, by foregrounding the ongoing tasks that converts have been chosen to fulfil, their calling, or their recognition of their unfinished and enduring special service to God and the privileges that such service will bring. Chartists were often encouraged to see themselves as entrusted to complete a particular political task. Benjamin Stott’s ‘Song for the Millions’ provides another good example of this enduring service to a political cause.

In Stott’s poem, Chartists are encouraged to ‘Lift up your faces from the dust / Your cause is holy, pure and just; / In Freedom’s God put all your trust, / Be he your hope and anchor.’⁵⁶ The notion of Christ as the people’s ‘hope and anchor’ appears in Methodist hymnody and has its origins in Hebrews 6:19.⁵⁷ Stott’s poem emphasises how notions of Christian hope and belief secure and reassure expectations in God’s purpose, to be consummated at some point in the unforeseeable future. The fight for the franchise is thus encoded as a coming political transformation earned through the assiduousness of the Chartists, figured as a transition between this world and the world to come. The direct address of the poem encourages Chartists to put their ‘trust’ in ‘Freedom’s God,’ and in so doing recognise and fulfil their election as a chosen people. Religious language, as these examples demonstrate, works in two interrelated ways in Chartist poetry: through religious rhetoric and mode of address. Poets can meditate on their election, attained through act of writing itself, as well as endow audiences with a model of political conduct, encouraging them to recognise their own election as dutiful subjects.

The mode of address of Chartist poems has also been highlighted as an important issue. As Brian Maidment notes, Chartist poems often addressed both middle and

⁵⁵ 1 Peter, 1:23, *Holy Bible*.

⁵⁶ Benjamin Stott, ‘Song for the Millions,’ in Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.108.

⁵⁷ ‘Show them the blood that bought their peace / The anchor of their steadfast hope’, Hymn no. 462, *A Collection of Hymns, for the use of the People called Methodists*, London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book Room, 1889. The Bible notes that: ‘...hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast,’ Hebrews 6:19, *Holy Bible*.

working classes. They 'presume a double, perhaps ultimately a contradictory, readership: one influential but intransigently hostile, the other politically sympathetic but powerless' in their attempts to produce a 'significant, communal rhetoric'.⁵⁸ As the examples of Iota and Benjamin Stott demonstrate, it is also important to see Chartist poems as at times self-addressed, or addressed to the literary traditions that these poets felt elected them. As Anne Janowitz observes, this is a familiar romantic model in which the speaker in the poem is understood as and associated with its author. Janowitz however revises this model by 'folding the isolated romantic self back into its originary matrix' in order to open up space for 'other versions of romantic identity' to emerge.⁵⁹ She focuses her attention on 'the notion of a collectivised popular sovereignty, which drew upon customary culture and its popular poetic forms, which were then marked and modified by the language of interiority.'⁶⁰

Seen in this context, the narrative of election is clearly not wholly unrelated to romanticism, indeed, this provides a framework in which the role of the poet could be imagined. As John Lucas notes, Percy Bysshe Shelley 'saw the poet as priest and prophet, preaching the word to his people'.⁶¹ In the early Victorian period, the romantic poets were represented as vatic, able to exercise powers of foresight or knowledge. Their talent was often understood as natural, effusive, and even God-given.⁶² This definition of romantic sensibility clearly filtered through to Chartist literary culture. In 1847, the Chartist journalist Thomas Frost observed that Shelley had gazed deep 'into the gloom of futurity, and saw in the coming time the realisation of his own bright visions of Utopia'.⁶³ Prior to that, William James Linton had mythologised Shelley as a politically resolute poet, particularly the notion that Shelley was committed to a set of personal principles of 'the strictest justice'. His short biographical 'Life of Shelley,' in the pages of *The National, A Library for the People* in 1839 was 'indebted for the greater part' to Leigh Hunt for its information.⁶⁴

⁵⁸ Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives*, p.23.

⁵⁹ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p.11.

⁶⁰ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p.12.

⁶¹ John Lucas, *Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, London: Methuen, 1971, p.9.

⁶² John Lucas, *Literature and Politics*, p.15.

⁶³ Thomas Frost, 'Scott, Byron and Shelley,' in Y. Kovalev (ed.), *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 323.

⁶⁴ W.J. Linton, *The National*, p.76; p. 78.

By the mid-to-late 1840s, the somewhat hackneyed idea of the poet as a seer was clearly in circulation and available to the Chartist reader. Often a romantic sensibility worked in conjunction with a religious cast of mind. As Patrick Joyce argues, such mixtures were able to affect popular sentiment, acting as constituent elements of a collective consciousness.⁶⁵ Both tendencies emphasised 'the struggle of moral opposites' in a language of 'exaltation and expectation' and thus produced a 'framework of social interpretation.'⁶⁶ The benefits of appreciating Shelley's poetry were also at times consciously represented to Chartists through religious discourses. In the *Chartist Circular*, influenced by the Universalist ideals of the preacher John Fraser⁶⁷, the political logic that permeated Shelley's poetry was purposive and providential:

...the pure diffusion of God's essence throbs alike in each human heart. His bounty, his love, his peace flows with unrestricted hand on the poor as on the rich. It is man's injustice and tyranny that turns the beneficent gifts of God's providence into a corrupt and corrupting channel.⁶⁸

God's good will is unceasing in upholding ordered existence, conditioning the events and circumstances in which the free acts of humans may take place.⁶⁹ The idea of the poet as a lone figure elected to their literary objectives, as noted by recent Chartist critics and commentators, was not uncommon in the writings of self-taught and Chartist poets themselves. Ebenezer Jones, a friend of W. J. Linton's, writing on the political duty of the poet, asked:

Who wrote the *Revolt of Islam*? Not Shelley! 'Tis the mighty utterance of a society whose eyes have just been opened to the glory of truth, and she made him her priest. He was but the lute; she was the God.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class 1848-1914*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp.33-34.

⁶⁶ Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People*, p.36.

⁶⁷ Joan Christodoulou, 'The Glasgow Universalist Church and Scottish Radicalism from the French Revolution to Chartism: A Theology of Liberation,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol.43, no.4, October 1992, p.619

⁶⁸ 'The Politics of Poets No. II,' *The Chartist Circular*, July 25, 1840, p.178

⁶⁹ J.D. Douglas (ed.), *The New Bible Dictionary*.

⁷⁰ Ebenezer Jones, *Studies of Sensation and Event*, London: 1883, p. xlv, cited in Lucas, John. *Literature and Politics*, p.8

John Lucas describes Jones's democratic sentiment as an example of intense hero worship.⁷¹ The passage is also remarkable however, for its revelatory tone and its representation of the relationship between Shelley as a priestly figure, the 'truth' he was chosen to represent, and the audience he addressed. Society's eyes are opened by truth, but truth also chooses or elects her true servants and representatives.

Since this thesis analyses the encoding of collective and personal cultural identity through Christian discourses, it will encompass a broad range of Chartist poetic forms. It will cover hymns, ballads, and epic poetry, demonstrating that radical Christian language was a pervasive idiom by which Chartists constructed their cultural and political identity.⁷² This idiom has a long history in radicalism. E.P. Thompson for example, notes the importance of the millenarian tradition in radical culture. He observes that Henry Hunt would make reference in his speeches to 'the "fatal day", or "the day of reckoning" [that] drew the loudest huzzas of the crowds' at the meetings he addressed.⁷³

Thomas Cooper, born into a life of poverty and hardship, was driven by a personal sense of appointment. By the most spectacular efforts, constructing his own rigorous learning programmes, throwing himself into one journalistic, political and cultural project after another, he managed to attain recognition as a self-taught intellectual.⁷⁴ His ambition and drive is rooted in the Christian experiences that marked his upbringing and early adult life. Cooper had become a Methodist, a dissenting tradition in which, through the intercession of the Holy Ghost, the conviction that Christ loved his subjects would dawn on his followers. Sins would be forgiven if only Methodists would: 'Resign and deliver up yourselves to God through Christ.'⁷⁵ It was the duty of all Methodists to seek out, or rediscover God's covenant with them, thus

⁷¹ John Lucas, *Literature and Politics*, p.8

⁷² John Frow notes that "culture" is by definition a realm of uses and of circulating energies.' John Frow, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 2. The use of the term 'idiom' here describes a loose collection of characteristics prevalent throughout language that are present in the more limited context of Chartist poetry.

⁷³ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980, p. 685

⁷⁴ Caroline Fox recalls seeing Cooper lecture. See Pym, Horace N. (ed.) *Memories of Old Friends Being Extracts from the Journals and Letters of Caroline Fox*, London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1883, p. 389

⁷⁵ David Tripp, Appendix II, 'Wesley's Covenant Service, 1780,' *The Renewal of the Covenant in the Methodist Tradition*, London: Epworth, 1969, p.181

recognising their salvation. Indeed as I argue in chapter 1, the Methodist theology of covenanting is revised and politicised in Thomas Cooper's Chartist hymns.

Though Cooper broke with Methodism and turned to radical politics, his Wesleyan thinking continued to exert an influence upon him and permeated his poetry. As Chapter 1 demonstrates, nonconformist Christian ideas encouraged Cooper into making personal faith choices, drawing him into radical politics. He subsequently became a key producer of a radical political discourse. In particular his Chartist hymns revised the quietist religious doctrine that permeated Wesleyanism. His shorter hymns and poems generally get only very brief literary analysis from Anne Janowitz, despite her emphasis on the importance of Cooper's place in the romantic tradition as a transitional figure between the Chartist poets Allen Davenport and Ernest Jones.⁷⁶ As Chapter 1 demonstrates however, his shorter hymns and poems are remarkable as much for their religious as their romantic allusions. The Christian roots of Cooper's hymns, songs and sonnets problematise as much as they confirm the 'romantic project' that Janowitz traces.⁷⁷

Much more critical attention has been devoted to the subject of Chapter 2, the epic poem *The Purgatory of Suicides*, on which Cooper expended most of his literary energy. Bouthaina Shaaban notes that Cooper only gave 'his full energy' to 'about five Chartist songs' besides his epic, and so focuses on the latter in a comparative analysis of Cooper's epic with Shelley's poetry.⁷⁸ Stephanie Kuduk likewise makes his epic the prime focus of attention and situates Cooper in a romantic context, assessing his 'immersion in republican poetics'.⁷⁹ My work instead assesses the secularised use of the election narrative in *The Purgatory of Suicides*. I demonstrate how this narrative provided a means for Cooper to represent his 'sacred function' as a personal calling and as a public and pedagogic duty. As an autodidact with high cultural ambitions, Cooper represented his personal dedication to particular cultural causes, writing himself into being through his epic. He also however, provided a model of political conduct for his Chartist audiences.

⁷⁶ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 167

⁷⁷ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 235

⁷⁸ Bouthaina Shaaban, 'Shelley's Influence on the Chartist Poets,' p. 291.

⁷⁹ Stephanie Kuduk, 'Republican Aesthetics: Poetry and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Britain,' D.Phil., Stanford University, 1999, p.206

Ernest Jones could not have differed more from Cooper in his class background and religious sympathy. Born in Germany on the fringes of aristocratic culture, after settling in England, Jones was bankrupted by a failed property deal. He partly saw Chartism as a means to fulfil his as yet unsuccessful literary career, but was also dedicated to his growing sense of social mission. Exiled gentlemanly figures such as he were often at pains to make plain their personal attachments to radical causes by making 'declarations of sacrifice' and their 'singular devotion to working people', but also in so doing, betrayed touches of fatherly 'deference' in their gentlemanly political activity.⁸⁰ First as a Chartist, determined to become 'a kind of social missionary' but later as a member of the Reform League and a liberal candidate, Jones pursued the 'romance of politics' to the end of his life.⁸¹

Originally a high Anglican, Jones underwent a spiritual crisis. He turned to low-church chapel worship instead, where he began to experience the anticlerical thinking that would energise his Chartist poetry.⁸² Stephan Lieske for example, focuses largely on Jones's analysis of class relations and his changing relationship with the middle classes through his poems. However, he also notes Jones's prophetic, Shelleyan romanticism, and the importance of the biblical narratives of fall and redemption in several of his poems.⁸³ Chapters 3 and 4 examine the political importance of Jones's Christianity in his Chartist poetry at two key periods in Chartist history: its final flourish during 1846-48, and its decline between 1848 and 1850, while Jones was a Chartist prisoner. Chapter 3 explores the relationship between Jones's 'evangelical idealism' and his sense of 'patriotic history', as noted by Miles Taylor.⁸⁴ It focuses on how the narrative of Christian election enabled Jones to represent himself as both an authentic and legitimate Chartist leader, and as a member of the Chartist rank and file, as one of many constitutionally legitimate members of a nation-state awaiting entry into their rightful political status.

⁸⁰ John Belchem & James Epstein, 'The Gentleman Leader Revisited,' p.178

⁸¹ Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones, Chartism and the Romance of Politics, 1819-1869*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.75; p.257

⁸² Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, pp.67-68; p.85

⁸³ Stephan Lieske, 'Ernest Jones' Contribution to the Development of Working-Class Poetry,' *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, vol.35, part 2, 1987, pp.118-127

⁸⁴ Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, p.255

Chapter 4 demonstrates a marked change in the uses to which the election narrative was put in his later prison poems. It examines Jones's response to the political isolation and silence imposed upon him as a Chartist prisoner. The common feeling of political destiny that the election narrative had previously foregrounded was now directed into the experience of intense persecution. These poems represent the poet as an isolated and imprisoned leader, who also attributed this experience to the rank and file Chartists. Modifying their use of the election narrative, Jones's prison poems also employed holy communion as a metaphor. In so doing, he explored and argued his continuing place as a gentleman-leader and poet while his imprisonment prohibited the usual connections with audiences and literary culture that a poet ordinarily enjoyed.

William James Linton, born into a lower middle class family, was a man of great industry. In his polymathic career he was a life-long radical, an engraver, journalist, newspaper editor, political activist, translator, poet and printer. It was only two months before his death in October 1897 that he accepted he was no longer strong enough to operate his printing press.⁸⁵ Chapters 5 and 6 examine what F.B. Smith describes as 'the profoundly religious cast of William James Linton's radicalism'⁸⁶ as expounded in his poetry between 1839 and 1855. Chapter 5 focuses on Linton's shorter poems from his and other Chartist periodicals. It shows the importance of three key influences on his thinking and literary output, the ideas of Joseph Mazzini, of Felicité de Lamennais (especially their emphasis on individual sovereignty and social duty), and of radical Unitarianism. The Chapter demonstrates how Linton justified to himself his role as an heir to republican, literary and illustrative traditions; part of a longer radical tradition to which he felt attuned as a political visionary, poet and a highly skilled engraver.

Chapter 6 examines Linton's longer meditative Chartist poems, in particular, their function as poetic responses to the political events of 1842 and 1848. It pays particular attention to the contribution that Christian narratives made to the construction of collective cultural memory in Linton's work, but also as personal

⁸⁵ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan. William James Linton 1812-1897*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973, p.215

⁸⁶ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*. p. 26

responses to the events of these years. It assesses how his works constructed textual and graphic collective cultural memories for the unenfranchised through these poems and their accompanying illustrations. It explores his personal relationship with literary figures such as Milton and Shelley, particularly their contributions to radicalism in and through the collective cultural memory that Linton constructs.

The following chapters demonstrate the importance of the individual and collective dimensions of the election narrative in the poetry of Cooper, Jones and Linton. As a poetic discourse, it aimed to shape the political aspirations of rank and file Chartists, as well as represent the particular experience of cultural and political leadership that the three Chartist poets felt called to fulfil during the major years of Chartist activity. The conscious recognition of their literary influences, iterated in their poetry, demonstrates their sense of election as poets, both personally to themselves and publicly to their audiences. Each chapter explores the symbolism of Christian language, the personal sense of election of each poet into a close relationship with their literary influences, and the broader political applications of Christian election. Its radical-democratic resonances articulate the relationship between the unique cultural positions these poets felt they had attained and their depiction of Chartist collective identity. An appendix of poems accompanies each chapter, with the exception of chapter 2. Thomas Cooper's epic poem suffers somewhat when represented in extract form. Those readers interested in *The Purgatory of Suicides* should consult the work of Kaye Kossick and Brian Maidment, both of whom reproduce extracts from his epic work.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Kaye Kossick, (ed.) *Nineteenth-Century Labouring-Class Poets*, volume 2, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2004; Brian Maidment *The Poorhouse Fugitives*.

Chapter 1

“Let every heart like Jesu’s move...”: Thomas Cooper’s Chartist Hymns, Songs and Sonnets.

Thomas Cooper was born in Leicester in 1805 and spent much of his early life in Gainsborough. His autobiography famously describes how he became a Methodist preacher, schoolmaster, journalist, Chartist leader, lecturer and educator and author of the epic *Purgatory of Suicides*.¹ He later became an apologist Baptist preacher and lecturer in the late 1850s, a cause to which he was devoted until his death. His epic poem is now beginning to receive critical attention and is the subject of Chapter 2.²

Cooper also published some of his hymns, poems and songs in the Chartist press, a few of which were republished later in his *Poetical Works*, but these have received little attention. Cooper’s shorter Chartist poems are not numerous, but they are significant for several reasons. First they represent Cooper’s sense of his personal election as a Chartist poet, as an agent of the literary influences he was hailed by, and as a representative or apostle to ‘the people’. Second they demonstrate Cooper’s use of popular and accessible song and verse forms in his attempts to shape Chartist collective identity. Third, the chronology of these poems show changes in the interpellation of their audiences through politico-religious discourses that acted as ‘vocabularies of conviction’ within a variety of public arenas or audience situations.³ Cooper’s later Chartist poems, ‘Sonnets on the Death of Allen Davenport’ have very different personal and public functions from his earlier Chartist hymns. Anne Janowitz notes that in the early 1840s Cooper was ‘central in promoting the general production of literature’. By 1846 having written *The Purgatory of Suicides* in prison, Cooper was ‘apotheosised as the Chartist poet par excellence’ but was also

¹William James Linton noted of the *Purgatory of Suicides*, written by Cooper while in prison, that ‘the rarity of such a performance gave him a certain notoriety and importance.’ William James Linton, *Memories*, London: Lawrence (1895) New York: Kelley, 1970, p. 41.

² See for example Bouthana Shaaban, ‘Shelley’s influence on the Chartist poets, with particular emphasis on Ernest Charles Jones and Thomas Cooper,’ D.Phil., University of Warwick, 1981; Timothy Randall ‘Towards a Cultural Democracy,’ D.Phil., University of Sussex, 1994; Stephanie Kuduk, ‘Sedition, Chartism, and Epic Poetry in Thomas Cooper’s *The Purgatory of Suicides*,’ *Victorian Poetry*, vol. 39, no. 2, Summer 2001, pp.165-185.

³ I borrow the phrase ‘vocabularies of conviction’ from Robert Wuthnow, ‘Introduction: New Directions in the Empirical Study of Cultural Codes,’ Robert Wuthnow, (ed.) *Vocabularies of Public Life. Empirical Essays in Symbolic Structure*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 13.

increasingly detached from Chartist literary culture.⁴ This chapter traces the changes in the way the election narrative operates in and through the shorter poems Cooper wrote as his literary career progressed.

Cooper's Chartism was informed by his religious faith. Though his spiritualism did gradually give way to a more secular perspective from 1835 onwards, and was intensified by 'the sufferings of the poor', it is difficult to conceive of Cooper as an atheist. His later imprisonment did bring about some 'atheistic reasonings' in May 1843, whereupon he finally accepted the futility of prayer. But Cooper says he never 'proclaimed blank atheism'. Rather, the contradictions of orthodox religion led him to seek to divest Christianity of its mythology, not to reject the possibility that God may exist.⁵ Indeed Cooper noted in *The Purgatory of Suicides* that 'I say not that there is no God: but that / I know not.'⁶ His first address to the Leicester Chartists at All Saint's Open in 1841 was 'partly on a religious theme, and partly on their sufferings and wrongs, and on the question of their political rights.' The meeting began and ended with a prayer, and was the first of Cooper's 'Sunday night meetings' held during the spring and summer of that year.⁷ Cooper eventually moved the meetings first into Leicester market place, and then into Ducrow's Amphitheatre. Here the meetings developed into an 'adult Sunday school for men and boys,' with the *Holy Bible* being one of the core texts studied.⁸

As Thomas Walter Laqueur notes, Christian practices such as Sunday school education were 'a source of the biblical rhetoric which influenced popular writing and speech during the nineteenth century.'⁹ They held great common currency among the working classes and Cooper used his adult education classes as a forum for

⁴ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.172; p. 160.

⁵ See John Saville, (ed.) *Thomas Cooper, The Life of Thomas Cooper, Written by Himself*, Victorian Library Series, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1971, pp. 259-263; Thomas Cooper, *Cooper's Journal* (1850) New York: Kelley, 1970, p.8; Stephen Roberts, 'The later radical career of Thomas Cooper c. 1845-1855,' *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and History Society*, vol. 64, 1990, p. 71.

⁶ Thomas Cooper, *The Purgatory of Suicides*, London: J. Watson, 1847, book VI, stanza XXXI, p.170

⁷ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 147.

⁸ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 164. The *Northern Star* carried an enthusiastic report, written almost certainly by Cooper, on the newly formed school. The New Testament was one of the seminal texts by which reading was taught at Cooper's school. See the *Northern Star*, January 29, 1842, p.6

encouraging literary production. The chapter begins by looking at some of the experiences that shaped Cooper's development as a poet, before discussing in more detail the shorter Chartist poems that he published. As Stephen Roberts notes, Cooper was in his mid-thirties before embarking on his Chartist career: 'Behind him lay important experiences...as an autodidact, Methodist preacher and radical journalist.'¹⁰ Cooper's hymns, songs and poems can be put into three chronological phases, each affected by developments in Cooper's Chartist career. The first is his Chartist hymns, the second his prison songs, and the third his dedicatory sonnets to Allen Davenport.

Of the first phase of his Chartist poetry, only three of Cooper's hymns have survived, published while running his 'Shakspearean' Chartist school in Leicester. They were printed in the *English Chartist Circular and Temperance Record for England and Wales* in the summer of 1842. The moderate Irish Chartist, John Cleave, who headed a considerable publishing and distribution agency, underwrote the paper.¹¹ Cleave, a co-founder of the London Working Man's Association in 1836, would also later assist Cooper in finding a publisher for *The Purgatory of Suicides* in 1845.¹² Cooper's hymns were written and published almost certainly with the Leicestershire Chartist camp meeting in mind, held at Mountsorrel on Sunday July 10th 1842.¹³ Cooper's 'Hymns for Chartist Camp-Meetings I.—L.M.' appears to have been published just prior to the Mountsorrel meeting.¹⁴ The second hymn in the series, 'II,—C.M.' was written by William Jones and appeared above Cooper's 'Hymns for Chartist Camp,

⁹ Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture 1780-1850*, London: Yale University Press, 1976, p. 160.

¹⁰ Stephen Roberts, 'Thomas Cooper in Leicester, 1840-1843,' *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol. 61, 1987, p. 62.

¹¹ Dorothy Thompson, 'Ireland and the Irish in English Radicalism,' James Epstein & Dorothy Thompson, (eds.) *The Chartist Experience. Studies in Working-class Radicalism 1830-1860*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 129; Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution*, Aldershot: Wildwood, 1984, pp.152-153.

¹² Cooper described Cleave as 'an earnest and kind friend.' See John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p.275.

¹³ At the meeting, a 'ledge of rock about thirty feet above the grass formed a natural platform for the speakers...masses of porphyritic granite, older than the Alps were filled with human beings who thus formed a natural gallery for listening to the great truths of democracy and Christianity, and with the thousands covering the greensward formed an assemblage of uncommon character.' See report of the camp meeting in the *Northern Star*, July 16, 1842, p.2. See also John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 174.

¹⁴ Unfortunately, the *English Chartist Circular* was not a dated publication, printing only its volume number and weekly part number, though it is known to have run from 3 January 1841 to January 1843. See J.F.C. Harrison & D. Thompson, *Bibliography of the Chartist Movement, 1837-1976*, Sussex: Harvester, p.103. Vol. II, no. 74 of the *English Chartist Circular* appears to have been published on or just prior to the weekend beginning July 9, 1842. Cooper's poem, 'Hymns for Chartist Camp-

III.—7's'. They were published the following week, probably after the camp meeting. Their later date and publication suggests they may have been inspired, written and published retrospectively.¹⁵ These hymns revise the Methodist practice of covenanting to represent the election of singers and audiences into a chosen people. Indeed Timothy Randall notes the importance of the covenant as a political idea in Cooper's prose fiction in the pages of the *Midland Counties Illuminator*.¹⁶

Cooper's 'Smaller Prison Rhymes' comprise the second phase, and have similarly received little attention. Only one of his 'Smaller Prison Rhymes' was published before 1877, appearing under the title 'Truth is Growing' in *Cooper's Journal* in 1850. It reappeared much later under the title 'Chartist Chaunt' alongside two other 'Chartist Songs' in his *Poetical Works*.¹⁷ Edmund Clarence Stedman's survey, *A Victorian Anthology, 1837-1895* also reprints some of Cooper's prison rhymes.¹⁸ They seem to be the only survivors of the many shorter prison poems Cooper wrote.¹⁹

Finally the chapter will turn to the third phase: the dedicatory 'Sonnets on the Death of Allen Davenport.' These poems do not make use of covenanting to express political collectivism in his earlier Chartist hymns. They instead foreground his intellectual and cultural leadership of Chartism. Cooper had by this time served his prison sentence, written his epic poem and was now embarking on his later radical career as an 'independent Chartist' and freethinker.²⁰ By 1846 Cooper was a leading Chartist cultural figure and had moved to London to recommence the writing career he had first tried to build there in the spring and summer of 1840.²¹ In 1846 there was perhaps no-one more fitted than Cooper to write dedicatory poetry to the recently deceased radical poet and activist Allen Davenport.

Meetings. I.—L.M.' is dated July 5th, 1842.

¹⁵ Cooper's poem is dated July 12th, 1842 and was published that week in *The English Chartist Circular*, no. 75 vol. II, 1842, p. 92.

¹⁶ Timothy Randall, 'Towards a Cultural Democracy,' p.124.

¹⁷ Thomas Cooper, *The Poetical Works of Thomas Cooper*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1877. Cooper also published 'Truth is Growing' in *Cooper's Journal*: 1850, p. 40.

¹⁸ Edmund Clarence Stedman, (ed.) *A Victorian anthology, 1837-1895 Selections illustrating the editor's critical review of British poetry in the reign of Victoria*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1895

¹⁹ See Thomas Cooper, *Poetical Works*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1877. Cooper had earlier written a clutch of songs for publication while he was serving in prison. He sent them to his wife, however Cooper later wrote back to her that 'the opportunity of reconsidering has led me to determine that it will be better not to publish them at present.' See DE2964/16 William Jones Papers, The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

²⁰ Stephen Roberts, 'The Later Radical Career of Thomas Cooper c.1845-1855,' p. 65.

Cooper's early cultural experiences prior to his turn to Chartism had taught him valuable lessons in literary judgement and what being a poet entailed. In his 'Address to the Reader' that commenced his later *Poetical Works* published in 1877, Cooper notes that he could have supplied short political poems 'in great plenty.' Aware that 'that the shelves of booksellers groan with the weight of such unsaleable "goods"', he was 'not desirous of increasing their unmarketable burthen.'²² By the mid-1840s, having written his culturally ambitious epic poem, Cooper had little retrospective regard for his shorter Chartist poems. Cooper felt his studious *Purgatory of Suicides* was to be his lasting literary testament. His pre-Chartist volume *The Wesleyan Chiefs* had appeared in 1833 and comprised poems written during his time as a Methodist preacher in Gainsborough. The volume was a personal and commercial failure for Cooper, and he self-deprecatingly recalled his literary naivete in his autobiography.²³ The poems in that collection concentrate largely on the conditioning of the soul in preparation for receiving God's gift in heaven:

We are but pilgrims of a day,
But tenants of the house of clay,
And wait our mortal doom:
This earth is not our resting place,
To Paradise we set our face,
And soon shall be at home.²⁴

He was not disheartened by the volume's failure. There had been praise for some of the poems, notably 'To Lincoln Cathedral' from the volume's proofreader, James Montgomery. This deepened Cooper's resolve to one day 'write a poem that should not fail.'²⁵

²¹ Stephen Roberts. 'Thomas Cooper in Leicester, 1840-1843,' p. 63.

²² Thomas Cooper, 'Address to the Reader,' *Poetical Works*, (second edition) 1886, p. xi. In 1850 Cooper had written: 'I assure beginners that...I see so much imperfection in what I have published, that I wish it were possible for me to withdraw it, and write out some of the same subjects anew. No young poet can act more wisely than to burn, and burn again, instead of furiously hurrying his imperfect effusions into print.' Thomas Cooper, (ed.) *Cooper's Journal*, 1850, p. 131-132.

²³ Cooper's Methodist friend Charles Kelvey encouraged Cooper and advised him on which poems to include in order to help the volume sell; advice that Cooper seems to have followed. ' "Place that *first*, and call the volume by that name," he insisted, "and it will sell the book!" Dear Charley! he wished it to be so; but he was mistaken.' The volume was funded by subscription, and it seems many did not in fact pay up. See John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 95-96.

²⁴ Thomas Cooper, 'Home in Heaven,' *The Wesleyan Chiefs and Other Poems*, London: 1833, p. 29.

²⁵ Cooper here refers to his later epic *Purgatory of Suicides*; John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 96. 'To Lincoln Cathedral' would later appear in Cooper's *Poetical Works* indicating perhaps the lasting impression that a recognised literary opinion had on Cooper.

Cooper warned other self-taught poets of the folly of rushing poems into publication at the behest of others. He had written to his fellow poet William Jones about the folly of submitting ‘ephemeral rhymes’ to newspapers in 1845. More could be gained, Cooper thought, for the working classes and the poet by writing more culturally ambitious works:

You see Harney [then editor of the *Northern Star*] cannot estimate your feelings—because he knows nothing of your sufferings—of the sufferings of thousands of poor Leicester lads. You will do yourself no good—and but little good to others—by contributing mere ephemeral rhymes to newspapers. It is a thing I should not stoop to, except as an additional advertisement for a meeting, or something of that kind,—and of course, then it would have to be something to be sung.²⁶

An important part of being a poet, he subsequently wrote in *Cooper’s Journal*, was having the confidence to accurately judge the credibility and worthiness of the verses that one had written. One could only be a true poet through judicious selection of pieces for publication, and a true poet could never entertain ‘the want of knowledge of the *mechanism* of verse’.²⁷ In other words, poets had to satisfy their personal literary aspirations, listen to their own literary influences knowledgeably and conscientiously, as much as think about their audiences. In *Cooper’s Journal*, he further recommended that the ‘attentive rhymers’ should look at the best models of literary form, such as Alexander Pope.²⁸ Such models however, were not universally accepted. In a review of W.J. Linton’s *Bob Thin, or The Poorhouse Fugitive*, the *Reasoner* noted that the form of Linton’s doggerel poem was ‘a masterly contrast to [Pope’s] beaten peculiarities.’²⁹

Cooper hoped that his general criticism of work by self-taught poets would encourage, rather than deflate their aspirations. ‘These hints...ought not deter young men of genius from “wooing the muse:” the periodicals of the Working-classes ought

²⁶ Thomas Cooper to William Jones, June 30, 1845, DE2964/20 William Jones Papers, The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

²⁷ Thomas Cooper, (ed.) *Cooper’s Journal*, p. 132.

²⁸ Thomas Cooper, (ed.) *Cooper’s Journal*, p. 132.

²⁹ *The Reasoner*, London: J. Watson, vol. I, 1846, p.254.

to abound with the purifying influences of true poetry.’³⁰ His writings tell not only of his wish to see more working-class writings in print. They are also important for understanding his own interpellation as a poet. His advice to other working-class writers represents his imagined relation to the conditions that elected him as a figure of literary authority, accepting and embracing the criteria upon which he is hailed.³¹ In *Cooper’s Journal*, he justified his place as one worthy of writing on the subject of working-class literature through the election narrative. In the following, Cooper attempts to reconcile his personal calling with his sense of public duty, while seeking to widen literary appreciation:

A wish to be useful to many who have written to me on these subjects, as well as love for the Muse herself, and a natural wish to see her becomingly wooed, while her lovers are being multiplied—must excuse for saying what I have said.³²

Cooper responds not just to ‘the many who have written,’ but also to the call of ‘the Muse herself’. The exercise of his own literary skill and judgement was a homage, an expression of his ‘love for the Muse herself,’ confirming Cooper as servant of the political and literary causes he wished to serve through being ‘useful to the many’. The exercise of his intellect legitimised him as an authoritative cultural agent, able to emphasise the benefits of poetry produced by the working-classes but it also distanced him from the audiences he addressed.

The unresolved tension between his role as personally motivated freethinking autodidact and that of publicly oriented educator permeates Cooper’s autobiography. He records how his passion for learning had changed his relation to the culture he emerged from. Despite recollections of scholarly friends and acquaintances in his autobiography, being an autodidact set him apart from the community in which he lived. Cooper recalled that in youth the ‘happiest hours of all I had in my early years were spent alone, and with books.’³³ Cooper attended a dame school, a Methodist Sunday school and was a ‘Bluecoat scholar’ at Gainsborough’s ‘Free School’ in the

³⁰ Thomas Cooper, (ed.) *Cooper’s Journal*, p. 132.

³¹ Judith Butler notes that ‘Interpellation...is not an event, but a certain way of *staging the call*’, “Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All,” *Yale French Studies*, no. 88, 1995, p. 6.

³² Thomas Cooper, (ed.) *Cooper’s Journal*, p. 132.

³³ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 22.

1810s.³⁴ He was aware of the stigma of ‘being pointed at as an idle good-for-nothing’ and a lack of intellectual opportunities forced him to commence work as a shoemaker.³⁵ Shortly thereafter, he embarked on a serious program of self-education, but became gravely ill at the age of twenty-two as a result of his harsh, self-inflicted educational programme. On recovery Cooper became a teacher and attended both Anglican Church and Chapel.³⁶ Nevertheless he was unable to reconcile his ambitions, talents, his own capacity for learning to the more practical educational needs that local Gainsborough parents required. Having energetically embraced the self-improving notion of an autodidact education, Cooper’s reliance upon his personal learning experiences for his teaching method proved wholly inappropriate.³⁷ As David Vincent notes, autodidacts such as Cooper were ‘true freethinkers’ who stood apart from bourgeois attempts to condition their educational practices. This meant that they often came into conflict with the religious schools and establishments from which they broke in the ‘pursuit of knowledge.’³⁸

Cooper’s intellectual presumptuousness would often undermine his ability to compromise. As a schoolmaster, his self-discovered educational programme did not allow him to fully appreciate the need for developing learning methods structured for uses beyond his own personal requirements. By his own admission, Cooper felt he lacked qualification as a schoolmaster and ‘had learned no old teachers’ tricks.’³⁹ Insulted by the reaction of the people of Gainsborough to his teaching methods, Cooper resigned, fell into a depression, but recovered and returned to Methodist preaching.⁴⁰ He still bore the hurt years later in his autobiography.⁴¹

In his new role as a Methodist preacher Cooper began to appreciate the personal and public benefits of thoroughly preparing his sermons:

³⁴ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, pp. 5;7;13.

³⁵ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 41.

³⁶ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 73.

³⁷ See John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, chapters VI & VII

³⁸ David Vincent, *Bread Knowledge and Freedom A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography*, London: Methuen, 1981, p. 177.

³⁹ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 75.

⁴⁰ Stephen Roberts, ‘Thomas Cooper in Leicester, 1840-1843,’ p. 63.

⁴¹ ‘Such were the kind of thanks I had from the poor, when I tried to benefit their children, without any cost to themselves!’ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 76.

I began to reason thus with myself "...Am I showing respect to Christ, and to Divine Truth, by treating religion as if it were not deserving of serious thought; and as if any raw talker could deal with it worthily?"...I set about the preparation of written sermons; and got the greater part of each sermon well fixed in my mind before I ventured to deliver it. The result was more cheering and pleasing than I can easily tell...I threw my whole heart and soul into my preaching; and the effects were often of a memorable kind...Nor could I continue to take a part in such work without endeavouring to make it serve my own intellectual culture. The art of writing out sermons was a noble induction to the art of expressing one's thought. I strove to make my sermons worth listening to. I had become master of a vocabulary of no mean order, by committing Milton and Shakespeare to memory and repeating them so often; and my reading of the old English divines enabled me to acquit myself in the pulpit with more than the ordinary ability of a Methodist preacher.⁴²

The accomplishments produced by the exercise of his duties as a servant of God are attributed to the exercise of his intellectual faculties. They also disdainfully separate him from less well-equipped 'raw talkers.' His learning, so Cooper felt, made his sermons all the more authoritative and engaging. This only made him more devoted to the strategy. In other words his ability to use his learning, to 'serve' his 'own intellectual culture' and his experience of the effects that his service to learning had upon his audience, confirmed Cooper's election as God's servant. This narrative was to influence his literary writing. The act of writing poetry was a response to the call of the literary influences and political duties that hailed Cooper as a Chartist hymn writer. As previously discussed, his sense of election had a profound effect upon his understanding of his role as chief critic in *Cooper's Journal*, where he responded publicly to 'the many who have written,' but also more personally to the call of 'the Muse herself'.⁴³

A Methodist superintendent expelled Cooper from the Methodist ministry in the late 1830s.⁴⁴ Cooper's subsequent search for a career that fitted his talents can be seen as a search for the role divinely allotted to him. Cooper later admitted that though his departure from the Methodist Society was 'enforced' upon him, his sense of

⁴² John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, pp. 89-91.

⁴³ *Cooper's Journal*, 1850, p. 132.

⁴⁴ Roberts observes that 'energetic and utterly sincere in his religious opinions, Cooper had come to believe that the Superintendent was neglecting his duties and attempted to fill the role himself.' Stephen Roberts, 'Thomas Cooper in Leicester, 1840-1843,' p. 63.

indignation did not help. Retrospectively he felt 'chargeable with a wrong spirit'. His bouts of anger at his 'ill-treatment' tell of a most painful and reluctant separation from Methodism that by his own admission was 'the source of bitterest agony' to his wife for years to come, and instilled in him a more rebellious and secularist perspective.⁴⁵ Cooper tried a variety of vocations. He first took a teaching post in Lincoln and taught at the Mechanics Institute championing its choral society, even to the point of leaving off his personal studies. He got himself dismissed from the society for his 'high-handed ways'.⁴⁶

Cooper next turned to journalism and made tentative connections with the then liberal Lincoln politician Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. His role as journalist for the *Stamford Mercury* led him into new circles where he was first acquainted with serious political discussion.⁴⁷ He rashly resigned from the *Stamford Mercury* after a quarrel with the proprietor about the running of the paper and left for London to pursue a writing career. Here Cooper was forced to sell his books to survive, but found work on the *Kentish Mercury*, *Gravesend Journal* and *Greenwich Gazette*. Again he disagreed with the owner, resigned, and luckily was offered work on the *Leicester Mercury*. In 1840 Cooper left London, disappointed at his failure to succeed as a writer. Stephen Roberts observes that Cooper's articles in the *Leicester Mercury* demonstrate a maturing radical character, conveying his developing political liberalism. Earlier, as editor of the *Kentish Mercury* he had already begun to develop his radicalism in editorials that called for an extension of the franchise, ballots, the re-organisation of parliamentary constituencies, abolition of capital punishment, as well as educational reform influenced by the Nonconformist British and Foreign Schools society.⁴⁸

Throughout Cooper's erratic, journalistic, political and religious career, apparently irreconcilable differences often came between him and the causes he sought to serve. Cooper seemed unable to compromise his principles; an ability that would certainly

⁴⁵ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 101.

⁴⁶ 'My heart and brain were soon on flame with the worship of Handel's grandeur, and with the love of his sweetness and tenderness...What mad enthusiasm I felt for music!' John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, pp. 107-110.

⁴⁷ 'Attendance at political meetings, public dinners, and concerts of music, involved the consumption of wine, and late hours. I became a *social* man...The religious seriousness was gone. Yet my new friends were all of the intellectual cast.' John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, 1971, p.116

⁴⁸ Roberts, Stephen. *Thomas Cooper: Radical and Poet c. 1830-1860*, M.Litt. University of Birmingham, 1986, p. 62-67.

have served better those causes had he been able to make concessions. In his autobiography, he represents himself as a man continually thrust upon new projects through which he finally might divine the fit and proper use for his talents. As such, his autobiography represents his desire to find the best appointment that Cooper felt himself elected to seek out. In so doing, he was continually renewing his covenant with the spiritual and intellectual causes that he felt called to him. Indeed as John Wesley had noted, ‘...good Servants, when they have chosen their Master, will let their Master chuse their work, and will not dispute his will’.⁴⁹ Cooper’s restlessness was partly a search for his proper calling, each falling off confirming his conviction that he had not yet found his vocation. His impatience might indicate nothing more than an inability to effectively work with other people. His unwillingness to compromise may also be seen in part as a misguided defence of intellectual freedom. He could not bring himself to betray his growing intellectual status and was desperate to avoid a position of cultural ineffectiveness.

When working for the *Leicestershire Mercury* in 1841 Cooper reported for the paper on a Leicester Chartist meeting. The experience converted him to Chartism. His sense of intellectual responsibility prompted him to criticise the treatment meted out to the most vulnerable in society.⁵⁰ He was already familiar with the arguments Chartists espoused: ‘The political doctrines advocated were not new to me. I had imbibed a belief in the justice of Universal Suffrage when a boy from the papers lent me by the Radical brush makers.’⁵¹ Cooper’s immediate experience of the depressed conditions of the stocking weavers contrasted sharply with the intellectual culture he had previously enjoyed in Lincoln. His latent political radicalism hardened, seemingly instantaneously, into a socially grounded radicalism.⁵² Cooper’s employment at the *Leicestershire Mercury* was ended by his growing association with the Chartist

⁴⁹ Wesley, John. ‘Directions for Renewing Our Covenant with God,’ Appendix II, in David Tripp, *The Renewal of the Covenant in the Methodist Tradition*, London: Epwell Press, 1969, p. 182.

⁵⁰ Edward Said observes that ‘the major choice faced by the intellectual is whether to be allied with the stability of the victors and rulers, or—the more difficult path—to consider that stability as a state of emergency threatening the less fortunate with the danger of complete extinction, and to take into account the experience of subordination itself’. Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*, London: Vintage, 1994, p. 26. Ernest Jones would later outline a similar dilemma in his poem ‘The Better Hope.’ See Chapter 4.

⁵¹ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, pp. 135-6.

⁵² ‘The shock produced one of the overnight conversions to which he was prone: he immediately became a Chartist.’ Philip Collins, *Thomas Cooper, the Chartist: Byron and the ‘Poets of the Poor’*, Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1970, p.11.

publication the *Midland Counties Illuminator*. He wrote against the universal liberal principles of the *Mercury*, by directly apportioning blame to the employing classes for the sufferings of the Leicester stockings. Cooper became editor and writer for the *Illuminator*, developing a role in the local leadership of Leicester Chartism. The paper ceased in May 1841.⁵³ His desire for prominence in Leicester Chartism led to a quarrel with the moderate Chartist leader John Markham. Eventually the more passionate Cooper gained ascendancy over Leicester Chartism where his career as Chartist poet began in the early 1840s and his national profile as a Chartist leader began to emerge.⁵⁴ As Stephen Roberts notes, his ‘radical sermons and the hymns of William Jones and John Henry Bramwich gave Leicester Chartism strong religious overtones, one of its most distinctive features.’⁵⁵ But these religious overtones also spilled over into the nationally read *Northern Star*. Cooper was one of several speakers who addressed the assembly gathered at the laying of the foundation stone of Henry Hunt’s monument in Manchester in 1842. Cooper’s speech appealed to his audiences using well-known religious images to rationalise Chartist goals. The *Northern Star* reported on the occasion of Hunt’s memorial:

Mr Cooper said they (the people) could see Chartism on a fine scale; they might expect a glorious harvest and in gathering to their ranks during the ensuing summer—(cheers)—all coming for the support of the Charter.⁵⁶

The report in the *Northern Star* makes Cooper speak with the surety of one that has already witnessed the future events that he foretells. He envisages a greater coming glory through the sheer weight of numbers that will turn to Chartism, or ‘ripen’ as subjects elected into God’s faithful remnant. The *Holy Bible* makes great use of the harvest as an image of the election of God’s chosen people. For example, in the parable of the separation of the ripe wheat from the tares, Christ asks ‘Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the

⁵³ Stephen Roberts, ‘Thomas Cooper: Radical and Poet,’ M.Litt, Birmingham University, 1986, p. 74-75.

⁵⁴ Stephen Roberts, ‘Thomas Cooper in Leicester, 1840-1843,’ p. 62.

⁵⁵ Stephen Roberts, ‘Thomas Cooper in Leicester, 1840-1843,’ p. 69.

⁵⁶ *Northern Star*, April 2, 1842, p. 6.

wheat into my barn.’ The wheat symbolises ‘the righteous that shine forth.’ The tares symbolise ‘the children of the wicked one.’⁵⁷

The Chartist poets who contributed to the *English Chartist Circular*—Cooper among them—often used Christian symbolism and took the hymn as their literary model in order to mediate Chartist aims and objectives.⁵⁸ In so doing, they utilised the religious narratives by which working people made sense of their everyday experiences. Thomas Walter Laqueur notes that:

The assurance of salvation and the community of their fellows provided students with the psychological strength to face the all too familiar spectre of death and disease. A religion which places great emphasis on the promise of an afterlife is not just “the chiasm of the defeated and the hopeless”, the solace of failed revolution. It is also the religion of those for whom death from consumption, smallpox, cholera, fever or accident is an ever-present oppressive reality.⁵⁹

Religious narratives permeated working-class life. There had developed for example, a whole body of authoritative accounts that described the last holy moments of the sick that could serve as models for reassuring both the dying, as well as those left behind.⁶⁰ These accounts emphasise the need to feel included among a chosen people. In the late 1820s, Cooper had himself suffered a life-threatening illness brought on by poor diet, physical and mental over-exertion that made him feel acutely the precariousness of life. He recalled a neighbour who tended to him while ill: ‘In little more than a year after that time, I saw that neighbour laid in the grave. Such are the unexpected incidents of this our mortal life!’⁶¹

The everyday narratives by which people came to terms with the transition from this life to the next were connected to a deep-felt need to seek assurance that the soul of the departed was included among God’s chosen. Victorian hymns, Michael Wheeler observes, often speak of heaven within the present, encouraging its singers to make

⁵⁷ Matthew 13:30; 38; 43. *Holy Bible*.

⁵⁸ See *The English Chartist Circular*, vol. II, 1842, passim.

⁵⁹ Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability* p. 161.

⁶⁰ Thomas Walter Laqueur, *Religion and Respectability*, p. 163.

⁶¹ John Saville (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p.70.

associations between the transformation of this transitory world into something like the next as well as identifying any obstacles that might check that transition.⁶² At the same time, the critic J.R. Watson notes of the effect of hymn singing generally that: 'The writing comes off the page, back into the body, lungs, blood'. The individual act of reading is replaced by 'plurivocal/univocal sound, individual singing joining in one.'⁶³ It was precisely this representation of political transformation as an inclusive religious experience that Cooper, as well as other Chartist hymn writers were revising in their use of the Methodist covenant as a key literary and political strategy, together with the symbolic language his hymns utilised. William Jones for example, ends one of his hymns with a great sense of expectation tempered with a symbolic awareness of the obstacles that continue to litter the path to freedom:

When will the sun of freedom rise
And roll these clouds away?
Oh! ere in death I close my eyes,
I hope to see the day.⁶⁴

Such visions however, are nearly always tempered by an awareness of the personal contribution required of Chartists in attaining that political goal. Cooper's Chartist hymn, 'I,—C.M.' reminded Chartists of the need to lead just lives, and to emulate the lessons of Christ.

Let every heart like Jesu's move—
Like Jesu's bosom glow!
That while we *say* we goodness love,
Our lives may *prove* we do.⁶⁵

Cooper's hymn encourages Chartists to follow Christ's example, building the Chartist movement modelled on a principled life that follows a just course of action. The italicised verbs 'say' and 'prove' emphasise the point. Thus did Christianity and Chartism work hand in hand to produce a 'practical religion'.⁶⁶

⁶² Michael Wheeler, *Death and the Future Life in Victorian Literature and Theology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 136.

⁶³ J.R. Watson, *The English Hymn. A Critical and Historical Study*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999, p.24.

⁶⁴ William Jones, 'Hymn,' *The English Chartist Circular*, No. 87, vol.2, 1842.

⁶⁵ Thomas Cooper, 'Chartist Hymns. I.—C.M.' *The English Chartist Circular*, No. 78, vol.2, 1842, p.104.

⁶⁶ Eileen Groth Lyon observes that for the Baptist Chartist leader Job Rawlings, 'practical religion' meant 'following the spirit and example of our Lord Jesus.' Job Rawlings, *Animadversion Upon a*

The desire to witness a transition from one state to another, the need to feel included within that new state, and the personal obligation and commitment that transition required are often distinguishing features of the Chartist hymns in the *English Chartist Circular*, and indeed Chartist poems generally. Cooper's 'Hymns for Chartist Camp Meetings. I.—L.M.' describes Chartists as God's 'mournful children', succinctly representing Chartist collective identity as a familial duty. The anonymous poem 'Chartists and Liberty' represents the agitation to gain the Charter as a transition from darkness to light, echoing the Creation. It claims that: 'Yes the darkness now is breaking, / At the dawning of the sun'. Edwin Gill's 'The Chartist for Ever Shall Weather the Storm,' manages to subtly convey both a sense of inclusion and transition in the last three lines of the opening stanza. The Charter acts as a modern Ark that gathers up the 'hopes' of Chartists. 'And thy sons have now set all their hopes on the sea, / In a bark called the Charter—for liberty bound, / The port where the millions are happy and free.'⁶⁷

Evoking the Methodist Camp meeting, Cooper's hymns also have a commemorative function, acting as tokens that are both invested with and themselves inscribed in a collective radical memory. Ernest Jones would later reprint some of the earliest Chartist poems he wrote in 1846, notably 'Blackstone Edge' and 'The Better Hope', in the *People's Paper* prior to the Chartist meeting at Blackstone Edge held on the 19th of June 1853: a meeting that was to be a 'people's resurrection' that would re-energise Chartism. Similarly, William James Linton's longer poems acted as containers for radical collective memory.⁶⁸ Poetry had become an important tool in mapping Chartism's own history both in the press, and in the memories of the Chartist rank and file. Paradoxically, Cooper's role in the publication of the now lost *Shakspearean Chartist Hymn Book* emphasises his aloofness as a leading cultural figure.⁶⁹ The volume was a product of the adult education scheme Cooper led, itself an integral part of the 'The Shakspearean Association of Leicester Chartists.'

Sermon Preached by Mr John Warburton, Bath: 1839, cited in Eileen Groth Lyon, *Politicians in the Pulpit Christian Radicalism in Britain from the Fall of the Bastille to the Disintegration of Chartism*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, p. 194

⁶⁷ See Y. Kovalev (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 38; p.104

⁶⁸ See Ernest Jones, (ed.) *The People's Paper*, no. 55, 21 May, 1853, p.1. 'The Better Hope,' reprinted in *The People's Paper*, no. 56, 28 May, 1853, p.6. See also Chapter 6 for a discussion of radical collective memory in W.J. Linton's longer poems.

⁶⁹ As Timothy Randall notes, no copy of this work is known to survive. See Timothy Randall, 'Chartist Poetry and Song,' O. Ashton, R. Fyson & S. Roberts, (ed.) *The Chartist Legacy*, Rendlesham: Merlin,

William Jones and John Henry Bramwich were the volume's main contributors. Cooper instigated and directed the project, but acted as a detached compiler, his role being editorial rather than contributory, writing just two hymns for that collection.⁷⁰ The Chartist school set up under Cooper's direction successfully made the transition from a forum for education as a form of consumption, to political and cultural production through the writing and eventual publication of poetry in the *Shakspearean Chartist Hymn Book*.⁷¹ Chartists became both creators and consumers of their own product. The hymns also had a major impact beyond Leicester Chartism, with Bramwich's 'Hymn,' sung to the tune 'New Crucifixion,' becoming a Chartist anthem, recited at Chartist meetings in various parts of the country well into the late 1840s.⁷² The Christian learning and writing ethos of Cooper's 'Shakspearean' Chartist school and the literature it produced sprang from his earlier experiences as preacher and schoolmaster, and from the experiences and expectations working people had of Sunday school education.

Singing Chartist hymns enabled Chartists to visualise their political struggle through God's promise of salvation offered to them as a symbol of kinship. Entering into a relationship with God always carried with it the responsibility to act in one's own interest.⁷³ In other words, by representing the relationship between God and 'the people' through kinship, the covenant between God and 'the people' could be remade. But it was always a Chartist's duty to recognise the injustice of their shared subjection, their own complicity in it, and to act responsibly and organise accordingly in order to break free from it. Thus as partners in God's covenant, enacted through singing, the covenant re-articulated therein acts not only as a motive for grateful praise, but also an attainment of class consciousness. On many occasions in Chartist poetry, the call to action and humankind's duty to each other is represented as a

1999, pp. 184; 194.

⁷⁰ John Saville (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 166.

⁷¹ Eileen Yeo stresses that Chartist classes encouraged members to realise 'that they were the really productive classes, not only capable of producing commodities and services, but also capable collectively of producing their politics and indeed the whole of their social lives.' Eileen Yeo, 'Practices and Problems of Chartist Democracy,' James Epstein & Dorothy Thompson, (eds.) *The Chartist Experience. Studies in Working-class Radicalism 1830-1860*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 352.

⁷² See *Northern Star* May 15, 1847, p.1.

⁷³ Cooper believed that "God helps them who help themselves" and was 'convinced' that if he 'had not shown both resolution and perseverance' while in prison then he never would have gained the privileges that he believed saved his life. This is just one of several episodes recorded in his autobiography whereby Cooper retrospectively felt 'providence' had saved him. See John Saville, (ed.)

Christian duty. The anonymous Chartist poem 'To the Sons of Toil' for example, affirms that: '...Heaven decreed all men should share / Alike his equal laws; / That all should live, and happy be, / And plead each other's cause.'⁷⁴ Cooper consciously endorses the act of singing to express that class-consciousness at the conclusion of 'Hymn for Chartist Camp, III 7's':

Shall we bear our tyrants yoke?
Can it not with ease be broke?—
Peal it to the vaulted blue—
*"We are many, they are few!"*⁷⁵

Cooper's use of italics emphasises his Shelleyan borrowing from 'The Masque of Anarchy' in apparent support of Janowitz's assertion that Chartist poets consciously drew from a romantic tradition.⁷⁶ But it is important to remember that use of italics for heavy emphasis is also a prevalent feature in Charles Wesley's hymns.⁷⁷ In the final two lines of the verse cited above, religious ritual jostles with the Chartist attachment to romantic literary culture. When experienced in the pages of the newspaper, the use of the imperative 'Peal' makes Cooper's role as a poet seem imploring, urging the reader on. Yet when sung communally, that audience situation transforms the words on the page into a unique performance. Reading emphasises the hierarchical 'me—you' relationship between the narrator and the subject hailed by the poem, while singing democratises the words and rehearses social transformation. The prosodic repetition of hymnody however, and the constraints it imposed would lead the culturally ambitious Cooper to cease publishing hymns and songs.

The hymn 'I—L.M.'⁷⁸ questions who may or may not sanction God by encouraging Chartists to divine for themselves whether it is humankind generally that has forsaken God, or whether God's faithful yet 'mournful children' (the Chartists) have yet to be forsaken along with the rest of humankind. Cooper's hymn also signals the influence of hymn writing by clearly identifying the metre employed. 'L.M.' written into the

The Life of Thomas Cooper, p. 254.

⁷⁴ 'To the Sons of Toil', Y. Kovalev, *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 49.

⁷⁵ Thomas Cooper, 'Hymns for Chartist Camp, III. 7's,' *English Chartist Circular*, vol. II, no.75, 1842, p.92.

⁷⁶ See Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 142.

⁷⁷ Donald Davies, *The Eighteenth-Century Hymn In England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 57-58.

⁷⁸ Thomas Cooper, 'I—L.M.', *The English Chartist Circular*, vol. II, no.74, p. 88.

title of the hymn indicates that the author employs the ballad variation, 'long measure,' a form prevalent in Methodist hymn writing generally.⁷⁹ Both Cooper and his friend William Jones self-consciously used specific literary forms and stress patterns and followed the style and conventions of the Methodist hymnbook. As Ulrike Schwab notes, Cooper, William Jones and John Henry Bramwich (the leading poets attached to Cooper's 'Shakspearean' school) all published Chartist hymns in the pages of the *English Chartist Circular*. Their hymns were often annotated with their metre, following the conventions of Methodist hymnbooks, enabling the hymns to be set to familiar or popular hymn tunes.⁸⁰ As such these hymns, as in the example below, are not just literary exercises in the use of form and metre. They also show how the application of popular tunes to their hymns could consolidate the fraternal experience of the Chartist meeting:

Hymns for Chartist Camp Meetings.

I.—L.M.

God of the earth, and sea, and sky,
To thee thy mournful children cry!
Didst thou the blue that bends o'er all
Spread for a general funeral pall?

Sadness and gloom pervade the land;
Death—famine,—glare, on either hand!—
Didst thou plant earth upon the wave
Only to form one general grave?

Father! Why didst thou form the flowers?
They blossom not for us or ours!
Why didst thou clothe the fields with corn?
Robbers from us our share have torn.

The ancients of our wretched race
Told of thy sovereign power and grace
That in the sea their foes o'erthrew—
Great Father! is the record true?

Art thou the same who, from all time,

⁷⁹ A glance through the Methodist Hymns composed and published by Charles and John Wesley, shows that many were written in long measure. See for example, hymn nos. 386, 391, 395, *A Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*, London: Wesleyan Methodist Book-Room, 1889.

⁸⁰ Ulrike Schwab, *The Poetry of the Chartist Movement: A Literary and Historical Study*, London: Kluwer, 1993, p. 132.

O'er every sea, through every clime,—
 The stained oppressor's guilty head
 Hath visited with vengeance dread?

To us,—the wretched and the poor,
 Whom rich men drive from door to door,—
 To us, then, make thy goodness known
 And we thy lofty name will own.

Father! Our frames are sinking fast!—
 Hast thou our names behind thee cast?
 Our sinless babes with hunger die!
 Our hearts are hardening!—hear our cry!

Appear as in the ancient days;
 Deliver us from our foes!—and praise
 Shall from our hearts to thee ascend—
 To God, our FATHER and our friend!

Thomas Cooper.

11, Church Gate, Leicester, July 5th, 1842

The above hymn describes an earthly paradise from which all people are excluded; a condition brought about by unequal social and political relations maintained by state powers. Chartists are allegorically represented as a lost tribe of Israel awaiting their call into that Promised Land, united in their common exile, yet journeying toward enfranchisement. The fourth stanza of Cooper's poem makes a direct comparison between Chartists and the Israelites fleeing Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and crossing the Red Sea:

The ancients of our wretched race
 Told of thy sovereign power and grace
 That in the sea their foes o'erthrew—
 Great Father! is the record true?

In the first stanza, Cooper describes Chartists as the faithful yet 'mournful children' foregrounding God's covenant with His chosen people through kinship, which also carries with it social and political duties. God's covenant is often represented in the Old Testament in terms of familial relations. His promise to the prophet Nathan that David's line will rule after him is represented in such language: 'I will be his father, and he shall be my son.' There are however conditions to God's covenant. 'He

[David] shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever.’⁸¹ The inclusiveness built into Cooper’s hymn, through the pronoun ‘our’ separates the Chartist body from ‘all’ of humankind, reversing the political exclusion of working people by the Reform Act of 1832.

The emphasis on ‘our share’, on ‘our wretched race’ situates Chartists at the centre, rather than the margins of political identity. By centring the hymn on ‘us Chartists,’ the outright possibility of turning to the middle-classes for assistance in extending the franchise is rejected. Radicals had supported the struggle for the political changes attained through the Great Reform Act of 1832, only to find that the voting system introduced unreasonable obstacles to registering as an elector and gave too much influence to the non-elected administrators of the electoral system.⁸² Certainly at the Great Birmingham Conference of 1842, Cooper had been pleased to see ‘so many persons present belonging to the middle class’ who were supporting the Charter rather than the ‘People’s Bill of Rights,’ proposed by the Complete Suffrage Movement.⁸³ But Cooper’s democratic zeal for the attainment of the franchise for all men did not allow for any threat to the unity of working-class radicalism based on the principle of attaining the Charter first and foremost, so achieving parliamentary representation. Following Feargus O’Connor at this point, Cooper argued that the middle-classes needed to meet the demands of the Charter and its supporters and would not suffer the Chartist cause to sacrifice its independence. He complained that: ‘there was no attempt to bring about a union – no effort for conciliation – no generous offer of the right hand of friendship.’⁸⁴ The changes to the voting system that Chartists argued for would prove a bitter struggle.

That Cooper’s hymn does not engage with specific pragmatic political issues is not all that surprising, given the Chartist emphasis on a ‘collective self help’ whereby religious faith ensured ‘moral legitimacy’.⁸⁵ The objective of the poem is to demonstrate to Chartists their legitimacy as Christian subjects, but also their duty to

⁸¹ 2 Samuel, 7:13-14, *Holy Bible*.

⁸² Miles Taylor, ‘The Six Points: Chartism and the Reform of Parliament,’ Ashton, O. Fyson, R. & Roberts, S. (eds.) *The Chartist Legacy*, Rendlesham: Merlin Press, 1999, p. 8.

⁸³ John Saville, (ed.), *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 221.

⁸⁴ John Saville, (ed.), *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 222.

⁸⁵ Eileen Yeo, ‘Some Practices and Problems of Chartist Democracy,’ James Epstein & Dorothy Thompson (eds.) *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-*

campaign for the Charter as a people independent of any cross-class assistance, rather than to explicate in detail the politics of Chartism.⁸⁶ The poem thus subtly combines familial with religious inclusiveness as a basis for legitimacy. Describing Chartists as God's 'mournful children' conveys both their sorry condition as well as their sense of political duty. The poem also makes a biblical allusion to the Creation in the opening line and opposes it with an allusion to biblical famine in the second stanza.⁸⁷ The allusion to famine draws a comparison between the plight of the Leicester framework knitters and biblical famine, further emphasising the isolation of the singers of this hymn in economic terms:

Sadness and gloom pervade the land;
 Death—famine,—glare, on either hand!—
 Didst thou plant earth upon the wave
 Only to form one general grave?

Biblically, God inflicted famine for his chosen people's disobedience. Famine could threaten whenever the will of God was disobeyed.⁸⁸ At the same time, the Bible makes clear that Joseph's interpretation of the Pharaoh's vision enabled Egypt to plan for the coming famine, which ultimately led to the prosperity of Joseph's family.⁸⁹ Clearly the effects of famine can be alleviated and a far greater redistribution of wealth achieved, given the right course of human action. There are other biblical examples of the threat of famine overcome in the Old Testament. Under the leadership of Hezekiah for example, Jerusalem staved off famine and survived the

1860, London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 348.

⁸⁶The *Holy Bible* has many instances where a chosen people are separated out from the rest of humanity: 'And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats...Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Matthew, 25:32-33.

⁸⁷ Cooper also begins his Chartist hymn 'I.—C.M.' with an allusion to the Creation: 'O Thou who didst create us all / With wonder working skill'. See Cooper, Thomas. 'Chartist Hymns. I.—C.M.,' *The English Chartist Circular*, vol. II, no. 78, 1842.

⁸⁸ The prophet Jeremiah recounts how God told him that: 'When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence.' Jeremiah 14:12.

⁸⁹ 'The land of Egypt is before thee; in the best of the land make thy father and brethren to dwell; in the land of Goshen let them dwell: and if thou knowest any men of activity among them, then make them rulers over my cattle. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh: and Jacob blessed Pharaoh.' Genesis, 47:6-7.

siege of the Assyrian army.⁹⁰ Cooper's poem claims the produce of labour as a political and moral right using a Christian precedent.

Cooper's representation of economic and political injustice through Christian language emphasises how Chartists envisaged their campaign as a self-governed and independent people, struggling toward their appointed goal. In so doing, the hymn also draws upon a specific Methodist idea. The hymn strikes what appear to the modern reader increasing notes of desperation rather than confidence, and at the very end expresses a deep-seated desire to see God 'Appear as in the ancient days'. The hymn encourages Chartists to consider their relation to God. It then makes an increasingly desperate search to find God, and at the end calls on God to make himself known to the Chartists. Cooper's hymn demonstrates a clear crisis.

The hymn might appear to support a procession toward secularisation and political action, seeming to doubt the existence of God. Cooper's hymn however, also draws upon Wesley's important Methodist work, *Directions for Renewing Our Covenant with God*. Wesley had developed and observed the ritual of covenanting from the mid 1700s to the end of his life, making it integral to Methodism.⁹¹ Wesley encouraged others to acknowledge their 'sin and misery' and to 'utterly despair' of themselves.⁹² Only by recognising that they had nowhere to turn except to God could Christ act as their salvation and mediator, able to reconcile sinners to God, consoling and confirming their inclusion among God's chosen people. This condition was attained and kept only with great difficulty, yet was potentially lost in a momentary lapse, as Cooper's own earlier period of intense piety, recorded in his autobiography demonstrates.⁹³ By bringing Methodist thought into contact with the radical narratives of political emancipation, Cooper produces poetry that allows its interlocutors to closely question the political motives of such powerful instruments as the Methodist connexions, while reworking those narratives into a populist, diffuse Christian culture that pervaded working-class thought. For example, Cooper's hymn opens using an interrogative near the beginning:

⁹⁰ See 2 Chronicles 32:1-22, *Holy Bible*.

⁹¹ '...the Covenant and covenanting were prominent themes in Wesley's reading...his exhortation to renew the Covenant may be regarded as a constant theme of his preaching.' Tripp, David. *The Renewal of the Covenant*, p.12.

⁹² David Tripp, *The Renewal of the Covenant*, pp.178-179.

God of the earth, and sea, and sky,
 To thee thy mournful children cry!
 Didst thou the blue that bends o'er all
 Spread for a general funeral pall?

Chartists are encouraged to both question themselves and the criteria upon which they are required to come to some sense of their legitimacy as a chosen people. The hymn gradually strikes increasing notes of desperation and becomes more exhortatory. The doubly addressed interrogative is substituted with a highly charged imperative toward the end, emitted in exasperation as an act of sheer desperation to represent 'hardening' Chartist hearts. The participants in the above hymn seem forced to finally accept that there is nowhere to turn except toward their duty as God's subjects for their political salvation. Yet the criteria upon which that connection with the Almighty might be re-made, though Methodist in origin, are tempered with the basic economic and political instruction that the poem simultaneously seeks to impart. Cooper's hymn rationalises the struggle for freedom from political oppression through the Methodist discourse of covenanting with God.

This may not seem at first glance the most obvious metaphor for the raising of political consciousness. The attainment of class-consciousness however, in seeking for one's place among a chosen people requires a certain amount of work on the part of the interlocutor. Covenanting requires a concerted effort on the part of the Chartist rank and file to make known to themselves, as Michael Wheeler observed of the Victorian hymn generally, the obstacles that might check the path to their political rights through a religious discourse.⁹⁴ Clearly religious narratives can be reworked to represent the Chartist emphasis on class independence and individual responsibility, not just to act but to make known to themselves the conditions of their own subjection. Cooper's hymns achieve this by emphasising the Chartists' status as people marginalised by the religious ideologies of bourgeois culture, subverting those narratives into forms more pertinent to the struggles of working people themselves. In another of his hymns, 'Chartist Hymns. I.—C.M.,' Cooper is keen to impress upon

⁹³ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, pp.77-88.

⁹⁴ Michael Wheeler, *Death and the Future Life*, p. 136.

Chartist audiences how the church sought to prohibit the intellectual growth of working people, advocating free and even secular inquiry:

While telling how the Saviour heal'd
The deaf, the dumb, the blind—
They strive to keep forever seal'd
The freeborn powers of mind!⁹⁵

The true basis for salvation, for delivering to themselves their new personal and political status, is effective agitation and organisation to secure the Charter: a right that church leaders (the 'They' in the above stanza) sought to deny them. Just as God and humankind might enter into a covenant that secures salvation, so Chartists also enter into a political covenant among themselves and with the narrator in the hymn that addresses them. As and when they really and truly recognise that address and act as conscientious Chartists dedicated to securing the Charter, then can they attain recognition of themselves as political beings. Chartists can then overcome their alienation by ascertaining a collective identity through a re-discovery of God on terms of their own choosing. This is why hymn singing was so important: it gave the Chartist rank and file the opportunity to act as interlocutors, both calling and responding at one and the same moment. This also accounts for the prevalence of questions in Chartist poetry, possessing an ability to construct a complex multiple address.⁹⁶ Cooper addresses his personal influences in and through the act of hymn writing, enacting his sense of election as cultural leader. He then dutifully addresses his Chartist audiences, who may either be readers, listeners or singers. At each and every stage of the processes of writing, reading and singing, labour is exacted from each agent, for which some future reward will inevitably come to them. Chartist audiences for example, are encouraged to re-ask questions of themselves and of their oppressors, as in Cooper's hymn 'I.—C.M.':

O Thou who didst create us all,
With wonder working skill—
Say, do the priests who on us call,

⁹⁵ Thomas Cooper, 'Chartist Hymns. I.—C.M.,' *The English Chartist Circular*, vol. II, no. 78, 1842

⁹⁶ Interrogatives appear in a great many Chartist poems. See for example, 'Would You Be a Great Lord?'; 'The State Pauper's Soliloquy'; 'What is a Peer?'; 'Oppression'; 'The Enslaved'; 'Lines on Shell, Killed at Newport'; 'The League'; 'Song for the Millions'; 'Ode to Liberty'; 'Our Cheer'; 'A Song for May'; 'The Poet's Mission'; 'The Gathering of the People'. See, Y. Kovalev, *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*.

Obey thy sovereign will?⁹⁷

Cooper's hymns interpellate Chartist audiences as bodies that need to organise themselves. The hierarchy this appears to create is also capsized by re-positioning those questions asked in the mouths of the Chartist rank-and-file audiences and singers, encouraging Chartist audiences to transform themselves into politically aware collectives via a process of self-questioning. The Chartist rank and file themselves equally act as addressers as well as respondents who enact the poem through the processes of reading, listening or singing. These new political identities are also anchored and consolidated using inclusive pronouns 'we' and 'our'.

It could be argued that Cooper's turn to Chartism and the changes to his religious faith recorded in his autobiography, force Cooper's hymn 'I.—L.M.' not to address God as a saviour, so much as to question his authority by cautioning that Chartist 'hearts are hardening.'

Father! Our frames are sinking fast!—
 Hast thou our names behind thee cast?
 Our sinless babes with hunger die!
 Our hearts are hardening!—hear our cry!⁹⁸

The hymn might seem to suggest that having left Methodist preaching, Cooper's growing rebelliousness informs his poetry, as he explains how Chartist hearts hardened when God abandons them. The poem therefore might seem to contradict the act of covenanting, whereby humankind's obligations to God are renewed. The narrative of election after all, always tells us that it is God who sets the conditions of the promise between Himself and His chosen people. However, pleading for God's assistance is a way of recognising His capacity to sufficiently empower His followers to face their 'foes'. Such a request is a sign of the collective's reliance upon God for help, but also signals the beginning of Chartists' sense of decisiveness by choosing to turn toward God.

Having to make such a 'prayer of desperation' is to recognise the possibility of remaking the covenant between God and his dutiful people. This recognition

⁹⁷ Thomas Cooper, 'Chartist Hymns. I.—C.M.' *The English Chartist Circular*, vol. II, no. 77, 1842

⁹⁸ Thomas Cooper, 'Hymns for Chartist Camp-Meetings. I.—L.M.' *The English Chartist Circular*, vol.

transforms subjectivity, which makes it worthy of praise. It is not an act of defiance commanding God to appear as if to prove Himself.⁹⁹ Cooper's hymn can be seen, for example, to echo the Old Testament prayer of Jabez: a man who petitioned God and was rewarded with his request.¹⁰⁰ Yet Cooper's Chartist hymns clearly do not end with same sense of peace, harmony and resolution symptomatic of the great many hymns that Charles Wesley wrote. Petitions for God's attention often appear in Methodist hymns in which the congregation pledges faith in lieu of a sign that they have been recognised by God:

Abba, Father! Hear thy child,
Late in Jesus reconciled,
Hear and all the graces shower,
All the joy, and peace, and power,
All my Saviour asks above,
All the life of heaven and love.¹⁰¹

Cooper's hymns instead ultimately end in despairing pleas for assistance, which act as indirect addresses to Chartists, urging them on to fulfil no-one's destiny but their own.

Cooper's Chartist hymns equate the gaining of a new polity, attainable through test and trial, with the idea of heaven as a new community populated by God's chosen people. At the same time, the act of progressing toward that new heaven is an acceptance of God's covenant, the first step toward that heaven enacted through communal singing. Clearly one effect of communal singing is to transform the identity of the singers through the act of singing itself, as much as through the Christian discourses in the hymn. This new identity is achievable because communal singing distributes cultural capital equally among all singers. All voices are made equal agents that can all question the consensus by which bourgeois culture could shape literature in its own image. Each singer puts energy into and so invests in a

II, no. 74, 1842.

⁹⁹ This was not to be the last time that Cooper made such an address to God. In the late 1850s, on his return from scepticism to Christian faith, Cooper recalled that Charles Kingsley had told him: 'When you feel you are in the deepest and gloomiest doubt, pray the prayer of desperation; cry out "Lord, if Thou dost exist, let me know that Thou dost exist! Guide my mind, by a way that I know not, into thy Truth!" and God will deliver you.' Kingsley was probably referring to the Prayer of Jabez, 1 Chronicles, 4:9-10, *Holy Bible*. See John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 371.

¹⁰⁰ 'And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.' Chronicles, 4:10, *Holy Bible*.

particular cultural identity by framing their utterance in a form historically and culturally established as a means of transforming that singer's political identity. At the same time, the Chartist song as a discursive event is both the reproduction of the cultural conditions by which that product is established and the finished product itself at one and the same moment. In other words, the singers are both encoders and decoders at the same time. As in the production of the *Shaksperean Chartist Hymn Book*, Chartist singers were both creators and consumers of their own product.

The reclamation of the means of production is counter-hegemonic, turning the cultural significance of the hymn against the apolitical appeals of the church to Chartists at the height of the Chartist Church demonstrations between 1839-1842.¹⁰² Though Chartist poems often made open rhetorical attacks on the religious establishment,¹⁰³ Cooper's hymns clearly critiqued church and state through their form and their performative situation and through the residual Christian narratives incorporated into those performances, notably using Methodist covenanting. As a cultural phenomenon, the singing of the Chartist hymn was an assertion of cultural and economic independence, representing Chartism as an alternative, inclusive church. By writing hymns Chartist poets could search for, find, and celebrate their role as poet through the act of writing. Simultaneously, the Chartist singer/audience was offered a cultural space through which they might re-imagine their relation to their subjection through an inclusive body that questioned the hegemonic order.

The shorter Chartist poems Cooper wrote during and after his imprisonment indicate a marked shift in their use of religious imagery, symbolism and their use of the election narrative. His perspective while a prisoner was increasingly secular. They were written while serving his prison sentence for sedition following the plug plot riots of 1842, although his autobiography makes no mention of them. They were probably part of a collection of short Chartist prison poems that he sent to his wife for publication. Thereafter, he changed his mind, directing his energies into his epic

¹⁰¹ Hymn 390, *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists*, p. 369.

¹⁰² As Eileen Groth Lyon observes, the mass Chartist presence at church services was intended to prick the consciences of the better off. Chartist demands for sermons based on biblical passages more representative of their conditions were seldom met. See Eileen Groth Lyon, *Politicians in the Pulpit*, p. 209.

¹⁰³ Attacks on churchmen as symbols of oppression are common in Chartist poems. In James Syme's 'Labour Song,' priests are 'mitred knaves' who take for themselves 'each comfort' owed to workers in

poem instead.¹⁰⁴ Cooper's new literary project *The Purgatory of Suicides*, discussed in chapter 2, now absorbed him. As for the relation between these poems and his earlier hymns,¹⁰⁵ his struggle with the prison system for better basic provision, for access to his books and writing materials, and the poor treatment he received for his defiance intensified his sceptical thoughts: '...those two months of torture at the beginning of my two years' imprisonment, served, most fearfully, to bring my atheistic reasonings to a head.'¹⁰⁶ His radical revision of Methodist ideas such as covenanting in his earlier Chartist hymns gave way to more secular meditations on his election as a cultural agent.

It might seem strange then that Cooper chose to include any of his shorter Chartist poems at all in his later *Poetical Works*, given his emphasis on the political objectives of hymn singing over and above the artistic function of such texts. He perhaps saw these poems as literary foils to his ten-book epic. The inclusion of what he called 'samples'¹⁰⁷ produces some sense of his literary range. They indicate that Cooper explored a number of literary avenues, and had skill in various literary forms. Though they may represent a literary style and purpose the poet no longer has faith in, the collection as a whole does indicate cultural growth and maturation. Along with the 'Smaller Prison Rhymes' appears a selection of 'Early Pieces' written in the early 1830s, some of which were the more successful poems from his *Wesleyan Chiefs*.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps Cooper's *Poetical Works* might be considered as much a representation of an imperfect yet honestly lived life as his autobiography. Biography certainly fascinated Cooper because it allowed one to view the life and work of the poet as two complementary phenomena.¹⁰⁹ His literary lectures always stressed the importance of appreciating the lives of poets in order to value better their literary works.¹¹⁰

lieu of their labours. See, Y. Kovalev. *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 81.

¹⁰⁴ See note 16.

¹⁰⁵ Ulrike Schwab notes that the form of 'Chartist Chant' and its use of symbol does connect it back to the tradition of the hymn. See Ulrike Schwab, *The Poetry of the Chartist Movement*, p.138

¹⁰⁶ John Saville (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 261

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Cooper, *Poetical Works*, 1877, p.xi.

¹⁰⁸ For example, Cooper's poem 'To Lincoln Cathedral,' praised by Cooper's first proofreader James Montgomery, appears in his *Poetical Works*.

¹⁰⁹ As Joss Marsh notes, biographical detail, including complete access to a poet's works, was of great interest to the mid-nineteenth century reader. 'Literary criticism requires and sanctions complete access to the poet's works.' Joss Marsh, *Word Crimes Blasphemy, Culture, and Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p.96.

¹¹⁰ Bouthaina Shaaban observes: 'In 1849, Cooper lectured on the lives of Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Byron and Burns' and emphasised in the *Plain Speaker* I, no.14 (1849), p.106, how the life of

The 'Smaller Prison Rhymes' do provide a different impression of how Cooper perceived his cultural role as a prison poet than that we receive through his epic. In 'Chartist Chant' the opening four lines of the poem use a continuous present tense to represent the need to maintain ongoing radical activity outside prison, while within prison, Cooper maintains his duty through the act of writing. As Isobel Armstrong observes, 'Chartist Chant' attempts to reconcile the desire to overthrow by force, with the hope and promise that the principles of education and reason may bring to the fight for the franchise.¹¹¹ This tension is demonstrated in the third line of the first stanza, where the 'Light' of education is juxtaposed with the 'quaking' seats of power. The poem thus ascribes political agency (one of the key functions that Timothy Randall credits Chartist poetry with) to intellectual labour.¹¹² Nevertheless, to represent the poet's role, Cooper's 'Smaller Prison Rhymes' draw upon two identifiable literary strategies connected to the narrative of Christian election. The first is the use of particular literary symbols, notably in 'Chartist Chant.' The second is the grammatical construction of these poems, notably the agency ascribed to particular subjects and the shifts between tenses in his two 'Chartist Songs.'

'Chartist Chant'

Truth is growing—hearts are glowing
 With the flame of Liberty:
 Light is breaking—Thrones are quaking—
 Hark! The trumpet of the Free!
 Long, in lowly whispers breathing,
 Freedom wandered drearily—
 Still, in faith, her laurel wreathing
 For the day when there should be
 Freemen shouting—'Victory!'

Now she seeketh him that speaketh
 Fearlessly of lawless might;
 And she speedeth him that leadeth
 Brethren on to win the Right.
 Soon, the slave shall cease to sorrow—
 Cease to toil in agony;
 Yea, the cry may swell to-morrow

a poet was fundamental to fully appreciating their literary contribution. See B. Shabaan, 'Shelley's influence on the Chartist Poets,' p. 293. See also Cooper's series of lectures where he spoke on, among others, the 'Life and genius of Byron,' advertised in *Cooper's Journal*, p.422.

¹¹¹ Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* London, Routledge, 1993, p. 194

¹¹² Timothy Randall, 'Chartist Poetry and Song,' O. Ashton, R. Fyson & S. Roberts (eds.) *The Chartist Legacy*, Rendelsham: Merlin, 1999, p. 172.

Over land and over sea—
‘Brethren, shout—ye all are free!’

Freedom bringeth joy that singeth
All day long and never tires:
No more sadness—all is gladness
In the hearts that she inspires:
For she breathes a soft compassion
Where the tyrant kindled rage;
And she saith to every nation—
‘Brethren, cease wild war to wage:
Earth is your blest heritage.’

Though kings render their defender
Titles, gold and splendours gay—
Lo thy glory—warrior gory—
Like a dream shall fade away!
Gentle peace her balm of healing
On the bleeding world shall pour;
Brethren, love for brethren feeling,
Shall proclaim, from shore to shore—
‘Shout—the sword shall slay no more!’¹¹³

Ulrike Schwab observes that in this poem the figure of Freedom suffers in exile, yet remains a ‘model of patience and hope’ that becomes a ‘driving force’ behind Chartism. The laurel wreath that ‘Freedom’ constructed is a symbol of coming ‘victory’.¹¹⁴ The laurel wreath however, is also a common symbol of literary status and is often associated with the celebration of literary accomplishment. A relief panel on John Flaxman’s memorial sculpture of Robert Burns for example, shows a standing female figure placing a laurel wreath, symbolising the spirit of poetry, on the head of the seated late poet.¹¹⁵ The iconography of the wreathed poet is also common in painting. Milton and Pope were both depicted in portraiture wearing wreaths.¹¹⁶

In the above poem, ‘Freedom’ is in the process of making just such a wreath, ready for when the franchise and its benefits would be gained. The making of a wreath clearly celebrates the role of poetry in that anticipated Chartist victory. ‘Freedom’ searches not just for one who might lead the ‘Brethren on to win the Right’ to victory,

¹¹³ Thomas Cooper, *Poetical Works*, 1877, pp.283-284.

¹¹⁴ Ulrike Schwab, *The Poetry of the Chartist Movement*, p.138.

¹¹⁵ See Margaret Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain 1530-1830*, second edition, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988, p.349. For the symbolic meaning of Laurel see *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, sixth edition, London: Cassell, 1962.

but indicates the centrality of poetry and the role of the poet in the gaining of the franchise. As much as this 'Chant' might seem a far cry from the erudition of Cooper's epic, it does tell us something of the role that Cooper envisaged for poetry and the role of the poet generally in the agitation for a better world gained through the Charter. 'Freedom' has not yet found the poet. The symbol 'The trumpet of the Free' also demonstrates the multiple modes of address that Chartist poems can represent. The use of the imperative 'Hark!' synchronises the representation of the poet with the audience by virtue of a trumpet-call that acts as a common rallying cry to both poet and the rank and file Chartists.¹¹⁷ The voices that might enact the poem, through communal recitation rather than individual reading, produce their own rallying cry.

The sound of the trumpet is also a dense biblical symbol that represents the role of both poet and audience. First it represents unity and organisation; a ritualised call to order as well as a proclamation. Moses was instructed by God to construct two silver trumpets 'for the calling of assembly and for the journeying of the camps.'¹¹⁸ Second, it acts as a symbol of resistance, especially against an invading foe:

And if ye go to war in your land against an enemy that oppresseth you, then shall ye blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies.¹¹⁹

Third, it provides the signal for the overthrowing of a regime and the redistribution of a Promised Land to a chosen people, as in the fall of Jericho in the book of Joshua:

...and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets...when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him.¹²⁰

The trumpet acts as a call to justified revolutionary activity to the song's audiences, through biblical allusions. The 'trumpet of the Free' also represents the poet as a

¹¹⁶ See David Piper, *The Image of the Poet*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982, pp. 69-71.

¹¹⁷ This point is made by Isobel Armstrong in *Victorian Poetry: Poetry Poetics and Politics*, London: Routledge, 1993, p.194

¹¹⁸ Numbers 10:2, *Holy Bible*.

¹¹⁹ Numbers 10:9, *Holy Bible*.

herald, reminding Chartists that the moment for attaining their goal is now. The narratorial position of the hymn thus echoes Joshua's order, commanding the Israelites collectively to shout down the walls of Jericho at the trumpet signal:

...and it came to pass...when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout: for the Lord hath given you the city...and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat.¹²¹

The act of communal singing had previously served Cooper well. It consolidated and reaffirmed the Chartist collective using the convention of the hymn. At the same time, that conventional literary form needed to act as a medium for social and political transformation. It is hardly surprising therefore that Cooper's songs—memorable yet straining against their poetic possibilities—should employ melodramatic language and changes in tense for their main literary effects. Cooper's use of the continuous present tense both synchronises and dramatises the responsibilities of Chartists, but also historicises that activity by foregrounding a collective memory created in part using Christian allusion.

Though 'Chartist Chant' begins by affirming the inexorable growth of radical reform, the poem also displaces the reader back to a time when 'Freedom' searched for her disciples. The poem contrasts the present with the past where 'Freedom wandered drearily', signalling and historicising the changing fortunes of radical activity. The history of radicalism itself is Cooper's subject in his 'Two Chartist Songs.'¹²² The first 'Chartist Song' puts in place a genealogy of European radical figures who famously brought the message of liberty to their nations. Consequently, these poems act as containers and celebrations of radical memory. In the first song, Watt Tyler the leader of the peasant's revolt; John Hampden, challenger of Charles I's authority to raise and levy taxes; William Wallace the popular Scottish leader and William Tell, the liberator of the Swiss, are all celebrated as 'the brave and the free'.¹²³ Though the performance of these Chartist songs seeks to raise the political awareness of their singers, a strong sense of radical history is represented, fixing the

¹²⁰ Joshua 6:4-5, *Holy Bible*.

¹²¹ Joshua 6:16-20, *Holy Bible*.

¹²² Citations to Cooper's 'Two Chartist Songs' are from, Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives*, Fyfield edition, Manchester: Carcanet, 1992, pp.57-59.

¹²³ Thomas Cooper, 'Two Chartist Songs,' p.57.

legacy of prominent radicals through popular song, integrating those lives into Chartist ritual at the moment that singing also foregrounds class independence. The performance of these songs distinguish the culture of Chartism from the rest of the cultural milieu. At the same time the overarching relationship between poet and audience remains hierarchical, with the poet making use of the directive, 'Let Labour's Children sing!' in the first song.¹²⁴

The second 'Chartist Song' relies on changes in tense and stress patterns between the first four lines of the verses and the refrain attached to each for its effect. The predictive and portentous opening of each stanza contrasts with the jovial refrain, written using a trochaic stress pattern. The repeated first line, 'The Time shall come' has a biblical resonance that is prophetic, assured and exhortatory.¹²⁵ The song again recycles the Shelleyan 'Ye are many—they are few' in its opening stanza.¹²⁶ The bulk of the song however, echoes the biblical convention of making predictions about the coming last days as a means of coding radical hopes in a familiar, accessible and emotive language, for example in the fifth stanza:

The time shall come when kingly crown
And mitre for toys of the Past are shown—
When the Fierce and False alike shall fall,
And Mercy and Truth encircle all.
Toil brothers, toil, till the world is free!
Till Mercy and Truth hold jubilee!¹²⁷

The threats to the greedy, the disloyal, the spreaders of falsehood and the murderous oppressors provide the sort of common-place condemnations of modern industrial life common to many Chartist poems and songs.¹²⁸ The prophetic quality of Cooper's song attacking the present social degeneration, anticipating the day when 'Mercy and Truth encircle all' echoes biblical prophecy. Isaiah for example, addresses the people of Judah as a:

¹²⁴ Thomas Cooper, 'Two Chartist Songs,' p.57.

¹²⁵ Thomas Cooper, 'Two Chartist Songs,' pp.58-59.

¹²⁶ Thomas Cooper, 'Two Chartist Songs,' pp.58-59.

¹²⁷ Thomas Cooper, 'Two Chartist Songs,' p.59.

¹²⁸ Thomas Wilson's 'A Song for Those Who Like to Sing It,' represents the ruling classes metonymically as 'The hand of oppression'. Kovalev, Y. (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 110.

sinful nation...your country desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land. Strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.¹²⁹

The prophet however, also looks forward to a day when 'Zion shall be redeemed with judgement, and her converts with righteousness.'¹³⁰

The third phase in Cooper's Chartist poetry is largely bound up with the publication and reception of his Chartist epic and his use of more popular literary forms, in order to build cultural and political support in the capital. Instead of returning to Leicester after serving his prison sentence, Cooper seems to have intended making some political impact upon London Chartism and initially saw Chartist songs as a means to cement his popular support among the London ranks and file Chartists. Cooper had broken with Feargus O'Connor in the late summer of 1845, largely it seems over the Land Plan and instead became an 'independent Chartist.'¹³¹ Writing from London in 1845, Cooper suggests to his friend and fellow Chartist poet William Jones that communal song, presumably having achieved much in Leicester, would be an important means to energise Chartism in London.¹³² Certainly Cooper tried to get another Chartist hymnbook published, and advertised in the *Northern Star* for contributions. Cooper called for submissions from Chartist poets for a projected 'new collection of patriotic minstrelsay, that could be used in our public meetings for congregational singing.' Cooper also noted in the same letter that 'I also composed a dozen little lyrics in prison, and we are in the habit of singing these in London.' Cooper's determination to act as the sole 'judge of the fitness of the pieces' angered at least one Chartist reader, John Mathias, who dared to question Cooper's status as Chartist laureate, asking 'who made him sole judge of poetry?' His assumption to the cultural leadership in London was not met with whole-hearted enthusiasm. Cooper retaliated by indicating that he felt Mathias overstated the importance of submitting the selection of a few Chartist poems to a committee.¹³³ Despite the *Northern Star's*

¹²⁹ Isaiah 1:4-7, *Holy Bible*.

¹³⁰ Isaiah, 1:27, *Holy Bible*.

¹³¹ See John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p. 277; Stephen Roberts, 'The Later Radical Career of Thomas Cooper c.1845-1855,' p. 65.

¹³² 'You may guess that I am bent on resuscitating Chartism in earnest, in London,—and therefore intend to introduce singing.—But more of that another time.' Thomas Cooper to William Jones, DE2940/20, William Jones Papers, The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

¹³³ Cooper notes 'I beseech Mr M., since he claims to be considered "a man of thought," to think a little farther, when I humbly opine, he will see the difference between one man arrogating to himself

support for Cooper, he later wrote in the *Star*: ‘Under the circumstances of objection...I positively decline the project altogether.’¹³⁴ It is clear as well that, having written his epic, he now distinguished sharply between poetry of great cultural value, and what he considered ‘ephemeral’ verse.¹³⁵ It is interesting that in his defence, Cooper emphasised his status as a ‘humble poet,’ a ‘poor rhymers’, and makes much of his fraternity to ‘his brother rhymers’, rather than his role as leader and instigator of the project. He was clearly at pains to balance his personal election as a cultural leader, sustained via his homage to his contemporary and historical literary influences, with his place as a user of a democratically shared poetic language.

Cooper best represents the relationship between Chartist poets in his ‘Sonnets on the Death of Allen Davenport.’ Other than his attempts to foster a working class writing culture in and through his late Chartist periodicals, these are his last contributions to Chartist poetry. They show a marked difference in the mode of address from the ‘ephemeral’ verse he wrote for the earlier Leicester Chartist meetings. Cooper represents himself as a public authority on the legacy of the deceased poet and political activist. His choice of the sonnet for Davenport’s epitaph might not seem the most pertinent form at first. John Milton however, had been a great public and political sonneteer who used it as a dedicatory literary form to eulogise Oliver Cromwell among others.¹³⁶ Neither were Cooper’s sonnets the first to be written with a Chartist commemorative function in mind. Iota’s ‘Sonnets devoted to Chartism’ commemorated the events of the Newport rising of 1839.¹³⁷

Written in the mid 1840s, Cooper’s ‘Sonnets’ differ from his earlier poems in that they do not open up performative spaces for the exploration of one’s role among a collective through the hymn and song. Indeed a Chartist hymn would have been highly inappropriate for an atheist like Davenport. Instead Cooper foregrounds his personal relationship with the literary culture that hailed him as a writer; an address

the right to “legislate for all,” and a poor rhymers offering to select from the contributions of his brother rhymers pieces proper to form a volume.’ *Northern Star*, January 24, 1846, p.3.

¹³⁴ See *Northern Star*, January 3, 1846, p.3; January 17, 1846, p.3; January 24, 1846, p.3.

¹³⁵ See Thomas Cooper, to William Jones, June 30, 1845, William Jones Papers, DE2964/20, note 23.

¹³⁶ See for example, John Milton’s sonnet, ‘To the Lord General Cromwell,’ M.H. Abrams, (ed.) *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, sixth edition, vol. I, London: Norton, 1993, p. 1472.

¹³⁷ See Kovalev, Y. *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, pp.70-71.

that Cooper had also answered while in prison in his epic *Purgatory of Suicides*. Cooper's 'Sonnets' equate physical labour with the arduous struggle to attain the intellectual skills that made Davenport and himself contemporary poets who yet shared roots in a radical literary history.¹³⁸

The opening sonnet ennobles the fortitude with which Davenport faced death, confirming him as a long serving and determined radical. This last stern test, the way in which he faced his own death, cemented his radical credentials. He died with 'A conscience pure', untroubled by religious doubt, secure in his atheism. The manner of his death was his 'crowning victory.' On men such as Davenport, 'the best encomiums should await'; the best formal expressions of praise are worthy of them. The decorousness of Cooper's epitaph is in keeping with the great show made of Davenport's final hours and funeral, assisted by 'Some kind friends min' string to his last few needs'.¹³⁹ Cooper's sonnets memorialise Davenport, who was buried in an unmarked common grave, with a literary headstone that his atheistic funeral could not give him.¹⁴⁰ In so doing Cooper considers the practice both men shared; the act of writing poetry but also his own fitness for that task. Davenport, the poem intimates, had faced his last moments with courage, was unflinching in his radical sympathy, to the point that it seemed his strength and fortitude before his death, his 'fine finish', exceeded all Davenport's prior exertions as a radical. Davenport produced his own lasting monument in that last act of strength:

What he has thought, and taught of, heretofore,
Was now his turn to practice—to commend
By's own example. "See! If you'll attend."¹⁴¹

Cooper's 'Sonnets' pun throughout on the relationship between labour, the writing of poetry and their respective yield. The 'fine finish' describes not only Davenport's

¹³⁸ Anne Janowitz notes that Davenport had little if any support as either writer or student. Cooper and Davenport are thus uniquely matched as self-educated Chartist poets. See Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 117.

¹³⁹ 'An atheist's burial, then, was an occasion for a show of strength and an ostentatious display of solidarity.' Malcolm Chase, (ed.) *The Life and Literary Pursuits of Allen Davenport with a Further Selection of the Author's Work*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994, p. 46.

¹⁴⁰ 'Davenport was buried in the unconsecrated section of Kensal Green Cemetery'. Malcolm Chase, (ed.) *The Life and Literary Pursuits of Allen Davenport*, p. 45.

¹⁴¹ Thomas Cooper, 'Sonnets on the Death of Allen Davenport,' Kovalev, Y. *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 88.

death, but also his skills as a shoemaker and as a poet, producing well-crafted poems. In Cooper's 'Sonnets' however, the product of intellectual and literary labour has shifted from the communal rhythms and measures that structure the hymn and the ballad. The effect is twofold: the decorousness cements the two poets as celebrated literary figures, creating a sense of intimacy between them. The sonnets also articulate a movement away from the inter-subjectivity constructed through collective singing to the interpersonal function of the sonnet form, thus putting distance between these celebrated poets and their audiences, highlighting both Davenport's death and their shared status as leading poets. The sonnets address an individual, rather than a collective, directly addressing the reader, by using the direct question 'And like a MAN has Davenport not died?' In the declarative two lines commencing the second sonnet, the narrator answers his own question: 'Yes, he of whom I speak, my humble friend, / A poet, too, philosopher and more'.¹⁴² The shift from the possessive pronouns of his earlier Chartist hymns and songs ('Our frames,' 'Our hearts') to the 'I' that speaks directly to the audience in his 'Sonnets' emphasises this new intimacy between the reader and narrator, but also makes the 'Sonnets' seem self-addressed.

Though Cooper memorialises the literary and political life of Davenport, so he seems to anticipate his own memorial, imagining the commemoration of his own poetic legacy. Davenport's strength and fortitude is rewarded with 'Glory', but the religious connotations of this word might seem inappropriate to an atheistic radical like Davenport. As much as the word in more secular contexts refers to the honour and fame attained by him as a poet and radical, it also communicates a state of heavenly bliss yet to be awarded or attained by humankind on earth; in other words, an as yet uncompleted radical programme. The meaning of 'Glory' also has very public associations. It indicates the shared wealth and splendour of Davenport's literary legacy as a poet bestowed upon present and future radical generations, the true value of which is yet to be recognised. The focus on Davenport's death only serves to underline the loss of a revered radical with his political goal yet unfulfilled. He thus acts as an exemplary model of political conduct to Chartist audiences. The emphasis on 'Glory' also represents the civic celebrations of the fortitude and worthiness that Davenport demonstrated in his final hours, rejecting notions of an afterlife. As

¹⁴² Thomas Cooper, 'Sonnets,' p. 88.

Malcolm Chase notes, for freethinkers like Davenport, ‘the working class concern to die and be buried with dignity’ was associated with the wish ‘to prove in this ultimate situation one’s adherence to the cause of free thought.’¹⁴³ The fearless acceptance of death, according to Cooper’s poem, was a ‘crowning victory’.

Davenport’s dignified demonstration of his own atheistic creed in the way he faced death was a model of individual conscience and political conduct, an example that Cooper felt brought Davenport ‘Glory’: ‘What he had thought, and taught of, heretofore, / Was now his turn to practice—to commend / By’s own example.’¹⁴⁴ Consequently, Cooper’s ‘Sonnets’ indicate a fundamental tension. On one hand, Cooper represents his personal understanding of secular-leaning Christian literary glory. On the other are the more public demands of Davenport’s atheistic, freethinking following. Cooper’s ‘Sonnets’ articulate both these strands. The multiple meanings of ‘Glory’ and its attachments to both specifically religious and secular contexts seek to bridge the tension between Cooper’s personal literary practices as the author of the ‘Sonnets,’ alive to his personal connections with his literary influences, and the freethinking audiences that received these poems.

Cooper’s shorter Chartist hymns, songs and poems initially represent Chartist aspirations using Christian narratives such as covenanting to indicate the election of the individual into a political body. They seek to consolidate Chartism and its vision of a shared social and political identity articulated through powerful Christian discourses in the pursuit of state-reformation.¹⁴⁵ With the cementing of his local political leadership, his growing national influence as a Chartist leader and his increasingly secular outlook, Cooper’s poems began to meditate on the cultural election of the poet. They also imagine the interrelationship between individual and collective cultural identities between poet and audience, and historicise those collective and individual identities, often combining religious with more secular frameworks in order to do so. Cooper’s final Chartist poems, ‘Sonnets on the Death of Allen Davenport’ subsequently find themselves riven between Christian influenced

¹⁴³ Malcolm Chase, (ed.) *The Life and Literary Pursuits of Allen Davenport*, p. 46.

¹⁴⁴ Thomas Cooper, ‘Sonnets,’ pp. 87-88.

¹⁴⁵ An awareness of both ‘law and religion’ provided a fundamental container into which a people could invest a ‘national consciousness’ constructed from ‘libertarian constitutionalism and providentialism.’ J.C.D. Clark, ‘Protestantism, Nationalism and National Identity, 1660-1832,’ *The*

representation of the election of the poet and the broader depiction of literary and cultural stature in more secular terms.

Chapter 2

“The sacred function of the tuneful bard” in Thomas Cooper’s *The Purgatory of Suicides*

The quotation that forms the title of this chapter is from Book II of Thomas Cooper’s epic poem, *The Purgatory of Suicides*. At this particular point, Cooper is contemplating the ‘sacred’ literary purpose that had been revealed to him while a political prisoner in Stafford Gaol from 1843 to 1845.¹ The use of the word ‘sacred’ emphasises the sense of mission he felt to produce an epic work in a demanding literary form. Not unlike his later description of the ‘Glory’ of Allen Davenport’s literary legacy as discussed in chapter 1, Cooper’s use of the word ‘sacred’ exceeds its narrowly religious application.² He also used it to represent his exclusive dedication to his literary influences and wrote as a Parnassian poet with, as Brian Maidment notes, ‘high cultural aspirations’.³ By describing himself as a ‘tuneful bard’ in his epic, Cooper not only articulated his personal sense of literary duty, but also associated himself with what Maidment terms the ‘high aspirations of the bardic tradition’.⁴ Cooper’s epic traces his undertaking of an intellectual labour.

Cooper was answering his personal election as a poet while a prisoner, but he also wrote and addressed his epic to audiences with a more collective and pedagogical purpose in mind. In writing his epic poem, Cooper expressed what Jurgen Habermas terms an ‘audience oriented subjectivity’ that facilitated the impulse to publicise his personal sense of election as a poet by virtue of his experiences as an autodidact.⁵ The literary influences discussed in this chapter energise two facets in Cooper’s epic: the first is his sense of personal affirmation, in which writing acts as a form of self-construction through carrying out an intellectual labour. This effort establishes his personal dedication to the tasks his literary influences elect him to carry out, thus

¹ See Thomas Cooper *The Purgatory of Suicides, A Prison Rhyme* (second edition), London: J. Watson, 1847, book II, stanza II.

² See my discussion of Cooper’s ‘Sonnets on the Death of Allen Davenport’ in chapter 1.

³ Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, Fyfield edition: Manchester: Carcanet, 1992, p. 99.

⁴ B.E. Maidment, ‘Class and Cultural Production in the Industrial City: Poetry in Victorian Manchester,’ in, A.J. Kidd & K.W. Roberts (ed.) *City; Class and Culture Studies of Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985, p.151.

⁵ See Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, (trans. Thomas Burger & Frederick Lawrence), Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989, p.28.

producing the second facet: the construction of a model of political conduct for his audiences. I specifically look at Cooper's references to Sir Thomas More, John Milton, William Wordsworth, Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Through his relationship with these figures, he understands himself as an heir to a literary genealogy. Cooper demonstrates his ability to refashion those influences into public displays of personal learning and erudition, making the private realm a public phenomenon. Through such influences, Cooper recognised his election as a 'bard'. All were sources of political as well as literary inspiration. Sir Thomas More is an exception in that direct references to his literary output do not appear in Cooper's epic, but More's poetry makes a small but I think significant appearance in his prison notebook.⁶

As the title of this chapter indicates, Cooper clearly understood that the 'function' of the 'bard' was to be 'tuneful', to make use of their literary talent. This phrase might seem to lack political force,⁷ privileging middle-class literary expectations. It does however imply a particular understanding of the status of the poet as a unique recipient of a free and bounteous gift, and so charged with the duty to put such skills to use: to be 'tuneful'. In Cooper's situation, his election as a poet confirmed and supported his political activities through another possible meaning of the word 'sacred.' It can also suggest the embodiment of laws and principles of a particular faith⁸ that by extension are inseparable from one's way of life as a member of a common collective, emphasising the relationship between religion and politics. *The Purgatory of Suicides* represents the poet's unique 'sacred' status and his responsibility as one among many other Chartists. It explores the public and private facets of this 'function' and their interrelationship with the wider literary and political traditions that Cooper felt elected to serve, and represented himself as doing so through the epic.

⁶ Cooper also later warmly reviewed More's prose work *Utopia*, in *The Plain Speaker*. See pp.80-81 of this chapter.

⁷ Brian Maidment makes just this observation of John Bolton Rogerson's use of the word. See B.E. Maidment, 'Class and Cultural Production in the Industrial City', p.148.

⁸ *OED*

Cooper's epic⁹ comprises a series of debates that take place between important poets, thinkers and leaders from antiquity and modern European history, all of whom had chosen to end their own lives. Cooper's spirit escapes his cell while his body sleeps at night in his prison cell. He acts as a witness to these debates and is charged with the task of recording and presenting these debates to his audience through his epic poetry. The democratic spirits argue for cultural and political change as a way out of purgatory, ending the cycle of violence done to the working classes by, as Cooper notes in his preface, 'the government that wrongs them'.¹⁰ The feudal spirits, satisfied with the semblance of power granted to them in purgatory, see no reason for relinquishing their places in the political hierarchy. By force of reason and debate however, the democratic spirits create a sea change in the collective opinion of the ghosts that linger in purgatory. 'Earth's sorrow' is overcome, but Cooper awakes from his dream-state at the end of the poem, to wonder in reality 'when would come / The day that goodness shall the earth renew.' (X, CXXVI, p.296).

In this chapter I analyse the importance of the narrative of Christian election to Cooper's journalistic, oratorical and poetic responses to the 'stand for the Charter' of 1842. I then describe how his martyrdom as a Chartist prisoner motivated him to write his epic poem. I then analyse the two significant aspects of the poet's 'function' bound up in Cooper's use of the word 'sacred'. First, how Cooper's relationship with his literary influences elected him to undertake the intellectual labour of writing an epic poem. Second, how the intellectual labour that the epic form demanded of him produced a model of political conduct for his Chartist audiences to take up. Using this model, the progressive understanding of the Chartists could overthrow oppression, its myths and ideologies. Though secular in its outlook, Cooper's epic continued to rely on the narrative of Christian election to enact his personal sense of intellectual inquiry.

Political ideas and practices are often ascribed a religious dimension through a variety of media forms. The commemorative engraving of the Peterloo massacre that appeared on the front page of the *Northern Star* depicted a banner advocating

⁹ The edition used in this chapter is Cooper's second edition, revised with expanded notes. Cooper called it his 'people's edition,' and was published in 1847. See Preface to Thomas Cooper, *The Purgatory of Suicides, A Prison Rhyme. In Ten Books*, London: J. Watson, 1847.

‘Universal, Civil & Religious Liberty.’¹¹ Moreover, as Paul Pickering notes, rank and file Chartists used overtly religious rhetoric in their own banners.¹² Chartist leaders could also subtly rework the Abrahamic covenant as a political device. Cooper’s prose account of a speech he gave during the ‘stand for the Charter’ in August 1842 emphasises his exclusive dedication to Chartism. His account in the *Northern Star* stresses his personal sense of the weight of expectation placed upon him, which it was his political duty to act in accordance with. Cooper describes how in Wednesbury he addressed an ‘immense gathering of labour’s sons; a vast assemblage of human eyes all raised in expectant intelligence’.¹³ The word ‘expectant’ indicates how for Cooper, the crowd anticipated that a chain of events either currently underway or at least soon to begin would deliver political justice through the Charter. But the word also indicates how Cooper felt the crowd looked for leadership from an appropriate elected figure: a figure who would eventually try to lead as much through the intellectual labour of epic poetry, as through political action.

Cooper was not on his own in visualising his relation to Chartism and the Chartists thus. Ernest Jones would later note in *The Labourer* that ‘the people mould a poet, but a poet directs a people’. William James Linton’s ‘The Gathering of the People’ is among the more remarkable Chartist poems in which the narrator’s dutiful leadership (expressed in the poem through the use of imperatives) is inextricably linked to, even reliant on the underlying current of radical feeling.¹⁴ On this tide of feeling the narrator hopes a mass movement will be built. Cooper’s use of the first person, describing first hand the events he witnessed, the meetings he contributed to, further demonstrates the great sense of personal duty to Chartism that Chartist leaders often were at pains to represent to their audiences.¹⁵

¹⁰ Thomas Cooper, Preface to *Purgatory*, p. 7.

¹¹ See *Northern Star*, August 20, 1842, p.1.

¹² See Paul A. Pickering, ‘Appendix C: The Chartist Banners’, *Chartism and the Chartists in Manchester and Salford*, London: Macmillan, 1995, pp. 214-216.

¹³ *Northern Star*, August 20, 1842, p.4.

¹⁴ See Y. Kovalev (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*: Moscow, 1956, p.312, p.188; my discussion of Linton’s poem in Chapter 5; Michael Sanders, ‘Poetic Agency: Metonymy and Metaphor in Chartist Poetry 1838-1852,’ Volume 39, No. 2, *Victorian Poetry*, 2001, pp.117-119.

¹⁵ To cite a few examples from Cooper’s letter, ‘On Thursday began a series of excitements, such as I had hitherto been a stranger to...On Friday morning, the 12th, I walked on to Wolverhampton and addressed another meeting...In the afternoon, I got on by railway to Stafford. I found matters in a somewhat critical condition in this Tory-ridden borough...’ *Northern Star*, 20 August 182, p.4

Though Cooper has been described as a physical force Chartist, he had clearly been at pains to distance himself from this position in his epic poem and in his earlier journalism. In the *Midland Counties Illuminator* Cooper noted that as a ‘party’ Chartists never advocated any such idea. ‘Who does not know that the very first loud note of “physical force” raised in the Chartist ranks was a proof that there were Judases among them?’¹⁶ Physical force Chartism was clearly a tendency distinct from the use of force as part of a spontaneous action if the circumstances demanded it,¹⁷ a sentiment echoed in the preface to his epic poem.¹⁸ Cooper’s life as an autodidact, his own dedication to learning meant that the political strategy he wrote into his epic was based on educational programmes more than anything else. In *Purgatory*, the ‘crowd’ in the ‘degrading mire’ would ‘feel anew’ and attain ‘might’ by feeding ‘the mind with knowledge’ (I. CXLI. p.16). Political justice was to be attained through an intellectual revolution. Education would encourage the formation of judicious opinions among the working classes. In turn the working classes would express both verbally and in writing, the case for the extension of the franchise through which they could choose a political apparatus to match their political perspective, demonstrating the ‘outward and visible sign’ of ‘growing intelligence’ among the working classes.¹⁹

Cooper’s sense of martyrdom as a Chartist prisoner was also a key literary motivation, spurred on by the legitimacy that his dignified political stance gave him. Though not a physical force Chartist, following the ‘stand for the Charter’ of August 1842, Cooper was represented as ‘having urged the mob to acts of violence at Stafford’, and was arrested.²⁰ The *Leicestershire Mercury* reported that Cooper addressed a crowd that had gathered round his door at the moment of his arrest: ‘My lads,’ Cooper is reported to have said, ‘I am going to prison; they have come to fetch

¹⁶ *Midland Counties Illuminator*, Vol. I, no. 8, April 3rd 1841, p. 30.

¹⁷ In the early 1840s Cooper stressed that it was perfectly understandable that a class may be pushed into extreme measures by continual abuse by the state apparatus. ‘God help the poor fellow that provokes a blow from the shoulder of mutton fist of a Bilston collier!’ *Northern Star*, August 20, 1842, p.4.

¹⁸ Cooper describes his regret at the destruction of property during the crisis of August 1842, but if the wronged working classes were urged to follow ‘a legal and constitutional course...it surely is not the person that so excites them that ought to be held responsible for the violence they may commit under and enraged sense of wrong, but the Government that wrongs them.’ Thomas Cooper, Preface to *The Purgatory of Suicides*, p.7.

¹⁹ Thomas Cooper, *Cooper’s Journal, or Unfettered Thinker and Plain Speaker for Truth, Freedom and Progress* (1850), New York: Kelley, 1970, p.129.

²⁰ *Leicester Journal and Midland Counties General Advertiser*, vol. XCI, no. 4841, August 26, 1842

me, but it is in the cause of truth.’²¹ Embracing his political martyrdom, ‘the notorious Chartist Cooper’²² was twice tried, eventually convicted and sentenced to two years in Stafford Gaol.

Cooper initially made sense of his prison experience to himself as the work of providence. Not long after his first arrest in August 1842, Cooper wrote to his Leicester friend Freshney from Stafford Gaol. He was anxious to get bail so that he could prepare his own defence for the assizes:

If, however, that be denied to me, why, I will resign myself cheerfully and dutifully to the all-wise Providence of the great Father, assured that he will “do all things well”. On that Providence I have depended too long to fear that Mercy and goodness will now be withdrawn.²³

Cooper’s words may be read in two ways. Just so long as he holds true to his ideals, whatever may befall him would be a victory for Chartist principles and political justice. On the other hand, Cooper was not yet convicted, and might have felt optimistic about securing an acquittal for himself, since after all Christianity assures its followers of God’s mercy to the righteous. It was the duty of the individual to recognise the ‘Providence of the great Father’ in order to cement the covenant between God and themselves by living a just life. Thus gaining legitimacy as an elected subject meant actively seeking out the fate to which one was truly destined. The many cultural avenues, such as journalism, teaching and novel-writing that Cooper sought out, described in chapter 1, were all concerned with gaining influential positions from which he might address as a mass audience. For Cooper, that destiny now was to be recognised as an epic poet.

Cooper’s autobiography is littered with many other seemingly providential anecdotes that suggest his sense of calling through key events upon which his life seemed to turn. The opening sentence notes that individuals had to believe themselves properly

²¹ *The Leicestershire Mercury*, vol. VII, no. 321, August 27, 1842, p. 3.

²² *Leicester Journal*, vol. XCI, no. 4842, September 2, 1842.

²³ Thomas Cooper to Freshney, Conklin papers [transcript], Lincolnshire Archives: ref. 2baptist8; See also British Library, Add. Ms 56,238, Thomas Cooper letters of, with fragments of his *Purgatory of Suicides*, 1842-44.

qualified prior to undertaking the writing of their life history.²⁴ As noted in Chapter 1, Cooper recalled how close he came to death during illness as a young man.²⁵ At the outbreak of the plug-plot riots of August 1842, Cooper left the foment at Hanley behind and headed for the NCA conference in Manchester. At one point Cooper, unsure of his path, was forced to choose a particular road and ended up in Burslem: precisely the town he wanted to avoid. Cooper knew that the authorities were already present there. He was detained and brought before the Hanley magistrate lodged there. Though by ‘Providence’ Cooper was kept from taking the safe path he initially set out for, this accident also would have proved that he was nowhere near the scene of the Hanley riots had the witnesses arraigned against him not proved so unreliable. His detention at Burslem, Cooper wrote, saved him from false witnesses being procured at his trial and almost certain transportation.²⁶ Cooper also recalls an ‘awful sense of deliverance’ having survived a train crash in 1858. Cooper had been in a carriage in which none of the persons therein were injured. The crash killed three and injured many more.²⁷

Each of these incidents compelled Cooper to bear witness to, or testify to conditions that he could only understand as providential. It may be that these incidents benefit from some literary treatment, rendering them more exciting for the reader. Given that Cooper had become a religious apologist by the time he wrote his autobiography, the coding of such incidents in highly religious narratives might rightly be viewed with suspicion. But Cooper’s prison letters also demonstrate that he had understood his allotted time as a prisoner as part of a providential pattern that ordered the phenomena and events of the material world, providing him with a key religious narrative by which he could divine his elected task as a poet. Incarceration encouraged his prophetic sense that this was his allotted time to write his great work, to undertake serious intellectual labour:

I purpose constructing a fabric that shall place me out of the rank of triflers—a severe, serious poem that will receive all of the grand or sublime I can effect—but no joke, no foolery:

²⁴ ‘The world expects, and almost demands, that some men write their autobiography.’ Saville, John. (ed.) Thomas Cooper, *The Life of Thomas Cooper, Written by Himself*, Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1971, p.1.

²⁵ John Saville, (ed.), *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p.70.

²⁶ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p.203.

²⁷ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, pp. 375-378.

satire and irony it may admit of—but only of the gravest and most unrelenting kind.²⁸

Cooper's preface to his first edition of *The Purgatory of Suicides*, tells us that his epic poem could not have been written 'except for my imprisonment.' The conditions imposed upon him while serving a prison sentence for seditious conspiracy were formative experiences that shaped his growth as an epic poet:

...a line might never have been composed except for my imprisonment; and the political strife in which I had been engaged has certainly given a form and colour to my thoughts which they could not have worn had my conceptions been realised at an earlier time.²⁹

The 'political strife' as recorded in Cooper's preface provided an important spark. His prison experiences however, and his dealings with the prison authorities were also key catalysts. The gaol was bitterly cold, Cooper wrote in his autobiography: 'the wind assailed us in every quarter,' causing 'tooth-ache and neuralgia daily'. He strongly resisted the prison regime and endured harsh treatment when he sued (at times resorting to physical means) for better conditions. Doing so gained him little else than grudging respect and he exasperated his captors who kept him in isolation, without food and severely weakened. Cooper eventually managed to draw up a petition to parliament and when opportunity arose, presented it to the governor. He also got a letter smuggled out to the radical MP, T.S. Duncombe, warning him that he had petitioned parliament via the prison governor, and finally he got improved food for himself and his fellow Chartist prisoners. He was subsequently allowed to write letters to his wife and friends, and was given access to books and writing materials, allowing him to embark upon his literary projects.³⁰

Cooper's sense of providence as a poet was by no means unique. If we compare Cooper's understanding of his literary task with another writer in the epic tradition such as William Wordsworth, one striking similarity does appear despite the immense differences between their experiences. Wordsworth's sense of his own cultural

²⁸Thomas Cooper letters of, British Library Add. 56238 ff.3-4.

²⁹ Thomas Cooper, Preface to *Purgatory*, p. 3.

³⁰ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, pp 238-249.

authority allowed him to deliberate upon his sense of literary qualification in the preface to *The Excursion*:

...when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them.³¹

Wordsworth never had his civil liberty curtailed and had been able to retreat freely into nature to contemplate his qualification as a poet. There he undertook 'a review of his own mind,' to 'examine how far Nature and education' had qualified him for such employment. Yet despite the obvious differences between the experiences of Cooper and Wordsworth—one poet choosing retreat, the other unjustly detained as a political prisoner—both poets placed great emphasis on the revelation to them of their literary qualification. 'As subsidiary to his own preparations,' Wordsworth tells us that he 'undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them.'³²

The notion that poetic power resided wholly within the poet was not an uncommon idea at this time.³³ Cooper certainly held this view. 'Genius has rules of its own,' Cooper wrote to the Leicester Chartist poet William Jones: 'aspirations that the vulgar world cannot understand' paradoxically isolating the writer from the very subject they focus upon.³⁴ Joss Marsh notes that Sir Thomas Talfourd defended Edward Moxon's posthumous publication of Shelley's 'blasphemous' poetry in the early 1840s on two fronts. First, the need to read all a poet's works in order to understand "'the growth of [his] mind'" and second, 'the belief that "the value of literature reside[s] in the author".'³⁵ Cooper's incarceration moulded him as a poet, but he no less saw the

³¹ Wordsworth, William. Preface to 'The Excursion,' in *William Wordsworth: Poems, Volume II*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1977, p. 36.

³² William Wordsworth, Preface to 'The Excursion,' p. 36.

³³ Brian Maidment points out that the bard in Victorian culture 'was a reminder of the possibility of spontaneous talent'. See B.E. Maidment, 'Class and Cultural Production in the Industrial City,' p.152

³⁴ Thomas Cooper to William Jones, William Jones Papers, DE 2964/20, The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

³⁵ Joss Marsh, *Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture, and Literature in Nineteenth-Century England*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1998, p.96.

product of his sentence as a demonstration of his literary qualification, his 'sacred function,'³⁶ describing his epic in a later preface as a 'Mind-history'.³⁷

To date, critical assessment of Cooper's poetry has focused largely on the romantic ideals of the political project set out in *Purgatory* and its contribution to republican poetics. Where the importance of Christianity has been addressed, it has been done as part of the anti-clerical tradition that permeates romantic literature, rather than a strategy for coming to terms with the task Cooper felt called to fulfil. Previously, Bouthaina Shaaban has observed Cooper's literary relationship to Shelley, with occasional references to the anticlericalism of both.³⁸ Stephanie Kuduk situates Cooper's epic in a tradition of complex republican aesthetics.³⁹ Timothy J. Wandling assesses Cooper's place within a legacy of Byronic eloquence and, like Timothy Randall, argues that Cooper's role as a poet took him out of, as much as it cemented his place among the working classes.⁴⁰ Although Anne Janowitz treats Cooper as an important figure within a romantic lyric tradition that spans the nineteenth century, her study contains only scant references to Cooper's epic.⁴¹ Timothy Randall concludes that *Purgatory* espouses an ambitious Chartist cultural project that is, nevertheless, often too attuned to his personal cultural values to appeal to 'the people'.⁴² It is clear however, that Cooper does attempt to do justice to his sense of duty toward the collective Chartist audiences he addresses, as much as his personal cultural aspirations. For example, Cooper represents the life of Christ near the beginning of his epic as a model for his Chartist readers. He attacks the priesthood for failing to follow Christ's example even though they preach his message:

³⁶ Cooper describes his epic as a monument that 'despite its imperfections...will outlast the posthumous stoneblock erected to perpetuate the memory of the titled lawyer' who unjustly prosecuted Cooper for his part in the Strikes and agitation of August 1842. See Cooper, Thomas. Preface to, *The Purgatory*, p.7.

³⁷ Thomas Cooper, 'Address to the Reader', *The Poetical Works of Thomas Cooper*, second edition, London, Hodder & Stoughton 1886, p. vi.

³⁸ See Bouthaina Shaaban, 'Shelley's Influence on the Chartist Poets, with Particular Emphasis on Ernest Charles Jones and Thomas Cooper,' Ph.D., Warwick University, 1981, pp. 315-321.

³⁹ Stephanie Kuduk, 'Republican Aesthetics: Poetry and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Britain,' D.Phil., Stanford University, 1999, p.158.

⁴⁰ See Timothy John Wandling, 'Byron, Agency, and Transgressive Eloquence: The Fate of Readers in Nineteenth Century British Literature,' Stanford University DPhil, 1997, pp. 170-191; Timothy Randall, 'Towards a Cultural Democracy,' Sussex University, DPhil, 1994, p.128.

⁴¹ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 159-194.

⁴² Timothy Randall, 'Towards a Cultural Democracy,' p.138.

What say ye,—that the priests proclaim content?
 So taught their Master, who the hungry fed
 As well as taught, who wept with men, and bent,
 In gentleness and love, o'er bier and bed
 Where wretchedness was found, until it fled?
 Rebuked he not the false ones, till his zeal
 Drew down their hellish rage upon his head?
 And who, that yearns for world-spread human weal,
 Doth not, ere long, the weight of priestly vengeance feel? (I. IV., p.12)

Cooper's anticlerical opinion indicated that the labouring classes would no longer conform to what Owen Chadwick terms 'the accepted and inherited axioms of society.'⁴³

There was clearly a general Christian dimension to Chartist notions of political liberty that Cooper, along with other Chartist leaders, drew upon. For example in Book VI of Cooper's epic, Eleazar urges the ghosts he addresses to abandon their love of the trappings of power: 'cleave no longer to these grandeurs vague' (VI. XCVIII, p.187). Even though the spirits might view the current power of the monarchy on earth as a precedent that justifies to them their thrones in the spirit world, Eleazar urges them to 'resist not His high Puissance / Who universal destiny controls, / And to His chosen ones, the fatal scroll unfolds,—' (VI. XCIX, p.187). Spirits such as Eleazar were asking themselves and each other just who might be among God's final elect. This spirit of individual and collective inquiry, together with the constant debate that dominates *Purgatory*, indicates the importance of intellectual labour to the project and to the attainment of Chartism's political objectives.

In Book IV, for example, the economic and cultural explorations of ways that a new world might work, as undertaken by the progressive spirits, have yet to overtake the power and force of religious mythologies such as Fate and Necessity. The spirit of Sappho concludes that Fate and Necessity are sterile arguments. Humankind's loathing of pain and suffering means that it will by its own endeavours conquer 'Pain, Deformity, Decay'. 'Nature' says Sappho, 'hath made them loathsome...Therefore, they shall not always be' and will end. (IV. XLIX. p. 129) Why should people doubt 'the cheering evidence of their own sympathies' and instead 'embrace clouds of dull

dubiety?’ (IV. XLIX, p. 129). Sappho believes in a ‘Faith more ennobling to interpret nature’s laws’ (IV. XLVIII, p. 129).

Although Cooper’s epic is clearly anticlerical, spirits such as that of the poet Sappho recycle notions of Christian faith to represent personal perseverance. Some of the spirits that populate Cooper’s epic however, think more about recompensing their own personal sense of loss and comforting themselves with the trappings of the power still granted to them in purgatory. They seem unable to let go of their desire to consume, even though their continued allegiance to feudal power structures causes great pain to those souls. One such spirit, Sardanapalus, notes that even though they are doomed to wander in pain through purgatory, the trappings of power are never taken away from them, though they do experience bouts of inexplicable pain: ‘...they fade / Not yet these regal splendours! Disarrayed / We are, by turns; to periodic pain / On joyless wanderings sent...yet in due season, thus restored, we reign!’ (I. LXIV. p. 27).

Their pain is self-inflicted and there seems no apparent end to the cycle, so long as the spirits are willing to submit themselves to the illusions of privilege. To such spirits, the feudal order is a natural system. They justify it by pointing out that they are still rewarded with the semblance of power, even after death. They refuse to acknowledge that they bring greater punishments upon themselves by succumbing to those trappings: ‘Kings rule by Nature’s law! I at thy threat of dissolution laugh! ’Tis like thyself—a cheat!’ (I. LXX, p. 28). Moreover they often blame each other for the social and political problems they may have sought escape from through suicide. The ghost of Nero defends feudal power and states that the generations of Romans that came after him lacked the courage to defend the Roman Empire. ‘Rome’s life with glory’ would have ‘been perdurably wreathed’ except for a lack of great leadership. Maximian then reminds Nero that he had been a pretty bad leader himself and a traitor to ‘Rome’s glory.’ (I. CXI-CXII. pp. 38-39). The recriminations however, such as those between Nero and Maximian, always show their hypocrisy and complicity in those problems.

⁴³ Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge:

Other more radical spirits contemplate what their continued existence in purgatory might mean. They look for a means to understand their situation, thereby seeking an escape from purgatory and attaining liberty. This often takes the form of theological reasoning. After the exordium of Book V in *Purgatory*, Cooper's soul again visits the spiritual realm. During this visit, Cooper witnessed the Girondists of the French revolution debating how monarchical power had once again triumphed over France and vanquished Liberty. These spirits debate atheism and belief, whether or not to accept that the 'Architect' of the universe is 'All-wise' (V. XLIV, p. 148), or whether to refuse to bow to God's 'homicidal glory' (V. LXVII, p. 153). They argue with some ferocity, but eventually decide to 'cease these pois'nous gibes' (V. LXXIX, p. 156). Such spirits as Buzot resolve to 'maintain / The calm, firm, steady toil to emancipate / Mind from its frailties' (V. LXXXII, p. 157). Buzot had been a Girondist leader during the French Revolution and committed suicide after Robespierre had outlawed his political party. Echoing Cooper's earlier hymns, such spirits seek answers through their own, increasingly secular inquiries.⁴⁴ They mull over the decisions they made on earth, question themselves and other spirits, and in so doing, begin to work toward the possibility of liberty. Humankind's duty after all, was to continue the work of the creation through labour.⁴⁵ For the egalitarian spirits, this took the form of intellectual labour. Rather than express complete unbelief, they represent their intellectual struggle toward political salvation through the election narrative. In seeking out their true course of political action through a question and answer process, they also come to understand the operations and desires of their own inquiring minds. In so doing, they enacted a change in their own intellectual and political identity. Their debates and personal intellectual struggles anticipate the future egalitarianism of the mortal world. Buzot for example opines, 'How long shall poor Humanity lie waste / On earth!' (V. XXXII, p.145).

Many more spirits were finding their way into purgatory. Every new additional suicide joining the purgatorial host, fleeing the mortal world, indicated to Buzot that 'each declare / Our ancient home enslaved. Who would have mirth / In afterlife while

Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 23.

⁴⁴'They strive to keep forever seal'd / The freeborn powers of mind!' See my discussion of Cooper's 'Chartist Hymns. I.—C.M.,' Chapter 1.

Earth's poor children wear / The fetters of despot, and despair / To break them?' (V. XXXII-XXXIII. p. 145). There was however, no satisfaction possible in fleeing from the problems of the mortal world, and purgatory prompted these spirits into debate through a process of self-questioning and deduction, centred largely on questions of faith: '...did we err / Deeming the Palestinian story fraud...?' (V. XXXV. p. 145). Other Girondist spirits such as Condorcet are sceptical and question not so much the existence of God, but the 'game of priests'. (V. XLVI. p. 148). In other words, Cooper's epic sees the commencement of his exploration of the evidences for the life of Christ later undertaken in *Cooper's Journal* of 1850.⁴⁶

Groups of purgatorial spirits, such as the Girondists, sought to break the cycle that always seems to overpower the drive for social and political change. They sought to demystify the false sense of power that enlivened other self-interested suicides. These questioning spirits recognise the need to synchronise the force of their ideas beginning to circulate in purgatory with the push for reform on earth.⁴⁷ In Book X of *Purgatory* for example, Cooper symbolically synchronises the march of the intellect with the material energy of the working classes to produce a new social order. Towards the end of his epic Cooper notes that 'The March of Thought was onward from of old', and that finally because of the irrepressible march of the intellect, the power of the mind had become universal and 'now reigns by might immutable.' (X. CX. p.292). This was achieved by the progressive spirits embarking upon a series of long discussions, undertaking intellectual labour, in order to discover how their choices could secure and liberate both the spirit world and mortal society. Along the way they deliberate on their earlier misguided attempts to enlighten humankind, and on how their impatience on earth meant the failure of such endeavours. One of their chief speakers Condorcet concludes that 'wisdom' lies in calmly viewing past errors to avoid future faults (V. LXXXI, p.157). At his behest, they stop arguing amongst themselves, leave off their 'Debate amid these ruins' and seek out the rest of the

⁴⁵ See Eileen Yeo, 'Chartist religious belief and the theology of liberation,' J. Obelkevich, L. Roper & R. Samuel, (eds.) *Disciplines of Faith Studies in Religion Politics and Patriarchy*, London: Routledge, 1987, pp.411-412.

⁴⁶ *Cooper's Journal, or Unfettered Thinker and Plain Speaker for Truth, Freedom and Progress* (1850), New York: Kelley, 1970, passim.

⁴⁷ Bouthaina Shaaban notes that Cooper borrowed from Shelley when he described 'Universal Knowledge' as a means to an egalitarian society in *The Reasoner* in 1847. Both poets wrote in accordance with Christ's teachings. See Bouthaina Shaaban, 'Shelley's Influence on the Chartist Poets,' p. 318.

'polemic throng' trapped in purgatory (V. LXXXIII, p.157). In so doing, they rehearse Cooper's later appeal in his second letter 'To the Young Men of the Working Classes.' Following the failure of the Queen's speech of 1850 to offer any real hope of the extension of the franchise, Cooper called on 'young men' to gather together to form 'companies' of petitioners, small collectives that would 'infuse spirit' into the 'undertaking' of each Chartist. In turn such collectives would 'convince the listless, or the opposers, that their coldness or aversion would speedily become disgraceful to them.'⁴⁸ Even the spirits of the French Revolution in Cooper's epic eventually put off their wild arguments and recognise sustained intellectual labour as the means to political liberty.

Cooper's epic meditates on what he feels is humankind's true purpose, often it seems with his own filiation to literary culture in mind. In Book VI, some of the spirits debate 'nature's impulse to do good', how nature endows them with power, and whether they used that power responsibly or not (VI. CVII, p.189). The ghosts were stung into thought by witnessing the apparent annihilation/transformation of the unrepentant ghost of Achitophel. Having earlier asserted that 'Monarchs are gods' (VI. XCIV, p.186), Achitophel was transformed into/replaced by 'a hybrid monster undefined / In loathesome hideousness', he became 'a sight more strange' than any 'bard, with frightfull'st frenzies smit, could misarrange!' (VI. CIV, p.189). No poet, not even Cooper the eyewitness could find words to express the horror of this transformation. The other spirits that also witnessed this transformation were 'smitten with remorseful torturings' and began again to debate their actions and decisions (VI. CV, p.189). Though nature moulds us, Mithridates the 'Pontic Chief' concludes, it is down to the individual to make the best use of those gifts that nature bestows on all its subjects. The lesson, according to Mithridates was clear: 'Let him who may / Contend 'gainst Nature's impulses that sway / The soul to tender and fraternal thoughts' (VI. CVII.). Let those who desire it resist the 'natural' impulses associated with 'tender and fraternal thoughts', but let the fate of Achitophel's spirit be a warning. The lesson Cooper's spirit draws is that there clearly is a choice to be made about what to do with such privileges, how best to use the free-will humans are granted. The ghosts that continue to make weak arguments to justify keeping those

⁴⁸ Thomas Cooper, 'To the Young Men of the Working Classes. Letter 2,' *Cooper's Journal*, (1850), New York: Kelley, 1970, p.82.

privileges for themselves are doomed. Though nature empowers certain people, gives 'genius of the bard to one,' and 'prerogatives of leadership' (VI. CVIII) to another, Mithridates also emphasises how nature also makes humankind all alike:

I dwell not to repeat what hath been told—
 How nature thus elects, yet doth impress,
 Each human essence with so like a mould,
 That all are brothers in their helplessness—
 Children of Fate—driving to refugeless
 Despair their kind, or being, themselves, forth driven.
 Maugre these thoughts, if mankind may possess
 General beatitude when thrones are riven
 From their foundations—let the judgement now be given!
(VI. CIX, p.190)

In these lines, nature both 'elects' and 'impresses' in the same 'mould' the 'human essence' implying both special selection and individuality as well as a set of shared characteristics common to all 'brothers'.

Cooper's references in *Purgatory* to Milton and other members of older libertarian generations suggests that he was seeking to form links with a much longer history of the creative mind. This history came to the attention of resolute autodidacts like Cooper through their determined engagement with learning and with romantic literature.⁴⁹ Yet romantic thought does make use of secularised versions of important religious narratives. As Owen Chadwick notes, there was a close relationship between romanticism and religion: 'the romantic age' had 'sought its heavenly city in the mysterious dim land where all men should be free'.⁵⁰ Chadwick's observation demonstrates how the narrative of Christian election, in its public realm, could promise redemption from slavery and offer citizenship within a yet-to-be-attained community. In its private sphere however, the narrative of Christian election also enabled Cooper to make sense of the personal relationships he entered into with his literary influences, thus validating his own status as a poet to his audiences.

As Timothy Randall notes, one particular aspect of this dualistic narrative is Cooper's role as a 'witness'. He perceptively observes that Cooper's task as a poet had been

⁴⁹ See Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, Reading: Pelican, 1965, pp.19-56.

⁵⁰ Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*, p. 28.

'revealed to him'.⁵¹ In other words, Cooper acted as a witness to a series of revelations that he was duty-bound to chronicle in his epic poem, thus enacting through his epic the transformation of private experiences into public material. There are moments, for example, when Cooper's personal understanding of his role as a prison poet is brought to the reader's attention. In Book VII when Cooper's spirit again travels to purgatory while his body sleeps, Cooper is accompanied by a band of mad, hysterical 'unbelievers' that dance to a funeral hymn (VII. XXIX, p. 210). Once in purgatory however, they realise their folly, and sense that their punishment is immortality in purgatory, the remnants of past mortal achievements, the gaudy objects they placed so much importance on, are all marred or damaged. Objects valued in the mortal world are useless in a realm, which, perversely, has no need for notions of exchange value to preserve a particular quality of life. Cooper wanted to speak with some of these spirits, but as a guest, rather than a resident in purgatory, he could not do so. All he could do was observe. The spirits were 'too weak, / In this low realm, to beam forth thought, or scan / The thoughts of others if they did not speak' (VII. XXXVII, p. 212). In other words, the intellectual labour, debate and discussion that Cooper personally undertook and encouraged others to embark on, was not possible here.

Cooper's point is that his personal purgatory in his prison cell was of course closely monitored. Cooper's interaction with other people and the outside world was severely limited. His encounters with them are a dark parody of a culture built on alienated labour. The spirits in *Purgatory*, in despair at their incarceration, find themselves trapped, newly imprisoned in a realm free of the need to labour for mortal needs, to which they have sacrificed their souls, but have to undertake an intellectual labour if they are to free themselves from purgatory. Cooper's interaction with other people while a prisoner was also severely limited. His epic records scarce, bitter sweet experiences such as addressing a 'sweet Robin' at the beginning of Book IV, then seeing and hearing the prison bolts being shut behind him: 'Once more resounds the hateful clank of bars' (IV. XIX); witnessing a hanging through the prison grate with a priest seeing 'the "Divine Law" carried out' (VI. V); hearing a 'Woman's voice' bidding farewell to her felon husband (IX. I.) In Book VII, Cooper begins to hanker

⁵¹ Timothy Randall, 'Towards a Cultural Democracy,' p. 130.

for his old mortal senses. Encountering this 'groupe / Of ghosts' Cooper 'Desire[d] to know them; but, the soul, though freed / From clay, on this dull shore seemed outward lore to need' (VII. XXXV, p.211). The isolation became unbearable, making Cooper long for his 'old mortal sense'. (VII. XXXVI, p. 212). His inability to communicate with certain spirits in purgatory may be read as a description of the effect of isolation in prison and his separation from the audiences he was accustomed to addressing:

Here spirit shared no powers intuitive:
 So gross it grew; that for old mortal sense
 The mind longed, painfully, when it would give
 Unto its neighbour mind some evidence
 That it still held its being: will, vehemence,
 Fire, energy, the soul no longer felt:
 Cold, carking consciousness of indigence
 Of thought—from waste with which it had misdealt
 Its opulence on earth—within the spirit dwelt. (VII. XXXVI, p. 212)

A similar sense of isolation would later prompt Ernest Jones to look for new metaphors by which he might continue to communicate with his literary influences, as well as address his Chartist audiences while physically isolated from both these sources of poetic inspiration as a Chartist prisoner.⁵² The need to connect with other minds in the above stanza suggests that the interaction between Chartist poets and their influences engendered the duty to pass on that knowledge to the rank and file, guiding them towards their own intellectual growth.

Yet generally the election narrative connects Cooper with his influences, providing the means by which he feels 'elected' as fit to travel into the realm of purgatory. In Book II, Cooper recalls the relationship he had entered into with Milton while young: that in his youth 'my young heart a covenant made / To take thee [Milton] for its guide in patriot deed'. (II. XI p. 57) Indeed so strong is the connection Cooper felt with his literary hero at this point that Milton becomes a spiritual embodiment that accompanies Cooper in his cell, and travels with Cooper's spirit into 'that drear and gloomy land' of purgatory (Book II, stanza XXI, p. 60). While Cooper's mortal body slept, his and Milton's spirits were 'Upborne,' carried away, transported by 'supernatural might'. (II. XX, p. 60). Both poets are elected by powers beyond their

control and realise that the cause of their election as poets resides not entirely in themselves, but in the action of supernatural forces. Both recognise that they are called upon to fulfil a particular duty as a form of thanksgiving for that selection as a privileged subject. They passed through a 'caverned aisle / Of wondrous masonry, and then are 'Upborne again' to a mountainside where they encounter two famous suicides, identified by Milton as the Sicilian philosopher and poet Empedocles and Cleombrutus. (II. XII-XXIV, pp. 60-61)

Milton's task as an established poet was to guide Cooper. Milton the 'minstrel guide', having identified the two spirits that he and Cooper encounter then leaves purgatory. Cooper however remains behind, feeling he 'was not free' to follow (II. XXV. p. 61). Cooper's purpose finally dawned upon him when the two suicides began to conduct a philosophical discussion without recourse to 'mortal sound' but were still perfectly understandable to him. Cooper's earthly senses were replaced by a 'birth of intellection' that made him party to their inaudible discussion (II. XXVI, p.61). This significant change in Cooper's subjectivity impressed upon him his literary responsibility as epic poet and chronicler. His mission was to personally witness and publicly record such dialogues in his poetry, legitimised by the 'birth of intellection' that he experienced while temporarily visiting purgatory. This notion of mental growth in purgatory is itself an indication of the providential opportunity to write that incarceration granted Cooper.

As noted in the Introduction, the depiction of the poet as a prophetic figure, recognising and fulfilling their elected task to which as poets they felt appointed, is not an uncommon motif in romantic poetry and its critical reception.⁵³ Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Alastor, or Spirit of Solitude' for example, represents the poet as one of 'the inhabitants of a world to which the familiar world is chaos'.⁵⁴ The 'wild' figure of the poet is disconnected from the realm of ordinary human existence, and is instead attuned to nature, to the 'motion of the leaves'. Focused thus, the poet is able to recognise 'a Spirit' that '[h]eld commune with him, as if he and it / Were all that

⁵² See chapter 4 *passim* for my discussion of Jones's prison poems.

⁵³ See Introduction pp.13-14.

⁵⁴ M.H. Abrams cites *Shelley's Literary and Philosophical Criticism* in M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953, p.282

was.⁵⁵ In his epic poem, Cooper clearly represented the myth of the solitary genius that, as Joss Marsh notes, was ingrained in romantic literary ideology.⁵⁶ In an apostrophe to his great influences in Book II, Cooper noted how Shelley and Byron wrote in a ‘rapt prophetic trance’ but were clearly seen as separate from the rest of society at the same time (II. VII, p.56). These two poets, according to Cooper, had been uncompromising in their anticlericalism and saw poetry as the proper medium for ‘Freedom’s fearless shout’. (II. VII, p.56). Rather like Shelley’s ‘Alastor,’ *Purgatory* consciously engages with the issue of the qualification of the poet. Poets are personally elected to write about liberty and freedom and do not write at the behest of a servile world: ‘when hath joined the servile world to say / Truth’s song was fitly chosen, fitly timed?’ (II. III, p.55). Cooper’s understanding of ‘genius’ is derived from the subsequent romantic construction of poets who at times had been at odds with their society, had not always sought social and critical approbation, but had posthumously gained recognition for their literary merit. Both Byron and Shelley had: ‘By impulse incontrollable...hymned / Soul-worship of the Beautiful,—the Free,’ and were ‘By freeborn strains, aroused to spurn at Tyranny!’ (II. III, p.55).

Cooper’s epic is also remarkable for the more eclectic literary knowledge it demonstrates. Just such an example is the literature and exemplary life of Sir Thomas More. Cooper clearly knew More’s prose work, but he was also familiar with his poetry. While a prisoner Cooper was initially refused all contact with his wife, even though she had fallen ill.⁵⁷ In his prison notebook, he wrote out a short passage of poetry from Sir Thomas More’s ‘The Twelve Propertees or Condicyons of a Lover,’ a poem that expresses the pain of separation from a loved one. More is much less famous as a Tudor poet than he is as the author of *Utopia*, making the appearance of his poetry in Cooper’s prison notebook seem rather arcane.⁵⁸ More had written the poem that Cooper quoted from while he spent four years with the Carthusian monks

⁵⁵ Percy Bysshe Shelley, ‘Alastor; or the Spirit of Solitude,’ W.M. Rossetti (ed.) *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, New York: Hurst, 1878, p. 90.

⁵⁶ Joss Marsh, *Word Crimes*, p.96.

⁵⁷ Cooper recounts in his autobiography that his ‘dear wife was in a very dangerous state.’ John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*, p.232.

⁵⁸ Even More’s entry in Margaret Drabble, (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, makes no specific mention of his work as a poet and lists only his major works.

in Charterhouse, contemplating the direction that his life's work should take.⁵⁹ Though not troubled by religious doubt, More certainly struggled to reconcile his personal intellectual calling with his sense of obligation to wider society, and whether to fulfil that duty in a political or a religious capacity. He decided to pursue a career in politics under Henry VIII, but remained sceptical of the king's patronage. As a man of God and a political reformer More was scrupulously principled. He would not recognise Henry, having married Anne Boleyn, as the head of the Church of England, and refused to take the Oath of Supremacy. More was imprisoned, eventually executed and made a martyr to the Catholic Church 400 years later in 1935.⁶⁰ Cooper perhaps took some comfort from the work of a prominent Tudor intellect whose principled stances he appeared to closely identify with, especially since both men were prisoners of conscience.⁶¹

Diuersley passioned is the louers hart
 Now pleasaunt hope, now dread and grieuous fere,
 Now perfit blisse, now bitter sorowe smart,
 And whither his loue be with him or else where
 Oft from his eyes there falleth many a tere
 For uery joy, when they together bee
 When thei be sundred for aduersitee.⁶²

Tears of joy are shed when the two lovers are together, while tears of pain are shed when separation is the result of their adversity or misfortune. The poem intimates that though destiny, providence, uncontrollable or unforeseeable circumstances might separate lovers from each other, either together or apart, lovers always share similar emotional responses that produce 'many a tere'. Cooper similarly responded to the 'adversity' lovers had to face early in his epic, and records how he underwent a

⁵⁹ Sister Mary Edith Willow, *An Analysis of the English Poems of St Thomas More*, Nieuwkoop: B. De Graaf, 1974, pp. 216-217.

⁶⁰ Bertrand Russell, *The History of Western Philosophy and its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, second edition, London: Routledge, 1961, pp. 499-508.

⁶¹ Sir Thomas More's life had first been written by his son-in-law, William Roper and was often reprinted and revised. See for example William Roper, *The Life of Sir Thomas More; to Which is Added, an Appendix of Letters*. Chiswick: C. Whittingham, 1822. Many other books on the life of More were written and reprinted in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries after Roper's biography. See for example More, Cresacre. *The Life of Sir Thomas More ... With a biographical preface, notes and other illustrations by the Rev. J. Hunter. L.P.*, London: W. Pickering, 1828. Popular sketches also became available, for example, *The Lives of Alfred the Great, Sir Thomas More, and John Evelyn*, by J. F. R., London: 1845.

similar trial, faced the obstacles in his path, and trusted to providence that he would again see his wife in this mortal life:

For my lorn dove, who droopeth in her nest,
I mourn, in tenderness; but to this breast
Again to clasp my meek one I confide
With fervid trustfulness! Still self-possess,
Since Truth shall one day triumph,—let betide
What may, within these bars in patience I can 'bide. (I. IX, p. 13)

Still certain of the coming 'triumph' of Chartism, Cooper—like the prison poet Ernest Jones would five years later—asserts his obdurate, patient endurance, secure in the belief that the 'Truth' of political justice via the Charter will be eventually obtained.⁶³ The double meaning of 'abide' however, at the end of this stanza underscores Cooper's patience and certainty. It suggests that Cooper refashions his prison term. His allotted time abiding in his cell is transformed into his readiness to abide by a particular promise, to continue living according to a particular political conviction, as well as his ability to withstand such a test. That test is expressed in terms that represent political perseverance as a personal faith. The word 'abide' is also extremely common in Methodist hymns. In hymn 329, the singers 'by faith' are witness to Christ their 'guide,' whose power enables them to withstand all trials that may come their way, and thus '[t]he fiery test abide.' Hymn 26 emphasises the redemptive power of Christ's wounds, and offers shelter to those seeking strength: 'How blest are they who still abide / Close sheltered in thy bleeding side'.⁶⁴ Cooper's use of the word 'bide' radically undermines the desire to seek shelter, to 'bide' with Christ that these hymns seek to convey. Instead Cooper re-deploys the image of confinement to represent how the incarceration he endured hardened his political consciousness while affording him the opportunity to write. Religious language was a part of Cooper's latent repertoire, since he had previously spent several years as a devout Methodist and preacher. It was also a convenient, well-recognised language

⁶² Sir Thomas More, 'The Twelve Propertees or Condicyons of a Lover'. This stanza appears in the prison notebook of Thomas Cooper, MSS 5061, Lincoln Public Library. See also a transcript of this notebook in Lincolnshire Archives 2Baptist8.

⁶³ Ernest Jones would later obstinately record in one of his prison poems that '...oppression and force are the folly of fools, / that breaks upon constancy's rock.' See Ernest Jones, 'The Prisoner to the Slaves,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, 1851, p. 339.

⁶⁴ John Wesley, *A Collection Of Hymns, For The Use Of The People Called Methodists*, London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book-Room, 1889.

ripe for political subversion as well. Readers are encouraged to recognise in the final phrases, 'let betide What may, within these bars in patience I can 'bide', Cooper's personal plight, as well as their own role as prisoners of England's economic and political system in aftermath of 'the stand for the Charter' of August 1842.

Men such as the polymathic Sir Thomas More were not just important intellectual models but a source of political inspiration as well. Cooper also appreciated More's wider political significance as a writer who confronted political oppression. Cooper would later review More's *Utopia* in the *Plain Speaker* and describe him as 'the *first Chartist writer*' whose 'romance' demonstrates 'the very highest *ideal* of the practice of "brotherhood" by a society.' Cooper clearly had immense admiration for More, who produced his momentous work 'in the reign of one of the most cruel monarchs, as well as greatest tyrants that ever sat on a throne'. Cooper was clearly writing his epic in the shadow of literary figures like More. He certainly saw More's *Utopia* as a subversive work that would never have been published in his own lifetime had it 'not been written in the form of a romance'.⁶⁵ Both writers also seem to share similar concerns about the uses of intellectual inquiry, and demonstrate their desire to publicise their radical ideas, yet are aware that public censure might result in their cultural and political isolation. Their readers might seek to find fault with the new ideas and opinions they propound. Readers might assert the virtues of customary practices in order to fend off any threat to the stability of the hegemonic order that new writing and its ideas might produce. More advances such an argument in his *Utopia* and Cooper followed his example in his epic. When Raphael had finished telling his tale in *Utopia*, the other fictional interlocutor named More wanted to dispute certain points with him.

But I saw Raphael was tired with talking, and I was not sure he could take contradiction in these matters, particularly when I recalled what he had said about certain counsellors who were afraid they might not appear knowing enough unless they found something to criticise in other men's ideas. So with praise for the Utopian way of life and his account of it, I took him by the hand and led him to supper.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Thomas Cooper (ed.) *The Plain Speaker*, 1849, pp.54-56.

Ironically, Raphael is subjected to exactly the kind of intellectual suspicion he was afraid of when the narrator decides not to question Raphael's ideas further and to falsely 'praise' his companion's 'Utopian way of life' for fear of stirring further controversy. Instead the narrator continues to secretly subscribe to the views he held prior to his exchange with Raphael. Cooper's epic expresses a similar sense of unease about the reception of new ways of thinking, though he seems to lack More's irony. In Book I of *Purgatory*, the ghost of Sardanapalus sits at the head of a group of regal suicides and puts forward a defence of feudalism. In that same speech he disagrees with the Roman soldier Anthony, who had previously suggested that such social formations would soon be swept away. In his speech, Sardanapalus admits to Anthony, here addressed as the 'Spartan,' that new ideas do not find much currency within the stable, hierarchical structure he is advocating. Convincing society of the validity of these new ideas in the face of a powerful hegemony was not going to be easy.

...Spartan, due
 Observance take that novelties congrue
 But ill with social weal: while bloom and thrive,
 Through endless ages, lands whose tribes eschew
 Disloyalty,—where son's meek sires survive
 Preserving, piously, their customs primitive. (I. LXXVI, p. 30)

In the above, Cooper argues that an unreformed political system privileges particular familial lines and therefore, the feudal order. He also makes Sardanapalus emphasise the supposed gentility of the ruling classes. Cooper's politics however, refuse to accept the intellectual consensus that power in the hands of the few can ever be of positive benefit to a people that lack political influence. More profoundly, Cooper is suggesting that the short shrift given to new ideas cannot ever be an expression of a free and liberal society. Such a society has to be built upon free and open argument. Political systems have to be argued for, intellectually reasoned out. The refusal to engage with ideas simply through fear, as Sardanapalus advocates, can only maintain the supposed 'freedom' of one part of society by enslaving the other part of that society. Only by the removal of the hypocritical 'piously' held virtues of the ruling

⁶⁶ Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*, in Abrams, M.H. (ed.) *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, sixth edition, volume 1, London: Norton, p.431.

classes, as described in the above stanza, can true 'freedom' be achieved.⁶⁷ The intellectual growth of 'the people' provides the means by which custom may be overthrown.

Though Cooper's form is elitist, his message is fiercely democratic. His epic imagines its role, in its public act of testimony to Cooper's personal sense of election as a poet, as a pedagogic literature for the Chartist audiences Cooper envisioned. The epic conveys Cooper's own intellectual labour, but also promotes that within his Chartist audience. We have seen so far how the narrative of Christian election provided a means by which Cooper came to know himself as an epic poet. In part, Cooper does this by responding as a subject who feels purposely hailed by his literary influences. Becoming a poet is a two-stage transformation process. First the witness testifies that being allowed to 'witness' to their literary influences grants them a special privilege. Second, the moment of recognition of their call as a 'witness' then encourages them to reflect upon that privilege and testify to it by sharing it; by writing about that experience and in so doing, making public their poetry.

Cooper's experiences were also sometimes played out through the character of Anthony who, as the chief advocate of need for reform, is central to his epic. This character also provides a template onto which Chartists could not only map their understanding of Chartist leadership, but were also encouraged to adopt those models of political conduct for themselves. In several key ways, the Roman leader, orator and warrior Anthony in *Purgatory* closely resembles Cooper, who was not the only Chartist poet to identify with a figure that embodied physical and intellectual qualities. F.B. Smith notes how William James Linton closely identified with the slave leader Spartacus.⁶⁸ Cooper's Anthony emphasises education as a form of liberation from the oppression of religious dogma. In Book I Anthony acknowledges his complicity in wrongs done on earth and seeks 'Freedom's holy call' (I, CXXXVII, p. 45). Anthony stands 'self-sentenced' and admits that in the past he had sought to 'engraft / Mystery with Truth' and encouraged mankind to 'reverence Freedom' in order to charm the uneducated, rather than seeking to produce a free

⁶⁷ 'Man must be delivered from his religious fears —ere he can be politically, morally & intellectually free'. Thomas Cooper letters of, with fragments of his *Purgatory of Suicides*, 1842-44. British Library Add. 56238 ff.5-24.

society through a concerted programme of education (I, CXXXIV, p. 44). There is a clear parallel here with Cooper's early life as a Methodist preacher discussed in Chapter 1. Human beings can and do change, as Cooper's break with Methodism and subsequent conversion to Chartism in 1841 demonstrated.⁶⁹

Anthony also demonstrates that great sense of urgency that Chartist leaders often show when seeking to win over an audience. He possesses powerful rhetoric, charisma and the presence that Chartist leaders valued for its ability to appeal to the passions of Chartist audiences, even though some eye-witnesses thought that the emotive appeal of the platform produced a transient, rather than a sustainable political base.⁷⁰ But it is largely the intellectual presence of Anthony the great Roman orator that is foregrounded in Cooper's epic. Anthony implores the other spirits to change their thinking, clearly echoing the function of a Chartist leader appealing to a mass audience, and fusing a political with a pedagogic function. He tells both his audiences in purgatory and the reader that open-mindedness and willingness to abandon old feudal systems of allegiance, the ability to imagine a new social order were key to understanding their providential purpose in purgatory: "Twere insolent / to dogmatize where being is still blent with mystery" (I. CXXIX, p. 43). Yet Cooper's mode of address here cannot be said to be fixed solely on his Chartist readers, but on middle-class audiences as well. Feudalism did not just oppress the powerless, but was seductive enough to delude even those whom feudalism seemed to favour into passive acceptance of the privileges it could bestow, perpetuating the cycle of their punishment in purgatory, as well as the conditions of oppression for working people on earth. At the end of Book IV, even though some spirits challenge proof / Of natural kingship', a 'haughty host' continue to 'contend...for ceaseless rule of princes' and thus prevent their own liberation from purgatory (IV. LX, p. 132). Cooper clearly had his attention on monarchists and the beneficiaries of patronage as much as the working classes.

Prophetic characters like Anthony are still needed to proclaim both the dawn of the intellectual revolution and the continuation of oppression unabated. Here again

⁶⁸ See Chapter 5.

⁶⁹ See John Saville, (ed.) *The Life of Thomas Cooper*. See also chapter 1.

Cooper and Anthony seem to be doubles, with both being figured as radical leaders making concerted appeals to their respective audiences. In Book I Anthony acts as an unco-opted agent, a dissenter from the political orthodoxy that surrounds him. Just such a response to incarceration by the state forces he most wanted to resist would later prompt Ernest Jones to metaphorically re-forged the bars of his prison cell into armour 'to beat the world without'.⁷¹ Anthony also acts as a kind of renegade intellectual exile that Cooper sought to emulate, questioning his subjugation. In the following stanza, Chartist readers are encouraged to map the plight of the enslaved helots of Sparta onto their own struggles in the hungry forties. Using such a strategy, Cooper commingles the private and the public function of literature. Prior to the stanza below, the feudal spirits had mocked Anthony for his political ideals. Speaking out against them, Anthony replies:

Ye clepe me Prophet! I accept the jest
 For earnest; and, with mystic wreath thus crowned
 By your united voice, Mystery attest
 To be the tyrant Power from whose profound
 Soul-Bondage Man is breaking: whispering sound
 Of Truth's young breath greets Europe's grateful ear;
 And Freedom, in some hearts, a throne hath found
 On that new shore where still, alas! Appear
 Earth's olden Stains: the helot's stripes—the helot's tear! (I. CXXXVI. p. 45)

In the above Anthony clearly accepts that political change was a gradual, rather than a cataclysmic process. Rather than a violent change effected by physical force to meet such animosity, a whisper of 'Truth' was being carried on the 'young breath' of the United States across to Europe; a nation not without its faults the stanza notes. It signifies an ironic, subversive acceptance and embracing of Anthony's approbation by virtue of provoking hostile voices into action. This only serves to cement his sense of difference from those voices, while emphasising his election as a missoner to those causes he was advocating. The above stanza also represents Cooper's intentions as an epic poet, encouraging the reader to associate the label of 'Prophet' with the poet, a strategy that William James Linton also employed in 'The Poet-Prophet.'⁷² As such

⁷⁰ Owen Ashton, 'Orators and Oratory in the Chartist Movement, 1840-1848,' in, O. Ashton, R.Fyson. & S. Roberts, (eds.) *The Chartist Legacy*, Rendlesham: Merlin Press, 1999, pp. 49-51.

⁷¹ See my discussion of Ernest Jones's poem 'Prison Bars' in chapter 4.

⁷² See W.J. Linton, *The Plaint of Freedom*: 1852, p.75.

this is no gentle reminder of the poet's presence but a statement of authority issued through the character of Anthony. The jests of a 'united voice' speaking out against Anthony (and his double Cooper) in fact confirm that in their haste to condemn him, his ideas have successfully unsettled the other ghosts. This is not unlike other instances of the power of Chartist platform rhetoric to unsettle the political and religious establishment. In a Chartist poem celebrating 'Chartist orators', F. Goodfellow's poem 'To Chartist Lecturers' satirically noted that Chartist speeches were 'strangely alarming to parsons and peers', clearly indicating that the language of Chartism not only had an effect on the political and religious establishment, but also consciously addressed those audiences.⁷³

Anthony and Cooper also resemble each other in their condemnation of the use of religious ideas to pacify the working classes. Instead Chartists are encouraged along the road to self-emancipation, fusing politics with education, by representing that agenda as an attack on religious doctrine: 'That they the real monsters are who try / To fill man with belief that they prolong / His respite from some monstrous vengeance o'er him hung' (I. CXXXII. p. 44). Christian practices are attacked for advocating the benign acceptance of one's status, for saying that by not accepting the current political order on earth, the soul might suffer in the life to come. Cooper attacks the Church's depiction of the uncertain future that changes to the social order may bring about. According to the establishment it is better to favour one's earthly lot than risk losing the possibility of redemption to an uncertain future. For example, in the exordium to Book V, he observes that 'Tyrants wreck their grudge / Not as of old' through blatant use of force. Instead, they target the leading working men that have begun to think, plan and consult with 'meek Philosophy'. They swap the open barbarity of the 'Murder of breathing things' and instead 'meekly try in peace to end ye' by preaching that meekness heralds 'the radiant dawn of Christian Civilization' (V. XXII-XXIII, p. 142). *Purgatory* questions the validity of underpinning the social order using Anglican notions of life, death and the afterlife. Just as the multitude of Chartist travelling lecturers and orators did, Cooper's epic seeks to win religious ideological territory in order to contest the political quietism that conventional religious belief advocated.

⁷³ F. Goodfellow, 'To Chartist Lecturers,' *Northern Star* 4 February 1843, reproduced in an appendix to Owen Ashton, 'Orators and Oratory in the Chartist Movement, 1840-1848,' pp. 78-79.

Intellectual growth as a theme permeates *Purgatory*. In Book III, Cooper undertakes a personal meditation on the subject, so providing a model for learning for his Chartist audiences. Book III begins with an exordium that meditates on the power of the sun, echoing Milton's *Paradise Lost*.⁷⁴ As a symbol of natural energy, the sun would rather provide anything than lend its power 'to aggravate the tyrant's chain' (III. I. p. 81). The sun then triggers memories of Cooper's youth. In his dream he remembers his intellectual growth, but soon wakes and berates himself, for that 'glimpse of childhood's cheerful bloom' served only to remind him how his mother had suffered in life, and to bring back upon Cooper 'a pile of / Achings' (III. VIII, p. 83). But his tacit understanding that his cultural aspirations took him away from such cultural contexts also pained Cooper. Memories of his mother in turn remind him that widespread human misery continues in spite of the beneficent energy provided by the sun. The tension set up between optimism and pessimism, between the richness of the dreams of heaven he entertained as a youth, and the poverty of his everyday life with his mother, provides a basis for Cooper to meditate his religious faith.

Cooper then revisits a series of questions he first addressed in Book I. Does the sun only shine to demonstrate that our stay on earth is merely to achieve nothing more than to bear up under our own mortality? 'Will not thy flame forshew that for me wait / The prison-portals of the grave, and I but stay / At large on sufferance?' (III. XI. p. 83). If the sun could shed light on the fate of the soul after death to those left behind in the mortal world, then 'how our dreams would flee!' (III. XII. p. 84). Humankind could gain liberty by removing the religious and intellectual mythologies that act as a barrier to the emancipation of the working classes. But Cooper was half-eager, half-afraid to ask such questions. Such knowledge would sweep away all 'hope, faith, and doubting' (III. XIV. p. 84). Abandoning entirely religious belief 'affords no calm', but yet the heart 'doth...misgive, / More than it hopes' (III. XV. p. 84). Still there remain nagging suspicions at the back of Cooper's mind. He concludes that the beauty of nature is a positive sign of a divine creator. The rising and setting of the sun is represented as a resurrection, as a Christianised symbol of future hopes in which are encoded Chartist political and social objectives. The 'disentombment' of the sun

⁷⁴ 'Hail, holy light! offspring of heaven firstborn', Fowler, Alastair. (ed.) John Milton, *Paradise Lost* Book III, line 1.

each morning had for previous generations provided a 'symbol' of the 'glorious life to follow death' (III. XVI, p. 85). Despite Cooper's faith being challenged, the Christian narrative of resurrection and transformation into a new state of being still provided a means by which a new political and economic polis could be imagined. As Timothy Larsen notes, Cooper's development as a freethinker still allowed him to maintain belief in a superior being responsible for the creation of the universe.⁷⁵ Indeed Cooper perplexed and frustrated George Jacob Holyoake who was unable to accept Cooper's attempts to mix secular thought with religious faith.⁷⁶

Other incidents while a prisoner also provided Cooper with a springboard from which he might encourage the Chartist rank and file to make sense of their own place in their political struggle. Early in Book VIII Cooper heard 'the grand "Old Hundredth"' hymn being played in the prison chapel adjoining the prison. 'Its solemn glory' pealed 'through the transcended soul!' (VIII. IV, p.228).⁷⁷ This hymn had provided the music for Henry Bramwich's Chartist hymn, which was among the most popular Chartist songs nationally, as well as among Leicester Chartists.⁷⁸ Most importantly for Cooper, the music now reminds him that despite his incarceration, the freedom of his intellect cannot be chained: 'Vain are your fetters, tyrants, for the mind!' (Book VIII, stanza V, p. 228). Cooper believed the 'Old Hundredth' to have been written by the Christian reformer Martin Luther, the founder of Protestantism. Cooper claimed him as a 'True warrior / For all men's right to think unawed by man'. (VIII.V. p. 228) Luther's legacy according to Cooper, was to have freed 'Old Europe from the tyrant's triple chain,' and to have made 'Reason the soul's suzerain' (VIII. V. p. 228). In other words, 'Reason' had become lord of the soul. Rational argument had replaced pure faith. The advantage of using a major religious reformer was to indicate the importance of devotion to one's personal conscience in attaining political liberty to the rank and file Chartists, thus demonstrating the centrality of the election narrative

⁷⁵ See Timothy Larsen. 'The Regaining of Faith: Reconversions among Popular Radicals in Mid-Victorian England,' *Church History*, vol.70, no.3, 2001, 531-533.

⁷⁶ Stephen Roberts, 'The Later Radical Career of Thomas Cooper,' *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, vol.64, 1990, p.72.

⁷⁷ See also Cooper's notes to Book VIII, p. 245.

⁷⁸ See chapters 1 and 3 for more on the history and the performance of Bramwich's hymn.

to Chartist political thought. Indeed Malcolm Chase, in his work on the Chartist Land Plan, points out 'how powerful the idea of independence was among Chartists'.⁷⁹

Almost immediately after Cooper describes Luther as an important symbol of intellectual freedom, he begins to encourage Chartists to think of themselves as heirs to a radical tradition populated by luminary figures such as Wickliffe, Jerome, Cobham and Latimer, each a 'stalwart pioneer / Of mental Freedom' (VIII. IX. p. 229). He does not address his contemporaneous Chartist audience directly, but instead praises past and future radical generations. First he praises the 'glorious band / Who broke the bondage of the Priest of Rome' and the 'Sires of our common Saxon fatherland' (VIII. VIII. p. 229). Cooper later employed the same strategy in the preface to his *Poetical Works*, writing that 'the great cause of Human freedom and Human Right demands that I do not help to consign my 'Prison Rhyme' to oblivion...I must take care that the fact is preserved as a lesson to Oppressors in the Future.'⁸⁰ In his earlier 'People's edition,' Cooper praised and offered instruction to future radical generations, the 'thrice blest children' of 'the far future' who will be the heirs to English radicalism:

O thrice blest children of that age of light
 And love, which now from the far future beams!
 To you it will pertain to place aright
 In Truth's great temple whom herself esteems
 Her true disciples. Ye, when Time's dim dreams
 And weakling fears are fled, and Knowledge pure
 Hath given the topstone to Truth's fane,—like gems
 In gold, shall place each dazzling form secure
 In its eternal niche. Our hands were premature! (VIII. X. p. 229)

The duty of future radical generations is to secure a place for all 'true disciples' within the temple to liberty. The stanza also notes that the present generation was too soon for its time: 'Our hands were premature!' The day will come however, when those ideals will be realised. Future generations are entrusted with truth's 'great temple', itself metaphorically constructed by and of 'Knowledge pure', with each 'dazzling form', each disciple possessing an 'eternal niche', that is, an elected place.

⁷⁹ Malcolm Chase, "'We wish only to work for ourselves": the Chartist Land Plan,' Chase, Malcolm & Ian Dyck, (eds.) *Living and Learning: Essays in Honour of J.F.C. Harrison*, Aldershot, Scolar Press, 1996, p. 137.

⁸⁰ Thomas Cooper, 'Address to the Reader', *Poetical Works*, second edition, p. viii.

Each 'disciple' also contributes to the construction of that temple. The stanza makes use of the discursive space of religion to represent political salvation through education. Future radical generations will be elected as 'true disciples' in the temple of Truth. Only when 'Knowledge pure' gives the 'topstone' to 'Truth' and those disciples have construed and recognised 'knowledge' can they find their place within that temple and become 'like gems / In gold'. Thus the election narrative pertains not just to Cooper as a poet, but is put forward as a model for Cooper's Chartist audiences.

Though the first official secular societies did not come into being until the early 1850s, Cooper's intense questioning of scripture while a prisoner demonstrates the extent to which secular thinking had become more pervasive among the working-class radicals of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Secularism had begun to attract intellectually minded Chartists who held firm anti-clerical opinions and were seeking new ways by which they might understand and appreciate society on a 'rational and material basis,' free of 'oppression and superstition.'⁸¹ Cooper was caught up in the wave of growing religious doubt that had commenced in the 1840s.⁸² Nevertheless, Cooper's principled intellectual stance continued to rely on a Christian conscience that both respected and sought to extend the rights of freedom of opinion to 'the people.'⁸³ Yet at the same time, the strategies by which Cooper sought to fulfil his pedagogic goals indicates that he felt his objectives as a mission. 'I have no second conviction so strong', wrote Cooper in one of his prison letters, 'as that Man must be delivered from his religious fears—ere he can be politically, morally & intellectually free in the proper sense of the word.'⁸⁴

The narrative of Christian election provided a fundamental tool by which Cooper allied his personal calling as a poet with the literary and political functions of his

⁸¹ Susan Budd, *Varieties of Unbelief Atheists and Agnostics in English Society 1850-1960*, London: Heinemann, 1977, pp.10-13. In the 1840 and 50s, secular organisations largely began to attract the support of formerly Owenist and socialist groups. G.J. Holyoake eventually founded his Central Secular Society in 1852. See Edward Royle, *Radical Politics 1790-1900 Religion and Unbelief*, London: Longman, 1971, pp.51-52

⁸² Frank M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.75.

⁸³ Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind*, p. 24.

⁸⁴ Thomas Cooper letters of, with fragments of his *Purgatory of Suicides*, 1842-44. British Library Add. 56238 ff.5-24.

Chartist epic. It is also clear however, that although Cooper increasingly subjects religious faith to intellectual pressure and becomes more secular in outlook, his intellectual model remains fundamentally reliant on the election narrative. Cooper's secular experiences newly energised the religious narratives by which he understood the source of his own political will and that of 'the people' he influenced.⁸⁵ Cooper did not reject Christianity. Rather he recognised that religious freedom was inextricably tied to the political freedom to propose and support policies sensitive to the social and economic requirements of the working classes. As Iorwerth Prothero notes, 'even at the height of Cooper's rejection of Christianity, he never espoused full atheism but was nearer to pantheism or theism, and always stressed Christ's perfection and moral beauty.'⁸⁶ The Christian narrative of election, albeit in a secularised form, enabled Cooper to make sense of his devotion to learning, his prison experience, his place in and among popular political organisations, and his role as a man charged with a political mission, largely because of the sheer sense of optimism such narratives could demonstrate. Edward Royle notes for example that the 'secular theology' of Owenism provided its followers with a 'vehicle for survival as well as for [its] mission in the old moral world.'⁸⁷ Though he suffered in prison, Cooper's epic is testimony, despite its faults, to his faith in education as a radical tool: 'If a man thinks,' Cooper wrote, 'he cannot remain stationary in his opinions'.⁸⁸ In his epic, Cooper constructed a symbolic representation of how, by recognising the importance of learning and by responding to its call, Chartists might actuate changes in their own cultural and political identity.

⁸⁵ Cooper's epic poem symbolises a 'journey into unbelief'. See Timothy Larsen, 'The Regaining of Faith: Reconversions among Popular Radicals in Mid-Victorian England,' *Church History*, vol.70, no.3, 2001, p.535.

⁸⁶ Iorwerth Prothero, *Radical Artisans in England and France 1830-1870*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 263.

⁸⁷ Edward Royle, 'Owenism and the Secularist Tradition: the Huddersfield Secular Society and Sunday School,' Malcolm Chase & Ian Dyck (eds.) *Living and Learning: Essays in Honour of J.F.C. Harrison*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996, p.201.

⁸⁸ Thomas Cooper letters of, with fragments of his *Purgatory of Suicides*, 1842-44. British Library Add. 56238 ff.5-24.

Chapter 3

Ernest Jones 'The Poor Man's Poet and Advocate': *Chartist Poems and Fugitive Pieces* and Poems from the *Northern Star*, 1846-1848.

This chapter explores the relationship between Ernest Jones's personal sense of Christianised romanticism and his evocations of the past, often in the constitutional and pastoral idiom, encoding Chartist desires for political change in the language of Christian regeneration through poetry.¹ The chapter also focuses on how Jones represented himself as a poet, an authentic and legitimate Chartist leader, and as a member of the Chartist rank and file, as one of many constitutionally legitimate members of a nation-state elected into and awaiting entry into their rightful political status. During Jones's rise to prominence as a Chartist, a columnist in the *Northern Star*, writing about a Chartist meeting held at Bradford Temperance Hall in May 1847, bestowed upon him the epithet 'the Poor Man's Poet and Advocate'.² The title itself signifies both the enduring radical history and romantic tradition that Chartism felt affiliated to, and the significance of poetry in attuning Chartism to that tradition. Thomas Spence many years earlier had described himself as 'the Poor Man's Advocate' on the title page of *Pig's Meat*. Spence's weekly penny journal comprised articles that had been: 'Collected by the Poor Man's Advocate (an old Veteran in the Cause of Freedom) in the course of his reading for more than twenty years.'³ Years later, the radical paper the *Poor Man's Advocate* was published in Manchester in 1832, further cementing the phrase in radical discourse.⁴ In the hands of the *Northern Star's* reporter, the phrase 'Poor Man's Advocate' is revised somewhat, the word 'poet' inserted into it and ascribed to Jones, placing him in a radical history devoted to representing the working classes. The article describes a meeting at Bradford Temperance Hall at which Jones spoke. The columnist for the *Northern Star* records how 'the doors were besieged by parties, anxious to hear the Poor Man's Poet and Advocate.'⁵

¹ As Miles Taylor notes, the pastoral idiom and Christian faith lie at the heart of Jones's *Chartist Poems* and his political oratory. See Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones, Chartism, and the Romance of Politics 1819-1869*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, p.88.

² *Northern Star* May 15, 1847, p. 1.

³ See Thomas Spence, (ed.) *Pig's Meat; or Lesson for the Swinish Multitude*, 1793-1796.

⁴ Doherty, J. (ed.) *Poor Man's Advocate*, Manchester: 1832-33.

⁵ *Northern Star* May 15, 1847, p. 1.

Jones would echo his earlier representation as 'the Poor Man's Poet and Advocate' four years later when, after having served two years in prison for seditious libel, he again sought the mantle of leading Chartist poet in order to re-establish his political career. Jones reaffirmed his devotion to the 'great cause' of 'the People versus their Oppressors,' in the pages of G.J. Harney's *Red Republican*. Here, Jones wrote that in that cause he had 'the honour to be one of the people's humble advocates.'⁶ Besides establishing Jones's place in a radical tradition by recycling Spence's title, the words 'poet' and 'advocate' may also be considered more complementary than they might first appear. The legal connotations of the phrase are well suited to Jones's status as a barrister and as a gentleman leader of Chartism. Being an advocate is to be 'one summoned or "called to" another,' especially 'one called in to aid one's cause...to defend or speak for.' The word 'advocate' also has a specific religious significance, and is used in 1 John to describe Christ as the intermediary interceding on behalf of humankind to God. 'My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous'.⁷ In this sense, Jones's contribution to Chartism becomes a personal sacrifice. An advocate then is an intermediary, invested with great authority that marks that person out from the rest of humankind: a status not unrelated to the popular nineteenth-century definition of 'poet'. As Nigel Cross notes: 'A "poet" was understood to be separate from the run of men. Poetry implied refinement, sensitivity, imagination and learning, all qualities which were supposed to be foreign to the masses but were highly valued by cultured middle-class readers.'⁸

The report of the Bradford Temperance Hall meeting published in the *Northern Star*, indicates that Christianity and ritual played important roles in the organisation of the crowd, ascribing Jones a literary and political place within Chartism, and producing an account that might accustom the Chartist reader of the report to such proceedings.⁹ At the meeting, those in attendance apparently struggled to fit into the hall. The singing of a Chartist hymn focalised and

⁶ See John Saville (ed.) G.J. Harney, *The Red Republican*, vol. I, 1850, repr. London: Merlin Press, 1966, p. 64.

⁷ OED; *Holy Bible*, 1 John 2:1-2.

⁸ Nigel Cross, *The Common Writer: Life in Nineteenth-Century Grub Street*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 146

amalgamated those present into an organised body and brought order to the proceedings:

Bradford.— On Sunday evening a public meeting was held in the Temperance Hall, Leeds road, to hear an address from Mr Ernest Jones. Long before the time announced for the meeting taking place, the doors were besieged by parties, anxious to hear the Poor Man's Poet and Advocate...Mr Anderson gave out the Chartist Hymn:—

'Britannia's sons! Though slaves you be,
God, your Creator made you free,'¹⁰

The couplet is from John Henry Bramwich's, 'A Hymn,' and shows the influence of Shelley's 'The Masque of Anarchy':

Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free!¹¹

Bramwich's hymn demonstrates the importance of considering the effect of Chartist poetry as read out loud to an audience, sung communally as celebrations, as well as read by individuals. As Timothy Randall notes, Chartist poetry is 'a literature which existed not only on the page as a literary text, but also as a social event.'¹² Bramwich's poem had previously appeared in the *Northern Star* on April 4th 1846, over a year earlier than the reported meeting at which it was sung. Chartist poems by leading poets were clearly not ephemeral, but resonated in the Chartist imagination. It appeared again in the *Northern Star* on July 17, 1847, after the above meeting had taken place (perhaps the meeting even prompted the reprint). On this later occasion, the hymn was given the title 'God Never, Never Made a Slave' and was to be sung to the tune, 'New Crucifixion.'

⁹ See *Northern Star* May 15, 1847, p. 1

¹⁰ *Northern Star* May 15, 1847, p. 1. See also Y. Kovalev, *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, Moscow: 1956, p. 118

¹¹ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'The Masque of Anarchy,' stanza LXXIV, W.M. Rossetti (ed.) *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, New York: Hurst and Co., 1878, p. 321

¹² Timothy Randall, 'Chartist Poetry and Song,' in Ashton, O. Fyson, R. & Roberts, S. (ed.) *The Chartist Legacy*, Rendlesham: Merlin, 1999, p. 173

Mr Anderson, overseeing the proceedings in the Temperance Hall, Bradford, 'gave out' Bramwich's hymn: a phrase that could mean 'distributed,' but also 'announced' in much the same way that hymns might be given out to a congregation in Church. Clearly Bramwich's hymn, as Brian Maidment observed generally of Chartist poetry, functioned 'to create and extend group identity and political solidarity'¹³ by opening up access to poetry through a public discourse. Religion was so closely tied to political identity that Chartist interests could not be imagined without reference to Christianity. The collective, oral recitation of Bramwich's hymn redistributed social power and challenged the dominance exerted over political and literary realms by elite culture: an authority made routine through the modern technology of print culture and its distribution. Hymn singing also differentiated Chartists from the voting classes by identifying and reconstructing this cultural practice on their own terms, articulating Chartists as a separate people. Bramwich's lines, 'Britannia's sons! Though slaves you be, God, your Creator made you free,' signal a vision of an alternative polity articulated in Christian terms. Simultaneously, a sense of election is also located in the importance of national identity by which Chartists recognise themselves as 'Britannia's sons,' signifying 'the spirit of the Western nation' by which an undivided people with mutual interests gain legitimacy in 'the self-presence' of recital.¹⁴

Though by 1847 Jones was well established as a Chartist poet, he had entered into an already existing literary culture. This culture co-opted notions of national and Christian identity and directed them into a political challenge to the consensus of the state, in which individual responses to political inequality are focused into a collective political duty. Jones's *Chartist Poems and Fugitive Pieces*, ends with the poem 'Onward and Upward', which finishes by declaring that 'Right upward the spirit is springing / From priestcraft—to nature and God!'¹⁵ The collection was extremely popular. By February 1847 it was into a fourth edition, and advertised

¹³ Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives, Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, Fyfield edition, 1992, p. 37.

¹⁴ Homi Bhaba, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.93

¹⁵ Ernest Jones, 'Onward and Upward,' *Chartist Poems and Fugitive Pieces*, fourth edition, London: Northern Star Office, 1846, p.16

as 'revised and corrected,' and was priced three pence.¹⁶

As Jones's poem demonstrates, Chartist hymns and poems encouraged their audiences to imagine their entry into a new political order as an aspirational objective in which their true, but as yet unfulfilled national identity was closely equated with an idealised Christian image of the better life to come. As Tony Claydon and Ian McBride note, this 'aspirational anxiety' had emerged in Tudor times and permeated national Protestantism to the beginning of the Victorian era.¹⁷ A similar tendency pervades Jones's Chartist poetry. His low-church faith was an important factor in articulating notions of cultural difference between middle and working class through Christian aspirations toward the better life to come. In 'Our Rally' for example, Jones makes an argument similar to Bramwich's:

My countrymen! why languish
Like outcasts of the earth,
And drown in tears of anguish
The glory of your birth?
Ye were a freeborn people,
And heroes were your race:
The dead—*they*—are our freemen—
The living—our disgrace,¹⁸

In the above, the Chartists of the present are as different from their 'freeborn' ancestors as they are from contemporary privileged classes, producing a tacit class analysis. The extraordinary sense of isolation and self-reliance that Chartist audiences are encouraged to comprehend, spurs the imagination on to envisage the better life to come.

Jones's rise as a Chartist leader between 1846 and 1848 was meteoric. He was soon prominent as a speaker at Chartist meetings, and as a poet in the literary pages of the *Northern Star*. The editor of the *Northern Star* at this time was G.J.

¹⁶ See *The Northern Star*, 6 February, 1847, p.4

¹⁷ Tony Claydon & Ian McBride, 'The trials of the chosen peoples: recent interpretations of protestantism and national identity in Britain and Ireland,' in Tony Claydon & Ian McBride, *Protestantism and National Identity Britain and Ireland, c. 1650-1850*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp.27-29

¹⁸ Ernest Jones, 'Our Rally,' *Chartist Hymns and Fugitive Pieces*, London: 1846, p.3

Harney, under whom Jones began to write the second leader and conduct the correspondence column. Along with Harney, Jones became a member of the Fraternal Democrats. The Chartist Thomas Frost noted that nearly all of the 'politics, history, fiction and poetry' in *The Labourer* was by Jones, but that 'the most stirring of his poetical effusions appeared in the *Northern Star*' some of which appeared in his highly successful poetry collection, *Chartist Songs and Fugitive Pieces*.¹⁹ Consequently this chapter will concentrate on these poems.

John Saville describes Ernest Jones's turn to Chartism as a 'conversion', concluding that after Jones's unfortunate (but by no means catastrophic) bankruptcy, his conversion was a moment of principled compassion.²⁰ Born into a privileged family, Anne Janowitz notes that Jones might logically have taken the stance of the Radical Tory, but instead chose the Chartist path. The influence of the democratic ideals associated with romanticism proved too strong in Ernest Jones to allow him to contemplate toryism.²¹ This chapter assesses how Jones's Chartist poems represent the impulse to provide cultural leadership, signalling the path toward a democratic society through the election narrative. Jones felt his personal understanding of his position as a subject fit to act as literary 'Advocate' was validated by his connections with literary culture. He soon found a position within an already existing literary radical discourse that could authenticate (but did not yet fully secure) him as leading Chartist poet, but also as an ordinary Chartist subject.

Jones was a talented and precocious youth. He had high expectations heaped upon him by his parents. He was born in Berlin in 1819, and the family had lived in Schleswig-Holstein where his father Major Charles Jones served as equerry to the Duke of Cumberland.²² With a sense of purpose and ambition instilled in him from an early age by his parents, the letters exchanged between young Ernest

¹⁹ Thomas Frost, *Forty Years Recollections Literary and Political*, London: Garland, 1986, p. 185. By February 1847 *Chartist Songs and Fugitive Pieces* was into a fourth edition, and advertised as 'revised and corrected,' and was priced three pence. See *The Northern Star*, 6 February, 1847, p.4

²⁰ John Saville, *Ernest Jones: Selections from the Speeches and Writings of Ernest Jones*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1952, p. 17

²¹ 'There was no obvious reason for Jones to shift from the idler comforts of the ironic stance to the difficulties of agitational optimism.' Anne Janowitz *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 174-175

²² John Saville, *Ernest Jones*, p.13

Jones and his parents indicate his growing unwillingness to lend himself to compromise. The family kept strong links with British culture, and Ernest read with great interest the English newspapers.²³ Writing to her son (affectionately called 'Carl' by his parents) while a boarder at school in Lüneburg, Mrs Jones's letters would include poems and lines of verse she had written. Her son would subsequently send poems and lines of verse back to his parents from his school situated not far from Hamburg. Indeed on occasions it seems that members of the Jones family would begin writing poems to which other members of the family felt quite free to contribute their own lines of verse.²⁴ From an early age it would appear that Ernest would have understood the idea of a poem as a terrain in which several poetic voices, several perspectives could co-exist or coincide with one another. This shift from one perspective, from one speaking position, from one mode of address to another, would prove to be an important feature in Jones's *Chartist Poems and Fugitive Pieces*, and the poems published in the *Northern Star*.

Mrs Charlotte and Major Charles Jones encouraged their idealistic son, but also tried to temper his precociousness. While he was still a boarder in Lüneburg, Mrs Charlotte Jones had written to her eighteen year old son that: '...my wish, my ardent wish is that your fame, excellence & rise to eminence, should arise from your emulation of the powers of a Cicero & men whose genius & talents your own will enable you with certain success to emulate and perhaps surpass.' However, she was also quick to emphasise the importance of considering more practical applications for his talents, encouraging in him the wisdom to use his faculties pragmatically: 'A career like Napoleon's requires too many concomitant circumstances. Too far, much too far out of the reach of human controul to rest upon'. Instead she suggested that, 'on the contrary when we draw for fame &

²³ Charlotte Jones sent Ernest material from English newspapers to him at school, seemingly at Ernest's request. In her letter of 15 June 1837, Charlotte apologises for being unable to send material sooner because the papers had arrived in Germany late. She further notes that she has sent a complete copy of a paper with this letter 'as it contains many interesting topics which are not in the German papers.' Mrs Charlotte Jones to Ernest Jones, Tuesday 15 June 1837, 'Jones Papers,' University of Hull Library, M/I227 (Microfilm).

²⁴ 'It seems, my dear love, that you are a sort of tenth muse to us, for your Papa has just read to me such beautiful lines which he has written in continuation of your Poem, and which are to accompany this packet,' Mrs Charlotte Jones to Ernest Jones, Tuesday 15 June 1837, 'Jones Papers,' University of Hull Library.

fortune on our own mental resources, that is the mine which the more it is worked the greater riches it will yield!’²⁵ Though he was clearly an idealist from an early age, qualities such as self-determination and independence were impressed upon the young Jones. His ambition needed to be tempered. Indulging in the ‘unreal creation of too romantic feelings’ Charlotte Jones warned, might make her son ‘too visionary for the world of commonplace reality in which in this present age we live.’²⁶

Jones’s idealistic ambitions were equally at odds with the machinery of the world in maturity as well as in youth. Anne Janowitz observes that nine years later, Ernest Jones’s romantic optimism would be all the more marked by his lateness as a Chartist poet, writing after the frustration of Chartist hopes for the petitions and the activism of 1839 and 1842.²⁷ The seriousness of Charlotte Jones’s advice to her son is tempered somewhat by being written in a vein of good humour, perhaps even faintly teasing in its wish that Jones would ‘not call it “Mama’s moralizing.”’²⁸ Jones’s ambitions might be interpreted as an early symptom of his romantic spirit. As Janowitz observes, as a Chartist poet Jones both indulged in and assuaged ‘the lyricism of romantic solitude,’²⁹ recognising his duty toward a communitarian poetic.

Jones became a member of several literary coteries as he tried to build a literary as well as a legal career for himself prior to his conversion to Chartism.³⁰ His fascination with literary status led him to record in his diary meeting the brother of Letitia Landon (L.E.L.), while dining at Lady Stepney’s (better known as the novelist Mrs Catherine Manners) in 1842.³¹ Success however, in middle class culture as either writer, barrister or both was difficult to attain. By the mid-Victorian period, less than 2 per cent of the middle classes in employment were

²⁵ Mrs Charlotte Jones to Ernest Jones, Wednesday May 31 1837, ‘Jones Papers,’ University of Hull Library

²⁶ Mrs Charlotte Jones to Ernest Jones, Wednesday May 31 1837, ‘Jones Papers,’ University of Hull Library

²⁷ See Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p.165

²⁸ Mrs Charlotte Jones to Ernest Jones, Wednesday May 31 1837, ‘Jones Papers,’ University of Hull Library.

²⁹ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 185

³⁰ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 175

³¹ Ernest Jones MS Diaries, Jan 16 1842, Ms 923 2 J18, Manchester Central Library; Laman

barristers, and there were even fewer professional writers.³² Later in his Chartist poem 'The Better Hope,' Jones reflected on his earlier failures to find the bourgeois literary recognition he so craved. Despite his 'rich old name,' Jones the aspirant poet in his pre-Chartist incarnation had to 'struggle to fight—for my natural right, / Of a place in the homes of man'.³³ Struggling for a 'place' in many homes indicates that Jones was musing on his inability to find any literary success, but his turn to Chartism changed that. Jones had earlier tried to foster a career as a playwright, poet, and novelist³⁴ and was on friendly terms with figures such as the Dublin born actor and dramatist Dion Boucicault, and Charles William Shirley Brooks, a solicitor turned journalist, who was later to contribute to *Punch*.³⁵ Jones was not successful as a dramatist, but between 1839 and 1845 he did manage to get a few original poems published in *The Court Journal*, along with some translations of German poems.³⁶ Jones also managed to publish his first novel, his pre-Chartist romance, *The Wood Spirit*.³⁷ However, Jones's diaries early on are strewn with many more rejections than acceptances of his work. Despite Jones's connections with the fringes of early Victorian literary culture, he was unable to find success. Submissions to Richard Bentley, publisher and owner of *Bentley's Miscellany*,³⁸ and the dramatist, actor-manager and producer Thomas James Serle were just two of the many early rejections that Jones suffered.³⁹

Even in poems written for more intimate occasions, he still contemplated his own private and public roles as poet. Jones wrote a poem on the occasion of his wife Jane's birthday in 1844. Rather than concentrating on its supposed subject, Jane's birthday, the poem is more concerned with celebrating Jones's ability to write poetry: 'Forth! Forth! Thou shining sword of song! / No faltering hand should

Blanchard's *The Life and Literary Remains of L.E.L.* had first appeared in 1841.

³² Eric Hobsbawm points out that the middle class was still small at this time. Even so, of the 200,000 middle class taxable incomes in the mid 1860s, barristers only numbered a lowly 3500, and professional writers numbered 2148. In the 1840s, Jones sought to make his name in two of the most exclusive professions. See Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990, p.156-157

³³ Ernest Jones, 'The Better Hope,' *Chartist Poems and Fugitive Pieces*, 1846, p. 1

³⁴ See John Saville, *Ernest Jones*, p. 14.

³⁵ D.C. Browning, *Everyman's Dictionary of Literary Biography*: London: J.M. Dent, 1958.

³⁶ See Ernest Jones personal album of poems and translations, Manchester Central Library.

³⁷ See John Saville, *Ernest Jones*, p. 14.

³⁸ Jones recorded on the third of July 1839, that he had called on Bentley to find his 'work refused.' Ernest Jones Ms Diaries, July 3 1839.

grasp thee / But burning hearts should clasp thee, / And thine Auroras flash o'er wandering worlds along.' Jones continues: 'Forth! From thy sheath of wordless thought! / Hurl on Times' giant form / Thy deeply sounding storm...' The poem seems to be more about his own search for poetic expression, his ability to respond to his inspiration, transforming his thoughts into poetic expression, than about Jane's birthday. Poetry is a 'sword' that 'Heals where it strikes and saves where others slay'. Jane is clearly his muse, yet a poem written to Jones's soul mate has a strangely public ring to it, concentrating as it does on the role, the function of, and the recognition due to the poet. Ernest Jones's real subject is the act of self-creation through writing. Only in the second half of the poem does his attention turn to her, addressing her directly, and even then as a source of literary inspiration, rather than a loved one: 'The sword of song be in thy hand!'⁴⁰

Jones's failures as a writer were compounded by bankruptcy, with serious consequences for his home life and his professional reputation. His literary 'rebuffs and disappointments' as a writer were now accompanied by 'legal and social struggles' and 'dreadful domestic catastrophes'.⁴¹ His diary indicates that Chartism was his redemption. After his 'conversion' in 1846, he records a sudden surge of frenetic activity. Records of social engagements now give way to a sudden sense of urgency. His movements for the first week in February, 1846 are described in very sparse, clipped language: '...attend Chartists—O'Connor—meetings, my office, making calls...Business, poetry, etc...'⁴² His much-discussed diary entry for October 8 1846⁴³ indicates that it was the success of his Chartist poems and songs that made the biggest impact on Jones. They were, it seems, almost an instant triumph. Writing after having attended his first Chartist

³⁹ Letter from Thomas James Serle to Ernest Jones, January 28 1843, British Library, Ms. Add. 52,477 f.260

⁴⁰ British Library Ms. Add. 61,971A. f3, 'Ernest, To his Jane --- On her birthday 21st January, 1844,' Ernest Jones: celebratory poetry, illustrations and pictures from his time in prison. These lines are later reworked into his poem 'The Peasant,' which opens with the couplet: 'Forth to the fight! Thou shining sword of song! / Sing, sing the toil, that makes the toiler strong.' Ernest Jones, *The Battle-Day and Other Poems* London: Routledge, 1855, p.95.

⁴¹ Ernest Jones, Ms Diaries, October 8th 1846.

⁴² Ernest Jones, Ms Diaries, February 1st -7th 1846.

⁴³ See for example Mark Hovell *The Chartist Movement*, third edition, Manchester University Press, 1966, pp. 281-282; Saville, John. *Ernest Jones*, Randall, Timothy. 'Towards a Cultural Democracy,' D. Phil: Sussex University; Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 179; Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones, Chartism, and the Romance of Politics 1819-1869*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp.82-83

convention, and having toured Manchester, Leeds and Nottingham, Jones was clearly intoxicated and elated by his reception as a Chartist poet:

I am pouring the tide of my songs over England, forming the tone of the mighty mind of the people. Wonderful! vicissitudes of life,—rebuffs and disappointments countless in literature...legal and social struggles, dreadful domestic catastrophes,—poverty,—domestic bickerings,—almost destitution,—hunger—labour of mind and body—have left me, through a wonderful providence of God, as enthusiastic of mind,—as ardent of temper,—as fresh of heart,—and strong of frame as ever! Thank God.⁴⁴

At last it seemed, ‘through a wonderful providence of God,’ Jones was overcoming the rebuttals that he had experienced as an aspiring poet and dramatist in middle-class circles. Chartism rescued him from both domestic and economic ‘struggles,’ and redeemed him as a man of literary merit. The ‘providence of God’ provided Jones with a way of coping with his personal struggles, a way of accounting positively for his bitter experiences. The suffering Jones and his family endured after his bankruptcy, together with his lack of early success as a writer is now viewed as a test of faith.

Jones had first addressed the Chartists in the pages of the *Northern Star* earlier in May 1846. His open letter, addressed ‘To the Chartist Body,’ was a bid for selection as a delegate to the forthcoming Manchester National Convention in August of that year.⁴⁵ In the same edition of the paper, Jones was also introduced as ‘a new poet’ in the literary review section. The review described Jones as ‘a frank, straightforward man, possessing the three grand requisites for a popular representative—honesty, talent and enthusiasm. Mr Jones feels that he has a mission to perform, and we do not doubt but that some one or more localities will accept his services.’⁴⁶ From the very beginning it seems Jones was presented as a man charged with a ‘mission’ to serve Chartism.⁴⁷ Indeed as Anne Janowitz observes, Jones’s series of four ‘Our...’ poems in his *Chartist Songs and Fugitive*

⁴⁴ Ernest Jones, Ms Diary, 1844-47, 8 October, 1846.

⁴⁵ See ‘To the Chartist Body,’ *The Northern Star*, May 9, 1846, p.1

⁴⁶ ‘A New Poet!’ *The Northern Star*, May 9, 1846, p.3

⁴⁷ ‘A New Poet!’ *The Northern Star*, May 9, 1846, p.3

Pieces were 'attempt[s] to render...a shared sense of calling, outcome and power'⁴⁸.

'The Better Hope' which opens Jones's collection, seeks to justify both his conversion to Chartism to himself, by which he might hope to gain acceptance by other Chartists, and his subsequent realisation of his enduring election to an as yet unfulfilled political task. The title of this poem is perhaps inspired by Hebrews 7:19, where faith in Christ, (referred to as the 'better hope') rather than obedience of the law, is acknowledged as the way to God. 'For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw unto God.'⁴⁹ The conversion narrative is a pervasive trope in radical culture. As Malcolm Chase notes, Allan Davenport's sudden turn to the Spencean system was 'remarkably akin to religious conversion'. His story would have been well known to Chartist readers of Davenport's *Life and Literary Pursuits*.⁵⁰ 'The Better Hope' is a complex psychological account of a conversion to Chartism, represented in the narrative of Christian election. From the outset, Jones's narrator is a troubled figure, still attached to, yet sceptical of the culture into which he was born, sensing the 'quiet hate' of a life of privilege enjoyed during the narrator's early life. The poem maps the journey from 'my father's house' out into 'the rough world.' A sense of uneasiness, an eerie foreboding quality seems to prefigure the conversion of the narrator to Chartism:

My father's house in the lordly square,
Was cold in its solemn state,
And the sculptures rare—that the old walls bear,
Looked down with a quiet hate.⁵¹

Having left the home of his father, the narrator feels more and more isolated, and while walking along the road, experiences for the first time the struggles of the working classes. The narrator realises the plight of the industrial worker and

⁴⁸ Anne Janowitz here is referring to four of Jones's poems in *Chartist Poems*, three of which have startlingly millenarian titles: 'Our Summons,' 'Our Destiny,' 'Our Warning,' and 'Our Cheer.' See Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 165

⁴⁹ Hebrews, 7:19, *Holy Bible*.

⁵⁰ Malcolm Chase, 'Editorial Afterword,' *The Life and Literary Pursuits of Allan Davenport*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994, p. 47

⁵¹ Ernest Jones, 'The Better Hope,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 1.

undergoes a conversion to Chartism. The modality of the poem both expresses the possibility of future change, while simultaneously implying that such chances have already slipped by. The line 'Alas! for the change of what might have been fair' disturbs the eerie and foreboding qualities emphasised early in the poem. The temporal mode of the poem changes from that of the reflection of the narrator on past events to conjecture on both failed and future radical initiatives. The narrator's own description at the end of the ninth stanza is interrupted with the interjection beginning 'Alas...':

And still as I wandered past hamlet and town,
I listened for laughter and song;
But man with a frown cast humanity down,
And tyranny gloried in wrong.

Alas! for the change of what might have been fair,
And the gloom of what should have been bright!
The wind weltered by—like one great swelling sigh,
And the noonday was darker than night.⁵²

The two stanzas recount the personal memory of the moment at which the narrator becomes an inward-looking subject, the moment at which the narrator remembers: 'Alas! for the change of what might have been fair'. The narrator instead recalls and revisits (in the act of speaking about a moment previously felt, rather than articulated) the point at which a desire for what might have been is felt and understood for the very first time. The conversion is however not yet complete. By halting the narrative account of his immediate experiences and turning to rumination and conjecture, the narrator moves away from facing up to the very real misery the narrator observed. The narrator only imagines a fairer world and in so doing moves away from, rather than confronts the problem at this point in the poem.

The address of the poem seems to do two things at this point. Firstly, it seeks agreement between the social and political values of the narrator and the reader. The audience is expected to share a similar desire for social change. Secondly, the narrator seems to engage in an act of personal contemplation and self-exploration, a turning away from the reader that affirms the painful difference between the narrator and the audience. There is then a split between the inner, private

contemplation, the search for self-justification written into the line and the outward appeal to a set of ideal values shared publicly between the audience and the narrator. This is made all the more powerful when we consider that the narrator's trajectory towards Chartism echoes Saul's journey, travelling on the road to Damascus toward his own conversion, finding his own true calling, and later taking a new name, Paul.⁵³

Significantly, Paul was the first apostle to have no first hand knowledge of Christ. His conversion was an act of pure faith. Similarly, Jones is compelled to write when confronted by a vision of the human suffering the factory system created, rather than writing from his personal experience of such suffering. As a middle-class exile, Jones could hardly write as a subject that had endured the long, embittered struggle with the deprivation and hardship that poets such as Thomas Cooper had in their struggle to educate and subsequently write themselves into literary culture. Instead, echoing Paul's confessional speech before Agrippa, the ruler of Galilee, Jones's narrator recounts the moment of conversion to Chartism as an act of pure faith.⁵⁴

The narrator is painfully aware of, and experiences guilt for past mistakes. However, just as Paul remained obedient 'unto the heavenly vision,'⁵⁵ the narrator in the poem cannot but keep faith with the principles that elect him: 'But I heard my soul cry—who but cowards can fly, / While a tyrant yet tramples a slave?'⁵⁶ The separation between selfhood and soul, the hypocrisy of a privileged life lived at the expense of proletariat, is resolved by responding to the call of the soul. Instead of turning away from confronting the problem toward a utopian vision of fairness, the narrator is now resolved upon a course of action with self and soul

⁵² Ernest Jones, 'The Better Hope,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 2.

⁵³ 'And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.' Acts, 9:3-5, *Holy Bible*.

⁵⁴ Paul's account of his own conversion does bear an interesting parallel to Jones's poem. Paul begins, 'My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews'. Paul then tells how as a Pharisee he had 'persecuted' the early Christians, undergone a conversion on the road to Damascus, and been chosen by God to show to both Jews and Gentiles 'that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.' The rest of his life is spent serving Christianity. Acts 26:4-20, *Holy Bible*.

⁵⁵ Acts 26: 19, *Holy Bible*.

united. There is then, a double move in the poem: the moment of conversion is followed by the realisation of the election of the narrator to their enduring political mission. Only 'cowards' dare 'fly' or wish for 'what might have been fair'. The narrator's earlier movement from his 'father's house' into the world, followed by the recognition of the 'tyrant,' articulates the narrator's new-found sense of difference from bourgeois culture; a difference shared by the multitude of Chartist supporters.

Only by breaking out of the sphere of privilege is the narrator able to fully comprehend this tragedy and recognise a remedy by responding to the cry of the soul. The eeriness of the early part of poem undermines any sense of assurance on the part of the narrator: 'And I passed one and all—through each old fashioned hall, / And I wandered away and away!' The repetition at the end of the line is dreamy, euphonic and irresolute compared with the political and biblical resolve toward the end of the poem: 'Then I bound on my armour to face the rough world, / And I'm going to march with the rest'.⁵⁷ The past, once a site of personal pleasure, is now a site of personal, perhaps even continuous pain: a 'haunted ground'.⁵⁸ Consequently, the narrator has to remember that past as eerie and ghost-like.

Jones's poem also opens up to Chartist audiences, the possibility of breaking from the formulae of working-class conversion narratives. Regenia Gagnier notes of conversion narratives such as Mary Saxby's *Memoirs of a Female Vagrant*, and Josiah Basset's *Life of a Vagrant* that their authors were 'the mobile who must be stabilized'.⁵⁹ These narratives demonstrated that the bad could become good. However, they troublingly justify the consolidation of the accepted social order or class system, in their battle to bring dignity to the experience of a life of struggle.

⁵⁶ Ernest Jones, 'The Better Hope,' p.2

⁵⁷ Ernest Jones, 'The Better Hope,' *Chartist Poems*, p.2. See also Paul's orders to the Christians to 'Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.' Ephesians 6:11-13, *Holy Bible*.

⁵⁸ Ernest Jones, 'The Better Hope,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 1

⁵⁹ See her discussion of Josiah Basset's *Life of a Vagrant, or the Testimony of an Outcast to the Value and Truth of the Gospel*, in Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities. A History of Self-*

Jones's poem subverts the working-class conversion genre to suggest that the 'bad' are the privileged classes. Chartists are instead interpellated as 'good' subjects that produce resistance. Just as in Hebrews 7:19, from which Jones appears to have found the title for the poem, faith in one's ability to make the right moral choice, rather than blind obedience to the laws drawn up by state powers, is the most important thing: 'For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by which we draw nigh unto God.'⁶⁰ Though the poem might lack agency at the beginning, toward the end of the poem, a newly discovered, self-determined and responsible 'I' emerges. 'The Better Hope' is therefore an important poem that encodes Jones's estrangement from bourgeois culture and his (re-)conciliation to his new persona as a Chartist activist and emerging leader using very particular Christian ideas.

Although the modification and emergence of a new 'I' is important in Jones's poetry, his literary status was also consolidated by engaging with the work of other poets, entering into cultural and political dialogues with their work. Hugh M'Donald's poem, 'Gudesake lets Agree,' appeared alongside Ernest Jones's Chartist poem, 'A Chartist Chorus' in the *Northern Star* on June 6, 1846. Appalled by dissension between forms of radical opposition, M'Donald seemed moved, or 'elected' to write a poem on the subject of radical discord. Jones's poem later reappears in his collection *Chartist Poems and Fugitive Pieces*, first published in the following October.⁶¹ Indeed it is possible that Jones wrote his poem in response to M'Donald's, taken from the *People's Journal*, a progressive magazine aimed at middle-class radicals and artisans. The poems draw on two different ballad traditions. Their juxtaposition on the same page of the *Northern Star* alludes to the ballad forms employed by Robert Burns and William Wordsworth. They also set up a fundamental political debate between class co-operation on one hand, as put forward by M'Donald and the staunch class independence of the Chartists, as put forward by Jones. Hugh M'Donald's poem begins as follows:

Some eighteen hundred years ago,

Representation in Britain, 1832-1920, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 153

⁶⁰ Hebrews 7:19, *Holy Bible*.

⁶¹ See Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, p.78

Man's noblest teacher said'
 "A house divided 'gainst itself..."⁶²

Jones's 'A Chartist Chorus' begins:

Go cotton lords and corn lords go!
 Ye live on loom and acre
 But let be seen—some law between
 The giver and the taker.

The poem ends:

Our lives are not your sheaves to glean—
 Our rights your bales to barter:
 Give all their own—from cot to throne,
 But ours shall be THE CHARTER!⁶³

Written in Scots dialect and situating itself within a Burnsian tradition,⁶⁴ the appearance of M'Donald's poem in both middle-class radical and Chartist publications acts as a plea for radical unity: "'Tis discord fell breeds a' our wae— / Then Gudesake lets agree.'⁶⁵ M'Donald's poem also addressed its audiences through a Christian rhetoric that pleaded for the unification of public opinion. By writing in the Burnsian tradition, the poet also demonstrated a specific literary tradition that the author felt personally attuned to. The poem's explicit, imploring appeal, 'Then Gudesake lets agree,' assumes shared Christian values between the narrator and the audience addressed, which are important to the sense of political outcome the poem seeks to confirm. The orality of the poem, its use of dialect, seeks to overcome some of the distance between the poet and the reader, particularly the distance between its progressive artisan and middle class context and its place on the literary page of the *Northern Star*. The poem seeks to emotionally affect its audiences, while producing a political message able to confirm shared values between a narrator and reader, affirming both subject positions as mutual members of a political movement.

⁶² M'Donald, Hugh. 'Gudesake Let's Agree,' *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p. 3

⁶³ Ernest Jones, 'A Chartist Chorus,' *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p. 3

⁶⁴ M'Donald's poem uses the same ballad-metre and alternating rhyme-scheme as Robert Burns' 'Ye Flowery Banks.' M'Donald breaks with Burns' poem by writing octets rather than quatrains.

⁶⁵ Hugh M'Donald, 'Gudesake Let's Agree,' *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p. 3

Jones's reply, 'A Chartist Chorus' appearing alongside M'Donald's poem, consolidates the construction of Chartist collective identity against an elite culture, addressing a common enemy and seeking to affirm the social power of its Chartist readers. Like M'Donald's poem, Jones's poem is also written in ballad-metre. Addressing industrialists and landowners, Jones's poem speaks out from within the ranks of the Chartists: 'Go! Cotton Lords! And Corn Lords, go! / Ye live on loom and acre'.⁶⁶ Rejecting a union with the middle-classes, Jones's poem is confrontational, seeking to consolidate Chartism against bourgeois power, cementing his own place alongside his fellow Chartists: 'We heed you not—we need you not, / But you can't do without us.'⁶⁷ The repeated imperatives in the poem's first line, 'Go! Cotton Lords! And Corn Lords, go!', are accentuated by Jones's inclusion of five heavy stresses within four feet, which breaks from the iambic stress pattern that dominates the rest of the poem. The poem also breaks from alternate lines of four and three iambic feet by ending the second and fourth lines with additional unstressed syllables, which seems to indicate a specific literary allusion to a Wordsworthian variant of the ballad form:

Go! Treasure well your miser's store
 With crown and cross and sabre!
 Despite you all—we'll break your thrall
 And have our land and labour.⁶⁸

The appearance of these two poems together on the same page of the *Northern Star* brings the Wordsworthian ballad into a dialogue with the Burnsian ballad tradition. Jones's stress pattern in the above stanza is comparable with the extract from Wordsworth's 'Lines Written at a Small Distance from My House'⁶⁹ below, especially the caesuras in the first and third lines, though Jones's above are more exaggerated:

Love, now an universal birth,
 From heart to heart is stealing,
 From earth to man, from man to earth.

⁶⁶ Ernest Jones, 'A Chartist Chorus,' *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p.3. In Jones's *Chartist Poems*, the line appears as 'Go! live on loom and acre'.

⁶⁷ Ernest Jones, 'A Chartist Chorus,' *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p.3

⁶⁸ Ernest Jones, 'A Chartist Chorus,' *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p.3

⁶⁹ Compare also Wordsworth's 'Simon Lee,' 'The Tables Turned,' and 'Ellen Irwin,' in R.L. Brett & A.R. Jones (ed.) *Wordsworth & Coleridge, Lyrical Ballads*, London: Routledge, 1991,

—It is the hour of feeling.⁷⁰

Jones addresses middle-class audiences through a variant of the ballad metre that demonstrates its place, as Anne Janowitz has noted, ‘between the plebeian and polite, customary and liberal, literary cultures.’⁷¹ Jones’s attack on the privileged classes, accusing them of despotism, relocates that tradition with plebeian culture. More than just the individual poems themselves, the dialogue between Jones’s and M’Donald’s poems confront what Janowitz describes as ‘the popular tradition of ballads’ that had become of great interest to ‘elite literary [culture]’⁷² and seeks to repatriate the ballad to what Patrick Joyce calls a ‘righteous and dispossessed “people”’.⁷³

The language of ‘A Chartist Chorus’ also confronts the ruling powers using Christian rhetoric. Jones states that: ‘Our lives are not your sheaves to glean— /Our rights your bales to barter’⁷⁴ Again Jones articulates the staunch independence of the Chartists and their difference from privileged culture. As well as offering an economic critique of the relation of the worker to the means of production,⁷⁵ the metaphor also carries religious meaning. Biblically wheat symbolises the entry into spiritual life at the Day of Judgement.⁷⁶ Only God has the right to ultimately determine the length of human life and ‘glean’ at the Day of Judgement his chosen people, the remnant that had lived fit and proper lives.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ William Wordsworth, ‘Lines Written at a Small Distance from My House,’ R.L. Brett & A.R. Jones (eds.) Wordsworth & Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, London: Routledge, 1991 p.59

⁷¹ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 34

⁷² Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 33

⁷³ Patrick Joyce, ‘A People and a Class,’ in Patrick Joyce (ed.) *Class*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 162

⁷⁴ Ernest Jones, ‘A Chartist Chorus,’ *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p.3. Jones would later not rule out a ‘cordial union between the middle and working classes,’ so long as the basis for that union was ‘the Six Points of the Charter.’ Report of speech made by Ernest Jones, ‘Middlesex County Meeting. Triumph of Chartism.—The Police and the People,’ *Northern Star*, May 27th, 1848, p.8

⁷⁵ The poem demonstrates that workers will no longer tolerate the unequal distribution of political power and wealth which makes workers, in a grimly cannibalistic image, the corn on which the rich are able to feed.

⁷⁶ Matthew, 13:30 ‘Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.’ *Holy Bible*.

⁷⁷ In Christ’s parable of the marriage feast, the requirement of the guests to observe proper rituals and customs was more than just a payment of respect to the marriage of the king’s son. It was also a show of respect to the office of marriage generally, which in turn would signify their fitness to take part in the celebration. ‘The Kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son.’ The king’s guests refused to attend, and tended their business interests instead. The king again sent out servants to muster together some guests to celebrate the wedding,

Clearly Christian rhetoric provided an important discourse that encoded self-definition and self-determination.

M'Donald's ballad found an audience firstly in the middle-class radical press. By discussing the oppression of a people by a non-specific third party, 'ithers,' M'Donald's poem assumed the sympathetic support of middle-class radicals distinct from those 'ithers', and avoids associating radicals with those not sympathetic to their politics:

We sow, and ithers reap the fruit;
 We weave, and ithers wear:
 We're scrimpit baith in caup and cog,
 That knaves may hae good cheer.⁷⁸

Jones's poem is more intent on addressing the oppressors of Chartists directly: 'You forge no more—you fold no more / Your cankering chains around us'.⁷⁹ Both poems seek to interpellate their audiences through very different strategies. Jones's poem, appearing above M'Donald's in the *Northern Star*, uses ballad form to attack the middle-classes, echoing the bourgeois form of the ballad tradition popularised by Wordsworth. In other words, Jones condemned the middle-classes by turning their own values upon them. Jones's use of form aligned him closely with the labouring classes and thus advocates the ballad form as a popular, rather than an elite literary form.⁸⁰ The printing of these two poems together appears to debate whether Chartists could be reconciled to sympathetic middle-class readers who, by their very status, occupy positions that consolidate an economically oppressive regime, or whether Chartists could best serve their objectives by taking full control of their 'land and labour'.⁸¹

but one guest offended by not wearing his wedding garment. 'Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called but few are chosen.' Matthew 22:1-13, *Holy Bible*.

⁷⁸ Hugh M'Donald, 'Gudesake, Let's Agree,' *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p.3

⁷⁹ Ernest Jones, 'A Chartist Chorus,' *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p.3

⁸⁰ Popular, that is, from the perspective of a large body of people interpellated as identifying with the 'us' of Jones's poem. See also Raymond Williams's definition of 'popular' in Raymond Williams, *Keywords. A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, London: Fontana, 1976, p. 237

⁸¹ Ernest Jones, 'A Chartist Chorus,' *Northern Star*, June 6, 1846, p.3

The difference between the two ballads (one calling for class alliance, the other fiercely confrontational), between modes of address across the poems demonstrates what Maidment describes as ‘technical difficulties of achieving significant, communal rhetoric’⁸² by virtue of the bourgeois notions of class alliance that serve to undermine Chartist notions of independence. The dialogue between Jones and M’Donald demonstrates how each poet articulated their own specific affiliations to certain literary traditions whilst encoding their own particular political messages. Political consciousness is created at the points at which individuals, clusters, and groups graze against each other, repel each other, or are kept apart by social forces, but that sense of separation is itself instrumental in the raising of political consciousness and cultural growth through an awareness of difference. As John Frow notes, culture ‘refers to a social group seen as other, or to my own group’s ways and customs *as seen by another group*; it is always “an idea of the Other (even when I reassume it for myself).”’⁸³

This difference can also produce a split address in Jones’s Chartist poetry, producing more than one mode of address. This poetically symbolises political discord between different audience situations and their particular political interests within the same poem. In ‘Our Destiny,’ the poetic voice is blunt about the range of audiences addressed and attacks both the oppressor and the oppressed for failing to act against their enslavement: ‘Hear! Trampers of the millions!—Hear! Benders to the few’.⁸⁴ In other poems Jones can be far more subtle and ambivalent about who is being addressed at any one time. Moreover, the mode of address will be perceived differently in different audience situations. In ‘A Chartist Chorus,’ the lines ‘And now we’ll be—as bold and free/As we’ve been tame and slavish,’⁸⁵ may be read by the ruling power as a threat to it. It may also be read as a form of carnivalesque license to Chartists to exercise their freedom to secure Chartist goals in their role as representatives of common rights. Here, the language of common rights belongs to subjects who seek to justify their political status. It provides an important but fraught territory for arguing political solidarity

⁸² Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives*, p.24

⁸³ John Frow quotes from Frederic Jameson, ‘On “Cultural Studies”’, *Social Text*, 34 (1993), 34. in John Frow, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p. 2

⁸⁴ Ernest Jones, ‘Our Destiny,’ *Chartist Poems*, p. 6

⁸⁵ Ernest Jones, ‘A Chartist Chorus,’ p. 10

among Chartist supporters, while maintaining a clear sense of separation, or difference from a ruling power that actively excluded the Chartists from political discourse. The development of Chartist activity, as Miles Taylor notes, had alarmed the Whigs who recognised the legitimacy of extensions to ‘parliamentary radicalism,’ but also used the constitution as ‘a vehicle for and defence against popular politics.’⁸⁶ Taylor further notes that the Tory leader Robert Peel never accepted ‘the legitimacy of [Chartism’s] constitutional claims’ and in 1842 had observed that ‘the charter amounted to an unjustified “impeachment of the whole constitution.”’⁸⁷

While in his poems Jones might play upon middle-class fears of Chartist activism, the Chartists themselves are often addressed using ancient names and traditional titles to legitimate them as cultural and political subjects, while the narrator takes a much more vanguardist stance, urging Chartists on to work towards their political rights. In his poem ‘Our Summons,’ for example, Jones emphasises the nobility of the birth common to all Chartists, and tells his audiences that they need:

No Changing Norman Titles,
To hide your English name
But the better one of *freeman*,
And the blazoning of fame.⁸⁸

Jones quite frequently addresses Chartists in ways that seek to legitimate them as political subjects through a shared nationalist genealogy. ‘Our Rally,’ begins with the address ‘My countrymen...’⁸⁹ and in ‘The two Races.—Part I,’ Jones calls upon ‘Ye sons of saxon chivalry’ who had ‘tamed the tyrant’s chivalry’ in earlier days, and points out that there is yet ‘misery to banish!’⁹⁰ Particular titles and symbols in Jones’s poems encourage their readers to consider themselves as members of a particular group, and allow Chartists to perceive themselves as both a separate people and as true representatives of the nation. The title of the poem is

⁸⁶ Miles Taylor, ‘Rethinking the Chartists,’ *Historical Journal*, 39, 1996, p. 489

⁸⁷ Miles Taylor cites *Hansard*, 3, May, 1842, in Miles Taylor ‘Rethinking the Chartists,’ *Historical Journal*, 39, 1996, p. 490

⁸⁸ Ernest Jones, ‘Our Summons,’ *Chartist Poems*, p.3

⁸⁹ Ernest Jones, ‘Our Rally,’ *Chartist Poems*, p.8

⁹⁰ Ernest Jones, ‘The Two Races.—Part I,’ *Chartist Poems*, p.7

itself significant, punning on the legalistic meanings of the word 'Summons,' with Jones as Chartism's advocate. It calls all Chartists to attention for a specific purpose. A Summons can also be a call to attend and account for oneself at a particular place. In that sense, the title has a collective dimension to it, addressing all Chartists using the collective pronoun 'our'. It also evokes the general sense of an urgent call or command, highlighting the election of the Chartists to a particular set of tasks, to a particular purpose or destiny. Indeed the poem ends by urging Chartists to their true labour, the gaining of their rights:

Up! Labourers in the vineyard!
 Prepare ye for the toil!
 For the sun shines on the furrows,
 And the seed is in the soil.⁹¹

More explicitly in another of Jones's poems, 'The Patriot's Test,' the narrator identifies the criteria that defines the true patriot. 'We ask not the wealth of his acres broad, / Nor the sum of his thousands won: / But we ask of him how he has served his God, / And the worth of the work he's done.'⁹² In 'The March of Freedom,' Chartists are among a chosen people: 'Liberty' passes over Europe on the crest of the revolutions of 1848 and eventually 'touched the British soil...And loudly here she chided; / "My chosen people, ye! / I gave ye many chances: / Why so long in growing free?"'⁹³ The narrator conveys both disappointment and a heightened sense of what John Wolffe describes as 'eschatological expectation', that is, anticipating the ends to which 'history would lead when the purpose of God reached its climax' at the final judgement.⁹⁴ In other words, 'Liberty' seeks to enact the redemption of the Chartists by calling them into their inheritance, and questioning why they have not already taken their opportunity. It is the sole responsibility of the Chartists themselves to recognise themselves as called into that role, thus fulfilling their covenant with the authority that calls to them, and

⁹¹ Ernest Jones, 'Our Summons,' *Chartist Poems*, p.3

⁹² Ernest Jones, 'The Patriot's Test,' *Northern Star*, January 29th, 1848, p.3

⁹³ Ernest Jones, 'The March of Freedom,' *Northern Star*, March 18th, 1848, p. 3

⁹⁴ John Wolffe, 'A transatlantic perspective: protestantism and national identities in mid-nineteenth-century Britain and the United States,' in, Tony Claydon & Ian McBride, *Protestantism and National Identity*, p.293; Matthew Black (ed.) *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, London: Nelson, 1962, p.484

attain their place in a new political order.⁹⁵ The notion of the Chartists as walking the path to a new political community is reprised in Jones's poem 'The Slave-Song':

No receding—no retreating!
Every man must do his part.
While the march of freedom's beating
In the blood of every heart.⁹⁶

Both the confessional narrative in 'The Better Hope,' the representation of his 'calling' as a poet through literary form in 'A Chartist Chorus' and the powerful presence of the narrator in his poems, were ways to negotiate a place within Chartist literary culture as a poet and leader, standing alongside, yet remaining separate from the rest of the Chartists.⁹⁷ In Jones's poem, 'Our Warning,' for example, Janowitz points out that the metre resembles that of Shelley's popular poem 'Men of England'. Jones mockingly addresses the ruling powers: 'Ye lords of golden argosies! /And Prelate, prince and peer.' The ruling powers are then told of the gathering of workers from all parts of the British Isles, from England, Scotland, and 'the green isle of the West' in pursuit of their rights:

We seek to injure no man;
We ask but for our right;
We hold out to the foeman
The hand that he would smite!⁹⁸

However, the consequences of the state withholding those rights, or forcefully quelling Chartist activity are represented later in the poem using revelatory and apocalyptic language to imagine the fall of social division. The poem anticipates what Jones would later describe as the need 'to break through these barriers of exclusiveness—to unlink the chains of prejudice'⁹⁹:

Then your armies shall be scattered,

⁹⁵ See for example, Deuteronomy 9:1, 'Hear O Israel: Thou *art* to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven.'

⁹⁶ Ernest Jones, 'The Slave-Song,' *Northern Star*, June 5th 1847, p. 3

⁹⁷ Anne Janowitz notes that in 'Jones's assertions of a collective identity...there is something of an attempt to build a place for his own consciousness within that collectivity.' See Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 166

⁹⁸ Ernest Jones, 'Our Warning,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 4

⁹⁹ Ernest Jones, 'Soldier and Citizen,' *Northern Star*, April 1, 1848, p. 8

If at us their steel be thrust,—
And your fortresses be battered,
Like atoms in the dust.¹⁰⁰

Jones's prediction, 'your armies shall be scattered,' opens up a gulf between present and future moments, and just as in 'The Better Hope,' the Bible provides the Chartist reader with both a precedent and a narrative through which the overturning of state power might be envisioned. His poem alludes to Psalm 68: 'Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered: let them also that hate him flee before him.'¹⁰¹ In 'Our Warning,' Chartist readers are interpellated through an archetypal literature as a righteous, wronged people who are 'gathering up' together to 'ask but for our right' as 'justice' dictates.¹⁰² Yet unlike 'The Better Hope,' 'Our Warning' remains ambivalent about the nature of the power that will scatter the forces of oppression by using a passive form: 'Then your armies shall be scattered...'. In 'The Better Hope,' an agent of social change, a newly responsible 'I' in the poem, was clearly identified. However, at the end of 'The Better Hope,' that social change had yet to be achieved.¹⁰³ 'Our Warning,' identifies the completion of the task at some future point, but fails to ascribe agency to the apocalyptic events, portraying an unavoidable destiny prescribed by the future actions of some unseen force, rather than arguing a clear radical course of action through human, historical forces. The unanswered question in 'The Better Hope' is 'when,' while in 'Our Warning' it is 'how' can radical change be achieved. What is more important to 'Our Warning' is seeing the coming redemption of society as an inspirational object of the imagination, rather than the political process by which that society might be attained. The social contract, the covenant, through which individuals recognise and oblige each other, is incorporated into an apocalyptic image of the final goal that the audiences the poem imagines are encouraged to invest in. Consequently, the political process is sublimated in deference to imagining the attainment of the final goal through biblical language.

¹⁰⁰ Ernest Jones, 'Our Warning,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 4

¹⁰¹ Psalms 68:1, *Holy Bible*, The Psalms were also an important influence on Jones's prison poetry. See Chapter 4.

¹⁰² Ernest Jones, 'Our Warning,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 4

¹⁰³ 'Then I bound on my armour to face the rough world,/And I'm going to march with the rest...' See Ernest Jones, 'The Better Hope,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 2.

Jones's poems also tapped into the Chartist imagination by acting as containers for radical memory. They produce a new national history of labour and struggle as a signifier of patriotism, as opposed to the accepted official history of the nation. His poem 'Blackstone Edge,' commemorates his maiden speech at a major outdoor meeting in the 'natural amphitheatre' of Blackstone Edge in the Pennines, near Halifax.¹⁰⁴ Indeed Jones was to forge a close relationship with Halifax, acting as its Chartist parliamentary candidate.¹⁰⁵ In the very first stanza of the poem, industry was anathema to the natural, God-given order of the natural world:

O'er the plains and cities far away;
 All lorn and lost the morning lay,
 When sunk the sun, at break of day,
 In smoke of mill and factory.¹⁰⁶

Later in the poem, a 'sounding song of liberty,' heralds the union of 'Old *Yorkshire*' with '*Lancashire*' who together join in the 'battle-prayer, / Of: Death to class monopoly!' The 'descant' of the Chartists runs both upward to 'heaven' but also outward to the rest of human society. The poem represents the Chartist meeting as addressing two audiences. It first goes 'up to Heaven,' seeking out the election of the Chartists as a chosen people, while the earthly address to the 'distant cities' symbolises both the difference of the Chartists as an autonomous collective separate from the privileged classes, but also their independent strength, able to make those cities quake: 'And up to Heaven the descant ran, With no cold roof betwixt God and man...Then distant cities quaked to hear, / When rolled from that high hill the cheer...'¹⁰⁷ Indeed in 'Labour's History,' Jones described his Chartist reader as a 'strong self-liberator'.¹⁰⁸ The Chartist collective represented in 'Blackstone Edge' reaches out to and threatens the political premise upon which modern industrial society is built. The poem also makes deliberate use of a literary model that was popular in the mid-nineteenth century, Thomas Campbell's 'Hohenlinden.' This poem is described by Mary Ruth Miller as a

¹⁰⁴ Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, p. 82; See, John Saville, *Ernest Jones*, p. 88. The poem can be found in Ernest Jones's, *Chartist Poems*.

¹⁰⁵ Jones's first election address appeared in the *Northern Star*, July 3rd, 1847. See Saville, John. *Ernest Jones*, p. 95

¹⁰⁶ Ernest Jones, 'Blackstone Edge,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁷ Ernest Jones, 'Blackstone Edge,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ Ernest Jones, 'Labour's History,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 10.

'martial lyric,' a poem of 'vigorous and energetic movement' that recounted the defeat of the Austrian army by French forces at Hohenlinden in 1800.¹⁰⁹

Significantly both poems have commemorative functions that convey both poets' reactions to events witnessed, as well as fixing those events for the posterity of history. Thomas Campbell had witnessed the capture of Ratibon during the Napoleonic wars, and had visited Hohenlinden about six weeks before the battle took place.¹¹⁰ Jones's poem ascribes a commemorative function to his first Blackstone Edge meeting. His links with Halifax were further cemented through the republication of 'Blackstone Edge' in the early 1850s, when Jones was trying to re-establish Chartism. In the build up to the annual meeting at Blackstone Edge held on the 19th of June 1853, Jones reprinted the poem in *The People's Paper*. Its first press appearance had been in the *Northern Star* on 22 August 1847, having earlier appeared in his *Chartist Poems*. The reprinting of 'Blackstone Edge' gave it a commemorative function reminding readers of earlier Chartist activity, as well as the first big Chartist meeting Jones had attended in the north of England. He intended the 1853 meeting at Blackstone Edge to be a 'people's resurrection' that would re-energise Chartism, as well as possibly remind the reader of Jones's inception into Chartism earlier in 1846, thus using poetry as a vehicle for radical collective memory.¹¹¹ Meetings at Blackstone Edge had by 1853 become a regular event,¹¹² and the subsequent reprinting of Jones' early Chartist poems in 1853 was a way of locating the reader both historically and presently as a reader, as well as reaffirming Jones's status as a poet. Poetry had clearly become an important tool in mapping Chartist history both in the press, and psychologically through the memories that the reprinting of certain poems sought to evoke.

Although Campbell is now a minor literary figure, he was once popular enough to have eleven of his poems, 'Hohenlinden' among them, included in Palgrave's

¹⁰⁹ Mary Ruth Miller, *Thomas Campbell*, Boston: Twayne, 1978, p. 85

¹¹⁰ Mary Ruth Miller, *Thomas Campbell*, p. 86

¹¹¹ Ernest Jones (ed.) *The People's Paper*, no. 55, 21 May, 1853, p.1. 'The Better Hope,' reprinted in *The People's Paper*, no. 56, 28 May, 1853, p.6

¹¹² Kate Tiller, 'Late Chartism: Halifax 1847-58,' James Epstein & Dorothy Thompson (eds.) *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 329

Golden Treasury in 1861.¹¹³ Jones followed the form of 'Hohenlinden' exactly, and wrote 'Blackstone Edge' using Campbell's iambic tetrameter with a triple rhyme in each quatrain, with the last line of each stanza sharing the same feminine rhyme. Compare for example, the third stanza of Campbell and Jones's poems respectively:

By torch and trumpet fast array'd
 Each horseman drew his battle-blade,
 And furious every charger neigh'd,
 To join the dreadful revelry.¹¹⁴

And grew the glorious music higher,
 When, pouring with his heart on fire,
 Old *Yorkshire* came with *Lancashire*
 And all his noblest chivalry.¹¹⁵

Campbell's poem was well known to nineteenth-century middle-class readers, and was well received by critics like Sir Walter Scott and William Hazlitt, along with Campbell's other great work, *Specimens of British Poets*, first published in seven volumes in 1819.¹¹⁶ Campbell, like Jones after him, had been a journalist and lecturer who remained a 'constant sympathiser with revolutionaries seeking liberty for their people.'¹¹⁷ Between 1821 and 1830 Campbell was editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*, and during the continental revolutionary activity of the early nineteenth century, he published articles on the causes of Polish, German, Greek, Spanish and Italian freedom fighters.¹¹⁸ Jones persistently romanticised a cyclical vision of human history, often representing Chartists as the true nobility. In 'The Two Races.—Part II' he notes that, although the contemporary privileged classes were traitors both to the labourers and former generations of nobles, 'another strain is sounding,' indicating that a new race has risen / Of more than

¹¹³ See F.T. Palgrave (ed.) *The Golden Treasury of the Best Songs and Lyrical Poems in the English Language*, London: Macmillan, 1861. My thanks go to Michael Wolff for pointing out Campbell's inclusion in the *Golden Treasury* to me, and to all the other members of VICTORIA who commented on the reception of Thomas Campbell's poetry in the early to mid-nineteenth century.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Campbell, 'Hohenlinden,' from Thomas Campbell, *The Pleasures of Hope, Gertrude of Wyoming, and Other Poems*, London: T. Nelson, 1852, p. 107

¹¹⁵ Jones Ernest. 'Blackstone Edge,' *Chartist Songs and Fugitive Pieces*, p. 11

¹¹⁶ Mary Ruth Miller, *Thomas Campbell*, p. 87; pp.122-127

¹¹⁷ Mary Ruth Miller, 'Thomas Campbell and General Pepé,' *Notes and Queries*, 45 (2), June 1998, p.211

¹¹⁸ Mary Ruth Miller, 'Thomas Campbell and General Pepé,' p.211

knightly worth' that was 'breaking from its prison / In the lowlands of the earth'.¹¹⁹ As a member of the Fraternal Democrats and the son of a British army officer,¹²⁰ Jones saw Campbell as a symbol of earlier European resistance to despotism.

But the influence of European radical activity generally on Chartism must not be overstated. Miles Taylor concludes that despite its outwardly European profile, Chartism, in keeping with its English radical traditions, maintained a decidedly 'protestant' perspective. For Chartism, the chances of 'imbibing continental ideas were fewer than has often been suggested'.¹²¹ The European refugees who fled to Britain in the 1840s were wary of any exposure that might threaten their fragile support, or lead to expulsion from Britain.¹²² Further, the domestic disagreements among Chartist leaders, the 'ideological ties that linked Chartism to liberalism' and the failure to 'generate meaningful critiques of industrial capitalism,' according to Margot Finn, were to distance late Chartism from European revolutionary activity.¹²³

Not unlike 'Blackstone Edge,' Jones's poem 'The New Year's Song of Our Exile' similarly evokes the notion of the cultural, political and social difference between the Chartist supporter and the enfranchised classes.¹²⁴ The poem uses the topical issue of transportation to represent the alienation of England's true subjects from the nation. But the ever-frustrated hopefulness of the poem presents the unattained repatriation of the exiled Chartist to England as an aspirational objective of the better, truly Christian life to come: what Tony Claydon and Ian McBride describe as the 'unrealised objective' of Christianised national identity.¹²⁵ England is by turn both the Promised Land and, in its present hypocritical and irreligious

¹¹⁹ Ernest Jones, *Chartist Poems*, p. 8

¹²⁰ The Association of Fraternal Democrats supported political refugees, organising accommodation and a means of subsistence for them. See Ashton, Rosemary. *Little Germany. German Refugees in Victorian Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 34; John Saville, *Ernest Jones*, p. 13

¹²¹ Miles Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism 1847-1860*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995, p.111-112.

¹²² Miles Taylor, *The Decline of British Radicalism*, p.111-112. See also Rosemary Ashton, *Little Germany*, p. 34

¹²³ Margot C Finn, *After Chartism. Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 62.

¹²⁴ Ernest Jones, 'The New Year's Song of Our Exile,' *Northern Star*, Jan 16, 1847, p. 3.

condition, a punitive state of 'cruel laws'. The poem opens with the following stanza:

What Messages from England?
 What news of blither cheer?
 What promise for the exile
 What better hope New Year?

The poem is written in the voice of an exiled, but patriotic Chartist, anxious for news from England and ever hopeful of repatriation, and uses separation and loss as its primary theme. Not only do the enfranchised classes impose their values and codes of morality through measures such as the New Poor Law, but also attempt to remake other distant cultures in their own image. The poem satirises expansionism and the spread of religion to far away countries, but it is a hypocritical faith that preaches piety and quietism, rather than representing the poor and their plight. The difference of the 'alien' culture from such liberal endeavours confirms the naturalness of the philanthropic enterprise, reaffirming the logic of liberalism, but also impoverishing the British poor:

Dost vault the proud church dome
 Above the houseless head?
 And, sending aliens *Bibles*,
 Deny thy children bread?

The affection the narrator has for England and English national identity is somewhat troubled, at once fiercely critical of the English nationalist chauvinism upon which an empire is fortified, but also longing to rediscover or reveal a true national identity. The poem commences, the Chartist reader might imagine, by addressing Chartist audiences, yet in the second stanza, the mode of address is far more open-ended. The poem now may be addressing the ruling powers, or Chartists, or both:

O England! thou my country!
 What dost thou there afar?
 Dost dream of Eastern victories,
 And truth-destroying war?

¹²⁵ Tony Claydon & Ian McBride, 'The trials of the chosen peoples,' pp.27-29.

The geographical distance between the country the poetic voice speaks of and the poetic voice itself gives the poem critical objectivity. Using the interrogative form, the poem examines the crimes of England's expansionism carried out through the trade practices and violence that were first used to oppress its own people, and are now replicated abroad.

Asking questions of the reader might seem to open up the conditions of access to poetry, enabling audiences to recognise themselves as social actors able to give answers. However, the poem also ensures that the audience's literary experience is from the perspective of an authoritative figure that delimits the reader's perspective through the use of the interrogative: the power to set the questions. The narrator occupies a 'centre' in the poem to which audiences are encouraged to respond, and through that response, recognise themselves. Outwardly, the use of the interrogative in the poem appears to be about adjusting the narrator's previous knowledge of England using answers sought from the reader, or audience. However, the narrator also acts as an authority or advocate, simultaneously conditioning Chartist agendas while seeking to empower a Chartist audience. Acting as the 'Poor Man's Advocate', the narrator demonstrates organisation and leadership to potential non-Chartist audiences. Further into the poem, the mode of address initially appears less ambivalent, and explicitly condemns the cruelty of the British state:

Art rearing cruel scaffolds,
 Thy cruel laws to aid,
 Where criminals may hang
 The criminal they made?

As well as addressing state power, the narrator also asks if those who share such sentiments can really be considered upholders of social injustice and true defenders of the rights of the freeborn Englishman. The mode of address is troublingly ambivalent at this point in the poem. The emphasis on labour in the poem, the building of churches, prisons, the construction of gallows seems to point to the complicity of the workers with their own enslavement. However, the poem also makes it clear that the ever-increasing exploitation of labour can only lead to the point at which workers revolt. First the building of churches to pacify

the poor, then the building of prisons to incarcerate them, and ultimately the construction of gallows to take their lives. The marked shift in mode of address splits the following stanza into two halves and emphasises the decisive break:

Dost think that slaves shall truckle
Forever to the blow?
Rise, nature's God, and rouse them!
Up, man! and thunder—No!

Jones's shifts in mode of address, especially the reported speech 'No,' signifies a clear break. The split in the address interrogates the offshore supremacy so vigorously celebrated in patriotic songs like James Thompson's 'Rule Britannia' that eulogised the Act of Union of 1707 and interpellated a united nation by celebrating conquests abroad.¹²⁶ As Linda Colley notes, Thompson's popular song had a chorus 'so rousing that it hardly seems to matter that it is Britain's supremacy *offshore* that [was] being celebrated, not its internal unity'; in Thompson's song, whatever the British are, 'they are not slaves.'¹²⁷ By emphasising the 'Englishness' of the slaves, Jones's poem refuses to define the slave as exotic or alien as Dickens later described Coketown in *Hard Times*, but echoes instead John Henry Bramwich's 'Hymn' in which he notes 'Britannia's Sons, though slaves ye be, / God your creator made you free'.¹²⁸ In Jones's poem the slave is, quite blatantly, the enslaved English worker. Yet the narrator still longs for repatriation, and ends with the plea:

Oh! Call me back to England!
Where'er ye rest or roam,
My dear—dear friends in England,
Oh! Take me—take me home!¹²⁹

¹²⁶ 'Rule Britannia, rule the waves;/Britons never will be slaves,' James Thompson, 'Rule Britannia,' from *Alfred: a Masque*, M.H. Abrams, (ed.) *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. I, sixth edition, 1993, p. 2453

¹²⁷ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 - 1837*, London: Pimlico, 1994, p.11.

¹²⁸ Charles Dickens described Coketown as 'the painted face of a savage' in *Hard Times*, (Wordsworth Editions Ltd.), 1995. p. 18; John Henry Bramwich, 'A Hymn,' in Y. Kovalev (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.118 . E.P. Mead's Chartist poem 'The Steam King,' also questions national identity as delineated in public song, and describes workers as 'white slaves' in a poem with a jaunty, nursery-rhyme rhythm. See Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives*, p. 41

¹²⁹ Ernest Jones, 'The New Year's Song of Our Exile,' *Northern Star*, Jan 16, 1847, p. 3

Not only has the exile lost possession of England, a nation has lost one of its true patriots; a faithful defender of a temporarily vanquished English national integrity founded upon a libertarian tradition. The exile yearns to return 'home', and to begin to redress the double exile in the poem: the exile of the transported Chartist, and that of a nation exiled through the enslavement of its own people. The repatriation of the emblematic 'exile' to England will begin to redress the loss of the nation, and commence the regaining of England as a land of liberty: as a promised land. The poem encourages Chartists to ask of themselves who and what Chartists are, what they are supposed to be, and what their co-existence with an oppressive state and its practices makes them, or intends them to be. The role of the Chartist is interpellated (using the geographically displaced voice of the exile), as defender of and heir to a promised land that is both 'future' and temporarily 'lost.' The poem seeks to move its Chartist audience through the differences between the past, present exile and future way of life, while seeking to keep the poem politically pertinent to the reader. Chartists are encouraged to enter into a relationship with that idealised future state, just as the poetic voice reaches ahead into its own future, asking to be taken home.¹³⁰ In so doing the poem allies millenarian tendencies with popular constitutionalism that enshrined ancient sources of legitimacy such as the Glorious Revolution of 1688, Anglo-Saxon law, the Bill of Rights and the Magna Carta.¹³¹ The poem does not try to directly persuade, but seeks to display and test bourgeois imperial aspirations. It juxtaposes bourgeois values against the implied values of Chartist readers, who are the defenders of the last vestiges of the British constitution.

The physical expenditure of energy also often acts as a metaphor for political action. Poems such as Jones's 'Onward,' emphasise Chartists are heirs to a long radical tradition in which the physical march of the Chartist is compared with the march of radical history through time. The poem emphasises human endeavour and struggle in the agitation for political rights: 'We have not marched so long a way / To yield at last, like craven things'. Chartist activity is also irrepressible,

¹³⁰ There is also perhaps a parallel with God's conditional promise of entry into the promised land to his chosen people: 'And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the Lord will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service.' Exodus 12: 25, *Holy Bible*.

¹³¹ James A. Epstein, *Radial Expression. Political Language, Ritual and Symbol in England, 1790-*

encoded in natural images that are revelatory and prophetic: 'Go stay the earthquake in the rock, Go quench the hot volcano's shock... / Ye cannot build the walls to hold / A daring heart and spirit bold.'¹³² Similarly in 'Onward and Upward', Jones identifies a radical current that both draws humankind along with it, yet is clearly beyond its control:

Right onward the river is rolling,
Its fountains are pulsing below,
And 'tis not in human controlling,
To turn but a wave of its flow!¹³³

Problematically, apocalyptic visions that attempted to make sense of unknowable forces were often a distraction from 'the real "signs of the times"'.¹³⁴ As described earlier, Jones's poem, 'Our Warning,' seems to suffer from just such a problem, by not ascribing any agency to the processes by which social change could be attained: 'Then your armies shall be scattered,—/If at us their steel be thrust'.¹³⁵ The failure of Jones's Chartist poems to consistently debate the causes of social and political disadvantage are further compounded by their often nostalgic look back to earlier models of social harmony. Again in Jones's 'Our Warning':

We want no courtiers golden,
And ye no bayonets need;
If tales of ages olden
Arightly ye will read.¹³⁶

The nostalgia of the poem relies for poetic effect on the contrast between two different moments; a present moment of inequality and a yearned-for, lost, supposedly more egalitarian past recorded for posterity in history and fable: the 'tales of ages olden' that reminds Chartists of their present loss.¹³⁷ The notion of loss is perhaps best exemplified in his poem 'The Cornfield and the Factory,' in which an agrarian idyll of 'cornfields' where 'the lark is in heaven' and human

1850, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 20-21

¹³² Ernest Jones, 'Onward,' Kovalev, Y. (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 150

¹³³ Ernest Jones, 'Onward and Upward,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 16

¹³⁴ Andrew Sanders, 'Dickens and the Millennium,' in Juliet John & Alice Jenkins, (ed.) *Rethinking Victorian Culture*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000, p. 86

¹³⁵ Ernest Jones, 'Our Warning,' *Chartist Poems and Fugitive Pieces*, p. 5

¹³⁶ Ernest Jones, 'Our Warning,' *Chartist Poems and Fugitive Pieces*, p. 5

¹³⁷ See Lawrence Lerner, *The Uses of Nostalgia. Studies in Pastoral Poetry*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1972, p. 41

'laughter' dwells on 'earth', is replaced by the 'curse' of 'the modern rack,' the factory system.¹³⁸ The poem ends by noting that modern industry 'wards the sunshine from the sod / And intercepts the very smile of God.' The poem thus represents the proletariat as alienated from their true and proper relation with God through the intervention of modern industry.

The use of the pastoral in Jones's 'The Cornfield and the Factory,' is paradoxical because the recognition of loss is also potentially the moment of self-recognition. The reader is presented with a vision of beauty that reminds the Chartist reader both of their present loss, and the better life to come. Evoking a lost national mythology, as well as an aspiration toward a better future, 'The Cornfield and the Factory' reminds Chartists of the dignity of labour shared by their ancestors. Chartists are encouraged to conceive themselves as an elected group, called into a particular collective identity encoded in the agrarian idyll. The pledge of identity offered to the reader is restorative. It presents a potential reconciliation between the idealised political identity that the poem offers as a model of political conduct, and the reader's awareness of their complicity with the conditions of their own current existence.¹³⁹ In other words, Jones's poem provides an important form of legitimisation; a process of self-discovery that offers the possibility of self-determination. As he noted in January 1847, 'working men have a right to look after the harvest of their own toil, after their own interests, a right to see how the national wealth is administered for the national good.'¹⁴⁰

Jones's poems often demonstrate how the past can provide social models as alternatives to modern industrial society. Jones's later prison poem 'The Garden Seat,' notes how important history is for providing the foundation for the future. Jones's utopian landscape is a model of cultivation and human intervention into the natural world for the production of a better human society. Elements from exotic climates such as 'A dewdrop of Savannah sweet' commingle with 'A particle of Arab heat'. 'A cedar from Assysria— / A willow from St. Helena' are able to live 'side by side...with Norway's scaldic pine.' The ancient architecture

¹³⁸ Ernest Jones, 'The Cornfield and the Factory,' *Northern Star*, June 27, 1846, p.3

¹³⁹ Judith Butler, 'Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All,' *Yale French Studies*, No. 88, 1995, p. 8

of Africa, Greece and the Roman Empire (and the values and ideas they represent) provide the foundation for modern civilisation. 'A fragment from old Babylon', the 'Aztec ruin of the west', and 'a cornice from the capitol is spread beneath our feet.' Ruins, remains, small parts of ancient civilisations are made to represent metonymically the values, ideas and principles of those civilisations. The ancient world also provides the foundation upon which all the benefits of modern western industry are constructed. From the vantagepoint in the poem, with ancient civilisation 'spread beneath our feet', both reader and poet share in, and 'may behold / A map of earth unrolled, / With the steamers on the ocean, and the railways on the land'. The poem ends by contemplating the joy of tracing 'the mighty plan / of the destinies of man, / Measuring the living by the stature of the dead.'¹⁴¹ The past provides the measure by which future accomplishments can be gauged or estimated. For Jones, culture is inescapably connected to past achievements, demonstrating the great Victorian interest in antiquity and classicism.

The beauty of an imagined past, counterpoised with the pain of the oppressive present, as poems such as 'The Cornfield and the Factory' and 'The Garden Seat' indicate, is therefore a recurrent literary device in Jones's Chartist poetry. Similarly, the narrator in Jones's 'Working Man's Song' affirms that 'The land is my birthright—the beautiful land!' and in the second stanza tells how 'They have torn me away from its mother-like breast, / And forth on a wilderness cast'.¹⁴² With bitter irony, Jones's 'The Factory Town,' describes the unremitting industrial conditions in which 'Women, children, men were toiling'¹⁴³ in the factory. Significantly, families do not toil together, but are symbolically separated by being placed in separate stanzas, signifying the destruction of the home and hearth of the domestic sphere. 'Fellow workmen' laboured 'side by side,' in one stanza, while 'half-naked infants' stand together two stanzas later with 'heart-frost amid the heat.' The dissolution of the ideal family unit enshrined in popular notions of home and hearth is symbolised using the form, as well as the content of the poem. 'The Factory Town' also mixes iambic and trochaic ballad-metre, with

¹⁴⁰ Ernest Jones, 'The Charter and no Surrender,' *Northern Star*, January 23rd, 1847, p. 3

¹⁴¹ Ernest Jones, 'The Garden Seat,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, 1851, p. 66

¹⁴² Ernest Jones, 'The Working Man's Song,' *Northern Star*, May 1st 1847, p. 3

the trochaic stanzas especially emphasising the monotonous pounding of the factory system. In the ninth stanza for example:

Woman's aching heart was throbbing
 With her wasting children's pain,
 While red Mammon's hand was robbing
 God's thought treasure from their brain!

The metre combines with the melodramatic analysis of the horror of factory work and its impact on the family, imposing mechanised systems onto family units, breaking mercilessly into familial relations associated more perhaps with the domestic realm than the industrial workplace. The poem certainly seeks to cement the gender roles of women and men, ascribing the rightful moral influence of women within the domestic sphere. Jones seems resolved not to represent, or act as literary advocate for the oppressed in the more natural iambic cadences of the English language. At other points in the poem, Jones employs poetic oppositions, for example, between the tranquillity of the pastoral and the terror of the industrial, mixing poetic cliché with grandiose language. In the fourteenth stanza, the cattle enjoy a better life than the factory workers do:

On the lealands slept the cattle,
 Slumber through the forest ran—
 While, in Mammon's mighty battle,
 Man was immolating man!

Jones's mixture of lyrical artlessness and lurid image is startling and intentionally melodramatic in its shift between synchronic literary terrains of the forest and the factory. The workers longed for a 'fresh touch of dewy grasses'¹⁴⁴ yet even the world beyond the factory was peopled by priests drunk 'from drowsy riot' and 'bloated' traders that mercilessly crushed 'the masses...beneath [their] stubborn will.'¹⁴⁵

Not all the poetic voices that interpellate from the 'centre' of Jones's poems are sympathetic voices. On occasions, in Jones's role as literary advocate, he writes in

¹⁴³ Ernest Jones, 'The Factory Town,' in Kovalev, Y. *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 141.

¹⁴⁴ Ernest Jones, 'The Factory Town,' p. 142

¹⁴⁵ Ernest Jones, 'The Factory Town,' p. 143

parodic voices, assuming the language of the ruling powers that subsequently may be taken up and used by Chartists. In 'Our Destiny,' Jones addresses the reader through the language of the factory owner. The poem is stark in its portrayal of the hierarchy of capitalism. The repetition of the imperatives in the first line, 'Labour! Labour! Labour!—Toil! Toil! Toil!', symbolises the repetitiveness and monotony of the factory system. As well as the physical cost, 'the wearing of the bone,' the factory system is responsible for 'the drowning of the mind', and takes a heavy mental toll on those it subjugates.¹⁴⁶ Jones's narrator mimics the hubristic voice of an industrialist, assuming a God-like power over a workforce suffering under the factory system. The poem thus inverts God's unforced love for humankind and the faith he expects in return through the Abrahamic covenant. The poem is therefore a parodic, perverse prayer to the power of capitalism led by a narrator that ventriloquises the factory owner.

Jones's poem 'Our Destiny' transforms the freely given praise to God for his unforced love into blind obedience demanded through sermon-like orders: 'Give your breath, ye millions! To elevate his name, / And die!—when ye have shouted it, till centuries shall hear.'¹⁴⁷ The poem's mode of address shifts however, when the narrator urges the reader to 'Unclasp God's book of nature'. Jones's poem now ceases to mimic the voice of the industrialist, and instead directly addresses both the 'Trampers on the many' and 'Benders to the few.' The fourth stanza, indicates the God-given qualities that all human beings share, but also how the servility demanded by the industrial economy has replaced the hierarchical relationship between God and humanity. Thus the poem's audience is addressed as a 'noble' people that remain exiled from a promised land. A Chartist collective identity is interpellated using language that, as Judith Butler notes, 'seeks recourse to the example of the divine voice that names, and in naming, brings its subjects into being.'¹⁴⁸ The 'prior and essential condition' of the audience addressed, its 'readiness to be compelled,' signifies its relation to the voice that hails it,¹⁴⁹ depicted in religious terms in Jones's poem:

¹⁴⁶ Ernest Jones, 'Our Destiny,' Kovalev, Y. *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.137

¹⁴⁷ Ernest Jones, 'Our Destiny,' Kovalev, *An Anthology of Chartist Literature: 1956*, p. 137

¹⁴⁸ Judith Butler, "Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All," *Yale French Studies*, No. 88, 1995,

p.9

¹⁴⁹ Judith Butler, "Conscience Doth Make Subjects of Us All," *Yale French Studies*, No. 88, 1995,

God gave us hearts of ardour—God gave us noble forms—
 And God has poured around us his paradise of light!
 Has he bade us sow the sunshine, and only reap the storms?
 Created us in glory, to pass away in night?¹⁵⁰

The literary form, as well as the language that Jones employs in the stanza is an equally important factor in the figuration of Chartist identity. Each of the lines is broken by a medial caesura, which gives the poem a ballad-like feel. The caesuras create clear tensions and oppositions within each line, but also relate other parts of the same stanza to each other. The second part of lines two and four, for example, clearly echo each other. They share the same stress pattern and rhyme scheme: ‘...his paradise of light...to pass away in night’, emphasises the possible loss of God’s grace through the failure to make proper use of the gifts that God bestowed upon humankind. Furthermore, the ‘hearts of ardour’ and ‘noble forms’ are gifts granted to all humans that identify and legitimate them.

The caesura of the first line emphasises the internal, spiritual condition of humankind, the ‘hearts of ardour’ contrast with their external human form, the ‘noble forms’ that symbolise God’s grace in his election of humankind, granted in a physical ‘noble’ form. These two seemingly separate gifts from God—the capacity for intense feeling (the ‘ardour,’) and the granting of the physical means by which God’s gifts can be explored (the ‘noble forms’ of beings created in the image of God)—emphasise humankind as God’s entrusted agents on earth. The second line, ‘And God has poured around us his paradise of light!’ is cautionary. It reminds the reader of the connection between God and humankind through the Abrahamic covenant, and encourages the reader to use their autonomy wisely, to pay homage to God and thus attain their election among his chosen remnant. The third line indicates how that homage is to be paid and, at the same time, the mode of address seems to close off possible middle-class readers addressing directly a Chartist readership: ‘Has he bade us sow the sunshine, and only reap the storms?’

The right to exercise control over their labour, overcoming the division of labour that robs the worker of a fair share of the surplus created is coded in religious language. The fourth line, 'Created us in glory, to pass away in night' reminds the reader of the first noble form after whom humankind was created and subsequently given dominion over the earth.¹⁵¹ As such, the 'noble forms' given to human beings were signs of God's 'glory,' instruments by which God's goodness is made manifest, and for which faith and praise are due. The rightful exercise of the 'noble' form implicates a relation among human beings as well as with the divine power that hails: 'the sunny heavens, that smile on all alike'.¹⁵² Consequently, as Jones notes in his poem 'The Coming Day,' 'the people's self becomes their glorious citadel.'¹⁵³ Christian imagery, together with the notion of feeling elected into a chosen people, or sensing that one's election was in doubt, provides a key strategy in the formulation of a shared political identity and a vision of an alternative polity, made available to the working classes through Jones's Chartist poetry.

¹⁵¹ '...and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth...' Genesis: 26, *Holy Bible*.

¹⁵² Ernest Jones, 'Our Destiny,' Kovalev, Y. (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 137

¹⁵³ Ernest Jones, 'The Coming Day,' *Chartist Poems*, p. 15

Chapter 4

“What fetters have I that ye have not as well...?”¹ Isolation, Fellowship and Leadership in Ernest Jones’ Prison Poems.

In his prison poem ‘The Prisoner to the Slaves,’ cited in the title of this chapter, Ernest Jones equates the individual captive with the wider Chartist body. Symbolising their disenfranchisement as a form of shared confinement, the poem is a meditation both on Jones’s situation as a Chartist prisoner, and on the situation in which the Chartists found themselves following the setbacks of 1848. Besides writing poems that contemplated the experience of the post-1848 defeats, Jones employed the symbol of the shared metonymic body and intimated that his poems were written with his own blood. In his recent discussion of Ernest Jones’s prison poems, Miles Taylor has stated the tale of ‘blood, sacrifice and salvation’ that Jones wove when recounting the composition of his prison poems, as belonging to ‘an altogether more salacious tradition of prison revelations—two parts Marquis de Sade to one part John Bunyan.’²

I argue that Jones’s astonishing claim that he wrote these poems with his own blood should be valued for its symbolic power as a metaphor for the act of writing poetry, and the cultural and political connections Jones sought to maintain with his own literary influences and his Chartist audiences, rather than its literal truth. The meanings encoded in both his claim and in the body and blood images in his prison poems, are as much religious as they are romantic and melodramatic. I demonstrate in this chapter that these images enact a literary communion in and through Jones’s prison poetry.³ They provide him with an important metonymic strategy by which he might overcome his isolation, affirm his sense of leadership (vital during the aftermath of April 10, 1848), assert his personal relationship with literary culture, his relationship to his audiences, and foreground the responsibilities of audience members towards their fellow Chartists. The metaphor

¹ Ernest Jones, ‘The Prisoner to the Slaves,’ *Notes to the People*, vol. I, 1851, p.339.

² Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones, Chartism, and the Romance of Politics 1819-1869*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003, pp.136.

of Holy Communion thus produces a model of political conduct in which the singular experiences of the poet are equated with the collective experiences of the Chartist rank and file. I also examine a particular Christian discourse that permeates particular prison poems: the language of the Psalms.

Jones used the metaphor of communion in the Dedication that prefaced his prison poems to represent his personal connection to his literary influences while a prisoner. 'Two years of books withheld—and pen denied. Two years of separation from the living, and not allowed communion with the dead.'⁴ The metaphor is extended in his prison poems to represent the life of an individual or a movement using a symbolic body capable of being broken into pieces in order to be apportioned out, or through a fluid shared among a collective as a symbol of unity and remembrance through Christ.⁵ Jones's use of the body (as a container, vehicle or object for consumption) and blood metaphors (signifying individual and communal characteristics or qualities as a bodily fluid) represent the relation between himself, his audience and his literary influences. Through these symbols, Jones represents his sense of election as a poet, but also his mutual relation to and sense of common action among the Chartist audiences he addresses.

The act of receiving Holy Communion signifies the relation an individual has with God through Christ but also, as 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 indicates, communion is a particular kind of metaphor. 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body; for we are all partakers of that bread.'⁶ Communion symbolises the common experiences and beliefs shared among all Christians, embodied in the life, example and sacrifice made by Christ. Holy Communion also represents and defines a Christian community against other communities, metonymically uniting the faithful into one body, an elected remnant. The Lord's Supper (the very first

³ Miles Taylor has questioned whether or not Jones actually wrote these poems while a prisoner. For an account of the circumstances surrounding the composition of his prison poems, see Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, pp.134-136.

⁴ Ernest Jones, *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 62.

⁵ See 1 Corinthians, 1:30, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption'. See also 1 Corinthians 11:33, 'Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.' *Holy Bible*.

communion) is notable for its emphasis on the final private hours of Christ together with his disciples,⁷ as well as symbolically with his followers yet to come.⁸

Jones first mentions that he wrote his prison poems using his own blood in Harney's *Red Republican*, when announcing his intention to publish a series of four long poems written while in prison.⁹ The advertisement was accompanied by a short account of his ordeal in prison. It detailed Jones's privations, how at certain times he was denied access to pen and ink, and how he wrote his prison poems 'with the aid of blood and memory'.¹⁰ Repeated in *Notes to the People*, Jones's account of writing his prison poems 'chiefly with my blood'¹¹ can be read as a melodramatic blood sacrifice to the Chartist cause, but also a metaphor for consanguinity with his Chartist audiences. Blood is shared between poet and audience, and is thus life giving and legitimising: a form of communion. 'Ernest Jones drew blood from his own veins, and that was the ink with which was written the hymns...*Red to the Red!* Most appropriately these hymns will grace the columns of the RED REPUBLICAN.' commented the *Red Republican*, perhaps more pertinently than they imagined.¹² Clearly Jones made a connection between the act of writing as a form of self-creation, and the letting of blood as a symbolic extension of his being, breaking the bounds of his physical body. Subsequently, the act of reading Jones's poems means that audiences shared in his blood, and thus took part in a process that resembled the act of communion. Jones was by no means the only poet to utilise communion as a metaphor for writing poetry.

⁶ See 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, *Holy Bible*.

⁷ 'My time is at hand: I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples.' Matthew, 26:18, *Holy Bible*.

⁸ In Christ's prayer before his arrest in the garden of Gethsemane, he prayed not just for his immediate followers, but 'for them also which shall believe on me through their word'. John 17:20, *Holy Bible*.

⁹ The four poetic works Jones advertised were, 'The New World, a Political Poem'; 'Beldagon Church, a Religious Poem'; 'The Painter of Florence, a Domestic Poem' and 'The Black Jury, or The Judgement of Europe, a Political Poem'. See John Saville (ed.), G.J. Harney, *The Red Republican* (1850) vol. I, London: Merlin Press, 1966, p. 64. Only the first three of these works were published as part of Jones's *Notes to the People*.

¹⁰ John Saville (ed.) *The Red Republican*, vol. I, p. 64.

¹¹ Ernest Jones writes that his epic poem 'The New World,' was 'written chiefly with my blood while a prisoner in solitude and silence.' Ernest Jones, *Notes to the People*, vol. I., p. 4; see also See also John Saville, (ed.) *The Red Republican*, vol. I, p. 37; Timothy Randall notes that such melodrama 'made for exciting narrative.' Timothy Randall, 'Towards a Cultural Democracy,' D. Phil., University of Sussex, p. 70.

¹² John Saville, (ed.) *The Red Republican*, vol. I., p. 37.

Several years earlier, in an lecture for the Hull Mechanic's Institute, the Corn Law rhymer Ebenezer Elliott noted that: 'poetry [was] the heart speaking to itself...[an] *earnest self-communion*—on which all composition purporting to be poetry must stand'.¹³ Poetic communion for Elliott is a form of self-realisation, 'the heart conversing with itself', and in so doing, conversing with God.¹⁴

Jones's use of the communion metaphor involves the symbolic letting of blood, summoning images of purgation. The willed and controlled flow of blood from the body might seem at first connected to a process of cleansing and healing. More convincing though, is to think of shedding blood to write poetry as a symbol of martyrdom. It enacts the process of self-validation in the face of coercion; an action against the seemingly insurmountable pressure that prison imposes on the individual that define the boundaries of the physical body and confine it to a cell. The release of blood is not merely a symbol of physical sacrifice, but a conscious, willed radical act that seeks to break the physical bounds of the body determined by its incarceration. Jones symbolically breaks the physiological boundaries of his body onto the page to share among an audience, but also remakes a covenant between himself and the Chartists. Sacrificially shedding blood onto the page, a shared literary space between poet and reader, represents Jones's sense of election as a poet. By linking blood with the act of writing, Jones also demonstrates a use for it beyond the realms of his own physical body. The image also affirms kinship or consanguinity with the reader beyond ordinary social relations. Jones uses blood to represent Chartism as a wider communion. Indeed in Acts 17: 26, Paul states that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth'.¹⁵

By using blood for a purpose beyond the realms of the physical body, Jones disrupts the concrete boundary that demarcates that which is usually inside the body and that which is usually outside the body. It therefore symbolises his attempt to remake the connection with his audiences that incarceration had broken. Jones's metaphor thus equates the works of his mind and imagination

¹³ Ebenezer Elliott, 'A Lecture on the Principle that Poetry is Self-Communion,' *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, no. XLVIII, Vol. IV, 1837 p.757.

¹⁴ Ebenezer Elliott, 'A Lecture on the Principle that Poetry is Self-Communion,' p.757.

with the workings of his individual physical body, dissolving its boundary in order to build a greater body of Chartists amalgamated into one movement. By affirming that he wrote with his own blood, his body acts as a metonym for the Chartist collective that Jones imagined and addressed during his incarceration. In his poems, a part is made to substitute for or represent a whole: a movement as well as an individual; an elected poet and leader who is simultaneously one among many other Chartists. Blood connects an individual with a particular community, but spilling blood (as Christ had done, thus founding the communion of his Christian following) extends the accepted or conventional boundaries of the body. In several of his prison poems, the body is broken, shared or doubled in some way, or blood is spilled. Occasionally, it is the imagination that is spilled at the point where the physical body pushes against its imprisonment. In 'The Prisoner's Dream' for example, 'The narrow walls oppress' Jones's 'swelling brain' which is 'big with great thoughts' that 'seek a vent in vain'.¹⁶

Holy Communion in Jones's prison poetry expresses political collectivism through body imagery and blood metaphors, mapping Jones's personal experience, but also representing the general condition of the Chartist body. Indeed as Anne Janowitz notes, Jones's prison poetry uses his personal prison experience to imagine a 'collective subjectivity'.¹⁷ But this subjectivity often has its roots in religious, as well as romantic traditions. Jones for example, draws upon the Methodist hymnal tradition. 'Easter Hymn,' and 'Hymn for Ascension Day,' dated Easter and Ascension Day 1850 respectively, are not only the titles of consecutive Chartist hymns in *Notes to the People*. They also reprise the titles of consecutive Methodist Hymns in John and Charles Wesley's *Hymns and Sacred Poems*.¹⁸ Jones's poem 'St Coutts's' was written about the construction of a charity church opposite Tothill Fields prison. It refutes the embodiment of Christianity in blocks of stone. More important to Jones is 'The holiness of flesh and blood, / Than the holiness of stone.'¹⁹ The human frame, not stone buildings,

¹⁵ Acts 17:26, *Holy Bible*.

¹⁶ Ernest Jones, 'The Prisoner's Dream,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.67.

¹⁷ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.185.

¹⁸ See 'Hymn for Easter Day' and 'Hymn for Ascension Day,' in Wesley, John. & Wesley, Charles. *Hymns and Sacred Poems*, London: MDCCXXXIX, pp.209-211.

¹⁹ Ernest Jones, 'St Coutts's' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.69.

acts as God's temple. Indeed in 'The Mariner's Compass,' God is 'The rudder, that beats in the breast.'²⁰ In 'Easter Hymn,' discussed later in this chapter, 'blood and tears' run in a 'stream' that signals both oppression and historical ties with former radical generations.²¹ Radical political collectivism is also represented as a fluid. In 'The Poet's Parallel,' mountain streams, though a minimal force on their own, unite into a 'mountain current' that careers past 'broken rocks' and evens out into a calm and beneficent river that sits at the centre of, and provides water for the natural world.²² This is echoed in the rural idyll 'The Garden Seat', where 'Nature's essences' are mixed into 'one harmonious whole.'²³ In 'The Silent Cell' the blood that runs through Jones's veins courses in a 'thousand streams!'²⁴ Body, fluid and blood imagery provided Jones with an important symbolic strategy for representing himself, his personal relation to literary culture, his relationship to his audiences, and the responsibilities of the reader towards their fellow-Chartists in the wider political community.

Jones had been arrested, tried and convicted of 'seditious behaviour and unlawful assembly' following the submission of the third Chartist petition, the assembly at Kennington on April 10, 1848, and the subsequent Chartist meetings in the early summer of 1848. He was sentenced to two years in Tothill Fields prison.²⁵ His treatment in prison, John Saville notes, 'was severe in the extreme.'²⁶ He was sentenced to endure the silent system that forbade any form of communication between prisoners. Having recorded in poetry the immense impact on him of mass meetings such as the Blackstone Edge gathering Miles Taylor notes, Jones was now confined to the smallest of speech communities.²⁷ Indeed the prison authorities took particular care to restrict his visiting rights, his access to literary and political texts, including his own previous Chartist publications, as well as his ability to generate any publicity for himself by writing for newspapers. Though

²⁰ Ernest Jones, 'The Mariner's Compass,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.65.

²¹ Ernest Jones, 'Easter Hymn' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.69.

²² Ernest Jones, 'The Poet's Parallel,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.64.

²³ Ernest Jones, 'The Garden Seat,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.66.

²⁴ Ernest Jones, 'The Silent Cell,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.67.

²⁵ Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, p.121; John Saville, *Ernest Jones: Chartist*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1952, p.31.

²⁶ John Saville, *Ernest Jones*, p. 33.

²⁷ Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, pp.121-122; See my discussion of Jones's poem 'Blackstone Edge' in chapter 3.

psychologically isolated, according to Miles Taylor however, it is questionable whether Jones's physical suffering in prison was as severe as he later claimed.²⁸ Arguments as to the severity of his sentence and prison experience aside, his systematic isolation, denied all contact with the outside world, except for eleven prison visits in two years,²⁹ was to have an important impact on the way that Jones's prison poems imagined the audiences they addressed. New and particular modes of address employing the metaphor of communion began to permeate his prison poems, alongside the political and anticlerical rhetoric that had distinguished his earlier Chartist poetry.

Despite his isolation, at least one account of Jones's plight as a prisoner and gentleman leader appeared in the radical press. G.J. Holyoake's *the Reasoner* considered that collecting payment to relieve Jones from picking oakum was not unreasonable, especially for a man of Jones's sensibilities. His:

talent, temper, education, station, and, I will add, public literary services, must combine to render the compulsory picking of oakum perfectly revolting to him; and it will scarcely be believed that the many who have given him their applause so lavishly, should not, now they know the truth, give their pence to relieve him from this indignity.³⁰

Jones did conform to prison regulations, but would not subject himself to tasks that would acknowledge his political activities as criminal, such as picking oakum.³¹ Indeed payment was made by Feargus O'Connor on Jones's behalf to relieve him of this 'degradation.'³² Despite the treatment meted out by the British prison system, Jones's persona mediated through the press was that of the wronged gentleman.

²⁸ Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, p. 125; pp.126-127; p.131.

²⁹ Miles Taylor, *Ernest Jones*, p.126.

³⁰ G.J. Holyoake (ed.) *The Reasoner*, vol. VII, 1850, p. 260.

³¹ The Reform League, seemingly using proofs from Jones himself, published a pamphlet entitled *Ernest Jones, Who is He? What Has He Done?* In it, picking oakum is described as a 'voluntary degradation'. The pamphlet implies that doing such work would have meant that Jones accepted that his political activity was criminal. See, John Saville, *Ernest Jones*, p. 33; James Crosley, *Ernest Jones, Who is He? What has He Done?* Manchester: 1868.

³² John Saville, *Ernest Jones*, p.34.

By presenting Jones the political prisoner as a man of integrity and refined sensibility, the *Reasoner* assumed a double address. First, it argued against the negative representation of the Chartist activist in the press, and the violent and unconstitutional suppression of Chartist demonstrations in the spring and early summer of 1848.³³ Second, it emphasised to its sympathetic readers the benefits that socially displaced gentleman like Jones brought to Chartism as a political cause.³⁴ Although a barrister by profession, and thus supposedly capable of maintaining financial independence, Jones's dependence on the movement for his survival in prison, as represented in the radical press, enhanced his status as an authentic Chartist by virtue of the social distance that he had been 'displaced'.³⁵ Yet the gentlemen leaders of Chartism were dragged into a series of political disputes that would throw the leadership into crisis between 1848-1850. Jones entered this crisis on his release in 1850 and quickly sought to establish his place as the foremost Chartist leader.

The changing nature of Chartism after the submission of the last petition, and its relationship with the state, was making the notion of a representative Chartist voice increasingly problematic. Chartism had by no means ever been a unified movement, and now found itself even further fragmented. The mass platform, for so long the mainstay of Chartist politics, was in decline. Consequently, as Belchem and Epstein note, 'a closure in context and style occurred' which made less tenable any notion of a literal continuity of radical public language.³⁶ Indeed Jones's symbolic use of Holy Communion and religious imagery in his prison poetry both explore the nature of that loss and seek to produce a rhetorically

³³ John Belchem observes that *Punch* felt duty-bound to ridicule the Trafalgar Square riots of 1848 on the grounds of maintaining public order. Subsequent Chartist meetings, designed to set the record straight, were similarly tarnished by disturbances. 'The efforts of the Chartist executive to set the public record straight were unavailing: from this point on, the press refused to distinguish between rioter, revolutionary, criminal and Chartist.' The authorities forcibly repressed displays of Chartist strength in numbers during late spring and early summer 1848 in an attempt to crush what remained of Chartism. John Belchem, '1848: Feargus O'Connor and the Collapse of the Mass Platform,' James Epstein & Dorothy Thompson (eds.) *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p.277; pp.293-294.

³⁴ See John Belchem & James Epstein, 'The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman Leader Revisited,' *Social History*, 22, no. 2, May 1997, pp. 178-179.

³⁵ John Belchem & James Epstein note that the plight of the displaced gentlemen leader unconnected with business or with the ownership of manufacturing industries, may have appealed to working people, but equally aroused suspicions about their motives. See John Belchem & James Epstein, 'The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman Leader Revisited,' p. 181.

accessible yet deeply symbolic form of communication, able to encourage individuals to recognise their rightful place among a wider political collective. In 'Earth's Burdens' for example, Chartists are 'A gathering of unripened sheaves' overtaken by the onset of autumn.³⁷ In 'Hymn for Lammas-Day' Jones notes that the corn in the fields awaiting harvest has been 'watered with orphans' tears' and 'enriched with their fathers dead.'³⁸ The poem encourages the working classes to take the produce of the fields for themselves precisely because of the sacrifice made of their forefathers. Taking the produce 'In the name of humanity's God' remakes the connection between former and present generations of the dispossessed in and through consumption; that is, through a form of communion.³⁹

While Jones was a prisoner, the consolidation of state power against Chartism led to the further fragmentation of an already divided movement. The united support for the 1848 European revolutions between English Liberals and Chartists had proved short-lived, and evaporated when the 'received English notions of popular sovereignty and republican virtue' were threatened by the growth of European political ideas. The continental revolutions 'drove a wedge between popular radicals and more affluent reformers,' and disagreements between proletarian radicals, and middle-class reformers over the reprisals by state powers did not help. As Finn notes, 'Mixing liberalism with democracy, socialism with nationalism, the revolutionary doctrines unleashed in 1848 did not shatter the English radical tradition, but they rendered its claim to speak equally for all classes within the state increasingly problematic.'⁴⁰ The symbolic use of communion in Jones's prison poems addresses the issue of how best to produce what Maidment terms, a 'significant, communal rhetoric at a time of overwhelming practical urgencies.'⁴¹

³⁶ John Belchem & James Epstein, 'The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman Leader Revisited,' p.178.

³⁷ Ernest Jones, 'Earth's Burden,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.66.

³⁸ Ernest Jones, 'Hymn For Lammas-Day,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.70.

³⁹ Ernest Jones, 'Hymn For Lammas-Day,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.70.

⁴⁰ Margot C. Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 61-2.

⁴¹ Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, Fyfield edition, Manchester: Carcanet, 1992, p.24.

Despite growing political differences, a vigorous Chartist rump did persist into the 1850s.⁴² George Julian Harney noted in the first number of his new Chartist periodical the *Red Republican* that, 'Chartism in 1850 is a different thing from Chartism in 1840.' Harney also observed that 'the English Proletarians have proved that they are true Democrats, and no shams, by going a-head so rapidly within the last few years. They have progressed from the idea of a simple *political reform* to the idea of a *Social Revolution*.'⁴³ Human agents were now overwhelmingly the arbiters of the historical changes necessary for attaining a new society based on Chartist principles. Similarly, Ernest Jones's poems no longer anticipated a sudden, cataclysmic or apocalyptic revolution that would rapidly grant power to the Chartists, as in his earlier poem 'Our Warning.'⁴⁴ Instead his prison poems begin to emphasise human agency, planning and patience. In the poem 'Prison Bars' for example, Jones notes that 'Patience' bony fingers / Each groove exactly mould.'⁴⁵

The movement away from massed rallies concentrated what remained of Chartist support around a clutch of new, diverse Chartist periodicals that sprang up after splits in the leadership. The result was a Chartist press that had 'little sense of speaking to or for a movement.'⁴⁶ Feargus O'Connor launched the *National Instructor*, G.W.M. Reynolds launched *Reynold's Political Instructor*, George Julian Harney ran the *Red Republican*, afterwards the *Friend of the People*, while Jones ran *Notes to the People*, from 1851 to 1852, and the *People's Paper* between 1852 and 1858.⁴⁷ The over-riding characteristic of the Chartist journals of the 1850s is the emphasis on the number of leading Chartists who independently of each other, edited and wrote much of the material printed in their

⁴² John Belchem & James Epstein, 'The Nineteenth-Century Gentleman Leader Revisited,' p. 178.

⁴³ John Saville (ed.) *The Red Republican*, vol. I, p.2.

⁴⁴ Jones's 'Our Warning,' was first published in 1846. The poem demands 'justice' and the 'right' for working people. The poem ends with the threat of sudden upheaval. 'And the anger of the nation / Across the land shall sweep, / Like a mighty Devastation / Of the winds upon the deep!' Y. Kovalev, *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*: Moscow, 1956, p. 139.

⁴⁵ Ernest Jones, 'Prison Bars,' Kovalev, Y. (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.162

⁴⁶ Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution*, Aldershot: Wildwood, 1984, p. 45.

⁴⁷ J.F.C Harrison, & Dorothy Thompson (eds.) *Bibliography of the Chartist Movement*, Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978. J. Saville, *Ernest Jones*.

publications. Previously, the most successful format had been the collaboratively, if not entirely democratically produced *Northern Star*.⁴⁸

Harney's *Red Republican* provided the initial vehicle by which Jones reintroduced himself to Chartist audiences. It advertised and published a selection of his prison poems in a series entitled 'Sacred Hymns.'⁴⁹ The periodical favourably reviewed the poems. 'We naturally feel no small degree of pride at being in a position to give publicity to some of the prison-penned productions of our friend and brother, who has kindly singled out the RED REPUBLICAN as the medium through which to make public a series of hymns written in his dungeon.'⁵⁰ Echoing his first introduction to Chartist audiences back in 1846, Jones addressed Chartist audiences primarily as a poet. Jones soon turned his attention however to re-establishing himself as a leading journalist and political leader. Harney and Jones even began to consider the possibility of running the *Friend of the People* (successor to the *Red Republican*), together.⁵¹ Political differences however, led them in different political directions, further fragmenting the Chartist leadership. Indeed the separation of these two allies is symptomatic of the divisions that were irreparably fracturing the Chartist leadership.

Harney, according to A.R. Schoyen, came to consider that the only hope for a working-class party lay in uniting 'the trade unions with the National Charter Association.' Ultimately, trade unions and co-operative movements would have to recognise that fundamental political reforms were required if a working-class party was to gain power. Harney's belief in Chartists, unions and co-operatives acting together was to end his association with Jones, who replaced Harney as Marx and Engel's chief Chartist disciple.⁵² Though Harney did not succeed in his hope of integrating Chartism, trade unionism and co-operation into a working democratic socialist programme, the basic principles of political reform, land

⁴⁸ Dorothy Thompson notes of the *Northern Star* that: 'Alone among Chartist journals it made a profit.' Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists*, p. 46.

⁴⁹ Poems in the *Red Republican* include 'Hymn for Ascension Day,' 'Hymn for Lammas Day,' and 'Easter Hymn.' See John Saville (ed.) *The Red Republican*, vol. I, p. 37; p. 48; p. 56. Jones's 'The Silent Cell,' appears in *The Red Republican*, vol. II, p. 8.

⁵⁰ John Saville, (ed.) *The Red Republican*, vol. I, p. 37.

⁵¹ See John Saville, (ed.) *The Red Republican* vol. II, p.168.

⁵² A.R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge: A Portrait of George Julian Harney*, London: Heinemann, 1958, p.206.

nationalisation and the requirement to modify the legislation hindering co-operation gained wide support at the Chartist Convention of March 1851.⁵³

Jones recorded in *Notes to the People* that the Chartist Convention of March 1851 reached the 'practical recognition of the co-operative principle'. He was less open to the need to modify political demands with socialist strategies that could accommodate other strands of radical thought. Co-operation (for example) could not advance far prior to the complete transformation of the English political landscape through the Charter. 'Co-operation should be a state-maxim, realised by the power of the state' which should compensate those disadvantaged by an inevitable short-fall in the ability of co-operatives to 'satisfy the requirements of the many.'⁵⁴ Co-operation could only be effective when nationalised under a 'democratic government,' and not before.⁵⁵ For Jones in the early 1850s, the co-operative attempt to compete with the economic power of the middle-class could never succeed. Despite the best attempts of co-operation, 'never...has the monopolist reaped such profits, or extended his operations with such giant strides.'⁵⁶ This is not to say that Jones saw co-operation as a misguided venture; rather, Chartists had to act as 'pioneers' under Jones's leadership. 'It is our duty' Jones wrote, 'not to postpone co-operative efforts, but as political pioneers, to clear the obstacle out of the way of the co-operative builder.'⁵⁷

Despite the wrangling of its leaders, Janowitz notes that Chartist literary culture did manage to represent some sense of tradition through romantic discourses.⁵⁸ Following the rejection of the last Chartist petition, the incarceration of many leading Chartists and the failure of the European revolutions, two prominent romantic heroes resonated in the Chartist literary imagination. For William James Linton and Ernest Jones respectively, Shelley's Prometheus and Byron's Bonivard, made famous in his poem 'The Prisoner of Chillon,' personified

⁵³ A.R. Schoyen, *The Chartist Challenge*, pp. 208-209.

⁵⁴ Ernest Jones, 'Letters on the Chartist Programme. Letter III,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 84.

⁵⁵ Ernest Jones, 'Letters on the Chartist Programme. Letter III,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 84.

⁵⁶ See Ernest Jones, *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.28.

⁵⁷ Ernest Jones, *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.303. See also Kate Tiller, 'Late Chartism: Halifax 1847-58,' in James Epstein & Dorothy Thompson, (eds.) *The Chartist Experience. Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860*, London: Macmillan, 1982 p. 320; p. 324.

⁵⁸ Anne Janowitz notes that: 'In places his prison poems return to the earlier romantic conventions of Byronic solitude.' Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 186.

endurance and perseverance. Both characters, the first mythological⁵⁹, the latter based on a historical figure,⁶⁰ symbolise the transcendence of seemingly insurmountable obstacles: leaders and creators who demonstrated strength in the most adverse conditions in spite of their isolation. In an article on the subject of 'Valour' in *The People's Journal*, Linton is haunted by Shelley's Prometheus: 'The naked and vulture-torn Prometheus, chained to his rock of agony, tormented by Jove's furies, is not so quiescent, so weak and lifeless as he seems. His patience is not chained.'⁶¹ Indeed Prometheus provides a key literary touchstone for Linton's poem 'The Dirge of the Nations.'⁶² Jones obstinately records in his poem 'The Prisoner to the Slaves,' that '...oppression and force are the folly of fools, / that breaks upon constancy's rock.'⁶³ Given the self-conscious way Jones positioned himself within a romantic tradition through poems such as 'Bonnivard,' it is of no surprise that critics have focussed on this aspect of his poetry:⁶⁴

Bonnivard.

To Chillon's donjon damp and deep,
 Where wild waves mount eternal guard,
 Freedom's vigil long to keep,
 They dragged our faithful Bonnivard.

Within their rocky fortress held,
 They thought to crush that captive lone!
 That captive left their rock, unquelled,
 Altho' his foot had worn the stone.

They hoped his gallant heart to slay,
 And o'er it bound their chain accurst;
 'Twas not his gallant heart gave way—
 It was the chain that broke the first.

⁵⁹ Prometheus is the maker of humankind in Greek mythology, turned into a rebellious, unyielding Titan in Shelley's 'Prometheus Unbound.' See Sir Paul Harvey, (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984.

⁶⁰ Francois de Bonnivard was a sixteenth century Swiss patriot and poet, made famous in Byron's 'The Prisoner of Chillon.' See Margaret Drabble, (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, sixth edition, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

⁶¹ W. J. Linton, 'Valour,' *The People's Journal*, vol. IV, 1848, p. 21.

⁶² See chapter 6.

⁶³ Ernest Jones, 'The Prisoner to the Slaves,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 339.

⁶⁴ Anne Janowitz describes how the combination of poetic elements associated with Chartism as a mass political movement were integrated with Jones's personal experiences to produce 'a poetic of collective lyricism.' Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 161.

O'er Chillon's donjon damp and deep,
 Where wild winds mount eternal guard,
 Oblivion's ivied fingers creep,—
 But all the world loves Bonnivard.⁶⁵

Timothy Randall observes that Jones's 'Bonnivard' alludes to the prisoner of Chillon as more than just a historical subject. Randall notes that Jones entered into 'a self-consciously *lived* romanticism.'⁶⁶ The endurance of Jones's Bonnivard, his patient resistance, may be read for example, as qualities that Jones would himself wish to be remembered for: 'Twas not his gallant heart gave way— / It was the chain that broke the first.'⁶⁷ As a Chartist prisoner, Jones substitutes for, and seeks to emulate the example of Byron's steadfast hero: 'That captive left their rock unquelled, /Altho' his foot had worn the stone.'⁶⁸

Jones's poem however does more than position the poet as self-consciously using the rhetoric of romantic traditions. It also demonstrates the importance he now placed on affirming his personal relationship with the Chartists using the metaphor of the shared body. Jones figuratively equates himself with his fellow Chartists, using Bonnivard as a metonymic symbol in order to do so. He emphasised in the Dedication that accompanies his prison poems that both reader and poet are 'fellow sufferers'.⁶⁹ Bonnivard's literary body is made available for interpellation by both poet and audience as equally wronged subjects. Through a dual metonym/synecdoche of the shared body, Bonnivard acts as a historical subject with whom all Chartists might lay some claim of fraternity and kinship. Bonnivard also symbolises Jones as a 'faithful,' 'unquelled' Chartist leader and poet, who was completely isolated and unable to find a means to communicate with his fellow Chartists. Thus relations between poet and audience are instead symbolically enacted as a means of emphasising the common political ground that his poems imagine in an attempt to overcome the divisions between Chartists. After all, in 1846 Jones had noted in 'The Poet's Mission' that it was the duty of

⁶⁵ Ernest Jones, 'Bonnivard,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 63.

⁶⁶ Timothy Randall 'Towards a Cultural Democracy,' D.Phil., University of Sussex, p. 72.

⁶⁷ Ernest Jones, 'Bonnivard,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.63.

⁶⁸ Ernest Jones, 'Bonnivard,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 63.

⁶⁹ Ernest Jones, 'Dedication,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.62.

the poet to rivet 'broken bands / And stranger-hearts together.'⁷⁰ Simultaneously, Jones highlights the state imprisonment of both the unenfranchised outside, and himself as a Chartists prisoner inside Tothill Fields, addressing his readers as 'Fellow Sufferers.'⁷¹

Jones's *Bonnivard* represents a set of shared qualities or attributes that a Chartist reader might sympathise with. *Bonnivard* becomes metonymic; an individual able to substitute for a set of idealised political principles shared between Chartist readers. By evoking an entire schema via the mention of one part of a particular schema,⁷² the historical figure *Bonnivard* comes to represent a broad set of principles that an individual Chartist reader could identify with. In other words, the figure of *Bonnivard* might signify a form of literary communion: a catch-all noun, representative of the qualities attributable by a poet to the Chartist body, of which one element or part is the individual reader addressed by the poet. *Bonnivard* represents both Jones's own physical body and an idealised, symbolic body through which poet and reader might engage in communion with their radical sympathies and duties to each other. *Bonnivard* is able to act as a wider social, shared body that all could lay a claim to; a body put to use beyond the realm or the needs of the individual. This use of an idealised body to connect the individual poet to their imagined audiences, instilling a sense of belonging, is the product of Jones's inability to superintend the relationship between poet and audience as he had done prior to his incarceration.

Although '*Bonnivard*' uses the romantic hero as a metonym to equate the poet with the imagined audience, the poem also inscribes a series of clear positions or roles into a literary hierarchy for subjects to recognise, making them available for occupation by an audience. Timothy Randall observes that Chartist prison poems often 'address [their audiences] from a position of authority, particularly on subjects such as individual suffering, self-sacrifice for the cause, and the

⁷⁰ Ernest Jones, 'The Poet's Mission,' *Northern Star*, October, 1846; Kovalev, Y. *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 179.

⁷¹ Ernest Jones, 'Dedication,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.62.

⁷² George Lakoff & Mark Turner, *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor*, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 100.

oppressive tyranny of the ruling classes.’⁷³ In ‘Bonnivard,’ Jones clearly indulges in his own self-identification with the patient figure of strength with a ‘gallant heart’, but is also the literary authority that writes and addresses an audience. In this Jones again echoes ‘The Poet’s Mission,’ where he noted that the poet both summons up or, ‘compels the light’ from thunderclouds, and also ‘casts the bolt away,’ directing a charge of lightening at a specific target.⁷⁴

In ‘The Prisoner to the Slaves,’ notions of isolation, leadership and fellowship are similarly enacted through the doubling of Jones’s own body. He represents himself as an isolated figure, as a fellow-Chartist or close comrade standing shoulder to shoulder with other Chartists, and as a leader set apart from the rest of the Chartist body. In the poem, Jones speaks ‘From my cell,’ telling the reader of the very particular circumstances that he has to survive, writing from his personal experience as a Chartist prison poet. Yet Jones makes clear that he considers himself ‘not the less free / Than the serf and the slave’ who comprise his ‘Fellow Sufferers’. The uniqueness of ‘my cell’ is countered by the implication that it does have some close relation to ‘your’ (that is, the reader’s) ‘dungeon.’ The poet’s suffering in prison is consequently presented as a shared experience. These phrases are metonymic precisely because they represent a particular shared condition using signifiers that convey the personal experience of particular individuals: the poet and the audience addressed. The poem then traces a gradual shift in perspective, outward from the contemplation of Jones’s own personal condition, to those of the ‘serf and slave,’ finally equating the two conditions with each other:

From my cell, I look back on the world—from
 my cell,
 And think I am not the less free
 Than the serf and the slave who in misery dwell
 In the street and the lane and the lea.⁷⁵

Jones’s isolation is emphasised by the layout of the poem on the page. The opening line begins and ends with the same phrase, ‘from my cell,’ and positions one above the other. This circularity, bringing together the different meanings of

⁷³ Timothy Randall, ‘Towards a Cultural Democracy,’ p. 70; p. 71.

⁷⁴ Ernest Jones, ‘The Poet’s Mission,’ Y. Kovalev (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 179

'my cell' by virtue of repeating the phrase, suggests that Jones's condition is inescapable, definitive, unending, delimiting the perspective from which he has to write. Yet later in the poem, it is clear that his imagination granted him freedom of expression:

They may shut out the sky—they may shut
out the light
With the barriers and ramparts they raise:
But the glory of knowledge shall pierce in de-
spite,
With the sun of its shadowless days.⁷⁶

These symbols of oppression, 'my cell' and 'your dungeon' are simultaneously alike and unlike each other, as demonstrated in the distal and deictic relations between the possessive pronouns 'my' and 'your,' assigned to each noun. Further into the poem, Jones affirms that 'the glory of knowledge shall pierce' the walls of the oppressive state that intervene between the poet and the outside world, breaking the barrier between poet and audience: between Jones's individual 'cell' and the dungeons beyond the prison walls. Prison symbolises the shared experiences of disenfranchisement. It also demonstrates that the intervention of the state into the relations between fellow Chartists increased the difficulties of formulating a unified Chartist position. This task, as noted earlier, Jones addressed by stating that the Executive ought to provide a leading core sitting in London, rather than returning to their regional bases in the early summer of 1848. The very act of writing the poem, deploying the symbols that affirm the differences and similarities between Jones and his audiences, foregrounds Jones's identity as both leader and fellow Chartist. The poem restates his sense of election as a poet, but also highlights the separation of Jones as a gentleman leader from those he sought to represent. The literary symbols 'my cell' and 'your dungeon' therefore operate as a complex pair of metonyms. Jones's account of his experience in his prison cell symbolises the individual incarceration that prompts the poet into a meditation upon the common condition of the wider Chartist body, represented to the individual reader as 'your dungeon'. Although the suffering of the Chartists is a collective condition, by the phrase 'your dungeon,' the poem reminds the individual reader of their personal enslavement.

⁷⁵ Ernest Jones, 'The Prisoner to the Slave,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 339.

Jones's prose also tries to reconcile the Chartist leader with the collective that is addressed and imagined. In *Notes to the People*, his analysis of the history and benefits of the small-farm system demonstrates that a nation is greater than the sum of its constituent elements. Jones ends by reminding his readers that '[God] led his chosen people to a Promised Land, and divided it among them, inalienably, while a nation.'⁷⁷ Though land is divided equally, the Israelites remained a single nation, a whole greater than the sum of its parts. The link between England as a new 'promised land' into which working people could gain entry, and Canaan could not be made clearer when Jones wrote: '77 million acres of the "promised land" lie around you! Your title is given you in the mouth that craves food, in the arm that can produce it. Your title is given you in the words, "he that will not work, neither shall he eat"—and by this title rise, and claim your own!'⁷⁸ The biblical rhetoric confirms the importance of personal self-improvement and group independence to Jones. However, the mode of address also differentiates the writer from the audience addressed. The struggle to represent to Chartists their rights is itself symptomatic of the recognition of the antipathy of former Chartist support, and the deep divisions among its leaders.

In 'The Prisoner's Dream,' Jones's experiences of the natural world are triggered by an external, natural force, the passing wind which 'plays o'er the prison bar, / Still fresh from kissing the green forest leaves'.⁷⁹ In this poem, just one part of God's natural world, the wind, triggers the imagination and memory of the poet, and upon closing his eyes, 'visions of the beautiful arise'.⁸⁰ The poem seems little more than a series of pastoral, agrarian dreams, in which man works and lives in harmony with nature with the assistance of developing technology. A landscape stretches away into the distance, where 'field and cottage melt in vague surmise,' where the 'hamlet' sits in the 'homely glade.'⁸¹ However, the poem is important for its explicitness about the way that the influences of the outside world act upon the poet's imagination. Of especial importance is the emphasis that Jones placed

⁷⁶ Ernest Jones, 'The Prisoner to the Slave,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 339.

⁷⁷ Ernest Jones, *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 114.

⁷⁸ Ernest Jones, *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 114. The biblical reference within this quotation is from 2 Thessalonians, 3:10, *Holy Bible*.

⁷⁹ Ernest Jones, 'The Prisoner's Dream,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 67.

⁸⁰ Ernest Jones, 'The Prisoner's Dream,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 67.

on the natural world as God's gift; a temple wherein due observance to God could be kept.

Jones was very much a disciple of nature, recognising its profusion, patterns and its harmony as a homage to God the creator. In his later lectures, *Evenings with the People*, Jones would attack the state church for actively misrepresenting Christianity to its followers. Instead, Christians should look for God in his own great works on earth. Nature, for example, was:

‘the great Cathedral—whose vault is the concave azure, whose floor is the tessellated pavement of the dark green grass...the ever-shifting pageantries of cloud, the glorious curtains that moderate its splendour. Show me a priest's church like that: it is from that the churchman would exclude you.’⁸²

Prison poems such as ‘Beldagon Church’ actively demonstrate how harmonious nature petitions the blessing of God, ‘the loving hand of Heaven’.⁸³ The natural world provides humanity with the greatest example of production and harmony, while humanity continues to defile the gifts received from God through the enslavement of humans for profit. In other words, Jones uses the harmony and abundance of the natural world in order to enact the harmony that humankind will enjoy in a free and equal world. All that is required is for individuals to recognise and fulfil their personal role and duty in the production of that new society. Other poems enact similar instances of the individual election of the Chartist subject. In ‘The Prisoner's Dream,’ the unconscious workings of Jones's imagination during sleep transform him, re-attune him as a poet. In other words, the power of the imagination to respond to particular cultural memories elects him as a poet:

Then let Imagination's alchemy
The fine material of its memories blend,
In the rich crucible of midnight dreams,
To some transparent palace of pure pearl—
And wake next morn a Poet!⁸⁴

⁸¹ Ernest Jones, ‘The Prisoner's Dream,’ *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 67.

⁸² Ernest Jones, *Evenings with the People*, (1856) London: Garland, 1986, p.3.

⁸³ Ernest Jones, ‘Beldagon Church,’ *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 24.

⁸⁴ Ernest Jones, ‘The Prisoner's Dream,’ *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 67.

Literary culture invites and accepts the poet through the homage paid to those influences expressed through the production of literature, through the exercise of the imagination. Not unlike Thomas Cooper's *The Purgatory of Suicides*, the workings of the imagination induce the individual into writing and thus the poet into being. Jones's prison poems are generally self-referential and autobiographical. They describe, for example, his experience of suffering in the prison infirmary in 'The Quiet Home.'⁸⁵ Jones felt able to emphasise these roles because, as Anne Janowitz notes, his new found authenticity as a Chartist allow him to return to his romantic influences and indulge his own 'Byronic solitude,'⁸⁶ confirmed by his 'comradely link' to his long-suffering fellow Chartists.⁸⁷ From this solitary position, Jones could manipulate the lyric form to emphasise the conscious role of the poet as representative of a collective identity. The 'crucible of midnight dreams' acts as the locus for the amalgamation of the individual imagination with the public role of poet. However, while serving as a Chartist prisoner, Jones could no longer command public spaces as he had done at Chartist meetings such as the meeting at Bradford Temperance Hall in 1846, examined in chapter 3.

The conditions for writing poems in prison were the very antithesis of the constitutional freedom Jones felt he could access and express in earlier poems such as 'Blackstone Edge.' As a prisoner he could no longer challenge the authorities at public meetings, or by writing in the press. Neither could Jones continue to use the same kinds of prophetic images to rationalise the political demands of the masses in a public space. Earlier in poems such as 'Blackstone Edge,' the massed Chartist crowd squared up to the state to represent the rights as yet denied to Chartists at liminal or contested political and geographical sites.⁸⁸ Jones's loss of liberty, that observable and direct connection with the people he addressed and represented, now precluded the use of such forms. Instead, Jones's physical body is increasingly emphasised as a vantage point from which the poet personally envisages an idealised society. His body also provides a model of

⁸⁵ Ernest Jones, 'The Quiet Home. Written in the Prison Infirmary, February, 1850,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 68.

⁸⁶ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 186.

⁸⁷ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, p. 185.

⁸⁸ See analysis in chapter 3.

political conduct to his Chartist audiences, encouraging them to see their own bodies as endowed with the same potential for effecting radical political change. In 'The Quiet Home,' he expects his immanent death. His body may disintegrate, but it will feed 'golden wheat and roses'. Future generations of children, in a world without the need for social or political struggle, will pass the spot where Jones is buried, 'and know it not.'⁸⁹ His body would directly contribute to the future well-being of society, thus echoing the communion.

As 'The Quiet Home' demonstrates, Jones's response to his incarceration was to use his poems at sites from which he could work through and challenge the political stillness that incarceration sought to impose upon him.⁹⁰ With the personal liberty to argue for political reform now lost to him, the battle for the Chartist political agenda was no longer carried out in a public space where Jones's audiences might reciprocate their approval. Instead the struggle was carried to the realm of the interface between Jones's literary imagination and his physical body, which also acted as a metonym for the Chartist collective. It should be no surprise that maintaining control over the bounds of the physical body (the last vestige of expressing any form of autonomy by a political prisoner against the state) should now act as the basis upon which Jones re-formulated and represented his role to himself and his relation to the audiences he addressed. In that sense, his prison poetry differs markedly to his earlier poetry. Jones had previously used the image of Communion in his poem 'Our Rally,' symbolising the need for unity among the Chartists:

Down with the cup untasted!
Its draught is not for thee:
Its generous strength were wasted
On all, but on the free—⁹¹

In the above, the working classes are told that they do not deserve to drink from the communion cup, by virtue of their failure to take their rights. The poem also

⁸⁹ Ernest Jones, 'The Quiet Home,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 68.

⁹⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, Jones experienced a positive reaction to his poems when on tour in the north of England. He considered himself to be 'forming the tone of the mighty mind of the people.' See Ernest Jones' Diary, 1844-47, 8 October, 1846, Ms 923 2 J18, Manchester Central Library.

⁹¹ Ernest Jones, 'Our Rally,' *Chartist Poems and Fugitive Pieces*, London: 1846, p.4.

suggests that the complicity of the church with the state in the oppression of working people makes a mockery of the relationship Chartists should enjoy with each other and with God through Christ. The poem echoes Corinthians 11, 'But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.'⁹² Individuals cannot enjoy a relationship with God while the enslavement of the nation's workforce is tolerated and indeed maintained through the relationship between the church and the state.⁹³ Jones's early poem drew attention to the contradictions of receiving ritualised Communion on the terms of the established church.

The metonymic relation between an elected individual and 'the people' was a strong tradition in Chartist poetry before Jones wrote as a Chartist poet. In the anonymous Chartist poem 'One and All,' the Chartists amalgamate into a collective that represents the nation, and the individual envoy, or 'apostle' represents the Chartists and their principles, acting as a missionary that spreads Chartism to the rest of the world:

Hand to hand, and heart to heart,
Let us act a nation's part;
Let us free our native isle;
From the rule of despots vile;
And send apostles o'er the world
With the Chartist flag unfurl'd.⁹⁴

Individuals join a collective that represents Chartist principles and sentiments, from which apostles are chosen and legitimated as subjects who best represent those Chartist principles. Such individuals are representative of, and able to speak with a particular authority for, a political system or set of principles. In other words they are individuals who are simultaneously part of a much larger single body: a part that stands for a whole.

⁹² See 1 Corinthians 11:27-28, *Holy Bible*.

⁹³ Communion cannot be taken unless the communicants are resolved in their own conscience. See 1 Corinthians, 'Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.' 1 Corinthians, 10:21, *Holy Bible*.

⁹⁴ F., 'One and All,' Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p. 54.

This use of metonymy, whereby a part substitutes for a whole, is a powerful, resonant characteristic of Chartist poetry, as Michael Sanders observes.⁹⁵ However, it is also clear that this awareness of the individual as metonymic envoy or representative has roots in Christian thought. Romans 12 for example, emphasises the importance Christians attach to gathering together to affirm each other not just as a group of Christians passively sharing a belief in Christ, but each as individual envoys charged with the task of carrying on Christ's work on earth as a form of praise. All have a place, and a role to play in society. Even though not all can enjoy the same 'office' no one is the less important for that difference: 'For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another.'⁹⁶ Poems such as 'One and All' remind Chartists that their everyday dealings with each other are a form of communion by which each is affirmed through their place within the greater Chartist body. This point is made in Jones's earlier poem, 'Our Rally.' In it, Chartists are urged to attend to their every day dealings with each other, rather than the hypocrisy of acquainting themselves with each other through the ritual of receiving communion. The body of the apostle in 'One and All' is able to represent a larger body, while remaining one small part of that body from which that individual remained indivisible through political principle, rather than through religious obsequy.

Jones's disconnection from society and from literary culture in prison reminded him of their importance to him, firing his imagination, his capacity to write as a poet, his ability to make use of 'Bold Aspirations' furnace.'⁹⁷ His Dedication compounds the effects of isolation upon himself and the other Chartist prisoners, cataloguing his new reliance on senses other than sight to rationalise his relationship with the outside world. The sense of hearing provokes the imaginative faculty into identifying relationships between remembered or imagined locations by associating similar sounds produced within those locations with each other:

⁹⁵ See, Michael Sanders, 'Poetic agency: Metonymy and Metaphor in Chartist Poetry 1838-1852,' *Victorian Poetry*, Volume 39, Number 2, Summer 2001, p.114.

⁹⁶ Romans 12: 4-5, *Holy Bible*.

⁹⁷ Ernest Jones, 'Prison Bars,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.64.

Of nights the faint swell of festal music floated over the grating from the vast palace where royalty was holding pageants, and the drumming of the guards, well told what power enabled it to hold them: while the low sob, or frenzied wail of prisoned misery broke fearfully upon the unsleeping ear of care...In rare intervals, unusual sounds shook the prison...the furious booming when a queen in state held her periodical review of lace and diamonds—while near her, perhaps at the same hour, the screams of children beneath the lash shrilled ruefully along the prison yard.⁹⁸

The emotional appeal and use of dramatic incident turns Jones's *Dedication* into melodrama, but also conveys to the reader just how much he relied on the sounds of events from the outside world filtering into the prison; sounds which he counterpoised with the sounds of suffering inside the prison. Rather than exploiting 'similarities between literal and figurative domains,' Jones's prose, like his prison poems, exploits more unconventional links between areas of experience.⁹⁹ Jones's account disorientates the reader, connecting disparate, remote events using a retrospective omniscient narrative: all the more ironic given his separation from the outside world while a prisoner.

At other times, religious symbols are used to unite the Chartists, and remind them of their collective condition. In 'Easter Hymn,' Jones again presents himself as one among many Chartists who suffers as Christ did. 'Crucified, crucified, every morn...Scorned and spat on, and drenched with gall; / Brothers! how long shall we bear their thrall?'¹⁰⁰ The use of crucifixion to represent the suffering of the remaining Chartists echoes Christ's crucifixion recorded in the book of Matthew.¹⁰¹ Crucifixion, a slow and tortuous execution reserved for the base criminal, inflicted upon Christ through the great influence that religious leaders

⁹⁸ Ernest Jones, 'Dedication,' *Notes to the People* vol. I, p. 62.

⁹⁹ Elena Semino claims that in the process of innovatively using metaphor, the 'attribution of new properties to the tenor domain...will challenge and potentially refresh the readers' existing sets of beliefs and assumptions'. Elena Semino, *Language and World Creation in Poems and Other Texts*, London: Longman, 1997, p. 197.

¹⁰⁰ Ernest Jones, 'Easter Hymn,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 69.

¹⁰¹ 'And they spit upon him...and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him...And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. And they crucified him, and parted his garments'. Matthew 27: 30-35, *Holy Bible*.

held over the people,¹⁰² is symbolically evoked by Jones. Crucifixion represents the treatment of Chartists by a church that largely refused to accept the right of citizens to enter into political demonstration or debate in order to pursue their human and constitutional right to social improvement through political representation. Crucifixion symbolises the oppression of the remaining Chartists, a movement crucified through both the falling away of grass roots Chartist support, and the continued complicity of the church with the state.¹⁰³ However, Jones is also a visionary prophet and poet. He foresees that 'A Sabbath shall come' upon which the poor shall be 'redressed' and thus gain entry into the elect.¹⁰⁴

The Pharisees revel o'er manor and loom:
We'll blow them a blast on the trump of doom;
It shall raise the dead nations from land to land;
For the resurrection is nigh at hand.¹⁰⁵

Though 'Easter Hymn' chronicles the suffering, betrayal of and imagined victory of working people, the poem that follows it, 'Hymn for Ascension Day,' catalogues the life of and celebrates the risen Christ, allegorically affirming the Chartist victory to come. In that poem, 'Freedom' has 'burst from prison.' Born 'Mid the ranks of toil and trade,' 'Freedom' has arisen 'To save us alive, / if we will but strive, / Body and soul as well.'¹⁰⁶ Both poems counterpoise each other. The first equates the suffering that all Chartists currently endure in the struggle for their political rights as a new crucifixion:

Crucified, crucified every morn,
Beaten and scourged and crowned with thorn
Scourged and spar on and drenched with gall;
Brothers! how long shall we bear their thrall?¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² 'But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.' Matthew 27: 20, *Holy Bible*.

¹⁰³ 'But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.' John 19:15, *Holy Bible*.

¹⁰⁴ Ernest Jones, 'Easter Hymn,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 69.

¹⁰⁵ Ernest Jones, 'Easter Hymn,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 69.

¹⁰⁶ Ernest Jones, 'Hymn for Ascension Day,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, 1851, p. 70.

¹⁰⁷ Ernest Jones, 'Easter Hymn,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, 1851, p. 69.

The second imagines and celebrates the accomplishment of their political goal, equating Christ's ascension into heaven with the attainment of freedom through the franchise.

Freedom is risen—
Freedom is risen;
Freedom is risen today!
She burst from her prison
She burst from her prison;
She broke from her gaolers away.¹⁰⁸

The poem equates the plight of all Chartists with the suffering of Christ in 'Easter Hymn,' while evoking of the body of Christ to symbolise the political ideals Chartists were aspiring to. Once again the individual body symbolises wider political issues. Chartists could thus consider themselves addressed conjointly through the metonymic figure of 'Freedom' in 'Hymn for Ascension Day.'

In 'Prison Fancies,' Jones wrote of his fear of losing the support of his fellow Chartists: the 'comrades and friends' who may forget him. Even if Jones's support should fail, he will not countenance relinquishing 'the truths I so fondly have held!'¹⁰⁹ Similarly, in 'The Mariner's Compass,' he is at the helm of a ship and is 'By a wondrous compass steering'. However, despite Jones's efforts, the ship 'Refuses to answer the helm.' Jones cannot contend with the strong, natural currents of the sea on his own. Consequently, control of his 'barque' will go the way of Chartist support, and will 'glide where the many go!'¹¹⁰ Even though Jones has the inspiration of his faith, he cannot do much without the support of a well organised and harmonised crew of Chartists. Jones's poem 'The Silent Cell' uses his own body as a metonym to convey this need. The poem seeks to overcome the problematic levels of abstraction by trying to locate poet and audience within a single common, albeit symbolic, body.

In 'The Silent Cell,' Jones has been refused his books by the authorities. Echoing his Dedication, Jones is denied the usual or recognised means of expressing unity

¹⁰⁸ Ernest Jones, 'Hymn for Ascension Day,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, 1851, p. 69.

¹⁰⁹ Ernest Jones, 'Prison Fancies,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 64.

¹¹⁰ Ernest Jones, 'The Mariner's Compass,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 64.

and fellowship with his literary influences. In its place, 'Hope and Memory, brought / Bright volumes' to him. His imagination became an 'airy pen'.¹¹¹ 'Hope' and 'Memory' symbolically replace the conventional pen and book as the signifiers of his connections with his audiences and acted as markers of his personal connections with literary culture.¹¹² Jones assumed or sought a position as a representative figurehead, defending the role of the poet in the act of writing itself, re-affirming his election as a poet in the service of the literary culture that called to him. The act of writing becomes an act of thanks and praise for the bestowing of that gift upon him. The poem also charts the movement of Jones from an individual who is unconventionally addressed by his literary influences, outward into the role of 'representative' literary figure, standing as an apostle for all Chartists. This is emphasised in the movement from 'my' early in the first stanza quoted below, to 'we,' forming the trinity of the poet, Hope and Memory in the second quoted stanza:

Denied the fruit of others' thought,
 To write my own denied,
 Sweet sisters Hope and Memory, brought
 Bright volumes to my side.

And oft we trace, with airy pen,
 Full many a word of worth;
 For Times will pass, and Freedom then
 Shall flash them on the earth.

They told me that my veins would flag,
 My ardour would decay;
 And heavily their fetters drag
 My blood's young strength away.

Like conquerors bounding to the goal,
 Where cold white marble gleams,
 Magnificent red rivers! roll!—
 Roll! all you thousand streams.¹¹³

The poem attaches agency to 'Hope and Memory' who bring the necessary 'volumes' to the attention of the poet, who is then able to write poetry, impelled

¹¹¹ Ernest Jones, 'The Silent Cell,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 67.

¹¹² Ernest Jones, 'The Silent Cell,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 67.

¹¹³ Ernest Jones, 'The Silent Cell,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 67.

by these agents. Jones's representation of the agency of the influences that visit him and their mediation through the language used by the poet seems to echo Ralph Waldo Emerson, whom Jones later quotes in *Notes to the People*:

Thoughts walk and speak, and look with eyes at me, and transport me into new and magnificent scenes. These are the pungent instructors who thrill the heart of each of us, and make all other teaching formal and cold.¹¹⁴

Anne Janowitz describes 'The Silent Cell' as a space where Jones's body 'becomes the scene of a drawing together of multitudes... [Jones's] mind, and then the circulation of his blood are magnified and expanded,' saving him from 'any incipient solipsism'.¹¹⁵ Janowitz positions Jones within a romantic tradition and her analysis of the blood circulation image in 'The Silent Cell' focuses on the conciliation between two subject positions: Jones as the lone poet and his multitudinous audience. The transfiguring quality of Jones's poetry is attributed to a romantic literary tradition whereby the object perceived is redefined, transformed and re-presented. The representation of the breaking of the individual body in the construction of a communal body however, also has its roots in the much older religious discourse of Holy Communion that encompasses 'many members in one body'.¹¹⁶

Jones is very clear in this poem to distinguish between himself and the powers of 'Hope and Memory' that transform him into poet. As such, he recognises his personal connection with and difference from his literary influences, in which he acts as the earthly manifestation for the two phenomena, Hope and Memory. He is thus charged with the duty of writing poetry as a homage for his election as a poet. Holy Communion also establishes a metonymic relationship between poet and an audience that elects Jones as a public Chartist poet, able to speak to and on behalf of 'the people.' It is at this point that, although subservient to Hope and Memory, Jones the elected poet speaks to and on behalf of 'the people.' Jones's body

¹¹⁴ Jones reprints this quotation under his own title, 'Thought and Language,' from Ralph Waldo Emerson's 'Lecture on the Times,' *Essays Lectures and Orations*, London: 1845. See *Notes to the People* vol. I, p. 220.

¹¹⁵ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour*, pp. 185-186.

¹¹⁶ Romans 12: 4, *Holy Bible*.

symbolises the common experiences and beliefs shared among all Chartists, emphasising the importance of reciprocation and interdependence between Chartists (Jones among them), spurred on by his acute awareness of his isolation in prison. His poetry represents a literary communion, shared blood between poet and audience, leader and Chartist body, as well as affirming Jones as a fellow-Chartist. Jones's references to his poems as written in his own blood indicate that his poems become sites wherein all Chartists share blood and consanguinity. Jones simultaneously communes as an individual with his literary influences, but also positions himself as a symbol of common action. The poem affirms Jones's personal sense of mission as a Chartist leader, affirmed through his physical being, which acts as a focaliser for the Chartist body, even as the poem seeks to affirm Jones as one among many in the Chartist body. The musicians playing the 'marches' are both united in a common body, and orchestrated through the individual body of the Chartist leader:

But never a wish for base retreat,
Or thought of a recreant part,
While yet a single pulse shall beat
Proud marches in my heart.¹¹⁷

The physical body is associated with the pulse of the march, and Jones's physical body is able to substitute for the Chartist collective. The 'pulse' suggests the throb of arteries, a thrill of emotion, or excitement, as well as the beat of a march or a musical rhythm. The pulse or rhythmic flow of blood around the body also represents the circulation of poetry among a collective Chartist body. Blood-letting and blood circulation symbolises the production, and circulation of poetry as cultural and political action.

The book of Psalms provides another important language that permeates Jones's prison poems. The language of the Psalms often represents the individual as isolated and under threat from a particular force or enemy, or faced with a potentially overwhelming foe. The Psalms provided Jones with an accessible, christianised model of resistance in which the weak heroically face up to a

¹¹⁷ Ernest Jones, 'The Silent Cell,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p.67.

despotic foe. A staple of public, communal Christian praise,¹¹⁸ they were a significant influence on Chartist culture and an important element of the culture of Chartist meetings generally.¹¹⁹ They combine received religious and historical genealogies with the psalmist's intense personal religious experience into a purposive, distinct literary form.¹²⁰ This thesis, so far as the author is aware, is the first to discuss the importance of psalmody to Chartist poetry.

Jones's debt to psalmody, touched upon briefly in Chapter 3, gains greater importance as a literary strategy for describing his condition as a persecuted leader, akin to the great leader and psalmist David.¹²¹ Perhaps most pertinently, the use of the first person as a mode of address (predominant in the Psalms) is metonymic in Jones's prison poems. Shamai Gelandner observes that 'the "I" in some psalms represents a community with which the speaker identifies himself. Therefore the personal pronoun does not necessarily indicate a personal prayer.'¹²² The 'I' is similarly foregrounded in Jones's prison poetry. Though the romantic tradition, as observed by Janowitz, remains a vital component of Jones's poetic idiom, as this chapter demonstrates, it does not wholly account for Jones's poetic 'I' in his prison poems.

Many of the Psalms are attributed to David, king of Israel, the greatest Old Testament leader. It should be of no surprise that as a Chartist leader, Jones might identify with the exiled David. Persecuted by King Saul, David nevertheless became Israel's greatest King. David's psalms map his development as an elected leader chosen to succeed Saul, but are also at times confessional, occasionally

¹¹⁸ John Alexander Lamb, *The Psalms in Christian Worship*, London: Faith Press, 1962, p.3; p.150.

¹¹⁹The importance of the psalms as a means of expressing and legitimating the Chartists' plight did not escape the notice of Benjamin Disraeli. In *Sybil or The Two Nations*, the Chartist leader Walter Gerard, charged with seditious conspiracy, was released on bail and returned to Mowbray. Here he was met by a 'triumphant procession' in which some of the parties attending 'arrived without music or banners, but singing psalms'. The passage seems to indicate the spontaneity with which the psalms could be taken up and sung, suggesting that they held a strong position in oral culture. Disraeli however, is rather condescending in his assessment of the political effectiveness of this communal discourse. See Smith, Sheila M. (ed.) Benjamin Disraeli, *Sybil or The Two Nations*, (World's Classics Paperback), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981 p. 338; p.341.

¹²⁰ J.D. Douglas (ed.) *The New Bible Dictionary*, Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1962, p. 1053.

¹²¹ See my discussion of the psalmic influences on Jones's poem 'Our Warning' in chapter 3.

¹²² Shamai Gelandner, 'Convention and Originality: Identification of the Situation in the Psalms,' *Vetus Testamentum*, XLII, 3, 1992, p. 305. See also Lamb, John Alexander, *The Psalms in Christian Worship*, p. 3

publicly so. In the Davidian Psalm 142, the exiled David, pursued by Saul's forces calls on God to: 'Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I'.¹²³ The trials, the personal tests of faith that the psalmist had to contend with are made public through a form designed for communal use. Sometimes the psalms are accompanied by short 'superscriptions' that further detail the conditions that the psalmist had to contend with.¹²⁴ Similarly, as Timothy Randall has noted, Ernest Jones's prison poems, particularly those written in solitary confinement, or when his health seemed likely to completely fail, are also accompanied by details of the crisis that prompted Jones to write that particular poem. Randall states that such details further dramatise Jones's prison experience for his audiences.¹²⁵ However, the inclusion of such details, the repeated emphasis on the individual pitted against a multitudinous enemy, emphasise an underlying psalmic influence on his poems, but in particular on 'Prison Bars.'

David's psalms often meditate upon the immediate conditions that threaten the life and safety of the narrator in the face of overwhelming numbers. The besieged yet faithful voice of the psalmist seeks God's condemnation of those who sin against the petitioner whose allegiance to God provides the bedrock for that prayer.¹²⁶ Moments of crisis are overcome through the reaffirmed covenant between the individual and God, expressed through the writing of the psalm itself. In psalm twenty seven, for example, the narrator speaks confidently at the beginning, assured by the difference, or boundary separating the psalmist (allied with God) from an enemy that threatens the petitioner. The psalm begins with the confident affirmation: 'The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?' The psalmist then experiences anxiety and fear when facing an enemy, and seeks assurance that God will stand by the psalmist: 'Hide not thy face far from

¹²³ For Saul's persecution of David see 1 Samuel, 19-24; Psalm 142, *Holy Bible*.

¹²⁴ Theodore L. Steinberg, 'The Sidneys and the Psalms,' *Studies in Philology*, vol. 92, no.1, 1995, p. 2

¹²⁵ Timothy Randall notes that many of Jones's titles 'are followed by circumstantial details which exhibit the progress of Jones's suffering'. For example, 'The Silent Cell. Composed, during illness, on the sixth day of my incarceration, in a solitary cell, on bread and water, and without books,—August, 1849.' Other poems in *Notes to the People* vol. I that make use of this convention include 'Prison Fancies,' 'Resignation,' 'The Quiet Home,' and 'The Legacy.' See Timothy Randall, 'Towards a Cultural Democracy,' p. 72.

¹²⁶ Shama Gelander, 'Convention and Originality,' p. 302.

me...leave me not, neither forsake me, O god of my salvation.'¹²⁷ But at the end of the ordeal, the psalmist again finds resolve, and is strengthened by a faith that itself forms the platform upon which the psalm is written and performed, recording the moment of crisis. In so doing, the psalmist acknowledges God's call to them, a sign that confirms the identity of the psalmist as one of God's faithful. Hence the psalmist discovers anew their election into God's chosen: 'Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.'¹²⁸ The psalmist is called into serving God in the process of writing a psalm that records that particular personal crisis.

The writing of the psalm signifies a symbolic renewal of the Covenant between God and his chosen people. Similarly, Jones's prison poems record moments of personal crises, but also the writing of the poet into being. His poems are riddled with doubts and fears of being overcome or oppressed by a powerful foe, or of being let down by supposed allies. 'Prison Fancies,' emphasises Jones's sense of isolation not by just having to face his 'foes' alone. It also represents his doubts over his supposed allies. The sense of isolation he presents in his poems allows Jones to represent his own sense of election to his audiences:

Troublesome fancies beset me,
 Sometimes as I sit in my cell
 That comrades and friends may forget me,
 And foes may remember too well...

But tho' I may doubt all beside me,
 And anchor and cable may part,
 Whatever—whatever betide me,
 Forbid me to doubt my own heart!¹²⁹

Jones is physically and psychologically isolated in prison. The psychological barriers that also imprison him strengthen the solid certainties of the prison walls. Jones makes it clear that he is sitting in 'my cell,' which may suggest the acceptance of his fate. In other poems, such as 'Resignation,' he notes that:

We all have our allotted task;

¹²⁷ Psalm 27:9, *Holy Bible*.

¹²⁸ Psalm 27:14, *Holy Bible*.

¹²⁹ Ernest Jones, 'Prison Fancies,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 64.

Their burden we all must bear—
 For God gave us our faculties
 To use and not to spare.¹³⁰

'Prison Fancies' might seem at first glance to turn on Jones's triumphant affirmation as self-reliant and independent. However, it is clear that Jones is addressing an external agent through which he seeks legitimacy as a political subject and poet. The imperative 'Forbid' effectively says 'confirm to me my faith in you.' Jones also wants to be an addressee; to be called upon by an external power that does the forbidding: 'Forbid me to doubt my own heart!' The use of the imperative 'Forbid' is Jones's affirmation as an elected poet, his recognition that he is called into that cultural position. It is also his acceptance of his position within a particular hierarchical structure, by which his election as Chartist leader and poet may be justified. It is also the moment at which Jones no longer considers himself alone in prison, re-cementing his political faith using the election narrative to do so. The imperative demonstrates Jones's sense of leadership as a poet, attained through his humility as a Chartist looking for guidance. Jones makes a demand of that external power, but only insofar as he seeks a role as a dutiful and obedient follower. In other words Jones becomes subservient to the political principles that he seeks to serve, seeking a place as a humble, elected servant of those ideals. In this poem, Jones largely succeeds in collapsing the distance between himself as both a cultural leader and low-church Chartist. Consequently, he is able to occupy more than one position within the poem. Jones can address his readers as a poet and leader, because he is also a willing servant to the political and literary ideals he feels elected to serve. Just as David entered into a very intimate, personal relationship with God, which can be observed throughout his psalms, so Jones represents his personal connections with his political ideals in similar terms in 'Prison Fancies'. Psalm 142, for example, emphasises intense, private worship as a path towards salvation: 'Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.'¹³¹

¹³⁰ Ernest Jones, 'Resignation,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 68.

¹³¹ Psalm 142, *Holy Bible*, King James version. The Psalm is subtitled 'Maschil of David: A Prayer when he was in the cave.' See also 1 Samuel, 24, *Holy Bible*.

'Prison Bars' has a more specific psalmic reference in it, beginning: 'Ye scowling prison bars / That compass me about'. The phrase 'compass me about' resonates through the Psalms.¹³² Psalm 118 for example demonstrates how important it is to the psalmists to take sides with God against a particular enemy or foe, aligning oneself against a boundary: 'The lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?' Importantly in this psalm, the Lord is with both the individual supplicant and her or his allies: 'The Lord taketh my part with them that helpeth me; therefore I shall see my desire upon them that hate me.' Humankind is of course fallible, and it remains 'better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.' Jones has a similar quandary in the poem 'Hope', in which hope is a 'Garden of thorny roses' in which the 'Roses fall—and thorns remain.' The poem uses the cultivation of nature as a symbol of cyclical revolutionary tendencies. Chartists, it seems, must dig in and sit out their period of defeat. But hope, for Jones the isolated Chartist prisoner, is also his 'Only friend, when traitor proven, / Whom we always trust anew.'¹³³ The certainty of some future intervention into the course of human history is based on faith and belief rather than trust invested in his fellow beings.

In Psalm 118, when the individual is besieged by a seemingly powerful enemy, similarly, the only power to overcome that foe is through faith in God, emphasising the isolation of the individual. 'All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them. They compassed me about; yea they compassed me about: but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them.'¹³⁴ In Psalm 18, David gives praise to God for his safe delivery from the hands of his enemies. David calls upon the Lord to save him 'from mine enemies', and from the 'sorrows of death that compassed me'. The 'floods of the ungodly,' threatened to overwhelm the psalmist. 'The sorrows of hell compassed me about...In my distress I called upon the Lord'. By making supplication, David is confirmed as a subject of God: 'In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, *even* into his

¹³² See psalms 18, 22, 32, 88, 109, 116, 118, 140, *Holy Bible*.

¹³³ Ernest Jones, 'Hope,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 63.

¹³⁴ Psalm 118, *Holy Bible*.

ears.'¹³⁵ Similarly, Jones's supplication to his apparently transcendental literary imagination (in so far as imagination is represented as an external phenomenon which visits the poet rather than being the sum product of life experiences) elects him and confirms him as a poet. As we have already seen, in 'Prison Fancies,' Jones addresses an external force or agent in order to seek out his election as a poet: 'Forbid me to doubt my own heart!'¹³⁶

Jones's reworking of biblical language and the application of particular Christian narrative structures to represent the condition of the individual, demonstrates the moral bankruptcy of the establishment using the language of righteousness. The use of biblical language also represents Jones's personal understanding as an individual besieged by the modern state, in order to validate himself as a Chartist writer. Religious language offered a great sense of legitimisation, confronting an oppressive power, and offering readers a form of moral as well as constitutional rescue from the despotism of a corrupt state power.¹³⁷ Biblical language always has to be on the side of the right and the good, and its readers and reviewers in the Chartist press similarly considered poetry a virtuous force. As one writer noted in Feargus O'Connor's *National Instructor* in 1850, great poetry was always a force for liberty and freedom, the reading of which could only ever make 'good citizens': poetry is never the weapon of 'tyranny and injustice.'¹³⁸ As Jones later wrote: '...the true poet is the high priest of God...he has a solemn duty to perform—not poverty, misery or want must make him veil the glory of the spirit for the sake of patronage or literary favour.'¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Psalm 18:3-6, *Holy Bible*. This Psalm is prefaced, 'To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul'.

¹³⁶ Ernest Jones, 'Prison Fancies,' *Notes to the People*, vol. I, p. 64.

¹³⁷ This point is also made by David Anthony Herbert, 'The Use of Religious Language and Imagery by the Chartist Movement,' M.Phil., University of Manchester, Faculty of Theology, 1992, p. 15.

¹³⁸ See 'The Political Influence of the Poet,' O'Connor, Feargus. (ed.) *The National Instructor*, London: vol. I, no 24, November 2, 1850, p. 379-380.

¹³⁹ Ernest Jones's review of Gerald Massey's *Graigrook Castle*, from *The People's Paper*, November 1, 1856, is cited in, Bouthaina Shaaban 'Shelley's Influence on the Chartist Poets,' D. Phil, University of Warwick, 1981, p. 217.

Chapter 5

'God and the People': William James Linton and the Religion of Radical Political Duty

William James Linton (1812-1897) was a radical activist and poet, a producer of several Chartist periodicals and an artisan wood-engraver. His activities spanned the early-middle and late nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic. In England, from the late 1830s through to the early 1860s, Linton promoted his republican principles and firm belief in universal suffrage as a journalist, editor and proprietor of a several radical journals and papers. He was highly regarded for his skill (though not always his artistry, much to his chagrin) as a wood engraver and was involved in several business partnerships with other talented engravers, producing illustrations for books, newspapers and literary journals. The quality of Linton's work was recognised early on. He submitted his first exhibit to the Royal Academy in 1837 and was later mentioned in Jackson's *A Treatise on Wood Engraving*.¹ His skill acquainted him with artists such as George Lance, John Gilbert, George Cruickshank, F.R. Pickersgill, Richard Dadd, and the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood.²

Following his disastrous marriage to Eliza Lynn in 1858, the death of two of his children and his disillusionment with British politics in the 1860s, he left for America in 1866. Here Linton continued his role as a lone political agitator and became a leading figure in American wood engraving.³ Toward the end of his life, Linton collected together duplicates of the poetry and prose he contributed to radical journals as a life-long radical. His extraordinary work *Prose and Verse Written and Published in the Course of Fifty Years, 1836-1886*, comprises

¹ Linton submitted an engraving entitled 'Nereids,' in 1837 and exhibited work again in 1855, 1858-59 and 1863-64. See Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts. A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904*, Vol. V, London: Graves & Bell, 1906, p. 71. See A. Chatto & J. Jackson, *A Treatise on Wood Engravings, Historical and Practical by William Andrew Chatto, with Upwards of Three Hundred Illustrations Engraved on Wood, by John Jackson*, London: 1861, pp. 590-591

² W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p.74. For an account of Linton's troubled relationship with the Pre-Raphaelite artists, see Jan Marsh, "Hoping you will not think me too fastidious," Pre-Raphaelite Artists and the Moxon Tennyson and Illustrations for an Edition of His Early Poems,' *Journal of Pre-Raphaelite and Aesthetic Studies* 2: (1) spring 1990, pp.11-17.

³ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan: William James Linton 1812-1897*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973, passim.

Linton's pamphlets and contributions to newspapers and magazines, with amendments to some works, collected into 20 volumes.⁴ This chapter analyses Linton's Chartist poems with reference to the religious dimension of his radicalism, a phenomenon first observed by F.B. Smith.⁵ In particular I examine poems from three of Linton's periodicals, *The National*, *A Library for the People*, (1839) *The Cause of the People* (1848) and *The English Republic* (1851-55).

Linton suggested that he 'perhaps inherited some tendency to radicalism' from his father, a reader of William Hone's periodicals.⁶ Linton's political sensibility hardened during his apprenticeship as an engraver and he became associated with radical Unitarianism. His Church of England upbringing under his mother's guidance gave way in early adult life in the engraving workshop where, Linton wryly noted, his 'first perversion' to radical Unitarianism took place. He worked alongside and was friendly with an anonymous 'infidel' engraver from Stockton-on-Tees for a while, and was also introduced into radical cultural and Unitarian circles at around this time.⁷

His radicalism, interest in European radical movements and the political and cultural initiatives he subsequently undertook were also influenced by two major European figures: Felicité Robert de Lamennais and Joseph Mazzini.⁸ Both emphasised individual sovereignty and social duty and saw religion as a chief guiding principle.⁹ Lamennais had been a Breton priest in the Catholic church. He led a reform campaign for a Catholicism that 'identified itself more and more with the politically and economically oppressed working class of Europe...The liberating message of the Gospel and the will of the people came to replace the church and the Pope as his guiding light.'¹⁰ Linton had been interested in

⁴ W.J. Linton, *Prose and Verse Written and Published in the Course of Fifty Years, 1836-1886* is a unique collection, compiled and presented to the British Library by Linton in 1895. See F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 242.

⁵ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 26.

⁶ W.J. Linton, *Memories* (1894), New York: Kelley, 1970, p. 16.

⁷ W.J. Linton, *Memories*, pp. 17-18; p.19; p.24.

⁸ See, W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p.26; pp.49-50.

⁹ Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848-1854,' *Journal of British Studies*, vol.28, no.3, 1989, pp.232; Thomas J. Braga, 'Lamennais and Liberation Theology,' *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, vol.18, no.1, 1989-90 p.85

¹⁰ Braga, Thomas J. 'Lamennais and Liberation Theology,' *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, vol.18, no.1, pp.85-86

Lamennais' ideas since the late 1830s and published an early translation of *On Slavery* (1840), a work that interested Chartists and Unitarians alike. Linton also met Lamennais in Paris shortly after the revolution of 1848 while he was a delegate of the People's International League.¹¹

Mazzini had first arrived in Britain in 1837. The founder of Young Italy, he was dedicated to freeing his country from the tyranny of the Austrian Empire. He believed in a non-socialist republicanism that was critical of European despotism. He also criticised the communist and socialist ideas of other rival European radicals such as Louis Blanc, who proposed the setting up of national workshops during the French Revolution of 1848.¹² By the late 1840s Linton was a confirmed Mazzinian disciple and was an activist in the radical ferment of the 1848 European revolutions, involved in British support for the revolutionary movements in Poland, Hungary, Switzerland, and France.¹³ He remained devoted to the cause of Chartism throughout.¹⁴ The presence of the ideas of both men in Linton's thinking indicates the importance of European radical thought and its history to his projects.

The title of this chapter recycles a republican motto, 'God and the People,' that Linton borrowed from his Italian republican hero Joseph Mazzini.¹⁵ It represents how Linton understood his own political obligation and echoes his earlier 1840 translation of Lamennais: 'The perception of duty is a religion.'¹⁶ Restoration work in Linton's old print room at Brantwood in the Lake District, where the

¹¹ F. Lamennais, *On Slavery*, (trans. W.J. Linton), London: J. Watson, 1840; Kathryn Gleadle, *The Early Feminists: Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831-1851*, London: Macmillan Press, 1995, p. 79; F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p.73

¹² Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848-1854,' *Journal of British Studies*, vol.28, no.3, 1989, pp.227-229

¹³ Linton was involved, for example in the People's International League. Howell collection, Bishopsgate Institute. See F.C. Mather, (ed.), *Chartism and Society: An Anthology of Documents*, London: Bell & Hyndman, 1980.

¹⁴ W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p.77.

¹⁵ See Joseph Mazzini, 'Europe: Its Conditions and Prospects,' (*Westminster Review*, April 2, 1852), in William Clarke (ed.) *Essays: Selected from the Writings, Literary, Political and Religious, of Joseph Mazzini*, London: Walter Scott, 1887, p.277.

¹⁶ F. Lamennais, *On Slavery*, trans. W.J. Linton, London: J. Watson, 1840, p.25.

English Republic was produced, has uncovered Mazzini's republican motto painted in faded, broken gothic script on the back wall.¹⁷



The remains of Mazzini's motto 'God and the People,' in Linton's former print room at Brantwood, near Coniston.

¹⁷Linton's print room at Brantwood was turned into an art and educational facility for children during the summer of 2000. Brantwood assure me that they are going to preserve Linton's motto.

It had been covered up after John Ruskin purchased Brantwood from Linton in 1872.¹⁸ Given its prominence on the wall of the print room, the motto is clearly an important one, indicating the centrality of Linton's personal dialogue with God to his political duty, and its relationship to the political and cultural labours undertaken in the print room. It suggests that Linton understood himself as a political individual by virtue of his recognition of the personal relationship with God to which he felt elected. The motto establishes Linton's faith as a source of his personal understanding of the political service to 'the people' that he undertook, attempting to coalesce 'the people' into a politically consciousness collective. Linton's borrowing 'God and the People' represented the political task he felt elected to fulfil as a religious mission dutifully undertaken on behalf of 'the people,' the 'unenfranchised' of early Victorian society. His personal radical agenda was represented using a 'theology of liberation', seeing it as his duty, as this chapter will demonstrate, to convert 'the people' to his political principles.

Linton came to understand his elected political duty in such terms by engaging with the ideas of Lamennais and later the influence of Mazzini during the 1840s. F.B. Smith notes how Lamennais influenced Linton through his 'faith in the sacred unity of mankind, his hortatory cadences and fervid apocalyptic sense.'¹⁹ In his correspondence with Linton, Mazzini claimed that Christianity had developed into 'a theory of duty' that privileged only 'the *individual* man'. It was the duty of radicals, with their knowledge of 'the *collective* man...to explain duty towards Humanity.'²⁰ Linton's poems, as this chapter will demonstrate, bear the impress of both men's ideas. They emphasise the right and duty of each to be a patriotic citizen, echoing the ideals of European radicalism while rejecting the laissez-faire liberalism that was more concerned with self-betterment. In his poem 'Our Tricolour,' Linton noted that '*Blue* and *white* and *green* shall span England's flag republican', and that those colours shall be 'Equal as the equal march of our duties and our dues.'²¹ Antony Taylor observes that the republican movement of

¹⁸ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 181.

¹⁹ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 24.

²⁰ Frederick W. Hoeing, 'Letters of Mazzini to W.J. Linton,' *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 5, no.1, 1933, p.59.

²¹ W.J. Linton, 'Our Tricolour,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 35.

the 1870s commemorated Linton's design for a new tricolour represented in his poetry by constructing its own white green and blue banner.²²

Linton was also quick to condemn what he considered the betrayal of the new French republic in 1848. The great puzzle that republicanism had to work out was how to prevent political struggles from being hijacked by the 'private interests of some few rulers', thereby undermining radical activity.²³ In his poem 'The Mark of Cain' Linton attacked those willing to accept preferment and privilege in lieu of their services to the Republic in battle. Linton saw the wearing of their decorations as a betrayal of the fallen on both sides of the conflict: 'Sad, O sad the chance, my brother! / That brought strife betwixt us twain; each misdeeming of the other'. Regarding the Legion of Honour conferred upon the victors, Linton was scathing: 'Who would wear them? Civic traitors, / Deeply stirring civil strife; / Not true patriots but dark haters / Of our young Republic's life'.²⁴ Such rewards were the mark of Cain, worn by traitors to their fellow beings rather than their true servants.

Linton also chanced upon references to the ancient Roman slave-leader Spartacus among the pages of Lamennais. The notes accompanying his own translation gloss him as a leader of insurrection, 'possessing great strength, with discernment and manners far above his fortune.'²⁵ In his translation of *On Slavery*, the modern Spartacus would equip the people with 'their acknowledged right; and therewith shall they conquer.'²⁶ Linton was clearly fascinated by the interrelationship between violent revolutionary tendencies and the overthrow of social orders via moral and intellectual arguments. As F.B. Smith notes, Linton styled himself as the new Spartacus, identifying with a historical figure that fed and 'magnified' his revolutionary ambitions.²⁷ Linton would adopt the pseudonym Spartacus for much of his Chartist poetry.

²² Antony Taylor, *'Down with the Crown': British Anti-Monarchism and Debates about Royalty Since 1790*, London: Reaktion Books, 1999, p.72.

²³ W.J. Linton, 'The Policy of Europe,' in C.G. Harding (ed.) *The Republican*, (1848) London: Garland, 1986, p. 62.

²⁴ W.J. Linton, 'The Mark of Cain,' *The Republican*, p. 199.

²⁵ F. Lamennais, *On Slavery*, p. 17.

²⁶ F. Lamennais, *On Slavery*, p. 17.

²⁷ F.B. Smith. *Radical Artisan*, p. 24.

While Linton's reputation as an engraver was growing in the late 1830s, he was also introduced into a middle-class Unitarian cultural circle by the playwright and Shelley enthusiast Thomas Wade.²⁸ As Kathryn Gleadle points out, Unitarianism's rejection of the trinity inclined its followers to radical principles and reformist agendas, to engage in critical self-questioning and debate.²⁹ Linton adopted the practice of intense self-questioning as a literary strategy in his Chartist poems. Seven of his twelve 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised' open with direct questions that the audiences are encouraged to answer for themselves.³⁰ However, Linton's status as an artisan precluded him from making much of an impression upon the radical Unitarian circles of W.J. Fox and Thomas Wade with which he was acquainted. The middle-class yet bankrupt Wade family considered his marriage to Laura Wade, sister to Thomas Wade a 'social declension'. Linton's mother objected on religious grounds.³¹ After Laura's death only six months into their marriage, Linton was inconsolable and threw his energy into producing his first periodical, *The National*. His circle of middle-class contributors did not sustain their interest in the educational and artistic objectives of a publication aimed at 'the unmonied' that was also failing to find an audience. *The National* closed at the end of June 1839.

Linton's political writings in his Chartist journals and papers demonstrate the importance of his Lamennaian and Unitarian dissent to the development of his political ideas. His radicalism, as he later recorded in *The English Republic*, was based on 'the doctrine of human equality under God.'³² Every individual was to be their own 'priest,'³³ entering into a dialogue with their personal faith. As one among many other Christian souls, they would sense their election into the service

²⁸ See W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p. 17-18; p. 19. Thomas Wade contributed a poem to Linton's *The National*, entitled 'Shelley' which attacked the construction of Shelley as an idealistic and ineffectual dreamer. '...Men Profane/Blaspheme thee: I have heard thee *Dreamer* styled.' See W.J. Linton, (ed.) *The National, A Library for the People*, London: J. Watson, 1839, p. 76.

²⁹ Katherine Gleadle, *The Early Feminists*, p.19.

³⁰ See Linton's series of poems, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised,' in *The National, A Library for the People*.

³¹ F.B. Smith. *Radical Artisan*, p. 15.

³², W.J. Linton, 'Monarchy or the Republic,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.242; F.B. Smith describes the *English Republic* as 'the fullest and most venturesome transposition of European republicanism into English.' It 'supplied a social democratic programme, a focus for egalitarian fervour, and a commitment to parliamentary reform and class harmony that kept alive the 'moral force' Chartist ideology through the period of Chartist demoralization'. F.B. Smith *Radical Artisan*, pp.105-107

of society, which in turn would lead to a closer relationship with God. Linton's republicanism was based on:

...equal political rights, in order that all may fulfil their social duties, that the whole nation may will and act as one life, with perfect integrity, walking Godward in the ways of worth and honour.³⁴

Linton's phrase 'walking Godward' inflects the entry of 'the whole nation' into a new political state. Linton did not envisage a future reward in heaven but the creation of the kingdom of God as a new political order on earth³⁵, often by alluding to radical traditions such as Cromwell's republic as a period of 'faith...In God and in human freedom.'³⁶ However, Linton's strong sense of English constitutional and 'contractual' authority rejected the sort of unrestrained free growth advocated by laissez faire individualism. Instead he emphasised the exercise of individual political conscience, for even the extent to which God exercised his will on earth was a phenomenon that humankind could not determine or decipher. God was inscrutable within the fabric of human society.³⁷ In the poem 'The Wonder of the Lord,' God shows no interest in intervening in a society dominated by personal greed, or that does not follow his principles:

The good God once looked out o' window,
To examine the ways of the earth:
He saw there abundance of misery,
Plenteous wrong; but a dearth
Of justice and loving kindness.
Lo! Where a fat vicar bad
The multitude feed him and perish:
God had given him orders to cherish
His belly, and bless them with blindness—
God said, he'd be blessed if he had.³⁸

³³ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 104.

³⁴ W.J. Linton, (ed.) *The English Republic*, vol. III, 1854, p. 2.

³⁵ As Thomas J. Braga has noted, Lamennais did not envisage the kingdom of God as 'a physical place in a new world', but as an 'inner transformation that was to be realized in the hearts of men.', Thomas J. Braga, 'Lamennais and Liberation Theology,' *Nineteenth-Century French Studies*, vol.18, no's 1&2, Fall-Winter, 1998-1990, p.98.

³⁶ W.J. Linton, 'Let England Remember!' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 73

³⁷ See F.B. Smith *Radical Artisan*, p. 107.

³⁸ W.J. Linton, 'The Wonder of the Lord,' *Prose and Verse*, vol. III, p.152.

The poor inevitably suffer, are 'starv'd into rudeness' and are compelled to take violent action against their oppressors, who in turn call on God to 'save us'. In reply to their plea, God answers 'I'll be damned if I do.'³⁹ The poem emphasises the consequences for the privileged, should they choose not to accept the arguments for equality and the fair distribution of wealth. God clearly does not act or intervene into the affairs of the earth in the way that the privileged classes imagine in the poem. Using the figure of the unrepentant vicar, Linton represents the importance of listening to one's individual conscience to the attainment of a truly just social order. Linton's poem 'Equality,' emphasises the importance of the each recognising their individual duty:

We claim our Right of Man:
 Our right to be
 Lords of ourselves, to wield beyond all ban
 Our own integrity.⁴⁰

In his poetry and journalism, the radical project he feels elected to promote has a sense of both its own history and trajectory. In an article entitled 'The Religion of the Future,' Linton describes Humanity as 'progressive,—destined to advance continually', and together with Equality and Liberty, it creates a trinity that is 'sacred and inviolable'. All three comprise the 'necessary elements in every satisfactory solution of the problem of society.'⁴¹

His poems may on occasions seem to replicate the interactions between two distinct voices, especially in Linton's 'Hymns to the Unenfranchised.' They may also represent the different functions of Linton's poetry for different audience situations, notably, the poem as simultaneously self-addressed and a public event. 'The Slave's Hymn' indicates the variety of literary strategies within his Chartist poems. The poem is infused with what F.B. Smith terms the 'hortatory cadences and fervid apocalyptic sense' of Lamennais.⁴² In this poem Linton anticipates political freedom in terms of a new providential order on earth. 'Liberty' is represented in the poem as a coming salvation that will free 'the people'. It will

³⁹ W.J. Linton, 'The Wonder of the Lord,' *Prose and Verse*, vol. III, p.153.

⁴⁰ W.J. Linton, 'Equality,' in W.J. Linton & G.J. Holyoake, *The Cause of the People*, London: J. Watson, 1848, p.56.

⁴¹ W.J. Linton, 'The Religion of the Future,' *The Cause of the People*, p.25.

vanquish woe from the earth, herald the dissolution of the present social order and the coming new order through political activism:⁴³

Speed thine advent Liberty!
So long have we watched for thee,
We have wasted till we are
As an echo of Despair.⁴⁴

This poem imagines 'the people' as an ever-alert collective, in a state of heightened readiness that echoes Christ's warning to his followers to remain ever-prepared for the second coming of the son of God.⁴⁵ The poem also represents the role of the people as disciples of Liberty:

Even as one who in the tomb
Seeks the shadow of his home
Through all doubt and darkness, we
Would embrace thee Liberty!⁴⁶

Even though the poem indicates that Liberty will come in order to redeem 'the people', the poem does not represent those awaiting salvation as agentless beings. Instead the narrator addresses Liberty, telling it that its arrival had long been actively demanded:

We have sought thee, till the tone
Of our weary hope hath grown,
Moss-like, o'er the earth, that stone
Of thy sleep, Beloved One!⁴⁷

Despite 'all doubt and darkness', 'the people' still remained faithful to their sense of election into a relationship with Liberty, and have 'sought' it continually, thus echoing their faith in the Abrahamic covenant, even though the poem's language is not specifically religious. Linton's poem is also ambivalent about just who might be among that elect group:

⁴² F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 24.

⁴³ F.B. Smith notes of the religiosity of Linton's radicalism that 'he was almost unique in his dedication to social love and the realization on earth of the Providential order.' F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 26

⁴⁴ W.J. Linton, 'The Slave's Hymn,' *Prose and Verse* vol. III, p.143.

⁴⁵ 'Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come...Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.' Matthew 24: 42-44, *Holy Bible*.

⁴⁶ W.J. Linton, 'The Slave's Hymn,' *Prose and Verse* vol. III, p.143.

⁴⁷ W.J. Linton, 'The Slave's Hymn,' *Prose and Verse* vol. III, p.143.

Whither hast thou wandered?
 'Tis the Widow'd that is dead.
 Horribly the dead earth stirs:
 What are its inhabitants?⁴⁸

'The Slave's Hymn' inscribes a political division between the faithful who reject the godless earth, and those disobedient to the will of God, seemingly to the point of the latter's dehumanisation, prompting the narrator to ask what nature of creature 'are its inhabitants'.

In other poems, Linton battles to establish the legitimacy of true Christianity by debunking religious ceremony and attacking its misrepresentation by religious authorities. Such views were characteristic of Unitarianism, as well as other dissenting traditions.⁴⁹ In 'By the Grace of God,' Linton points out that the christening of a child does not make that child an equal member of Christ's flock. Rather, religious authorities are more concerned with upholding political and class inequalities on supposedly religious grounds such as monarchical 'right divine'. In 'The Christening,' children are warned that though they may be encouraged to consider themselves Christians, they will be urged to treat with disdain 'Christ-like poverty' and will be paradoxically counselled 'To hate the 'Anarchist' / Who preach'd Equality.'⁵⁰

The narrator in 'The Slave's Hymn' addresses not just Liberty at the end of the sixth stanza but also 'the people'. It asks whether they consider themselves part of the elect group of radicals working towards the attainment of an egalitarian world. The poem also senses the collapse of the present social order, the ever-present possibility that the impoverished will not survive this 'dead earth', and anticipates salvation for those that endure until the last days of the earth in the final stanza.

Haste! the hearth of the world is cold;
 Haste! the Titan Hope grows old;
 Mute Despair cries out to thee:
 Speed thy coming Liberty!⁵¹

⁴⁸ W.J. Linton, 'The Slave's Hymn,' *Prose and Verse* vol. III, p.143.

⁴⁹ Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860*, London: Longman, 1998, p.104.

⁵⁰ W.J. Linton, 'By the Grace of God'; 'The Christening,' *Prose and Verse*, vol. III, pp.146; 148

⁵¹ W.J. Linton, 'The Slave's Hymn,' *Prose and Verse* vol. III, p.143.

The poem ends on an apocalyptic note and also echoes Christ's warning to his disciples: 'But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved'⁵² Linton's use of the interrogative in this poem seeks to engage his audiences in dialogues both with the narrator and with their own consciences. In so doing, he provides a model—based on the social function of the conscientious and dutiful individual—that encapsulates the relationship between the individual and their allotted cultural and political tasks to which they are elected. In the above, readers are encouraged to recognise themselves as fully developed individuals who are duly able and responsible for undertaking their social obligation in the form of cultural and political activity.

The notion of political grouping represented in religious language was prominent in Linton's thinking. F.B. Smith notes that Linton's treasured copy of Sir Henry Vane's *A Retir'd Man's Meditations* contains a heavily underscored key passage on the 'election of the just, assuring them that if they consecrated their will to harmony, they would not "fade away".'⁵³ Linton framed his multivalent address in 'The Slave's Hymn' by making what for him would become a characteristic use of the interrogative. This encourages the audience into a dialogue both with the narrator and with their own political consciences, questioning the claim of orthodox religion to be true to God's will. The audience is challenged to fulfil its radical political duty. Owen Ashton observes that Linton would later stress to his radical comrade W.E. Adams that the best 'strategy for individual conversion lay with the role of the printed word' and cites a key letter in evidence⁵⁴:

I feel certain that tracts to awaken thought and personal conversation are the two best means. Preaching may be good sometimes—but words so uttered do not, I think, have the weight of well-digested tracts.⁵⁵

Though Ashton foregrounds the function of written tracts in Linton's letter, 'personal conversation' was also an important tool in the process of radical

⁵² Matthew 24:13, *Holy Bible*.

⁵³ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 26.

⁵⁴ Owen Ashton, *W.E Adams: Chartist, Radical and Journalist (1832-1906)*, Tyne & Wear: Bewick Press, 1991 p. 69.

conversion. Indeed 'The Slave's Hymn' (among other poems) constructs a dialogue and invites its audiences to share in a dialogic exchange, using the interrogative as a rhetorical device. Linton's Chartist Hymns, analysed later in this chapter, often contain more than one narrator and set up dialogues between speakers in order to debate radical agendas.

Linton insisted throughout his political writings on the importance of recognising 'the natural equality of humankind.'⁵⁶ In Janowitz's analysis, Linton's 'The Song of the Scattered' is 'freighted with the elegiac ambition of comradely restoration'.⁵⁷ It is important to further note however, that the poem anticipates this restoration by using a vision of the final day of reckoning at which God's elect are chosen: 'Heavenward, Exile! friends are there: / Nothing endures in vain.'⁵⁸ A slightly different version of this poem appeared later in the pages of the *Cause of the People*. The sustained use of questions, apocalyptic and biblical language, and the representation of the objectives of the poet and the audience (constructing private and public modes of address as well as addressing different classes) permeate Linton's Chartist poetry.

Linton's first periodical was entitled *The National, A Library for the People*. Thomas Wade, W.J. Fox, Douglas Jerrold and Dr Southwood Smith were all contributors, indicating the support of artistic and literary figures from the Wade Circle that Linton was associated with in the late 1830s.⁵⁹ The *Northern Star* described the *National* as 'judicious and valuable, and in the original articles a large amount of valuable instruction is conveyed through a variety of elegant and pleasing mediums.'⁶⁰ As well as appreciating the pedagogic ambition and the aesthetic diversity of the *National*, the *Northern Star* admired and reprinted Linton's own poetry.⁶¹ Yet despite receiving such high commendation, the

⁵⁵ Owen Ashton cites Ms. Eng. 180 (Houghton Library, Harvard University, USA) W.J. Linton to W.E. Adams, Brantwood, Saturday, July 19, 1856 in Owen Ashton, *W.E Adams*, p. 69.

⁵⁶ W.J. Linton, 'The Right of Universal Suffrage,' *The Republican*, p.117.

⁵⁷ Janowitz, Anne. *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.202.

⁵⁸ W.J. Linton, 'The Song of the Scattered,' *Prose and Verse*, vol. III, p. 156.

⁵⁹ For a discussion of Linton's place in this circle, See F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, chapter 2.

⁶⁰ *Northern Star*, vol. II no. 66, Feb 9, 1839, p. 7.

⁶¹ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised No. III,' *Northern Star*, vol. II no. 70 March 16, 1839, p. 7.

National was not to survive for long. But before it ceased, it made a significant contribution to the radical traditions that reverberated through Chartist literature and culture. On April 13 1839, the *Northern Star* reprinted Percy Bysshe Shelley's 'Song to the Men of England' from Linton's *National*. This must count as among the earliest periodicals espousing Chartist beliefs to reprint Shelley's song. *The Northern Star* gave Shelley a national Chartist audience way beyond that of *The National*'s more modest circulation.⁶²

Linton's 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised,' published in *The National*, subvert the hymnal tradition (as Thomas Cooper also would in the 1840s) in several ways. Fiercely anticlerical, these hymns represent early Victorian society as risible and paradoxical. They contest the cultural, economic and political integrity of early Victorian economic, political and religious values. Through a complex use of questions that are both self-addressed by the narrator and aimed at middle-class and Chartist audiences, these hymns seek to interrogate the ideological territory of Christian faith and usurp the very language by which the 'unenfranchised' found themselves politically marginalised. They subvert the religious practices inherent in Anglican faith such as the Litany, and in so doing question the claim by priests and their congregations to be true Christians.

The title of this series 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised' alludes to the solidarity that hymn singing produced. They may be seen as part of a longer radical tradition that incorporates the writing and recital of Chartist verse.⁶³ The series contains twelve hymns, seven of which begin with direct questions that are answered at the end of each poem.⁶⁴ These hymns may be read either as a lone voice speaking and answering itself or as a lone voice answered by a multitude. Using the interrogative form, Linton seeks to involve the audiences addressed by provoking a response from them to the communicative event that the poem opens up. This provides a question and answer model, engaging the individual reader or mass

⁶² *Northern Star*, April 13, 1839, p. 7.

⁶³ This tradition persists throughout the major years of Chartist activity. In chapter 3 I discuss the importance of the singing of John Henry Bramwich's 'A Chartist Hymn.' It focalised and brought order to the proceedings at a Chartist meeting held at Bradford Temperance Hall, attended by Ernest Jones. See *Northern Star*, May 15, 1847, p. 1.

⁶⁴ See Linton's series of poems, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised,' in *The National, A Library for the People*, London: J. Watson, 1839.

audience in political debate or conversation. At the same time, these hymns may be read as representing the processes by which the poet debates and divines his own political self-determination. Both audience situations—the dialogue between the narrator and a collective and the lyrical, lone, self-addressed voice of the narrator—produce very different poetic and political effects, as in the following hymn:

Hymns for the Unenfranchised No. I

Who is the Patriot, who is he,
When slaves are struggling to be free,
Freedom's best-beloved may claim
To bear her holiest Oriflamb?

He who joineth hands with power,
When the anarch would devour
Trampled right insurgent?—He
Is no friend of Liberty.

He who claimeth kin with Right
Perfumed or in ermine dight,
Knowing not the "rabble"?—He
Hateth truth and Liberty.

Who "for Truth's sake" would embrace
A lie, who seeks fit time and place
To traffic with his birthright?—*We*
Follow not Expediency.

He who through distress and scorn
Freedom's cross hath grandly borne,
The Uncompromising,—he shall be
The banner-man of Liberty.

Though he wear no title-brand
Though he own no stolen land
Prouder as an upright man
Than to crawl in Fashion's van,
Though his bearing be uncouth,
Though his zeal be rude as truth,
Though he lieth never—He
Shall lead the Bond to victory.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised,' *The National*, p. 51.

In 'Hymns No. I,' Linton replaces the priest-led Litany with a narrator that unintentionally leads 'the people' into their own political self-fulfilment through their growing intellectual awareness of and debate with the instruments of their oppression. Their political breakthrough echoes a religious break with conformity and the making of a new relationship with God, as well as giving the working classes a language with which to argue for their rights to political recognition. Linton's narrator disingenuously asks who England's true patriots might be. The questions posed seek particular answers from the audience, much like the repeated refrains of the Litany. In the Book of Common Prayer, many prayers including the Litany are led by a priest in which the congregation recite a refrain. The textual strategy of Linton's hymn exploits the difference between the narrator and those that utter the refrain. Though the narrator deliberately looks in the wrong place for the true patriot, the people know the right and true answer and choose to 'follow not expediency' but instead seek a more appropriate moral solution over and above the desire to find a short term practical political solution. The hymn is split into two parts. The first two thirds of the poem consists of an opening stanza, with stanzas two through to four consisting of adverbials that modify the question posed in the opening stanza. Stanzas two to four also contain a communal refrain following the dash in each of the penultimate lines in those stanzas, echoing and subverting the communal refrain in Christian prayers found in the Litany.

The narrator's question is answered in the form of a communal refrain beginning after each dash in the penultimate lines of the stanzas. A lone voice occupies a unique position or 'place of the Centre' at the beginning of the poem that is differentiated from the collective voice of 'the people' in the refrain. Subsequently, the response to that individual voice is a sign of the interpellation of the collective voice of 'the people'. They respond and are rewarded by finding an image, finding a place that is, in the space that the lone voice makes available to those that contribute to the collective refrain; what Althusser called 'the *guarantee* that this really concerns them [subjects] and Him [the Subject]'.⁶⁶ What concerns them is the wilfully unruly narrator that seeks solutions in all the wrong places. A collective that assesses the views of and ultimately disagrees with the

⁶⁶ L. Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, London: NLB, 1971, p. 180.

narrator produces its own answers, which are presented in the refrain. Unlike the Litany, the congregation in this hymn will not so easily follow the narrator. Thus 'the people' are hailed, elected into their rightful place through the space opened up by recognising that the questions the narrator asks are political absurdities. Real 'Patriots' for example, cannot ever have any truck with a desire for power.

In the above analysis, a clear difference between the questioner and the respondents opens up, marked by the grammatical symbolism of the narrator making use of questions and the respondents making use of declaratives to provide the right answers to questions wrongly asked, each separated by long dashes. In the last third of the poem however, rather than switching between different modes of address (the interrogative and declarative respectively), Linton places the language of the poem entirely in the voice of the collective. 'The people' now occupy the cultural and poetic centre of the hymn, and thus effectively silence the (wilfully) misguided lone speaker that satirically seeks to understand who the true 'Patriot' might be among the power-hungry. Linton's hymn rejects the cultural hierarchy that the narrator seeks to exercise, replacing it with a language shared by 'the people' who rise up from underneath the lone voice that leads the poem.

The hymn may also be interpreted as an intense self-examination, rather than a radical collective address subsuming the voice of the reactionary individual. Instead of reading the poem as addressed to a collective, the hymn might be lyrical, expressing the thoughts of a narrator thinking or speaking rhetorically in isolation, making the hymn seem self-addressed. In this reading, the voice of the poem poses a series of questions to itself which, it realises it would be absurd to answer 'yes' to. Instead the voice of the poem becomes a divided persona that produces its own dissident answers to the absurd opinions that society seeks to inculcate in all its subjects. This persona seeks and gradually recognises its true political duty. At the same time, the political logic in this hymn and the voice of the narrator resemble and enact the poet's decision to answer his election into the political and cultural service of 'the unenfranchised.' Both readings provide individual and collective audiences alike with examples of reasoned political conduct as either individuals or members of collectives, supplying a model of

dignified and stoic political behaviour. The hymn therefore produces an unresolvable yet productive tension between the individual and collective responsibility that resonates through Linton's poetry. The first reading seeks to consolidate the political will of 'the unenfranchised' against the privileged classes. The second gradually remakes the individual and repatriates that voice to a politically aware collective. His hymn provides a political defence of individual freedom and duty; freedoms necessary for the production of the new egalitarian society that Linton envisaged later in his *English Republic*.

Though 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised No. I' contributes to the mapping out of Linton's political and cultural theory of individualism, other hymns attack the social, political and religious inconsistencies that produced the social exclusion that his radical politics sought to counter. Symbols of power such as the church were a favourite target. In 'Hymns no. III', Linton attacked the religious doctrines with which religious and political establishments substituted the more urgent economic needs of the 'unenfranchised'.⁶⁷ Linton constructs a very different though no less effective dialogue between two voices. The hymn debates who precisely is to blame for the continued subjection of the working classes. The first narrator contends that workers 'worn to the heart with toil', labour only for the ruling classes. They conspire against the possibility of liberty by 'Heaping the property tyrant's spoil'. Another voice interjects and indicates that there 'is many a sorrier villainy' than that perpetrated by workers who fear to attend 'Freedom's gathering', a phrase that represents the political meeting as an elect group.⁶⁸ It is again also possible to read the poem as a single voice reaching its own conclusions by sustained reasoning and political deduction.

The hymn very deliberately works its way up from the bottom of the economic scale, searching out the true villain of social injustice by a 'question-and-answer' process of elimination. As Linton's hymn works its way up this scale, it first assesses the effects of the competitive economic relations between members of the same class. It then begins to analyse the ideological relations between

⁶⁷ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised. No. III' *The National*, p. 107.

members of different classes. Linton's attention turns to the middle-class villain 'Who, for the sake of a thriving trade, / Truth in the balance of Fraud hath weigh'd'. The impoverished do not sin of themselves as the first narrator intimated in the opening stanza. They are instead the prey of those who seek to manipulate 'thriving trade' for their own benefit. In the final stanza Linton attacks the upper classes for their hypocritical notions of class and taste, and for their paradoxical belief in civility and manners. Each line in the final stanza contains a paradox or contradiction. The upper classes are both 'vile' and 'well-bred'. They are 'Fortune's' willing servants, yet are deceived by that fortune. Their 'virtue' is hypocrisy, they grieve that their 'truth' is painful and are themselves the perpetrators of class oppression by doubting the gentility of God. In so doing, they accept competitive economics and sacrifice the perfectibility of human society:

One—the vilest, a Thing “well-bred,”
 Fortune's minion, the falsehood fed,
 Whose virtue playeth the hypocrite;
 Who grieveth that truth is not polite;
 And doubteth of God's gentility:—
 Dastard! Liar! When thou art free,
 Freedom shall wear thy livery!⁶⁹

Capitalist society is the very antithesis of Linton's belief in a true Christian human justice. The 'World's Religion' requires 'human passions' to 'bow down before accustomed forms.' It grieved Linton that 'the services from humanity to humanity, which should be rendered freely and lovingly, should be shut up in a den of thieves, in the poor storehouses of Commerce, only to be bought when spoiled and worthless!'⁷⁰ He rejected the justification of inequality as a sign of divine will put forward by natural theologians like William Paley (1743-1805), who had favoured the workings of the natural order irrespective of occasional pain and suffering for some people. Paley saw such evils as unavoidable if a stable social order was to be upheld. The rewards for the souls of the distressed in

⁶⁸ Near the beginning of the sermon on the mount, Christ assured the persecuted of their blessing: 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Matthew, 5:10, *Holy Bible*.

⁶⁹ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised. No. III' *The National*, p. 107.

⁷⁰ W.J. Linton, 'Religion,' *The National*, p. 263.

heaven however, would more than recompense for their poor quality of life.⁷¹ Linton's poem questioned the grounds of future heavenly reward. He refused to accept the temporal argument that God would recompense the just for their poor quality of life anticipating an earthly rather than heavenly election. Here again Linton echoes Lamennais, who argued for rights 'founded upon the equality of nature', thus battling with the equivocations of organised religion that deliberately misled 'the people'.⁷²

Other hymns analyse the paradoxical attempts at appeasement through property held in trust: that is, the maintenance of a 'stable' political state specifically upheld by the inequalities it produced. Linton's hymns attack the abuses of landlordism that made the working classes dependent upon the privileged classes by robbing tenants of the right to ownership and enfranchisement. The renting of properties to the working classes only further oppressed them. 'Hymns No. III' identifies the betrayers of the 'unenfranchised,' while 'Hymns No. IV' immediately following it, focuses on the effects upon the betrayed: 'What if they starve? / The Landlord has his fee.'⁷³ In 'Hymns No. IX', Linton attacked the property interests of the religious authorities:

We sought for peace—ye gave us toil and war;
We begged for quiet bread—and stones were given:—
Tyrants and priests! we will be scourged no more:
The chains of loyalty and faith are riven.⁷⁴

In a footnote to this poem Linton notes that in 'stones' he is referring to '[t]axing us to build new churches in times of famine.'⁷⁵ His hymn also echoes his own accompanying notes to his translation of Lamennais's *On Slavery*: "What manner of man is he, who, if his brother ask him for bread, will give unto him a stone?" Inquire at Somerset House, at our Police-houses, or at the office of the Mendicity

⁷¹ For a discussion of British natural theology see Frank M. Turner, *Contesting Cultural Authority: Essays in Victorian Intellectual Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp.101-127.

⁷² F. Lamennais, *Modern Slavery*, p.8

⁷³ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised No. IV,' *The National*, p.107.

⁷⁴ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised. No. IX,' *The National*, p. 289.

⁷⁵ W.J. Linton, *The National*, p. 177.

society.’⁷⁶ Linton’s image of the stone is infused not just with the subjection of the populace; it also implies the physical subduing of the flesh, following the ascetic life of St Jerome. The antithesis between ‘bread’ and ‘stones’ is charged with the physical need of the unenfranchised countered by spiritual abstinence imposed upon them by the church authorities.⁷⁷ The needs of the people were met with property investments ironically ‘given,’ to ‘the people.’ Property in the poem was held on their behalf, on conditions dictated by the Church. As Linton later noted, ‘the land-holders [had] shifted the national burthens from their own shoulders and voted themselves absolute proprietors.’⁷⁸ The right of individuals to attain equality was frustrated by too much property and capital held in the hands of the few that made up the privileged classes. The inability of the poor to attain property condemns them to a life of penury, putting them at the mercy of their landlord.

In ‘Hymns No. IX’, humankind does appear mentally free of the ‘chains of loyalty’. Ironically however, that new consciousness, freed from its chains was only able to recognise property, capital and religion as empty symbolic meals for the souls of the poor rather than their stomachs. Echoing Linton’s ‘Hymns No. I’, the solutions put forward by the privileged classes are made to seem absurd and macabre and the narrator attempts to ‘rouse’ the unenfranchised, calling them to action. Indeed several of Linton’s poems ventriloquise the voices of the privileged classes, mimicking the cruelty and inherent violence that laissez-faire economics mete out to the unenfranchised.

The market place provided another space where violence of laissez-faire policy could be examined. In ‘Hymns No. XII,’ Linton produced a dark satire on trade practices. The poem also symbolised the death of human relations through the

⁷⁶ F. Lamennais, *Modern Slavery*, p.15. The Mendicity Society was a charity with offices at 13, Red Lion Square, London. It provided food and work to those in need, but would also hold to account ‘vagrants and impostors’ for their indolence. See Peter Cunningham, *A Hand-Book for London, Past and Present*, vol. II, London: John Murray, 1849, p.547.

⁷⁷ Linton is probably alluding to Christ’s refusal to turn stones into bread at the behest of the devil in Matthew 4:3, *Holy Bible*. Linton would see nothing but folly in taking Christ’s refusal to succumb to temptation as precedent to refuse the poor subsistence in order to save them from the evils of idleness.

⁷⁸ W.J. Linton, ‘Republican Measures. The Organization of the Land,’ *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.123.

division of labour, and more profoundly the literal death of the impoverished at the hands of free trade. Linton deconstructs the economic symbols that the political and economic powers employed in order to highlight their deceit. Contemporary political and economic theory in the late 1830s and early 1840s did not merely produce bloodshed. They were themselves products of violence from the beginning. Linton renders the relationship clear by making the stones of the market place red with blood. Trade and violence occupy the same geographic as well as social and economic space:

Whither goest thou?
 To the market-place, where the stones are red,
 Where the sons of one mother
 Murder each other
 Till Death sleep surfeited.⁷⁹

In this startling hymn, the verbal actions 'go,' and the copular 'be,' indicate geographical and spatial relationships. The other verbs, 'Murder' and 'sleep,' indicate through their juxtaposition a close relationship between consumption and immolation. Capitalism becomes cannibalistic when, at great human cost, the labour surplus is literally skimmed off and consumed. Linton also evoked the market place as the site of the continual re-collapse of human relations into a post-lapsarian competitive state 'Where the sons of one mother/Murder each other,'⁸⁰ applying the biblical story of Cain and Abel to modern economic relations. As Linton noted in his translation of *On Slavery*, 'everywhere the People groan under a sacrilegious oppression; everywhere, instead of the mild countenance of Christ we behold the image of Cain.'⁸¹ Linton reminds his reader that not just the unenfranchised are exiled. Rather, exile is a condition borne by all of humanity brought about by market forces. Exile in this hymn, as in others, is self-perpetuated and self-imposed by 'the falsehood fed'.⁸² Thus well-known key religious symbols such as the first murder, representing another fall, demystify economic competition, whereby the buying of labouring power for profit produces

⁷⁹ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised. No. XII,' *The National*, p. 355.

⁸⁰ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised. No. XII,' *The National*, p. 355.

⁸¹ F. Lamennais, *On Slavery*, p. 17.

⁸² W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised. No. III,' *The National*, p. 107.

slavery and condemns the eager seller and buyer to perpetual subjection to those market forces, and to ever more biblical falls.

In 'Hymns No. V,' the narrator again addresses Liberty and unpicks the delusions that both tyrant and slave perpetuate. It suggests that liberty is an ideal that all 'forms' might commune with, and equates Liberty with an intense personal religious experience, the word of God arriving from across 'the Infinite Mystery.'

Liberty! through all forms thy thought is gliding,
Like God's Word through the Infinite Mystery;
Too long have tyrants and their slaves been hiding
The lorn world's peace in wrongful anarchy:⁸³

'Liberty' visits, energises, and calls on 'all forms'. Indeed 'Liberty' might elect all of humankind, were it willing to recognise the slavery that capitalist trade was dependent upon. 'Liberty' provides a political communion that echoes the Holy Spirit entering the apostles at the feast of the Pentecost in Acts 2: 'And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.'⁸⁴ But 'Liberty' is also given the pronoun 'thy' and is thus personified and directly addressed by the narrator of the hymn. Using this direct address, the narrator assumes a personal relationship with 'Liberty' and, in recognising and representing that it flows 'through all forms' in the poem, acts as its advocate and servant, but also assumes the persona of the prophetic leader.

F.B. Smith notes that Linton's *The Cause of the People*, was 'named in imitation of the *Cause Du Peuple*, edited by George Sand.'⁸⁵ Both papers perhaps found their titles in Lamennais's *On Slavery*. In his own translation of 1840, Linton had noted that: 'the cause of the People is holy; it is the cause of God: it shall triumph.'⁸⁶ Thus the democratic principles encoded in the title carry religious connotations of Linton's election to his republican principles. Linton began *The Cause of the People* with the assistance of G.J. Holyoake and the paper followed the European radical activity of 1848. It was also concerned with the development of a Chartist moral and educational agenda for the attainment of the Charter. The

⁸³ W.J. Linton, 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised No. V,' *The National*, p.177.

⁸⁴ Acts, 2: 4, *Holy Bible*.

⁸⁵ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p.78.

paper attempted to cover all of the major Chartist activity, as well as wider European news. Its object was to 'advocate the People's Charter,' to provide 'foreign information,' and advertise organisations such as the People's International League, of which Linton was secretary.⁸⁷ Its membership included Thomas Cooper, Douglas Jerrold, W.J. Fox, and James Watson. The League opposed the non-interventionist policy of Britain to the annexing of Cracow to Austria in direct contravention of the 1815 peace settlement. It sought to redress 'that abdication of national duty,' form an organisation that espoused the principles of national freedom, foster public awareness of European issues and improve understanding between nations.⁸⁸ As ever, the duty of the individual provided the basis of that new citizenship. Linton noted in *The Cause of the People*:

How shall the Nation grow except all parts in the Nation share and help its growth? How shall all grow unless they have fair room for growth,—the Equality on which their Freedom builds, rising up like some well proportioned column, a pillar of Humanity?⁸⁹

The Cause of the People was generally dismayed by the poor organisation of the National Charter Association after the failure of the national petition of 1848.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the paper had regular columns that followed Chartist agitation, monitoring for example the People's Charter Union, and the National Charter Association. Linton also made the democratic point of recording O'Connor's Chartist activities, even though he opposed them.⁹¹ Later in the *English Republic* Linton would again voice his dismay at the 1848 NCA convention, where he felt many of Chartism's early mistakes were repeated. Confusion, lack of organisation and the unsatisfactory means by which delegates were elected undermined Chartism's ability to actualise a coherent plan of political action and its

⁸⁶ F. Lamennais, *On Slavery*, p. 27.

⁸⁷ W.J. Linton & G.J. Holyoake, *The Cause of the People*, p.8.

⁸⁸ 'Secretary's report to the first Public Meeting of the People's International League at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand, 15 November 1847,' F.C. Mather, (ed.), *Chartism and Society*, pp. 127-128

⁸⁹ W.J. Linton, 'What We Are Ruled For: Why We Need Universal Suffrage,' *The Cause of The People*, p. 65.

⁹⁰ G.J. Holyoake, 'New Action and the Need of the Hour,' *The Cause of the People*, p. 2.

⁹¹ W.J. Linton, *The Cause of the People*, p. 8.

'Blustering talk [had] led to foolish riots'.⁹² As Margot Finn notes, English backing for the continental revolutions did unite the Liberal left, Dissenters and Chartists on a wave of 'patriotic internationalism'. The diversity of continental revolutionary politics however, was not always amenable to English notions of popular sovereignty, making that tradition's ability 'to speak equally for all classes within the state increasingly problematic.'⁹³

Chartists like Linton who understood 'popular sovereignty'⁹⁴ within a European radical dimension found themselves diametrically opposed to leaders such as O'Connor. The latter made pleas for Chartists to conduct themselves within the law, yet punctuated those pleas with threats of the violent consequences should the will of the people be denied, making their largely constitutionalist conduct ambiguous.⁹⁵ Linton clearly addressed one of his poems, 'The Woe of Discord', to the leaders and members of the newly formed National Charter Association. As well as making a general plea for radical unity to the rank and file Chartists, Linton attacked the 'system of centralisation' for its unsuitability for building confidence in the Chartist leadership. It eroded the opportunity for individuals to exercise their rights to participate in political decision making via the combined efforts of local Chartist branches, for 'such combination in each place may form the nucleus for the collection of further strength...Men so associated will be able to depend upon each other.'⁹⁶

The Woe of Discord

Woe to you, Disunited!
 Uselessly brave:
 Ye at whose councils Discord sits invited,
 As slave with slave

⁹² W.J. Linton, 'Chartism,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 82.

⁹³ Margot C. Finn, *After Chartism: Class and Nation in English Radical Politics, 1848-1874*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 61-2.

⁹⁴ Linton predicted that an 'era of popular sovereignty' was dawning upon Europe in the early summer of 1848. See *The Cause of the People*, p.5

⁹⁵ John Belchem, '1848: Feargus O'Connor and the Collapse of the Mass Platform,' J. Epstein & D. Thompson (eds.) *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture 1830-1860*, London: Macmillan, 1982, p.271.

⁹⁶ W.J. Linton, 'Our Organisation,' *The Cause of the People*, pp.41-42.

Woe to you, Disunited!—
 Lo, while you rave,
 Red-handed Tyranny walks on delighted
 Over your grave.

Woe to you, Disunited!—
 O, Brother-Slave,
 Hope dies unless thy life with mine is plighted,
 As hand with glaive.⁹⁷

Linton's poems in the *Cause of the People* did not only comment on broad political issues of both local and European dimensions. They also provided analyses of the Lammenaian and Mazzinian political creed that Linton had imbibed:

Our voices!—O the liberty
 Of speech is little worth,
 Unless our lives speak echoingly:
 Best Orator! come forth,
 And swear, no easy oath of words, no empty form, but by
 Thy life held solemnly!⁹⁸

In his poem 'Open Speaking,' Linton emphasised the social and political benefit of reciprocal communication between people. Once again 'personal conversation' was an important tool in the process of radical conversion. Indeed in one of Mazzini's letters to Linton at around the time of the beginning of the European revolutionary activity, he described his present understanding of and desire to reconfigure Christian faith in republican terms to Linton:

I want to re-link heaven and earth together, I want to teach my readers step by step to know that democracy instead of being an anti-religious thing, is starting from a religion and leading to another.⁹⁹

Linton's poetry is fraught with the symbolic tension between raw revolutionary energy, anger and pedagogic moral force. This is particularly the case in his reprint of a revised version of the 'Song of the Scattered', in which the words

⁹⁷ W.J. Linton, 'The Woe of Discord,' *The Cause of the People*, p.48.

⁹⁸ W.J. Linton, 'Open Speaking,' *The Cause of the People*, p. 24.

⁹⁹ Frederick W Hoeing, 'Letters of Mazzini to W.J. Linton,' p.59.

'battle-song' had been replaced with 'tempest-song.'¹⁰⁰ The first lexical choice emphasises human agency, while the latter foregrounds natural or divine agency, connoting providence. Nature, as well as political logic, was used to spread 'Chartism to some new unbroken soil'¹⁰¹ as a desirable means of organising society, as in the following extract from his poem 'Liberty':

Free as the forest-flowers—
 Each its own growth;
 Free as God's equal hours—
 Each its own task:
 Such is the life we ask;
 Freedom shall be ours—
 God hear our oath.¹⁰²

Though Linton's *English Republic* gave him greater prominence in the national Chartist movement, by this time Chartism had been greatly weakened.¹⁰³ As noted in chapter 4, leaders such as George Julian Harney and GWM Reynolds who survived into the 1850s began to change their political tactics. Understanding social rights for these leaders came to be seen as a fundamental part of the development of later Chartist rhetoric in the periodical press.¹⁰⁴ Advocacy of reform within the current political make-up of the UK began to appear in their periodicals, but Linton rejected the new socialist drive, and stood firm by his own political solutions.

Linton's journal the *English Republic* was begun in January 1851. The newspaper editor Aaron Watson dismissively recalled that the Lake District was wholly unsuited as a place for producing a newspaper. It was inaccessible, without any adequate transport, and without any local industrial population or infrastructure. 'Only visionaries with the smallest possible experience of the real world could have entered on such an experiment with even the slightest hope of success.'¹⁰⁵ That the ideas in the *English Republic* survived and even made an impact on late nineteenth-century journalism was due to two key factors. Linton's republican

¹⁰⁰ Compare *Prose and Verse* vol. III, p. 136 with *The Cause of the People*, p. 32.

¹⁰¹ W.J. Linton, 'Our Organisation,' *The Cause of the People*, p. 41.

¹⁰² W.J. Linton, 'Liberty,' *The Cause of the People*, p. 64.

¹⁰³ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 109. See also Finn, Margot C. *After Chartism*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁴ Margot C. Finn, *After Chartism*, p. 86.

¹⁰⁵ Aaron Watson, *A Newspaper Man's Memories*, London: Hutchinson, 1925, p. 52.

vision won the admiration of several Chartist-republican associations, notably in northern towns and cities such as Macclesfield, Manchester, and York and in the midlands in Nottingham and Cheltenham.¹⁰⁶ From this last town came W.E. Adams, later editor of the hugely popular *Weekly Chronicle* and a life-long admirer of Linton and Mazzini. He would re-circulate his reminiscences of his republican activism with Linton at Brantwood in the pages of the *Weekly Chronicle* in the late nineteenth century. Accompanied by other Cheltenham republicans, Adams tramped all the way up to Coniston to assist Linton in the production of both the *English Republic* and the *Northern Tribune* in 1854.¹⁰⁷ Joseph Cowen, patron of Newcastle's National Republican Brotherhood had financed the installation of a printing press at Brantwood in that same year. The press was used to print both periodicals until 1855.¹⁰⁸

In the *English Republic* Linton continued to espouse his Lammenaian and Mazzinian creed of 'mystical republicanism'¹⁰⁹ that contained within it the 'principle of the Charter'.¹¹⁰ The Charter remained for Linton a vital constituent element in the securing of a new English Republic, for a just society depended on possessing 'the right of controlling its acts'.¹¹¹ He encouraged his readers 'to begin anew in every place, to organise local associations of men understanding what they aim at'. Linton's journal would 'advise as to the best methods of procedure.'¹¹² In a series of retrospective analyses of Chartist activism, Linton attacked Chartism's lack of organisation and the potentially divisive issue of seeing the movement as split between physical and moral force factions. On occasions, Linton was critical of Chartism's leaders and strategies. He had no time for the 'aimless violence, not without good intention' among the O'Connorites.¹¹³ He also felt however that the '[l]ukewarmness among the more sensible of

¹⁰⁶ Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848-1854,' *Journal of British Studies*, vol.28, no. 3, July 1989, p.243.

¹⁰⁷ Owen Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁸ See James S. Dearden, 'Printing at Brantwood,' *The Book Collector*, Vol. 28, no. 2, 1979, pp.516-520.

¹⁰⁹ Owen. Ashton, *W.E. Adams*, p.66.

¹¹⁰ W.J. Linton, 'Chartism. I. A Matter of History,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 85.

¹¹¹ F. Lamennais, *On Slavery*, p. 20.

¹¹² W.J. Linton, 'Chartism. I. A Matter of History,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 85.

¹¹³ W.J. Linton, 'Chartism,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 82.

working men' had undermined Chartism.¹¹⁴ For Linton, gaining access to an already corrupt political system would not produce any significant changes for the working classes. The Charter in itself did not consider '*laying down common principles* for the sake of which men shall gain that power.'¹¹⁵ Linton felt it his mission to provide the guidance missing in the Charter: 'Our aim,' Linton wrote, 'is by the dissemination of principles *to fit* the people for superseding the present hindrance of monarchy, for preventing the domination of class, of any class whatever.'¹¹⁶

At times, the exclusiveness of Chartist agitation as it sought to differentiate itself from middle-class activity, had not been helped by its lack of organisation, control and order, and Linton complained bitterly about a disenfranchised populace 'unfit for rebellion.'¹¹⁷ Developing new organisations based on the perfectibility of humankind was the only way national agitation could be made effective. Every human being he affirmed has, 'a life which it is his duty to build up toward the most perfect beauty of which his nature is capable'.¹¹⁸ But that duty is always attuned to collective action in Linton's republicanism, seeking to eliminate social exclusion through 'the amelioration of all by all.'¹¹⁹

The *English Republic* espoused a social harmony that demanded that one's individual will, responses and actions be faithfully made to benefit wider culture. 'No man has a right to isolate himself,' for each member is 'conducive to the general purpose'.¹²⁰ Social 'Duty,' and individual 'will' had to be balanced. Linton believed that by truly recognising one's sense of political and social obligation, equal human relations could be attained. That moment of recognition itself would signify the entry of subjects into a new collective. Linton was at pains to emphasise everyone's need to honour '...the debt to collective humanity. He has received: he is bound to render'. Acquiring and accepting political

¹¹⁴ W.J. Linton, 'Chartism,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 82.

¹¹⁵ W.J. Linton, 'The Ghost of Chartism,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.176.

¹¹⁶ W.J. Linton, *The English Republic*, vol. III, 1854, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ W.J. Linton, 'The Position of the Working-Classes. A Chartist Epitaph,' *The English Republic*, vol. II, 1852-53, p. 22.

¹¹⁸ W.J. Linton, 'Universal Suffrage,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.164.

¹¹⁹ W.J. Linton, 'To the People: The Organization of Democracy,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.8.

¹²⁰ W.J. Linton, *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 166.

subjectivity, living the life of a true republican, obliges the individual to similarly encourage others and to bring them into the republican cause. Linton also emphasised the connectedness of the individual with the history of human society: '[a]ll the life of the Past...all this has worked together to make him the man he is'.¹²¹ In so doing he echoed Mazzini, who saw the task facing radicals as 'perfecting ourselves through a series of progressive existences' in order to attain their political ends.¹²² Linton often drew historical comparisons with Cromwell's republic, noting that his own *English Republic* was being written two hundred years after Cromwell.¹²³ As a result he demonstrated his belief in inexorable political progress. His poetry also emphasises the historical construction of the radical individual in similarly republican terms and contains poetic evocations of the lives of Milton, Cromwell and others who provide models of republican conduct and political progress. His poem 'From the Old to the New' not only echoes Mazzini's understanding of the fight for democracy as 'starting from a religion and leading to another',¹²⁴ it also envisages a new republic built on the literal remains of past republican experiments:

O'er the Hills another dawn advances;
 Yesterday is past. Is past untrue?
 The grave-stones of its changes and chances
 are the triumphal pavement of the New.¹²⁵

A new republic is created literally on the 'grave-stones' of an old republic, by forming the old 'grave-stones' into a new pathway. Another day dawning indicates another opportunity to rebuild the English republic. Indeed, the grave as a symbol of political hope, rather than despair would later resurface in Linton's longer poems, discussed in chapter 6. In the above poem, Linton again makes use of the interrogative. By asking 'Is past untrue?' Linton repudiates the historical tendency toward the glorification of the modern capitalist economy. He instead

¹²¹ W.J. Linton, *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 166.

¹²² Frederick W. Hoeing, 'Letters of Mazzini to W.J. Linton,' p.59.

¹²³ W.J. Linton, 'Two hundred years ago the English Republic was a fact.' *The English Republic*, vol. III, 1854, p. 1.

¹²⁴ Frederick W. Hoeing, 'Letters of Mazzini to W.J. Linton,' p.59.

¹²⁵ W.J. Linton, 'From the Old to the New,' *The English Republic*, vol. II, 1852-3, p. 176.

encouraged the audience to value their own radical history.¹²⁶ The poem provides the political precedent, the language, and a theory of the historical construction of identity whereby '[a]ll the life of the Past'¹²⁷ works together to encourage the reader to imagine how the 'changes and chances' of former movements could provide a template for the new. In 'Thought, Word and Deed (To Joseph Mazzini)',¹²⁸ Linton uses the actions of God as a template for political behaviour. He sees the emulation of God's work by humankind on earth as an exemplary model for Chartists and radicals. Instead of using the more lyrical formations of ballad poetry and the hymnal tradition, this poem uses an iambic pentameter in blank verse interspersed with rhyming couplets and alternating rhymes. Towards the end, the poem also evokes the spirit of Milton, whose 'great heart' provides the exemplary model of republican conduct.¹²⁹

Thought, Word, and Deed (To Joseph Mazinni).

God thought of his creation, and t'was done:
 For in God's nature *thought, will, deed* are one.
 And he approacheth unto God most near,
 Whose thoughts in acts their true responses hear.
 Action is natural echo of true will.
 Thought is the seed, and will the secret growth
 To accomplish thought: to elaborate, fulfil,
 And realize the Idea in visible life.
 Thought is a prophecy. He puts the knife
 To his own growth, whose being ends in thought,
 Whose thought hath but the stunted growth of words.
 'Tis as if warriors, having forged their swords,
 Should dream the fight was won, that *forged* was *fought*
 I said—Whose life is but of thought and word,
 He is as one who, having forged his sword,
 Sleeps, dreaming victory won: for I was wroth,
 Seeing how thought and action are divorced
 In these dull times, stern principle enforced

¹²⁶ See Robert G. Hall, 'Creating a People's History: Political Identity and History in Chartism, 1832-1848,' in O. Ashton, R. Fyson & S Roberts, (eds.) *The Chartist Legacy*, Rendlesham; Merlin Press, 1999, p. 235.

¹²⁷ W.J. Linton, *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 166.

¹²⁸ W.J. Linton, 'Whose life is but of thought and word, / He is as one who, having forged his sword, / Sleeps, dreaming victory won'. From 'Thought, Word and Deed (To Joseph Mazzini), *The English Republic*, vol. II, 1852-3, p. 340.

¹²⁹ There are other poems by Linton that evoke Milton as a model of republican behaviour. See for example 'The Voice of Wat Tyler,' *Prose and Verse* vol. III, p. 148-9. In 'The Homeless', Milton is evoked as an elected missive of Liberty and held in great admiration. The poem's narrator addresses Liberty thus: 'Yet redeem us! Though our guilt / Its own sepulchre hath built; / Even for thine own Milton's sake, / Turn not from us...' *Prose and Verse* vol. III, p. 151.

To hide in the closet. I should be most loath
 To speak or think irreverently of those—
 The Lords of Thought—whose words are warrior blows
 In the world-conflict. Yet of them the best
 Not only *spoke* but *did*: as faith had need
 Of utterance, poured forth true word as deed.
 Witness our Milton, his great heart express'd
 In his daily life! And witness thou, my Friend!
 Whose aim steps firmly on to the same heroic end.¹³⁰

The poem may be read in at least two ways. First, the dutiful works of Chartists, labouring in mind and body toward the delivery, or 'creation' of a new English republic will bring each individual into a new political consciousness that also elects them into a more intimate relationship with God, by virtue of recognising God's thoughts in their own individual acts: 'And he approacheth unto God most near, / Whose thoughts in acts their true responses hear'. This occurs not just in the creation of that new order, but also through the 'acts' they carry out in working toward it. The ongoing tasks that individuals undertake, their recognition of their unending and enduring special service to their political calling elects them into a closer relationship with God, which in turn re-confirms their sense of political destiny. The poem thus makes a religion of radical political duty for the audience addressed, but also enacts Linton's own sense of election to his sense of duty.

Secondly, Linton's narrator describes how by hearing God's thoughts in his own actions he moved nearer to God: his own 'acts' are carried out in recognition of his election to that task. His election legitimises him as an agent of the forces that seek to motivate, lead and work as a servant to both 'God and the People.' The fourth line of the poem 'Whose thoughts in acts their true responses hear,' emphasises the profound importance of the election narrative to the literary and political agenda's of Linton's Chartist poetry, for God's thoughts can be heard in the just (or unjust) acts of humans.¹³¹

In its deployment of the election narrative, the poem emphasises the natural orderliness of paying attention to and acting in accordance with one's duty, one's

¹³⁰ W.J. Linton, 'Thought, Word and Deed,' *English Republic*, vol. II, 1852-3, p.340.

¹³¹ W.J. Linton, 'Thought, Word and Deed,' *English Republic*, vol. II, 1852-3, p.340.

conscience even, balancing it with the right and proper exercise of an individual free-will that elsewhere in Linton's poetry 'God even dares / Not hinder'.¹³² This lays the blame for human suffering at the feet of the privileged classes, whose acts and omissions uphold social and political inequality. By representing the narrator and the audiences addressed as members of an elect group following the example of Milton, the poem seeks to situate both as equals within that collective. The poem depicts an egalitarian political relationship between the narrator, seeking to provide cultural and political leadership, and the numbers necessary for achieving certain political objectives. Thus Linton's poem acts out the political processes whereby individuals gained a place among a political collective through the narrative of election. In 'The Gathering of the People', humankind has gathered together 'naturally' into a mass, an 'elect' group:

Roll, roll, world-whelmingly!—
 Calm in your path
 Glory walks, harvestward:
 God rules your wrath.

'It is accomplished:'
 Melt we away!
 The phoenix To-morrow
 Is the child of To-day.¹³³

The final election is suggested in the image of the harvest, acting as a metaphor both for physical labour and the achievement of a new society through a collective that upholds the Christian faith and anticipates their election by serving their fellow human beings. A similar pattern can be seen in the poem 'For the Future' quoted earlier.

For the future are we sowing
 On the common field of Right,
 So that each have room for growing
 Freely to its utmost height,—
 All the ripen'd sheaves to be
 Garner'd for Humanity.¹³⁴

¹³² W.J. Linton, 'Liberty', *Prose and Verse*, vol. III, p. 155.

¹³³ W.J. Linton, 'The Gathering of the People.' *Prose and Verse*, vol. III, p. 139. See also Maidment, Brian. *The Poorhouse Fugitives*, pp.40-41.

¹³⁴ W.J. Linton, 'For the Future. (Air - *The Harmonious Blacksmith*),' *The English Republic*, vol. II, 1852-3, p. 176.

Other poems by Linton describe how sustained political exile could often provide the energy for building a new republican initiative. The complementarity between the opening couplets of the poem 'Nearing It,' shows that political exclusion also signifies a step toward a new republic at the moment the injustice of perpetual exclusion was reaffirmed:

Every minute in the night
 Be it dark and dread,
 As a step toward the light
 On the mountain head:
 Till our eyelids reach the dawn
 And the fearful night is gone,
 As swift as startled fawn
 From the Hunter's tread.¹³⁵

Though the poem discusses the subjugation, containment and constriction of 'the People' in an oppressive society, it also demonstrates how awareness of one's political exile was itself a step toward a new republic, toward a new egalitarian society. His awareness of the darkness and exile enable Linton to imagine 'a step toward the light'. Linton's own steps seem to follow the example of previous poets. In 'Sonnets Devoted to Chartism III', Iota equated the personal act of writing itself, with the broader political trajectory of Chartism: 'Along this favourite walk was wont to wend / One of the noblest patriots of the age; / Each step I take reminds me of that friend.'¹³⁶

Linton's shorter Chartist poems demonstrate his belief that a new republican society can only be attained through the right and proper conduct of all individuals, recognising their election in and through the fulfilment of their social and political duty. All have a responsibility and obligation to contribute to the 'righteous general will'¹³⁷ of wider society. Simultaneously, Linton's poetry also sprang from his personal dialogues with particular cultural and political influences, through which he felt elected to undertake particular initiatives on behalf of 'God and the People.'

¹³⁵ W.J. Linton, 'Nearing It,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p. 345.

¹³⁶ Iota, 'Sonnets Devoted to Chartism,' Kovalev, Y. (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, p.71.

¹³⁷, F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p. 25.

Chapter 6

‘...almost the utterances of an oracle’: Radical Collective Memory in the Longer Poems of William James Linton 1843-1852

This chapter assesses Linton’s personal sense of election to construct radical collective memories of key moments in Chartist history for ‘the people’. In particular, these longer prophetic poems commemorate the events of 1842 and 1848 and represent the historical significance of radical activity. In Linton’s radical history, notions of the afterlife and ghostly exile act as a metaphor for the commemoration and mourning of lost opportunities to effect political changes. Linton was frustrated that the revolutions of 1848 did not inspire the English working classes to agitate and unite. His poem *The Dirge of the Nations*, written following the failure of the European revolutions of 1848, seems to enact his sense of personal defeat: ‘Let us strive no more, but perish / With the hopes we may not cherish!’¹ If only in the current political climate were there wisdom in continuing to argue that ‘Freemen dare not turn away’ from their political objectives, mourned Linton.²

His poem at times slips into despair and adopts a self-accusatory tone at the thought of leaving off his radical politics. He imagines this self-betrayal as the conscious selection of a ghostly and ephemeral existence over the achievable reality of a republican society. He abandons the idea as quickly as it occurs to him: ‘O that One should choose the shade / For the substance! O afraid / To worship Truth in scorn of fashion!’³ His strategy is to prompt his readers into contemplating their own part in the betrayal of the chance for political change in Britain in 1848. He reaffirms his commitment to radical politics toward the end of the poem, emphasising the possibility of future collective entry into a new egalitarian political order, giving his poetry an eschatological quality. In the midst of the failure of the revolutions of 1848, Linton still could hear ‘the acclamations / Of the Faith-Awakened Nations; / And the

¹ W.J. Linton, *The Dirge of the Nations*, London: 1848, p.108.

² W.J. Linton, *The Dirge of the Nations*, p.108.

³ W.J. Linton, *The Dirge of the Nations*, p.109.

sweet low-chaunted song / Of their organised endeavour.’⁴ Indeed he ends the poem with an engraving of a flight of spirits ascending to heaven, equating political liberty with the heavenly afterlife.⁵

Linton’s longer poems also seek to recuperate and reclaim history for the unenfranchised as a reaction to their being dispossessed by privileged culture. As Brian Maidment notes, Linton’s *Bob Thin, or The Poorhouse Fugitive* represents the ‘linking of the history of oppression...to the larger history of English capitalism,’ producing a ‘radical rewriting of history’.⁶ Linton historicised the experiences of those whom bourgeois history passed by, those who otherwise would have passed through such histories unnoticed. As this chapter will demonstrate, the cultural memories he constructed were partly enacted using religious myths of birth, death and the afterlife. Using such myths, Linton’s longer poems sought to adduce symbolic meaning and a sense of historical trajectory and future political outcome to the unenfranchised. The poems offer ways by which ‘the people’ might begin to contemplate and challenge their own marginalisation by responding to Linton’s depiction of the cultural memories to which they were the heirs. As Wulf Kansteiner notes, ‘Cultural memory consists of objectified culture, that is the texts, rites, images, buildings, and monuments which are designed to recall fateful events in the history of the collective.’⁷ Linton’s memorialisation of such ‘fateful events’ in his poetry sought to rally political support for his moral force Chartist initiatives, drawing future hope from the present failure or death of radical political programmes. John Milton and Percy Bysshe Shelley again provided Linton with two vital literary touchstones, acting as luminary literary examples to ‘the people.’ The memory of the lives and literary output of these poets, as Linton’s poems demonstrate, impelled the cultural and political development that would inevitably produce a human society based on Linton’s republican principles.

⁴ W.J. Linton, *The Dirge of the Nations*, p.115.

⁵ See endplate for *To the Future: The Dirge of the Nations*, reproduced on p.236.

⁶ Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives: Self-Taught Poets and Poetry in Victorian Britain*, (Fyfield edition), Manchester: Carcanet, 1992, p. 74.

⁷ Wulf Kansteiner, ‘Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,’ *History and Theory*, (May 2002), p.182.

The majority of Linton's longer poems, *The Jubilee of Trade* (1843); *Bob Thin, or the Poorhouse Fugitive* (1845); *To the Future: The Dirge of the Nations* (1848) were all privately printed in London, presumably with the assistance of Linton's friend James Watson.⁸ *The Plaint of Freedom* (1852) was privately printed in Newcastle. In a project left unfinished upon his death in 1897, he reprinted all except the last of these poems at the Appledore Private Press, together with his 'Rhymes and Reasons Against Landlordism,' written between 1847-1850, and some other radical poems written in the 1850s and 1860s. The existence of this project, unfinished in his lifetime, indicates that Linton continued to attach importance to these longer poems. Upon his death the project, comprising only 50 copies, was completed by his friend W.P. Hopson.⁹ The collection is interspersed with occasional illustrations, but does not reproduce many of those that accompanied these poems when they were first printed in the mid-nineteenth century. Those images that do reappear, however, accompany different poems in the later reprinting. All the illustrations reproduced in this chapter are from Linton's earlier editions.

Like much of the output from the Appledore Private Press, Linton's reuse of images in his unfinished project different contexts perpetuates his sense of dutiful individualism, as described in chapter 5, by virtue of the autographic quality of the work. By personally printing limited runs of his own works, Linton exercised complete control of the means of production, independent of an outside publisher. He thus enacted his individualist republican politics through book production and illustration. Linton's politics saturate the manufacture of his works, as much as they do the texts and images they contain.

⁸ Linton did not at this time possess his own printing press. James Watson published an undated second version of the poem. See Linton, W.J. *Bob Thin, A Poor-Law Tale*, London: J. Watson (n.d.). The illustrations differ markedly, and it lacks part two of the tale.

⁹ Linton founded the Appledore Private Press at his home near New Haven, USA soon after selling Brantwood to Ruskin in 1872. See F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan: William James Linton 1812-1897*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973, p.181. For the circumstances around the publication of this late example of Linton's radical verse, See R. Malcolm Sills, 'W.J. Linton at Yale – The Appledore Private Press' *Yale University Library Gazette*, vol. 12, no 3, January 1938, p.51.

The late 1840s were not only marked by a downturn in the political fortunes of radicalism. Linton's business also fell into decline. In 1842, he had consolidated his reputation as a leading wood engraver when he entered into partnership with the 'good and eminently successful engraver', John Orrin Smith.¹⁰ The firm became the principal engravers for the *Illustrated London News*.¹¹ Linton's new business venture acquainted him with many important figures in the world of art and illustration, such as William Bell Scott, as well as publishing.¹² Linton remained however, committed to politics and Chartism, although his artistic friends pointed out to him 'the impolicy of [his] open association with chartists and the like.'¹³ After the death of Orrin Smith in 1843, publishers appeared less willing to deal with Linton now that he solely ran the business. He noted in his *Memories* that: 'One low church publisher, told me plainly that he could not avail himself of engraving, however well done, by a man of such principles.'¹⁴ As a Unitarian, Linton's relations with other Christians were clearly fraught. Despite his personal acquaintances with artists through his activity at the Institute of Fine Arts, his politics meant he lost business, the 'untoward consequences' of which took their toll.¹⁵

Linton's political and religious principles clearly increased the friction between himself and the clients he engraved for. By the late 1840s, Linton had come to a political and moral theory in which all human acts intended as contributions to the building of a new society required him to be wholly and completely 'just'. In his writings, he rejected the idea that it was better to steadily acquaint the world with progressive ideas. Linton thought it a contradiction in terms for society to think of itself as 'just', while believing that 'gradually' attained political changes were the best way forward. Gradualist half-measures inevitably undermined radical initiatives, nor was it wholly or completely honest. 'Justice', Linton faithfully noted, 'is surer-

¹⁰ W.J. Linton, *Memories*, (1894) New York: Kelley, 1970, p. 55.

¹¹ F.B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, pp.48-49.

¹² W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p. 55-60.

¹³ W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p. 76.

¹⁴ W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p. 76.

¹⁵ W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p. 73; p.76.

footed.’¹⁶ His sense of political justice would have precluded him from denying his political position for the sake of business connections. The deterioration of the engraving business was complete in 1849 and Linton left London for the Lake District. The disappointment of his business failure was compounded by disenchantment following the failure of the European revolutions of 1848 and by concern for his family’s health.¹⁷ In the early 1850s however, Linton again took up the republican cause with vigour and began publishing the *English Republic*, which closed in 1855.

Linton’s dense, prophetic style was not confined to his longer poetry. His journalism aroused admiration and irritation in at least one of his readers. A Chartist named Johnson wrote about Linton’s work in May 1848 to William Shirrefs, who was distributing Linton’s journal the *Cause of the People*. Johnson considered that although the articles Linton wrote in that paper displayed thoughtfulness and talent, they were nevertheless ‘almost the utterances of an oracle’. He complained that they were not ‘sufficiently popular’ and that ‘the taste of the Chartist body is not sufficiently matured to relish them.’¹⁸ Linton’s thoughts on the function of the poet were as oracular as his political journalism. In his notes accompanying *The Plaint of Freedom* Linton observed that ‘the Statesman and the Poet-Priest’ were beings ‘whose callings are different: the one having to prophesy of the future, the other to organise the present.’¹⁹ Clearly one of the major ways that he understood his own literary role was through the Christian narrative of election, by which he felt a priestly calling as a poet to inculcate knowledge in his reader.

His poems also encourage audiences to respond to specific cultural memories, including particular literary influences. As both the epitome of Christian republicanism and a key literary touchstone for the major romantic and Chartist poets, Linton consistently evoked Milton as a vehicle of radical collective memory. He had

¹⁶ W.J. Linton, ‘Universal Suffrage: The Principle of the People’s Charter,’ C.G. Harding (ed.) *The Republican* (1848), London: Garland, 1986, p.143.

¹⁷ W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p. 78.

¹⁸ See F .B. Smith, *Radical Artisan*, p.80.

included extracts from Milton's prose writings in his first periodical, *The National, A Library for the People* in 1839.²⁰ His long poetic work, *The Complaint of Freedom* was similarly inspired by and dedicated to 'the Memory of Milton'.²¹ At the beginning of the poem, Linton addresses Milton directly in eulogising terms:

O Thou! Our England's Most Divine:
 Forgive thy liege, who—sitting here
 In the shadow of thy sepulchre—
 With feeble voice would echo thine.
 Who dares—Methought thy very clay
 Might tune the thinnest pipe of grass
 To tell the free winds as they pass
 How England lets thy grave decay.

How o'er it things abhorr'd of light
 Crawl hideously, and worms obscene;
 And daily trappings of the Mean
 Would hide the epitaph of Might.—
 Thy prophet-mantle who may wear?
 Yet from thy car of splendour throw
 One spark on me: my song should flow
 Volcano-voiced for all to hear.²²

There are several key words here: Milton's 'Memory', his role as a literary 'Divine', and Linton's attempts to write poetry in the 'shadow' of Milton's work. The 'Memory' of Milton, appearing in the dedication to the poem, indicates Linton's understanding of the impact of human history on modernity, and in particular, the immense consequences of Milton's memory on modernity. In *To the Future*, references to past present and future events litter his longer poems. Britain is personified as 'The land of Alfred' who 'Toil'd for the Future's peace.' Britain is also 'The Land of Milton, whose prophetic eyes, / Beyond the shadows of passing time, / Gazed on the Future's face, with calm sublime'.²³ In the extract from *The Complaint of Freedom* above, his description of Milton as 'England's Most Divine' indicates Milton as one devoted to the service of God, but also as an intuitive and visionary

¹⁹ W. J. Linton, *The Complaint of Freedom*, Newcastle upon Tyne: G. Bouchier Richardson 1852, p. 75

²⁰ See W.J. Linton, *The National, A Library for the People*, London: James Watson, 1839, p. 356

²¹ W. J. Linton, *The Complaint of Freedom*, p. 1.

²² W. J. Linton, *The Complaint of Freedom*, p. 3.

poet whose 'sepulchre' casts a 'shadow' over Linton. The capitalisation of the word 'Divine' emphasizes Milton's status as an instrument of God's providence: an individual elected to a particular ministry that Linton sought to emulate. Milton's 'shadow' falling across him elects him as a poet but also potentially eclipses his literary endeavours, but *The Plaint of Freedom* also memorializes Milton, just as Thomas Cooper memorialized the literary and political life of Allen Davenport in 1846 in his sonnets.²⁴

The symbol of the grave as a site of radical memory resonates through *The Plaint of Freedom*. Modern society was charged with doing an injury to Milton's grave. Linton's poem treats it as a site invested with the spirit of republicanism. Later in the poem, the spirit of Milton speaks, censuring 'the people' for their inactivity, thus betraying their radical heritage: 'What tomb hath hid thy copies of heroic thought?'²⁵ But Milton also foregrounds the justness of republican principles, asking the people not to 'lose in widest range of growth / The shade which each should yield to each' and he encouraged 'every life' to be 'an earnest speech; / The nation's one according oath!'²⁶

The Memory of Milton also permeates his journalism. In the pages of the *Cause of the People* Linton challenged his readers: 'has Milton lived for you, and shall you not live for England?'²⁷ His aim was to encourage the Chartist rank and file to contribute to the building of a new English Republic. Everyone had a part to play in building the popular consciousness necessary for a new political state built on the basis of the Charter. In C.G. Harding's the *Republican*, Linton claimed that everyone had a stake or interest in developing for themselves: 'A life with an eternity dependent upon it—an eternity of consequences to the world, the human future!'²⁸ Individuals were to recognise and fulfil their vital role as 'memory makers', contributors to a collective

²³ W.J. Linton, *To the Future*, p.96.

²⁴ For a discussion of Thomas Cooper's 'Sonnets on the Death of Allen Davenport', see chapter 1

²⁵ W. J. Linton, *The Plaint of Freedom*, p. 43.

²⁶ W.J. Linton, *The Plaint of Freedom*, p.49.

²⁷ W.J., Linton, *The Cause of the People*: 1848, p. 17.

²⁸ W.J. Linton, 'The Right of Universal Suffrage,' *The Republican*, p.120.

cultural memory.²⁹ Linton's strategy was to encourage the activation of new political identities by reproducing and revising popular cultural memories according to the radical political and historical contexts that lay dormant in the collective memory of the people. Collective cultural memories might be built that were powerful enough to provoke a complete change in the political identity of ever more individuals, and to rupture the hegemonic order of the privileged classes. As Linton observed of the trajectory of history in the *Republican*:

Near two thousand years ago was preached the principle of individualism—the independence of individual nature—the inviolability and equality of human rights...Christianized Humanity stepped from the nonage of barbarism to the first years of discretionary manhood. The martyrdoms of the first Christians; the vindication of the right of genius in the priesthood of early Rome; the fight for spiritual freedom, first by Wickliffe and Luther, and afterwards by Voltaire and the Encyclopaedists; the contention for political freedom in the first French revolution; and, lastly the struggle for commercial freedom even now at issue;—these are so many workings of the same principle of individual right, so many necessary consecutive chapters, exposing the truths and untruths of the theory and practice of individualism, of the assertion of the Self.³⁰

Linton here constructs a network of key historical moments in which the political liberty of the dutiful individual working for 'equality' is mutually co-dependent on the unfolding of human history. Future generations would be prompted to emulate the achievements of past republicans. The notion of progress toward a new society is perpetuated, providing an opportunity for the commemoration of such figures from history in a contemporary social context.

Linton also used popular figures from the mythology of English national identity in order to challenge the existing cultural memories that served the instruments of the British State. His poem *The Jubilee of Trade* is accompanied by engravings that

²⁹ See Wulf Kansteiner, 'Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,' *History and Theory*, 41 (May 2002), p.180.

graphically subvert symbols of authority, accompanying the textual subversion that occurs in the body of the poem. These images instead tell an often-suppressed alternative version of English economic, political and social history, producing a new pantheon of radical cultural memories. Christian imagery and thought is used in both the poetry and engravings in order to do so. His engravings of the coins at the beginning of the poem indicate the powerful ways in which certain national myths were perpetuated in order that they may serve British imperial power. On the frontispiece, Linton engraved the reverse of a gold sovereign, representing St George slaying the dragon. The image of St George had originally been the work of the famous Italian engraver and medallist Benedetto Pistrucci.³¹ It was introduced into the British coinage in 1817 and replaced by a shield design from about 1825. Linton also repeated this image in his illustrations for *Bob Thin, or the Poorhouse Fugitive*.³²

St George is commonly considered as a heroic servant of Christianity and an ally to the medieval Crusaders. He became patron saint of England around the time that the English Order of the Garter was founded in 1348.³³ Linton's image of St George contributes to a pantheon of Christian champions who, in his imagination, contended with the forces of oppression but had also become patriotically allied to popular nationalist sentiments. On the coin, St George is represented in the famous Christian allegory in which he slays the dragon, symbolising an agent of divine justice defeating Satan. The placing of this image on a gold sovereign parodies rather than enacts Christian virtue. It foregrounds the extent to which the myth of this popular Christian figure now seemed to signify one common national identity. The image subverts the story of the English people as constructed on the terms of the privileged classes. As a popular figure in the consciousness of 'the people', the appearance of St George on a British coin forms a new order of discourses that represented a collective identity sympathetic to the economic goals of the state.

³⁰ W.J. Linton, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,' *The Republican*, p. 186.

³¹ Linton knew the brother of Benedetto Pistrucci as a teacher at Mazzini's free school for the Italian poor in London. Linton described Benedetto as 'a clever medallist' in his *Memories*, p.49.

³² See W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin, or the Poorhouse Fugitive*: 1845, p.9; p.15.

³³ *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, sixth edition. London: Cassell, 1962, p. 394.

W. B. Scott
from W. J. L.

(4)

THE
JUBILEE OF TRADE



A VISION OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY
AFTER CHRIST

W. J. LINTON — 1843

THE JUBILEE OF TRADE:

A VISION OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AFTER CHRIST.



'Mammon, the least erected Spirit that fell.'
'Gold, yellow gold.'

As I lay in the shadow of Slavery,
Watching the shrieking Moments flee
From the grasp of the cold Night, damp and drear,
Like flame from a reeking sepulchre—

(Ever the shrieking Moments fled,
Each with its agony burdened,
Heavily laden, so that they
Ever went stumbling on their way)—

As I lay on a waif of the mighty sea,
Where homeless weeds companion'd me,
(When the dull winds stir'd them to and fro,
Their clammy fingers cross'd my brow)—

Linton asks the reader to consider the relationship between Christian duty, national identity and the cash nexus. The juxtaposition of a figure that supposedly represented Christ's principles on a symbol of British economic power summarizes the conflicting narratives of Christian goodness and the pressures of free trade economics. Linton's engraving confronts the reader with a representation of wealth, a Christian hero as an agent of God's divine sovereignty, and national identity, in order to challenge how the history written by the privileged classes intertwined those myths in one common referent.

The rise of the Anti-Corn Law League and the corresponding hegemony of free trade ideology were directly related to the fate of the Chartist movement. *The Jubilee of Trade* reflects on the Chartist activity in 1842, the decline of which allowed the League to attain chief position as a protest movement. Asa Briggs notes that members of the Anti-Corn Law League had fed the flames of the 1842 agitation in the hope of furthering their own cause. When pay and conditions became the focus of the agitation, rather than the repeal of the Corn Laws, 'they changed sides and helped to suppress the revolt.'³⁴ Support for Chartism declined and the League became 'almost a monopolist in the pressure group politics of the years 1842-1846.'³⁵

The poem chronicles the apparent victory of free trade economics, but ends with its ultimate defeat. It also demonstrates that Linton's democratic beliefs were moulded in and through Christian narratives. The broad moral and intellectual dimensions of Linton's Christian faith permeated his analysis of free trade. In so doing, he challenged liberal conceptions of true Christian faith, contested the practices of religious institutions and thus the ideological terrain of true Christianity. As well as mapping the broad effects of free trade, the poem also represents the narrator as a lone, isolated figure charged with the task of understanding, coming to terms with and witnessing the ultimate self-destruction of free-trade practices. In that sense the poem anticipates Ernest Jones's lone narrator, who similarly struggles with his own

³⁴ Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement 1783-1867*, London: Longman, 1959, p.317.

³⁵ Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, p.321.

sense of elected duty in 'The Better Hope' in 1846.³⁶ Focusing on the elected duty of the narrator, *The Jubilee of Trade* revises notions of Christian conduct, so that such duty might be offered as a proper model of Christian, as well as political conduct to the reader, thereby providing the possibility for enacting political change in the reader.

The Jubilee of Trade also has the millenarian subtitle, *A Vision of the Nineteenth Century after Christ*. It represents its subject matter through a 'vision,' through the personal experience and consciousness of the narrator, emphasising the prophetic quality of Linton's longer poetry. Christianity provides a major discourse by which radical political knowledge and theory are imagined and presented to the audiences addressed. As Linton would later note in the *English Republic*, true Christianity was about 'believing in the equal freedom of individuals and looking farther to the brotherly organisation of all humanity.'³⁷ That Linton Christianised his vision of a world dominated by free trade, representing it as a moral dystopia, may have been prompted by the wide use of biblical language already exercised in the representation of economic ideas. It was not just radical republicans and Chartists who made use of religious language. The free trade movement itself made use of biblical rhetoric in support of its arguments. As Asa Briggs notes, their interests were often 'conceived in humanitarian and religious, as well as economic terms. The very language of men like Cobden...was dominated by Biblical metaphors and images.'³⁸

Linton's subtitle alludes to the paradoxical violence done by religion to those it ought to best serve, making it tempting to read it as an anticlerical statement, or at least as verging on the secular opinion that was increasingly influential on sub-parliamentarian radical politics.³⁹ Yet though fiercely anti-clerical, Linton never considered himself an unbeliever. He later wrote that though he had great respect for

³⁶ For an analysis of 'The Better Hope,' see chapter 3.

³⁷ W.J. Linton, *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.334.

³⁸ Asa Briggs, *The Age of Improvement*, p.315.

³⁹ Edward Royle notes that 'though secular societies were officially neutral in political affairs...most members seem to have supported the liberal-radical politics of the leadership.' Edward Royle, *Radical Politics 1790-1900 Religion and Unbelief*, London: Longman, 1971, pp.63-64.

Charles Bradlaugh, he had 'little sympathy with his irreligious opinions' and came to consider G.J. Holyoake's arguments as 'duplicitous and slippery'.⁴⁰ A more likely source is Linton's own translation of Lamennais' *On Slavery* (1840), and the representation of the history of Christianity as a period of test and trial contained therein. In *On Slavery*, Lamennais notes that 'After eighteen centuries of Christianity, we yet live under a heathen system.'⁴¹ Linton blamed Christian institutions, whose rivalries further undermined any good they might do. Later in the *English Republic*, he condemned the confusion that denominational differences created. A key 'dogma' had been forgotten: 'That dogma is THE DIVINITY OF MAN, the equality of all men as Sons of God.'⁴² The true Christian is 'he who would work out the principle, who would realize the idea upon the earth.'⁴³ This is a dogma, Linton contends, that was in circulation 'eighteen centuries ago, and the impulse to realize that has been the motive of human action in what we call Christendom.'⁴⁴

Linton in other words saw the Christian mission to build God's kingdom on earth as achievable only through republican principles. Only by this means may the individual enter a new Christian-Republican consciousness. Religious belief and republican conviction were forms of faith-union that were under continual renewal, and indeed for Linton had been so throughout history. Linton observes that the earlier leading Christian lights such as Luther had tested 'every possible application' of the reformist principles that had existed within their own lifetimes.⁴⁵ Linton's subtitle to *The Jubilee of Trade*, 'A Vision of the Nineteenth Century After Christ,' is testament to the vitality of that radical tradition and challenges the notions of virtue and duty upheld by Christian orthodoxy. Just as in Linton's later periodical, the subtitle represented Christian history as a phenomenon that would eventually produce Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

⁴⁰ W.J. Linton, *Memories*, p.164.

⁴¹ F. Lamennais, *On Slavery* (trans. W.J. Linton), London: J. Watson, 1840, p. 17.

⁴² W.J. Linton, *The English Republic*, vol. 1, 1851, p.332.

⁴³ W.J. Linton, *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.332.

⁴⁴ W.J. Linton, *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.333.

⁴⁵ W.J. Linton, *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.333.

The opening stanzas of *The Jubilee of Trade* are notable for their construction of a collective radical memory in the aftermath of the events of 1842, symbolising the need for Chartists and radicals to learn the lessons of their indecision for the future of radical politics. The narrator is addressed by a voice that guides him to a vision of a dual horror: that of the workings of the industrial economy, or how 'Trade kept jubilee,' but also the unsuccessful attempt to implement the People's Charter in the summer of 1842:

As I lay in the shadow of Slavery,
 Watching the shrieking Moments flee
 From grasp of the cold Night, damp and drear,
 Like flame from a reeking sepulchre -

(Ever the shrieking Moments fled,
 Each with its agony burdened,
 Heavily laden, so that they
 Ever went on their stumbling way) -

As I lay on a waif of the mighty sea,
 Where homeless weeds companion'd me,
 (When the dull winds stir'd them to and fro,
 Their clammy fingers cross'd my brow) -

Through the Drizzly Fog and the wilder'd crowd
 The voice of a stern Commandment strode,
 Bidding me quit my dreams, to see
 How the Spirit of Trade kept jubilee.⁴⁶

These opening stanzas are heavily pre-modified. The main clause, in which 'a stern Commandment' elects the narrator to his particular task, is deferred until the fourth stanza. The effect is to produce an opening that is disorientating, signifying political and cultural confusion and anarchy, symbolising grammatically the seemingly eternal deferral of the attainment of a true and just society by virtue of the victory of free trade economics over Chartism. The disorientation the poem creates might allude in part to Linton's despair at the new setbacks that Chartism suffered after the unsuccessful 'stand for the Charter' in 1842. His *Memories* mentions little of the

⁴⁶ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, London:1843, pp. 63-64.

specifics of his involvement in Chartism in this period, other than that he was continually active in the Chartist 'cause' as a lecturer and speaker throughout the 1840's.⁴⁷ In his memoir of James Watson however, he noted that:

Lukewarmness among the more sensible of the working men, and aimless violence, not without good intention, among the O'Connorites, just kept alive the name of Chartism till the proclamation of the French Republic in February, 1848, awoke old hopes in England.⁴⁸

The language at the beginning of Linton's poem is puzzling. It is difficult to grasp what might be signified in the repeated nightmarish phrase 'the shrieking Moments', yet the capitalisation clearly indicates its importance. The unpredictable energy of these 'Moments' is in contrast with the listless, death-like state of the narrator. This opposition perhaps symbolises two tendencies as characteristics of the shortcomings of Chartist activity: political lethargy and the potentially (self)-destructive potential of physical force tactics.

At the beginning of the poem, the narrator lies under 'the shadow of Slavery' and watches 'the shrieking Moments' fleeing from 'the grasp of the cold Night' as if they were 'flames from a reeking sepulchre'. The image is not unlike the opening of Shelley's 'Ode to the West Wind' (1819) in which dead leaves are 'driven like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing.'⁴⁹ In Linton's poem, the 'shadow of Slavery' is an overwhelming and blighting presence under which the 'shrieking Moments' try to escape from a rotting corpse. By representing the 'Moments' in this way, the poem suggests a transition from an earthly to an elemental or spiritual existence; a destructive, unpredictable and uncoordinated energy emanating from a decaying body; and symbolically, notwithstanding the national scale of the agitation, the failure of the 'stand for the Charter' in 1842. More abstractly, the image might also

⁴⁷ See W.J. Linton. *Memories* (1894), New York: Kelley, 1970, pp.55-98.

⁴⁸ W.J. Linton, *James Watson, A Memoir* (1880) New York: Kelley, 1971, p.50.

⁴⁹ P.B. Shelley, 'Ode to the West Wind,' William Michael Rossetti (ed.) *The Complete Poetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, New York: Hurst and Co., 1878, p.417.

represent the many lost opportunities for radical political change, lost 'Moments' in the history of English republicanism.⁵⁰

Rather than ascending heavenward, these 'Moments' struggle aimlessly, 'burdened' it would seem by their own particular agonies. Having themselves lived in the 'shadow of Slavery,' they seem trapped somewhere between this world and the next. They seem to represent spirits that had accepted their lot in an unequal society, but in so doing were not wholly 'just' in their earthly actions and principles.⁵¹ Having undermined the building of a new society based on the Charter, they also find themselves exiles from a heavenly reward, just as they had been from the earthly glory of freedom and equality. The metaphor is not unlike Thomas Cooper's evocation of purgatory as a place that both punishes oppressors, and provides a place for misguided spirits to work through their own political mistakes. The sepulchre in Linton's poem is no final resting place either. Contrary to the Judeo-Christian conception of life after death, the grave in the beginning of the poem signals the commencement of a state of perpetual exile. The 'Moments' are neither able to return to their Maker, nor damned to hell, but only able to go 'stumbling on their way'. In the aftermath of the plug plot riots of 1842, Linton represents Chartist identity as a state of pained, perpetual and ghostly exile. Chartism is symbolised as a collection of lifeless corpses, whose bodies are interred. Its spirits however, are doomed to haunt the earth in perpetual exile, thus yet keeping the ghostly cultural memory of Chartism abroad, divested of its own corporeal presence and the wider political body it symbolises. Shortly after these spirits have stumbled away, the narrator shakes off his dreamy state. He then witnesses the 'jubilee' of 'the Spirit of Trade' that takes centre stage in the wake of the decline in Chartist fortunes.⁵² Linton's poem contributes to the making of the cultural memory of Chartism in the aftermath of the plug plot riots of 1842, focalising those recent events through the language of Christian notions of life after death. Simultaneously Linton—perhaps following Shelley's 'Masque of

⁵⁰ Thomas Cooper used the phrase 'a stand for the Charter' to describe the strikes and demonstrations of August 1842. See *Northern Star* August 20, 1842, p. 4.

⁵¹ W.J. Linton, 'Universal Suffrage: The Principle of the People's Charter,' C.G. Harding (ed.) *The Republican* (1848), London: Garland, 1986, p.143.

Anarchy'—fulfils his elected task to memorialise a conflict between ruling and working classes.

Linton's poem certainly makes textual and formal allusions to Shelley's passionate response to the Peterloo Massacre. As Anne Janowitz notes, 'Shelley's example is always close by in Linton's poetic.'⁵³ The objectives of both poets clearly intersect. Shelley had been stirred by the news of the Peterloo Massacre into writing 'The Mask of Anarchy.'⁵⁴ Provoked by events surrounding the 'stand for the Charter' of 1842 and the subsequent dominance of the Anti-Com Law League, Linton emulated Shelley by using his literary form and metre as inspiration in *The Jubilee of Trade*. In so doing he was responding to the radical memory that Shelley constructed in the writing of his poem in 1819. Linton's awareness of the historical progression toward the attainment of a republican society that had gone before him, made him feel elected to produce another cultural memory of a later conflict. Compare Shelley's sense of elected duty:

As I lay asleep in Italy,
There came a voice from over the sea,
And with great power forth it led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.⁵⁵

with that of Linton's:

As I lay on a waif of the mighty sea,
Where homeless weeds companion' d me,
(When the dull winds stir'd them to and fro,
Their clammy fingers cross'd my brow) -⁵⁶

⁵² Linton, W.J. *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.63.

⁵³ Anne Janowitz, *Lyric and Labour in the Romantic Tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p.207.

⁵⁴ See 'Note on The Masque of Anarchy, by Mrs Shelley,' in W.M Rossetti (ed) *The Complete Poetical*

Work of Percy Bysshe Shelley, New York: Hust & Co., 1878, p. 321.

⁵⁵ P.B. Shelley, 'The Masque of Anarchy,' *The Complete Poetical Work of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, p. 317.

⁵⁶ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, pp. 63-64.

In the fourth stanza of *The Jubilee of Trade* however, we also encounter the embodiment of the radical memory that Linton was responding to. In the following, a 'stern Commandment' addresses the narrator, and selects him as one among a 'wilder'd crowd' to make sense of the extraordinary success of the ethos of free trade:

Through the drizzly fog and the wilder'd crowd
The Voice of a stern Commandment strode,
Bidding me quit my dream, to see
How the Spirit of Trade kept jubilee.⁵⁷

Here Linton constructs an antithesis between the 'wilder'd crowd', who are uncertain and confused, and the narrator, who is aware of his calling, yet uncertain of his ability to fulfil that task, namely understanding and representing how the supremacy of free trade came to pass. The 'stern Commandment' elects the narrator, signalling his validation as a subject fit to witness and fulfil the task of recording those experiences. In so doing, the poem acts as an allegory for the struggle to write poetry in the shadow of the major influences that the poet feels elected to emulate. In *The Plaint of Freedom*, the influence was Milton. Here it seems to be P.B. Shelley. Several later stanzas pun on the difficulty of doing justice to the literary tradition to which the poet felt elected, and the revulsion that he felt at having to face the 'horrors' of free trade. As the narrator journeys through the world of *The Jubilee of Trade*, the poem demonstrates that even the most stalwart radicals can succumb to fears and apprehensions. As Joseph Mazzini noted in 1847, 'even among the friends of democracy, there are men who put their hands to the work with hesitation, and who sometimes appear seized with a vague terror.'⁵⁸ Linton's poem echoes this sentiment:

Lord of pity! let me flee:—
But that Voice of potency
Led me on, and lighted me
The horrors of the night to see.

⁵⁷ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.64.

⁵⁸ Joseph Mazzini, 'Thoughts Upon Democracy in Europe' E.A. Venturi, *Joseph Mazzini*, (second edition) London: Henry S. King, 1877, p.172.

Ever where it lured me on
 Rotting human hearts were strown
 In my path; and hollow cries
 Told me of their agonies.⁵⁹

The poem describes the task of the narrator as a 'life-long penance', an act of self-punishment in recognition of guilt.⁶⁰ The narrator, prior to his election, had been content to 'dream' about and observe 'the shrieking Moments'. Now, however, the narrator is transformed into a dutiful individual who recognises their political and Christian obligation and has to choose whether or not to fulfil that duty. The 'Commandment' to the narrator is to come to an understanding about 'How the Spirit of Trade kept jubilee', rather than to be dogmatically told of its 'horrors'. In so doing, though the 'Commandment' is powerful and irresistible, it also respects the narrator's autonomy, 'the independence of individual nature',⁶¹ emphasizing the need for the narrator to find an explanation that is pertinent to himself. The poem is at pains to demonstrate the importance of the narrator firmly understanding the task set and then choosing to fulfil it. Only by so doing can his actions be truly sincere and republican. This is a vital component of Linton's theory of political identity. Linton believed that the 'sovereignty of man' was responsible for making humans moral beings, accountable for their actions, and 'capable of virtue.'⁶² By asking the narrator to seek out an explanation, the poem contends that language, and particularly questions, have a specific locutionary force that produce material outcomes. The understanding of questions and their answers can alter the cultural and political identity of individuals, by providing an opportunity to exercise personal 'virtue', producing an engaged response, thus contributing to the drive toward a new republic. Certainly in the next poem discussed, *Bob Thin, or the Poorhouse Fugitive*, Linton used a question-and-answer strategy to just such an effect. Indeed Linton placed great emphasis on 'the equal recognition of every member of society,' and 'the knowledge of the meaning of the Charter, and the end to which it will lead.'⁶³

⁵⁹ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.64.

⁶⁰ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.64.

⁶¹ W.J. Linton, 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity,' *The Republican*, p. 186.

⁶² F. Lamennais *On Slavery*, p. 8.

⁶³ W.J. Linton, *The Cause of the People*, p.25; p.33.

The narrator of *The Jubilee of Trade* attempts to faithfully follow his 'Commandment'. He witnesses the sacrifice of human 'hearts' to satisfy 'the hellish rage' of the 'Worms' that feed upon them, the sacrifice of Children to 'the monster multitude', and the unfettered power of free trade to freely buy the sexual favours solicited by women '[i]n the dust of their own pride.'⁶⁴ In Linton's vision of free trade there is nothing that may not be bought or sold. There are moments however, where the narrator succumbs to lethargy, and confesses a desire to give in under the fierce assault of free trade society on his senses. In so doing, the narrator is painfully aware that he becomes complicit with the very forces he has been elected to witness, record and relate. Free trade wears out dissident subjects in order to make them more amenable to it, negating their ability to mobilise their resistance:

Ever onward as I pass'd
Shaking even as one aghast
At his own conscience, my sore eyes
Were smitten with calamities.
Till, exhausted with the woe,
Of that travel (none can know
How worn, —I seemed almost to be
A portion of that misery,
Breathing the most tainting breath
Of that universal death),
I sank down by a little heap
Of yellow grass—a mournful heap,
Silently bow'd o'er One asleep.⁶⁵

The poem represents weariness as a corruption that so consumes the being of the narrator, that he becomes an agent of that corruption, 'Breathing the most tainted breath' of free trade. There are other instances of free trade as a disease, for example, 'the bastard Wealth' is a leprous being who, 'with prayers' tempts others to share his fate.⁶⁶ In a fit of self-admonishment, the narrator records that the 'old Command' once again called upon him. If you wish to rest or do not feel committed to this task, the voice indicated, you are by no means 'constrained...To follow the steps of

⁶⁴ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.65.

⁶⁵ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.67.

Misery.’⁶⁷ In other words, the narrator is under no compulsion but their own sense of duty to fulfil their allotted task. At this point, the narrative of Christian election acts as an allegory for testing political conscience. It is the narrator’s duty to once again remake the covenant with the ‘stern Command’ and to choose either ‘a portion of that misery’ or to continue with their allotted task as a witness. In so doing, Linton writes a painful account of his frustration and disillusionment as a poet and political oracle, as well as providing a model of political conduct to his readers. The narrator is asked whether he wishes to remain part of an elect remnant faithful to republican principles, or to forfeit that place, allow his faith to crumble, and join ‘the wretched crowd’. Indeed it seems no coincidence that, immediately following this pressing choice, the crowds grow more violently jubilant as they approach the apogee of free trade’s carnival, as if to tempt or finally wear down the narrator and press home their advantage:

Denser grew the wretched crowd,
And their shout more fierce and loud:
Their wide discord-voice did say-
‘This is Trade’s high holiday!’...
...From all comers wherein Trade
Is owned, honour’d and obey’d,
Came his subjects, one and all
Hungering for his carnival.⁶⁸

After describing the carnival that follows ‘the fiend’ free trade, the *Jubilee of Trade* ends by detailing, in an all too easy outcome, how the ‘Commerce-God’ is consumed by the very disease that it propagates, thereby freeing human society:

In his own smoke and stench – he died
In the very fullness of his pride:

And men were without Trade and free
In the Heaven of Love’s wide charity.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.68.

⁶⁷ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.67.

⁶⁸ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.68.

⁶⁹ W.J. Linton, *The Jubilee of Trade*, p.78.

Bob Thin, or the Poorhouse Fugitive is written in two parts. The first carries the life and death of Bob Thin, while in the second part, the spirit of Bob Thin passes into the afterlife. In the second part, Linton attempts to meld together the popular Christian belief in the reward of the afterlife with his vision of post-revolutionary consciousness. In a brief review of Linton's work, the *Athenaeum* noted the quality of the accompanying illustrations, and thought the form of the first part of the poem to be an 'eminent specimen of doggerel', though its content was 'strange' and 'rambling'.⁷⁰ Despite the innovative first part, the second part, though oracular in mood is, as Brian Maidment notes, a poorly sustained poetic work.⁷¹ It was described in the *Athenaeum* for example, as 'a piece of mysticism which opium may have inspired'.⁷² Both admiring and admonitory, the mixed response of the *Athenaeum* ignored the political messages of both parts, and provided at best a dubious middle-class approval of Linton's poetry as an exercise in literary form. For all its shortcomings however, Linton's doggerel epic does reveal key strategies by which the ideas that motivated him were made available to the audiences addressed. Linton's primary target in *Bob Thin* was the hypocrisy of the 'sophisticated' and 'civilized' privileged classes of 'Christian Respectability' who preached abstinence and self-reliance, respectability and the ideology of self-help and choice, ostensibly for the 'labourer's benefit.' As he observes later in the poem: 'Thus does their charity atone for their cupidity.'⁷³

Linton's tale of Bob Thin's experiences and his death at the hands of the New Poor Law, deconstructs the cash nexus that robs him of his share of labour surplus: the 'profit' that 'Bob spun, though he might share none of it.'⁷⁴ Yet before Bob's tale is told, the narrator indicates that first the poem must historicise the growth of alienated human relations and economic oppression. As in his other longer poems, Linton employs biblical and Miltonic allusions. One of the strategies that Linton employed

⁷⁰ *The Athenaeum*, London: J. Francis, 1846, no. 979, p.785.

⁷¹ Brian Maidment chooses not to include the latter parts of *Bob Thin* because of 'a considerable weakening in the force of the poem'. Brian Maidment, *The Poorhouse Fugitives*, p.66.

⁷² *The Athenaeum*, 1846, no. 979, p.785.

⁷³ W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin, or the Poorhouse Fugitive*, London: 1845, p.9; p.15.

⁷⁴ W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin*, p.12.

in his satirical rewrite of English history was to echo the biblical story in the book of Genesis of the fall of Adam and Eve from innocence. Echoing *Paradise Lost* and the book of Genesis, the poem represents this history as another biblical fall:

Let us endeavour to unravel
 The tortuous track of human travel,
 Out of the naked innocence,
 Through the rude windings of offence,
 To that sophisticated morn
 Which witness'd our tale's hero born?⁷⁵

Bob Thin echoes earlier poems such as 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised No. XII'. In Linton's hymn, competitive market forces produce oppression and murder, and thus another biblical fall.⁷⁶ Yet Bob Thin's oppression is not merely described or told for him in Linton's poem. By virtue of a question and answer process, Bob himself comes to an understanding of the history of his own oppression. Moreover, according to Linton's own political theory, it is Bob's duty to do so. As the 'cart of charity'⁷⁷ took Bob and his family to the poorhouse, Bob began to question his charitable patron, who is at first at a loss to answer Bob's questions, but recovers his composure and argues Bob into eventual silence. Linton's poem also revises a strategy that was first utilised in his earlier poems. *Bob Thin* echoes the dialogues between speakers in works such as 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised,' where radical agendas were debated using a question-and-answer strategy. It is worth reprinting the passage from *Bob Thin* at length. It provides an accessible description of the basis upon which Chartism fought for better political representation, and has a memorable rhyme scheme and metre, jumping from one respondent to the next. By this means Linton disseminated 'the knowledge of the meaning of the Charter, and the end to which it will lead.'⁷⁸

Pray tell me why I'm set in limbo?—
 Answer—Because the Well-to-do
 Can find no use for you.—

⁷⁵ W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin*, p.5.

⁷⁶ For a discussion of Linton's 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised No. XII' see chapter 5.

⁷⁷ W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin*, p.13.

⁷⁸ W.J. Linton, *The Cause of the People*, p.25; p.33.

What right have they to order me?—
 Answer—The right of property.—
 Question again—But how invented?
 It can't be shown that I consented:
 And every compact doth demand
 Two parties.—You understand,
 Replies the other, your assent
 Was duly given by Parliament,
 Your representatives, and—Stay!
 Will you be good enough to say,
 How these same representers got
 At the will of one who had no vote?—
 Answer—My friend! You are not able
 To comprehend this veritable
 Fair feature of our Constitution,
 Which—Favour me with a solution
 Of that fine-sounding word! What is't?—
 Hereupon Answer clenched his fist,
 Eloquently.— Will tell me where
 It may be found?—Reply, a stare,
 And a sort of clutching at the air...⁷⁹

This extract debates the complex relationships between members of the working classes through labour. Bob Thin struggles to engage with 'Answer,' his interlocutor, because of the latter's reluctance to relinquish power to the version of working-class identity that Bob Thin represents, thus validating that identity. 'Answer' is clearly and ironically the wrong interlocutor, but at that moment, Bob Thin can appeal to no-one else. Both participants in this dialogue act as metonyms for the political and cultural formations that they represent, making the poem a site of class conflict. Bob's isolation reminds the reader that, though a supporter of Chartist principles, he had not been active as a Chartist in the early part of the poem. Devoted (somewhat paradoxically) to his family, Bob had simply had no time to devote to political activism and was disconnected from his fellow workers by virtue of the alienation of labour.

The discussion between the two respondents in this extract also seeks to redress middle-class representations of Chartism as an impassioned, yet uneducated and

threatening movement. 'Answer' is at first civilised, but when his authority is endangered and seems on the verge of losing the debate, he becomes intimidating. Linton noted that 'Answer clenched his fist' and verged on the use of physical force. But shortly after this episode, having regained composure and control once again, 'Answer's' eloquence returns. Having stuttered, stumbled and clutched 'at the air', 'Answer' is then able to produce a long and detailed oratory on the history of the modern British constitution, thus silencing Bob Thin. Current parliamentary representation is justified with reference to the glorious revolution of 1688 and the constitutional changes that 'our wise ancestors approved', thus creating the modern political state.⁸⁰ Bob is effectively silenced by the recitation of a nationalist mythology that simultaneously sought to make him into an obedient British subject while denying him his political rights. Though Bob Thin loses the hegemonic struggle with the enfranchised classes, Linton's poem does temporarily claim history for the unenfranchised, lodging with them a symbolic meaning, a cultural memory of their rights as no lesser heirs to that popular constitution. The images of the coins that accompany *The Jubilee of Trade*, as discussed earlier, similarly critique the cultural memory of national identity as perpetuated by the privileged classes.

Linton's paired poems, *To the Future: The Dirge of the Nations* are dated April and November 1848 respectively on their title pages. Only the second of the two poems was published in the Chartist press. *The Dirge of the Nations* appeared in C.G. Harding's *The Republican*.⁸¹ Copies of both poems, with illustrations, were privately printed and distributed to friends and political sympathisers. As the accompanying illustrations demonstrate, Linton's dedication in the copy consulted for this thesis indicates that they had belonged to the pre-Raphaelite artist William Bell Scott.⁸² George Julian Harney also owned copies.⁸³ Moreover, their pagination, beginning at page 85, indicates that they were to be printed as part of another publication.

⁷⁹ W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin*, p13.

⁸⁰ W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin*, p.14.

⁸¹ See *The Republican*, pp.20-28.

⁸² See W.J. Linton, *To the Future: The Dirge of the Nations*, Liverpool University Special Collections and Archives, Spec Fraser 34 (5).

⁸³ Margaret Hambrick, *A Chartist's Library*, London: Mansell, 1986, p.148.

W. B. Scott
from W. J. L.
(5)



TO THE FUTURE
THE DIRGE OF THE NATIONS

W. J. LINTON — 1848

The poems chronicle the European dimensions of revolutionary activism and its subsequent defeat. At the time they were written, Linton was secretary for the People's International League, founded in April 1847, and dissolved by the autumn of 1848. The aim of the movement was to 'aid the people of this country in forming a correct judgement of the national questions now agitating Europe' as well as teaching 'the right of nationality.'⁸⁴ Linton's paired poems make use of Christian discourses, that shape both the celebratory poetry in the first poem, and in the second, the mournful poetry in which the failure of the European revolutions is represented. Indeed after their collapse, Mazzini 'would insist that irreligion had helped to bring about the revolutionary failures of 1848'.⁸⁵

Linton's opening poem, *To the Future*, celebrates the dawning of the revolutionary movements across Europe and their promise of a new European future. It is correspondingly exultant, in stark contrast to the horror that resonates through *The Jubilee of Trade*. Linton, for example, addresses Alphonse de Lamartine, a diplomat, romantic poet and leader of the new French government,⁸⁶ and encourages him to:

Found your Republic on the Nation's heart:
 Securing unto everyone his part
 In the harmony of life; aye keeping free
 The course of progress, aye protecting both
 The right of weakness and the right of growth.⁸⁷

Linton's poem acts as a rallying call to European republican tendencies, rather than the socialist and co-operative tendencies that were also acting within Chartism at this time.⁸⁸

⁸⁴W.J. Linton, 'Address of the People's International League,' London: 1847, cited in Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism, 1848-1854,' *Journal of British Studies*, vol.28, no.3, July 1989, p.230.

⁸⁵ Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism,' p.233.

⁸⁶ Robert Tombs, *France 1814-1914*, London: Longman, 1996, p.377.

⁸⁷ W.J. Linton, *To the Future*, p.88.

⁸⁸ Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism,' p.234.

To the Future is bold and ambitious. Its language, like the revolutionary fervour it describes, emulates 'God's jubilant thunder'.⁸⁹ The enjambment in the opening six lines represents the unifying power of the radicalism sweeping Europe as well as the 'Echo' of radical history. The heavy caesuras in lines two to four inclusively, represent the reverberation of the history of radical and democratic trends that were resounding in the European revolutionary consciousness. The caesuras, together with the mixture of iambic and trochaic stress patterns, disturb the reader's attempts to regulate the metre of each line, producing a rhetoric that mixes a celebratory with a spontaneous response to the revolutions: '...yet again are stirr'd / The depths of life, and living acclamations / Echo the storm':⁹⁰

Again the Song of Freedom through the Nations
Leapeth triumphantly; again is heard
God's jubilant thunder; yet again are stirr'd
The depths of life, and living acclamations
Echo the storm. Our want hath found its voice:
Rejoice! rejoice!⁹¹

Linton shows his acute awareness of the history of revolutionary potential. The 'depths of life', that is the histories of the people, are 'stirr'd', producing new 'living acclamations'. Collective cultural memories of past events provoke feelings that are granted a contemporary expression of assent. Indeed for Linton, it is history that reifies humankind. As he noted later in the *English Republic*: 'All the life of the Past...all this has worked together to make him the man he is.'⁹² Linton's poem also echoes Mazzini's belief in the strengthening voice of rising nations 'that demonstrated the law of continual progress—without which there would be neither life, nor movement, nor religion.'⁹³

⁸⁹ W.J. Linton, *To the Future*, p.85.

⁹⁰ W.J. Linton, *To the Future*, p.85.

⁹¹ W.J. Linton, *To the Future*, p.85.

⁹² Linton, W.J. 'Universal Suffrage,' *The English Republic*, vol. I, 1851, p.166.

⁹³ Joseph Mazzini, 'Thoughts upon Democracy In Europe,' p.171.



(April, 1848.)

AGAIN the Song of Freedom through the Nations
 Leapeth triumphantly ; again is heard
 God's jubilant thunder ; yet again are stirr'd
 The depths of life, and living acclamations
 Echo the storm. Our want hath found its voice :
 Rejoice ! rejoice !

The second poem in this two-part series, *The Dirge of the Nations*, mourns the collapse of the European revolutions of 1848 and the frustration of Chartist hopes after the debacle of Kennington Common on April 10, when the third and final Chartist petition was submitted.⁹⁴ In so doing, Linton's poem returns to the images of ghostly exile that we encountered at the beginning of *The Jubilee of Trade*. The opening of *The Dirge of the Nations* also bears an interesting comparison with the beginning of *To the Future*:

YET the gory-headed Vulture
Teareth the Promethian heart;
Yet dead Hope, denied sepulture,
Roams a weary ghost apart,-
On this side of Charon's River
Wandering for ever, ever,
O to be grav'd with Hope, to see
The shore of our eternity!⁹⁵

In the highly allusive lines above, Linton employs both Christian and Classical discourses. The poem reverts to the ballad tradition, but also subverts that form at the same time. Its lyrical introspection, using a four beat stress pattern, is the very antithesis of the spontaneous-yet-decorous rhetoric that commences *To the Future*. The enjambment employed in that poem had contributed to its celebratory effect. In *The Dirge of the Nations* however, the enjambment is heavier and more regular. The trochaic stresses that commence all but two of the above lines are made to feel weighty. This is particularly noticeable in the first four lines, all of which end with heavily stressed syllables such as 'sepulture', or with long-vowelled, mono-syllabic words such as 'heart'. The stress pattern of the poem makes it feel processional and funereal. Unlike, *To the Future*, the heavy stresses that end the first four lines make the reader pause before the next syllable in the following line. Echoing *The Jubilee of Trade*, *The Dirge of the Nations* represents 'Hope' as an ethereal exile that 'Roams' as 'a weary ghost' that is trapped in the world of human society, separated from the spirit world of Hades, and lacks the means to cross 'Charon's river', better known as

⁹⁴ Gregory Claeys, 'Mazzini, Kossuth, and British Radicalism,' p.225.

⁹⁵ W.J. Linton, *The Dirge of the Nations*, p. 101.

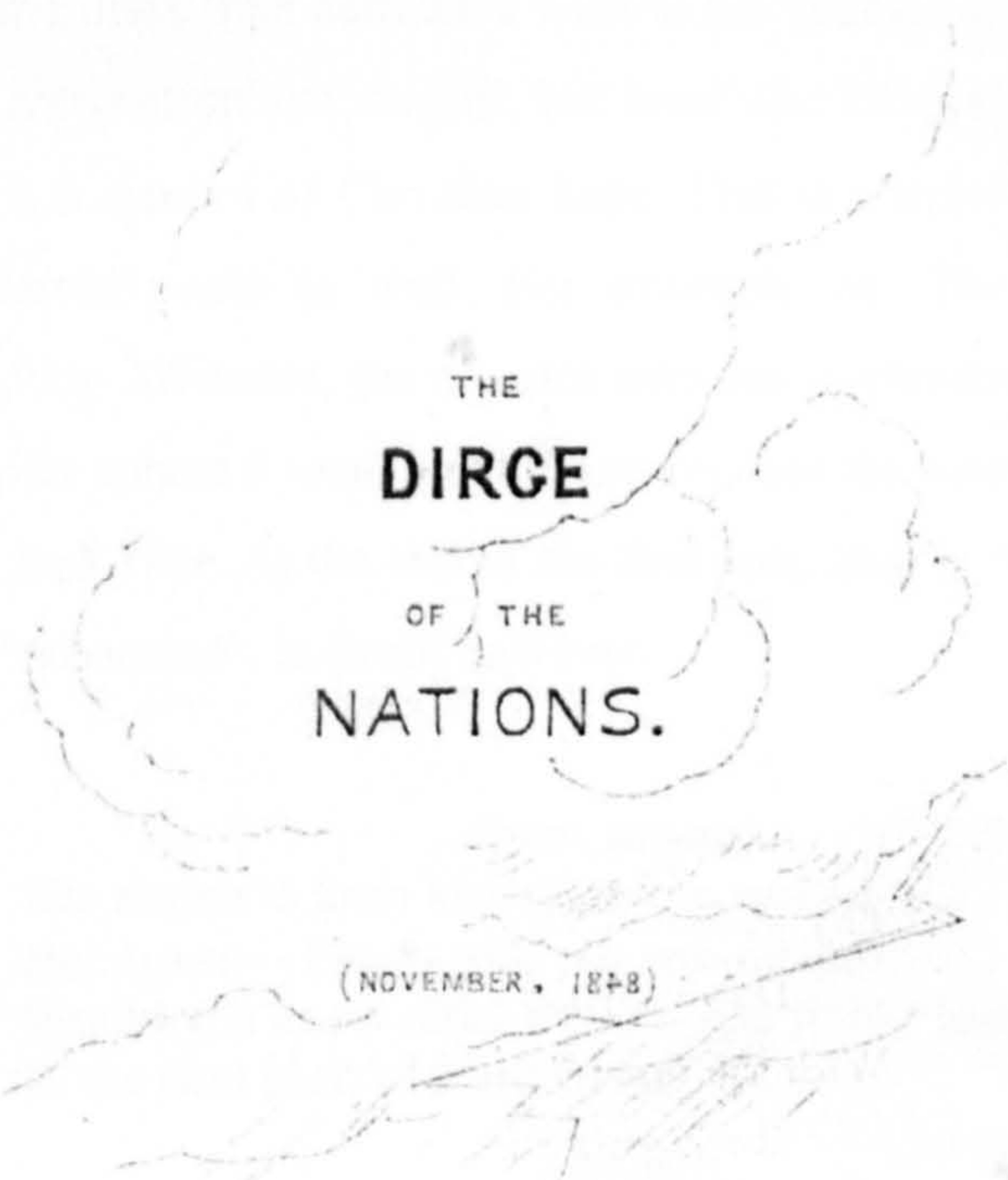
the mythical river Styx. Here again we experience an allusion to Milton, who in *Paradise Lost*, described the 'Abhorred Styx' as one of several rivers 'Whose waves of torrent fire inflame with rage.'⁹⁶ In so doing, Linton constructs a running metaphor in which the ghost of democracy and republicanism haunts the realm of the living, thus providing a powerful image by which a collective cultural memory may be constructed.

The Dirge of the Nations represents the fate of European radicalism through the Christian and Classical myths of birth, death and the afterlife, by which republican movements might be memorialised. The poem seeks to retrieve and reconstruct collective cultural memories, codifying them in the idioms of Christianity and Classical literature not just to play out the future social transformations that are anticipated, but also their persistent deferrals. In so doing, Linton was representing his responses to those events using texts and images pertinent to his Chartist and radical audiences, producing cultural memories that summon up the momentous events in the history of radical activity. Despite its mournful literary form, the poem's message is ambiguous: 'dead Hope' yet lingers as a ghostly form because its body has yet to be properly interred, halting its passage into Hades. Hope's final resting place, decided by the judges of the dead who assign each ghost its right and proper place in Hades, has yet to be found.⁹⁷ This is in contrast to the visual representation of the dawning of European republicanism as a heavenly ascent, as the engraving on the first page of *To the Future* demonstrates.⁹⁸ Echoing the grammatical symbolism and imagery at the beginning of *The Jubilee of Trade*, once again the republican initiatives that spread across Europe have not produced fruit.

⁹⁶ John Milton, *Paradise Lost* book II, ll. 577-581.

⁹⁷ Sir Paul Harvey *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* (1937), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984, p. 193.

⁹⁸ See p.230



THE
DIRGE
OF THE
NATIONS.

(NOVEMBER, 1848)

YET the gory-headed Vulture
 Teareth the Promethean heart ;
Yet dead Hope, denied sepulture,
 Roams a weary ghost apart,—
On this side of Charon's river—
Wandering for ever, ever.
O to be grav'd with Hope, to see
The shore of our eternity !

Yet the lingering ghost of Hope is a memory that also haunts the land of the living, thus perpetuating a collective radical memory. It is important not to equate the realm of Hades with damnation but, according to classical mythology, as the resting-place for all of the dead. The narrator's wish to be 'graved with Hope' might seem at first to signify resignation and despair, but must also be qualified by bearing in mind that the grave is a symbol of Christian hope. This is a trope that had been used by other earlier Chartist poets as well. For example, in 'The Dying Republican to His Comrades,' by Aristedes, the narrator asks his 'comrades' to 'Come near me' before 'To a happier sphere I must soar'.⁹⁹ Linton uses the symbol of the grave in a similar fashion in *Bob Thin*. At the end of the first part, Bob is 'O'rladen with his weariness' and sinks 'exhausted'. In death however:

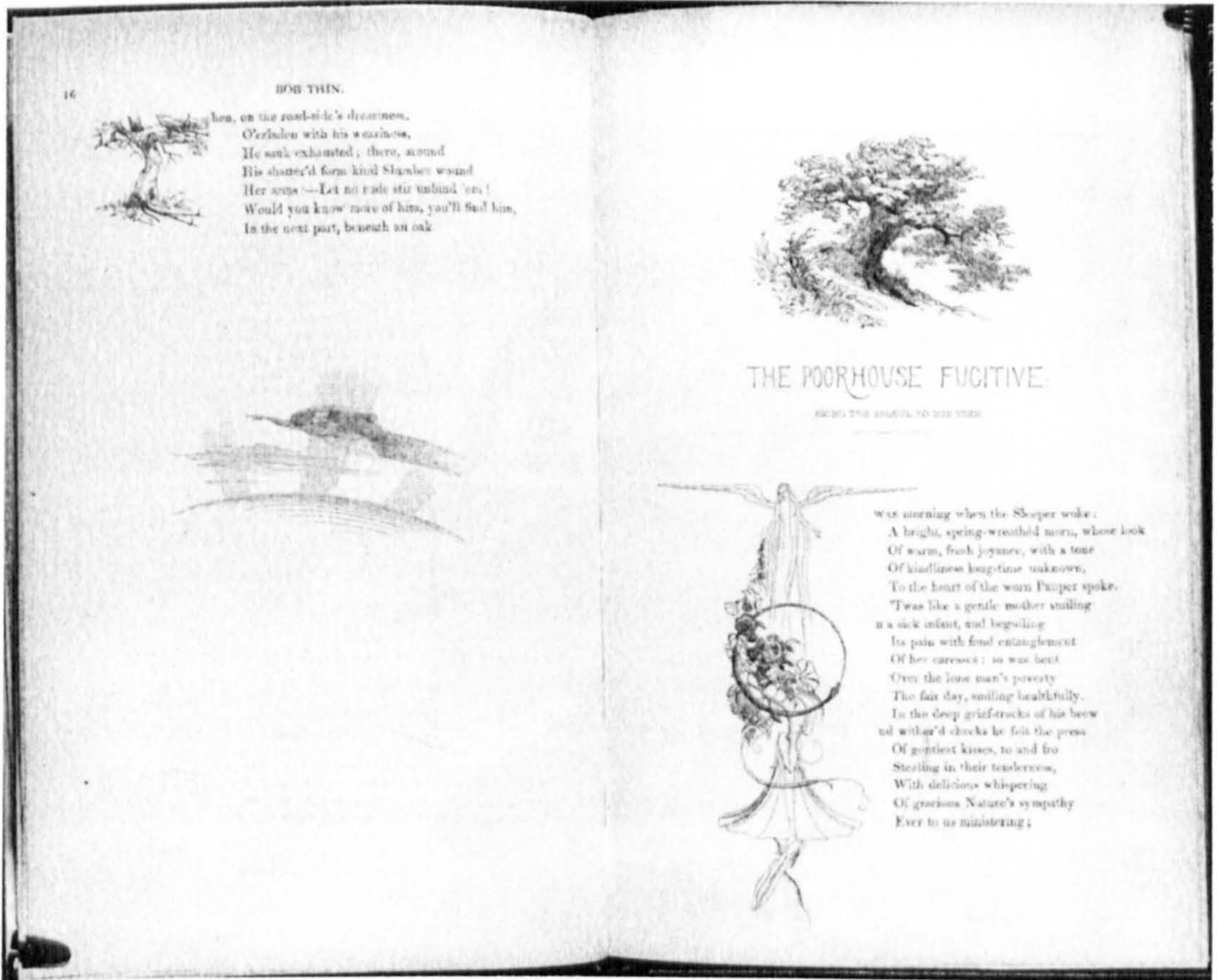
...there, around
 His shatter'd form kind Slumber wound
 Her arms:— Let no rude stir unbind em!
 Would you know more of him, you'll find him,
 In the next part, beneath an oak.¹⁰⁰

Bob Thin, having lived a virtuous and hardworking life as a weaver and challenged the political system that dissociated him from his rights to full citizenship through the franchise, is clearly represented as a soul fit to take his part among an elected group in the next world. Significantly, he is buried beneath an oak, demonstrating his place among the true English patriots. In this sense, the poem echoes Linton's search for England's real patriots, in his 'Hymns to the Unenfranchised'. In the first line of the second part, Bob's spirit awakes: 'Twas morning when the sleeper awoke'.¹⁰¹ The rhyme on 'oak' and 'awoke' unites the two parts of the poem, representing Bob's grave not so much as a site of defeat, but as a symbol of future radical hopes.

⁹⁹ Aristedes, 'The Dying Republican to His Comrades,' *Northern Star*, Sept. 1, 1838, p.7.

¹⁰⁰ W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin*, p.16.

¹⁰¹ W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin*, p.17.



16

BOB THIN.

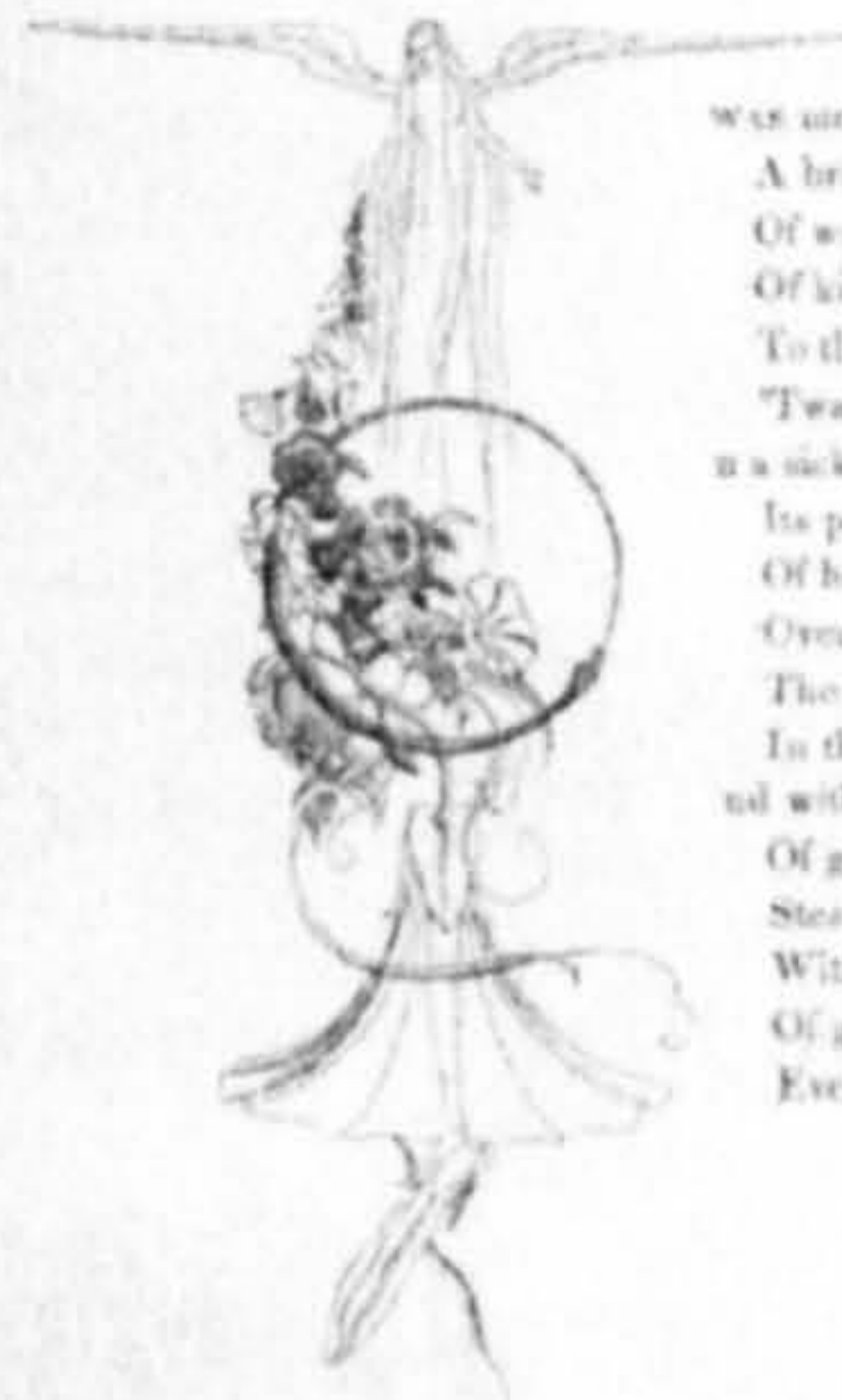


here, on the road-side's dreariness,
 O'erladen with his weariness,
 He sank exhausted; there, around
 His cluster'd form kind Slavesby wound
 Her sons:—Let no rascal stir 'em!
 Would you know more of him, you'll find him,
 In the next part, beneath an oak



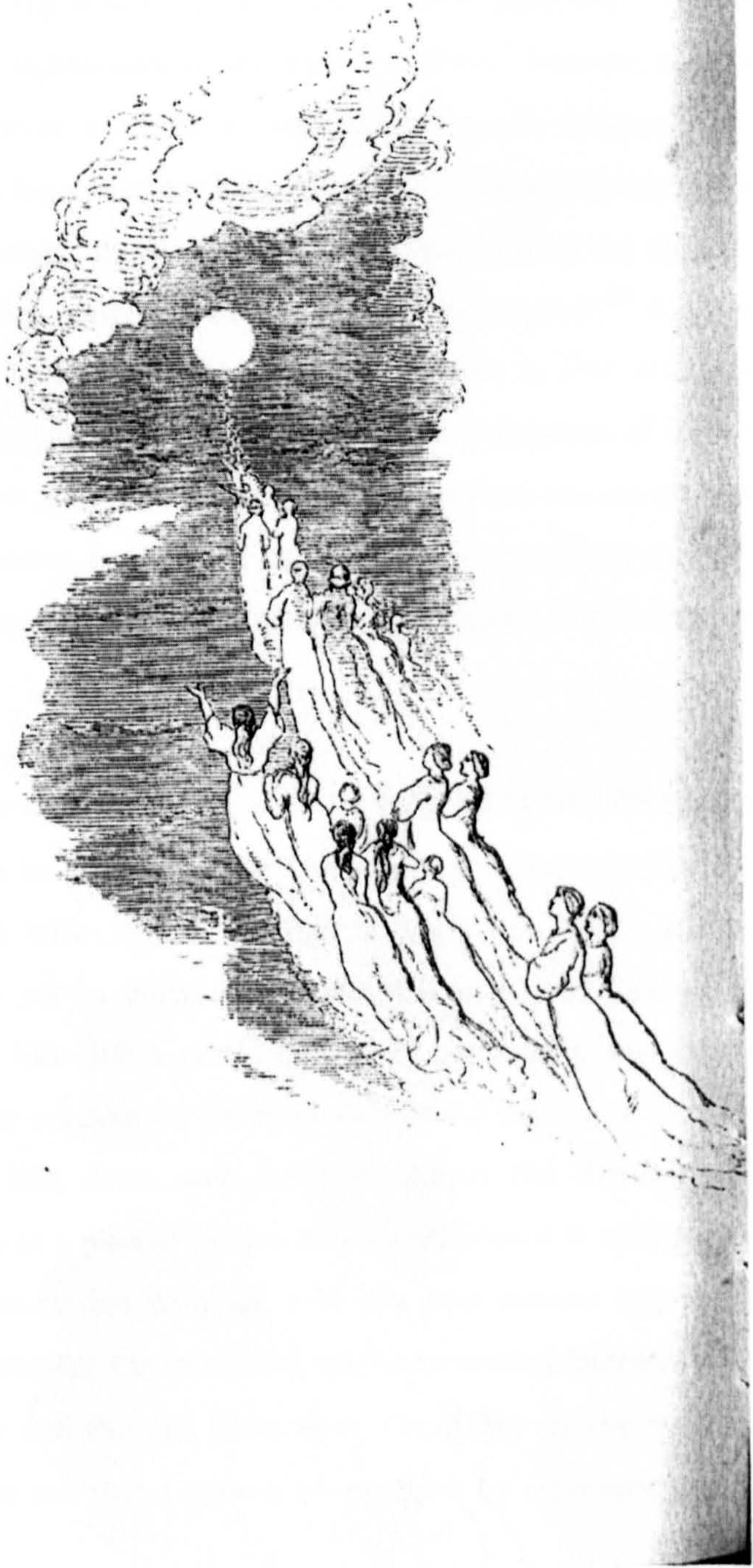
THE POORHOUSE FUGITIVE.

FROM THE ANNOTATED EDITION OF THE POEM.



was morning when the Sleeper woke:
 A bright, spring-wreathed morn, whose look
 Of warm, fresh joyance, with a tone
 Of kindness long-time unknown,
 To the heart of the worn Fauper spoke.
 'Twas like a gentle mother smiling
 At a sick infant, and beseeching
 Its pain with fond entanglement
 Of her caresses: so was bent
 O'er the lone man's poverty
 The fair day, smiling beautifully.
 In the deep grief-tracks of his brow
 And wither'd cheeks he felt the press
 Of gentlest kisses, to and fro
 Stealing in their tenderness,
 With delicious whispering
 Of generous Nature's sympathy
 Ever to us ministering;

From *Bob Thin, or The Poorhouse Fugitive*



Endplate for *To the Future: The Dirge of the Nations*

The mixture of faith in and despair of revolutionary hopes in both *The Dirge of the Nations* and *Bob Thin* echoes the Story of Job in the Old Testament. Despite his righteousness, Job experiences immense suffering, personal loss and ill-health. He complains bitterly that 'the thing which I greatly fear is come upon me'.¹⁰² He finally has to abandon his sense of righteousness and humbly 'abhor' himself, recognizing the inability of humankind ever to claim to comprehend God's actions.¹⁰³ At one point, Job seeks release from his suffering. He perceives that though the natural world around him is cut down and dies, 'there is yet hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.'¹⁰⁴ Job sees the natural world as analogous to his own existence and wishes to find solace in the knowledge that he himself might later 'sprout again' in the kingdom of heaven: 'O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me!'¹⁰⁵ Both the fate of Bob Thin, and the yearning of the narrator in Linton's *Dirge* seem to echo Job's desire.

That same desire—at once to abjure God's will by wishing one's own destruction, yet still hope for salvation—can be detected in the desire of the narrator in *The Dirge of The Nations* to be 'graved with Hope'. Though wishing for death, the narrator believes that salvation may yet be assured, that the destruction of this world may usher in the next. Rather like Job's plea, the poem represents the exceptional circumstances that befall the narrator by ambivalently using the grave to symbolise Judeo-Christian notions of life, death and salvation. As in *The Jubilee of Trade*, political exile is represented as a pained yet promissory existence in which the hopes for future revolutionary success are weighed with the ever-present conditions that inhibit political change. Moreover, the images of spirits ascending heavenward on the first page of *To the Future* and the end plate after *The Dirge of the Nations*, also symbolise the election of the just into a republican paradise by representing a host of

¹⁰² Job, 3:25, *Holy Bible*.

¹⁰³ Job, 42:6, *Holy Bible*.

¹⁰⁴ Job 14:7, *Holy Bible*.

¹⁰⁵ Job 14:13, *Holy Bible*.

spirits making the transition from one realm of existence to another. Linton had originally used the images to illustrate Bob Thin's ascension into an egalitarian heaven to enjoy 'happier hours'.¹⁰⁶ He re-used it for *The Dirge of the Nations*.

As well as alluding to key literary and biblical figures, the narrator of *The Dirge of the Nations* also addresses his own 'Vision of the fearful Now'. This vision acts as a cue, prompting the narrator to fulfil his election as a servant to the causes that he served, mediating his responses to those events to the audiences interpellated. In following section of the poem, the narrator ruminates on and represents his public role as a poet, and how his emergence into that role was dependent upon his ability to exert 'controul' over that 'Vision' that is reflected upon in the writing process.

Linton's narrator in *The Dirge of the Nations* is a self-styled Promethean figure, metaphorically chained to a rock 'whose age was green'd with my sorrow's ceaseless falling.'¹⁰⁷ Thus incarcerated, he suffers perpetual agony, yet his function as both chronicler and prophet appears redemptive, humanising and indeed empowering. That this is so is by virtue of the narrator's awareness of his literary and political purpose, his identity as a poet, and his compulsion to narrate the experience of writing a 'fire-shower' of verse that may yet hurry 'the Present on / To the tomb of the unknown!' Once again future radical hopes are represented using the grave as a symbol of hope:

Visions of the fearful Now,
 Glaring through the cloven snow-
 Whence my lava thoughts are pour'd,
 Echoing thee, as word by word
 Falls the fire-shower of my verse
 Underneath the smoky hearse
 Hurrying the Present on
 To the tomb of the Unknown!
 Yet dost thou my sense controul;
 Through the ruins of my soul
 Is thy sad procession pouring,

¹⁰⁶ W.J. Linton, *Bob Thin*, p 39.

¹⁰⁷ W.J. Linton, *The Dirge of the Nations*, p.102.

And between the cannons' roaring
 Yet I hear the heavy tread
 Of the Nations with their Dead,
 And their voices call to me
 Through the mist of agony.¹⁰⁸

The narrator's 'Visions' are a phenomenon from which 'lava thoughts' emanate. He appears able to exercise 'control' over those thoughts. At the same time, his ruined 'soul' acts as a means through which those thoughts cannot help but pour. Nor can the narrator ignore the voices of the recent and long dead in revolutionary history that 'call to me / Through the mist of agony.' His sense of duty to the literary and political objectives he feels elected to fulfil, will not permit it. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Linton abandons any notion of betraying his radical politics as soon as it dawns upon him, because of his sense of elected duty to those principles: 'O that One should choose the shade / For the substance! O afraid / To worship Truth in scorn of fashion!'¹⁰⁹

The narrative of Christian election, whereby individuals are selected by their experiences to a particular task or ministry, is central to Linton's personal representation in and through the act of writing poetry, as well as more publicly, providing a collective cultural memory for his readers during the fluctuating political fortunes of Chartism. Moreover, Linton's speeches after the revolutions of 1848 represented his belief in an ethical interventionist policy through which England as a united nation could act to dispel Europe-wide oppression. His political rhetoric reflected the soaring optimism, the moments of disappointment, and his sustained faith in future radical hopes depicted in *To the Future* and *The Dirge of the Nations*. In a meeting held in autumn 1848 celebrating the 'Second Centenary of Swiss Nationality', Linton's speech pleaded for the 'earnest spirit' of Eliot, Hampden, Vane, Cromwell, Sydney and Milton to 'light on us'.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, Linton looked forward to a time when 'our race shall stand like the Angel of the Apocalypse...and

¹⁰⁸ W.J. Linton, *The Dirge of the Nations*, p.103. His phrase 'the ruins of my soul' indicates a redemptive function for the narrator, echoing the desire to be 'graved with Hope'

¹⁰⁹ Linton, W.J. *The Dirge of the Nations*, p.109.

¹¹⁰ W.J. Linton, 'Second Centenary of the Swiss Nationality,' *The Republican*, p.37.

proclaim...that injustice shall be no more, that the day of righteous judgement has come, that right-hearted England does and will interfere for the sake of Right'.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ W.J. Linton, 'Second Centenary of the Swiss Nationality,' *The Republican*, p.37.

Conclusion

In recent years critics have described the poetic output of Chartists largely within the context of romanticism. This thesis argues, however, that it is equally important to acknowledge the cultural and political implications of the Christian contexts to which their poetry is attuned, saturated as it is with religious narratives, symbols and traditions. The Chartist poets discussed in this thesis made extensive use of Christian language and the narrative of Christian election to imagine and represent their roles as cultural and political leaders. Consequently, Chartist poetry cannot be fully appreciated unless its religious systems of meaning as a radical heritage are reactivated.

As E.P. Thompson notes, dissenting traditions in the eighteenth century provided the poor with the opportunity to imagine both their coming reward and the divine retribution awaiting the privileged classes. The growth of Methodism for example, notably provided the seeds of the 'democratic spirit' that both contested Wesley's organisational structure and was tinged with a millenarian edge, even as it appeared to militate against the revolutionary tendencies that arose during the early 1790s.¹ More generally, Thompson observes that the eighteenth-century dissenting tradition produced a clutch of 'competing sects and seceding chapels' that provided a 'forcing-bed for the variants of nineteenth-century working class culture.'² Eileen Yeo and Eileen Groth Lyon have established the importance of Christian language generally to particular forms of Chartist protest. The preceding chapters have demonstrated how Cooper, Jones and Linton, as heirs to particular Christian traditions, all put religious language and the election narrative to a variety of political and cultural uses.

The revivalist discourses of Thomas Cooper's Chartist hymns clearly show the importance of Thompson's christianised radical tradition to subsequent political movements. His hymns articulate the participatory dimensions of Chartism as a popular organisation that anticipated social improvements through political liberty. They also represent recital and singing as transformational processes that

¹ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991, p.37; pp.45-46; pp.50-53

² E.P. Thompson, *Making*, p.55

conflate the individual's entry into a collective political movement with the election of the individual into God's chosen people. Cooper's later sonnets show a marked shift in address. His confidence and prominence as a Chartist poet and leader had grown markedly. His role as a representative of a populist movement had also begun to conflict somewhat with his inclination toward the intellectual aspects of freethought. Consequently a clear secularisation of the election narrative began to take place in his thinking in the early to mid 1840s.

The secularisation of the election narrative in Cooper's epic poem is evident in *The Purgatory of Suicides*. In it, he showed his determined engagement with the sort of limitless intellectual enquiry he valued so much.³ Cooper understood his prison term as a fit time and place for undertaking the culturally elevated task of writing epic poetry. It signalled his sense of election as a mediator of broader educative and political initiatives and his more vanguardist sense of his revelatory role as a poet. Cooper felt persecuted as a political prisoner, yet was inspired by his literary ancestors to give voice to and ruminate on the struggles and setbacks that bedevilled the attainment of political liberty: a future he imagined as an 'endless afterlife of jubilee'.⁴ Though his inquiries into the causes of oppression and how they might be solved were represented through the election narrative, he could not discount secularism. Indeed, the use of the election narrative enacted his tacit need to come to some personal understanding about the intuitive operations of his own inquiring mind, as identified by Timothy Larsen.⁵ Cooper ultimately turned to his personal vision of the intellectual individual as a model of social and cultural improvement, rather than the model of collective cultural development that he had envisaged in the pages of *Cooper's Journal*.⁶

Ernest Jones's conception of Chartist political agendas in Christian terms differed from Cooper's Methodism. Jones had turned to low-church worship in the early 1840s, but his upper-middle class origins also encouraged him to conceive a

³ As Timothy Larsen notes, Cooper made this point in his lecture notes of 1856. See Timothy Larsen, 'The Regaining of Faith: Reconversions among Popular Radicals in Mid-Victorian England,' *Church History*, vol.70, no.3, September 2001, p.533

⁴ Thomas Cooper, *The Purgatory of Suicides* (second edition), London: J. Watson, 1847, book X, stanza CXXV p.296

⁵ Timothy Larsen, 'The Regaining of Faith,' p.534

particular version of the election narrative. He was represented early on as an advocate who felt elected as an intercessor to act on behalf of the Chartists. His class and status as a barrister and legal advocate enabled him to attain a position as a gentleman-leader. The notion of advocacy imputed to Jones however, also clearly acted as a facet of the election narrative. Jones dutifully undertook a literary labour that was depicted to an extent as self-sacrificial and thus democratically oriented. He argued for laying aside personal literary ambitions and urged leading poets such as Browning and Tennyson to attend instead to a 'poetic spirit' that struck 'the chords of liberty'.⁷ His populist conception of writing poetry, however, ensured that his work was received all the more favourably and helped to cement his prominence within the Chartist movement.

Like Cooper's epic, Jones's prison poems enact his symbolic martyrdom as a Chartist prisoner. Unlike the sometimes-anxious intellectual and cultural inquiry that impelled Cooper's scholarly work and literary output, Jones emphasised communion and bloodletting, the breaking of the individual body for consumption by a wide audience. His metaphor for the act of writing, the provision of a willed and controlled release of blood, may itself be seen as a symbol of his own sense of cultural authority among Chartists. His prison poems however, also signal the writer in crisis. For Jones, communion and metonymy articulated his personal predicament in prison as an index of the wider crisis facing Chartism in the late 1840s and early 1850s. His literary strategies and discourses highlight the troubled relationship between his emphasis on the importance of shared, common experiences among all Chartists, and his concern to maintain his position as the leading literary figure in Chartism.

The Christian contexts of William James Linton's hymns and poems differ from Cooper's and Jones's. His usage is more secular, making general criticisms of Anglicanism and its traditions, rather than utilising the more specific biblical references that populate Cooper and Jones's poetry. This is not so surprising, for although Linton's personal faith remained unshaken during his life, he was

⁶ '...it now becomes a matter of the highest necessity, that you all join hands and heads to create a literature of your own.' Thomas Cooper, *Cooper's Journal* (1850), New York: Kelley, 1970, p.127

acquainted with the infidel traditions that Ruth Watts notes other leading Unitarians had experimented with.⁸ His early 'Hymns for the Unenfranchised' use interrogatives as a dialogic strategy, subverting the Christian practices and beliefs that are legitimated in and through texts such as the Litany. In these hymns, the positions occupied by addresser and addressee seek to promote the intellectual stimulation of 'the people' and enact a radical-political conversion in the reader. In the poems from *The Cause of the People* and *The English Republic*, the election narrative seeks to position and construct the audience as an historical actor or social agent, relative to the context of the broader history of radicalism. The election narrative also represents the poet's ever-developing political and cultural being, as well as his call to the cultural and political service of his audiences.

Linton's longer poems demonstrate his personal, even oracular sense of election as the producer and mediator of particular cultural memories, using graphic images as well as poetry. His relationships with his literary influences (notably Milton and Shelley) are re-enacted in the process of writing, inscribing his own literary identity, even though he was also writing in the shadow of those influences. Linton also employed the election narrative to represent—on behalf of 'the people'—their role as heirs and contributors to collective cultural memories of radical activity. Through this strategy, Linton sought to personally come to terms with the political setbacks and defeats that Chartism encountered. *To the Future* and *The Dirge of the Nations* map Linton's jubilation and despondency during and after the revolutions of 1848, using particular Christian myths. They, along with *The Jubilee of Trade* and *Bob Thin*, demonstrate how Linton would at times fuse political hope with despair using grave imagery, using images of the resurrection to represent inexorable political progress and the election of God's chosen remnant into heaven as a metaphor for future republican hopes.

Though there are some similarities in the uses to which these poets put Christian language and the election narrative, there is no homogeneous grand narrative that can be attributed to their poetry and its objectives. The particular Christian

⁷ Ernest Jones, 'Literary Review,' Y. Kovalev, (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, Moscow: 1956, p.311

discourses that they utilised in their poetry all indicate very different relationships with Christianity and demonstrate a variety of ways in which those discourses could critique the Church and the state. None of their positions could be described as a prevailing Christian idiom or a governing discourse within Chartism, though each of the various Christian discourses utilised is intrinsic to their modes of political opposition. This thesis has therefore not focussed on the sociological analysis of Christianity, though it has discussed in places Chartist responses to Christian structures and institutions. Instead it has considered the effects of religion on the cultural habituation of those who led Chartism, wrote poetry, and through it, made available particular models of political conduct to their audiences. Following Sarah C. Williams, it has assessed religion as a cultural formation based largely on the ways in which 'historical actors constructed their cultural and religious identity', detailing how their Christianised discursive practices permeated the public realm.⁹

It follows from this analysis that opportunities for further research can be identified. Firstly, there is scope to further investigate the work of the less prominent but no less important Chartist poets. William Jones for example, wrote hymns that often operated in dialogue with Cooper's. Though omitted from Kovalev's anthology, he was a well-published Leicester Chartist poet in his own right. Having risen through Cooper's classes as one of the Shakspearean Chartists, he is one of many who deserve more critical attention. Alan Little's thesis on popular politics in Leicestershire contains a vital appendix of Jones's poetry published in the Chartist press.¹⁰

Secondly, no space has been afforded to considerations of gender in this thesis. Though there were many more male than female Chartist poets, there are rare occasions when a primarily female audience is assumed in some Chartist poems. One early anonymous poet in the *Northern Star* clearly addressed female Chartists as 'Daughters of the good and brave,' noting that 'Justice, Truth, Religion,

⁸ Ruth Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England 1760-1860*, London: Longman, 1998, p.104

⁹ Sarah C. Williams, 'Victorian Religion: A Matter of Class or Culture?' *19th Century Studies*, 17, 2003, pp.14-15

Reason, / Are our leaders in our cause.' Encouraged to be 'faithful, firm, confiding', their political 'efforts' would be guided by 'Mercy's God'.¹¹ Apart from Linton's general advocacy of universal suffrage, the poets discussed in this thesis have little to say about the impact of their poems on women readerships in specific Christian terms. In what ways did Christianity as a discourse energise women's support for popular rights?¹² How might it have articulated women's identification with the movement and in what ways might their particular sense of mission have differed from that of men?

Thirdly, there is a need for further research into the responses to Chartist poems by their intended audiences. By focusing on the Christian dimensions of the literary and political models deployed by these poets, this thesis has attended less to the broader responses to Chartist poems in the public realm. Indications of audience reactions included in this thesis have largely been those recorded by the poets themselves. Cooper's letters give his thoughts on hymn singing and Jones's diary entries give us a glimpse of audience reactions to his early poems. News and literary items from the Chartist press indicate the importance of the performance of Chartist hymns and songs. It follows from this thesis that further research into the audiences of Chartist poetry needs to be carried out. Indeed Jonathan Rose's *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* argues for a much greater emphasis on the history of the working-class reading experience itself, surveying and assessing the reception of texts rather than critically appraising them. As Rose notes, working-class readers did habitually record their experiences of reading.¹³ What evidence might there be to indicate the responses of Chartist audiences to the poetry of the movement, and in particular the literary strategies detailed in this thesis? These texts demonstrate definite expectations of their audiences, yet it remains unclear in many cases exactly how these texts were received, and how this might affect our understanding of the interpellation of Chartist audiences.

¹⁰ See Alan D. Little 'Chartism and Liberalism: Popular Politics in Leicestershire 1842-74,' D.Phil., University of Manchester, 1989

¹¹ A.L., 'The Slaves Address to British Females,' *Northern Star*, Feb. 17, 1838

¹² As Helen Rogers notes, Chartist women promoted 'their support for popular rights and liberties as an extension of their domestic, womanly, Christian and patriotic duties.' Helen Rogers, *Women and the People Authority, Authorship and the Radical Tradition in Nineteenth-Century England*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000, p.81

¹³ See Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, London: Yale University Press, 2001, pp.1-11

Finally, there is potential for further research into the Christian contexts of Cooper, Jones and Linton's careers after Chartism declined. Timothy Larsen has already begun the reappraisal of Cooper's re-conversion to Christianity, but his later career as a peripatetic lecturer remains under-researched. Ernest Jones writes very little poetry after Chartism, but what did his low-church thinking contribute to his later liberal politics as a member of the Reform League? In the last poems Linton published in the British press in 1866 before leaving for America, he still anticipated an end to European conflict and a time when 'Russian serfdom dares abjure the Tzar, / To share the People's great deliverance'.¹⁴ How did his Unitarianism inflect his later critiques of European politics and his responses to other radical moments, such as the Paris Commune of 1871? Indeed, the research of F.B. Smith, Shirley Dent and Jason Whittaker aside, Linton's radical career in America remains under-researched.¹⁵

As Chartist leaders, Cooper, Jones and Linton all utilised and explored their religious beliefs. Cooper reminded his audiences that none might 'honour Christ' while their own thoughts 'be like a dream'; Jones felt political liberty to be a 'redemption' that is in the people's 'own possession'; and Linton considered the way to a new republic to be 'Bound in the bond of Love, a God-like Symmetry!'¹⁶ Christian discourses were central to their poetry through which they came to understand and voice their personal political and cultural filiation to their causes, and represent models of political conduct for the movement to take up. Consequently, this thesis has demonstrated the importance of Christianity to Chartist poetry and politics, from intertwined literary and cultural perspectives, and has identified opportunities to further extend knowledge in these fields.

¹⁴ W.J. Linton, 'Yet Shall It Come,' *The Poorhouse Fugitive*, [Collected Works], Hamden: The Appledore Press, 1897, p.169. This volume notes that 'Yet Shall It Come' was among the last four poems Linton published in Britain, in the *Kendal Mercury* in 1866.

¹⁵ Smith, F.B. *Radical Artisan: William James Linton 1812-1897*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973; Shirley Patricia Dent, 'Iniquitous Symmetries: Aestheticism and Secularism in the Reception of William Blake's Works in Books and Periodicals during the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s,' D.Phil., University of Warwick, 2000; Shirley Dent & Jason Whittaker, *Radical Blake: Influence and Afterlife from 1827*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002

¹⁶ Thomas Cooper, 'Chartist Hymns. I.—C.M.,' *The English Chartist Circular*, vol.2, no.78, p.104; Ernest Jones, 'A Song for May,' in Kovalev (ed.) *An Anthology of Chartist Literature*, Moscow: 1956, p.147; W.J. Linton, *To the Future*, London: 1848, p.97

Appendix A: Thomas Cooper's Hymns and Sonnets

HYMNS FOR CHARTIST CAMP-MEETINGS

I.-L.M.

God of the earth, and sea, and sky,
To thee thy mournful children cry!
Didst thou the blue that bends o'er all
Spread for a general funeral pall?

Sadness and gloom pervade the land;
Death—famine,—glare, on either hand!—
Didst thou plant earth upon the wave
Only to form one general grave?

Father ! why didst thou form the flowers?
They blossom not for us, or ours!
Why didst thou clothe the fields with corn?
Robbers from us our share have torn.

The ancients of our wretched race
Told of thy sovereign power and grace
That in the sea their fees o'erthrew—
Great Father! is the record true?

Art thou the same who, from all time,
O'er every sea, through every clime,—
The stained oppressor's guilty head
Hath visited with vengeance dread?

To us, -the wretched and the poor,
Whom rich men drive from door to door,—
To us, then, make thy goodness known,
And we thy lofty name will own.

Father! our frames are sinking fast!—
Hast thou our names behind thee cast?
Our sinless babes with hunger die!
Our hearts are hardening!—hear our cry!

Appear as in the ancient days;
 Deliver us from our foes! –and praise
 Shall from our hearts to thee ascend–
 To God, our FATHER and our friend!

11, Church Gate, Leicester, July 5th, 1842

III.-7's

God of power! – is it true–
" We are many, they are few !"
 Why, then, drag we still the chain?–
 Better to be with the slain!

Better with the noble band–
 Martyrs of our father-land!–
 Each, his blood an offering gave,
 Rather than exist – a slave.

Better like brave Hampden die,
 With the sword upon our thigh!–
 Better like great Sydney, fall,
 Bold and blithe, at freedom's call.

Widowed wives in Bastille cell–
 Patriots in the prison-hell!
 Spies to watch our ev'ry word–
 Hirelings ready with the sword.

Tyrants's laws grow worse and worse!
 Shall we wear our children's curse?
 Shall we see them droop and dies,–
 Sinless babes, –in slavery.

Shall we bear our tyrants' yoke?
 Can it not with ease be broke?–
 Peal it to the vaulted blue–
" We are many, they are few!"

11 Church Gate, Leicester, July 12th, 1842

CHARTIST HYMNS

I.- C.M.

O Thou who didst create us all,
 With wonder-working skill—
 Say, do the priests who on us call,
 Obey they sovereign will?

While telling how the Saviour heal'd
 The deaf, the dumb, the blind—
 They strive to keep for ever seal'd
 The free born powers of mind!

While telling how the Saviour toil'd
 Among the humble poor—
 They scorn the widow and her child,
 And on them close the door!

While telling how the Saviour fed
 The multitudes of old—
 They rob us of our daily bread,
 And starve our babes for gold!

Be far from us, O Lord, such guile!
 Let none of us, e'er seem
 To honour Christ — yet all the while,
 Our words be like a dream.

Let every heart like Jesu's move—
 Like Jesu's bosom glow!
 That while we *say* we goodness love,
 Our lives may *prove* we do.

11 Church Gate, Leicester

SONNETS ON THE DEATH OF ALLEN DAVENPORT

By a Brother Bard and Shoemaker

GLORY! O Glory to the truly great,
 Who when death comes, can die as all should die;
 A conscience pure—their crowning victory!
 And none who knew bestowing blame or hate:
 These are they who deserve our homage high,
 Heroes—how low so e'er have been their state—
 On whom the best encomiums should await,
 So noble 'tis to die right manfully!
 And like a MAN has Davenport not died?
 Some kind friends min'string to his last few needs,
 And he so calm—so inward fortified—
 His last thread drawn—his labour gone through quite—
 While the fine finish all the past exceeds,
 For nothing yet appears to cause the least affright.

Yes he, of whom I speak, my humble friend,
 A poet, too, philosopher—and more;
 Thus to the last courageously him bore,
 And made the honest always to be his end.
 What he had thought, and taught of, heretofore,
 Was now his turn to practice—to commend
 By's own example. "See! if you'll attend."
 So might he say, "I'll go the road before!"
 And now they'll take him where he wished to be—
 Even by to-morrow's mid-day, where the flowers
 Will grow, as comes the Spring time, lovingly,
 And charming all, who wandering near, may know
 The dust imprisoned there, had once the power—
 Mute as it is—the boldest truths to show.

Northern Star, December 5, 1846

Appendix B: Ernest Jones's poems 1846-1848

The following poems are selected from Ernest Jones, *Chartist Songs and Fugitive Pieces*: 1848.

THE BETTER HOPE

A child of the hard-hearted world was I,
And a worldling callous of heart,
And eager to play—with the thoughtless and gay,
As the lightest and gayest, a part.

With a rich old name, and a passionate thought,
The brightest or darkest to span;
But a struggle to fight—for my natural right,
Of a place in the homes of man.

My father's house, in the lordly square,
Was cold in its solemn state,
And the sculptures rare—that the old walls bear,
Looked down with a quiet hate.

My father's hall was a dark old spot,
With a dark old wood around,
And large quiet streams—like watery dreams,
On the verge of a haunted ground.

And the dwellers were filled in that solemn place,
With the trance of a sullen pride:
For the scutcheoned grace—of a titled race,
Is the armour the heart to hide.

Oh ! The eye sees but half, through a blazoned glass,
The smile of the sunshiny earth;
And a laugh cannot pass—through a marbly mass,
But it loses the pulse of its mirth.

And I thought: there beyond in the broad, laughing world,
Men are happy in life's holiday!
And I passed one and all—through each old-fashioned hall,
And wandered away and away!

The trees, they shrunk back—on my venturous track,
Old trees that my childhood had seen ;
And the mansion looked dun—in the light of the sun,
Like a grave with its long grasses between.

And still, as I wandered past hamlet and town,
I listened for laughter and song;

But man with a frown cast humanity down,
And tyranny gloried in wrong.

Alas! for the change of what might have been fair,
And the gloom of what should have been bright!
The wind weltered by—like one great swelling sigh,
And the noonday was darker than night.

For a giant had risen, all grisly and grim,
With his huge limbs, loud, clattering and vast,
And he breathed his steam-breath—through long channels of death,
Till the soul itself dried on the blast.

And fibre and flesh he bound on a rack,
Flame girt on a factory-floor;
And the ghastly steel corse—plied its horrible force,
Still tearing the hearts of the poor.

Like a wine press for mammon to form a gold-draught,
It squeezed their best blood through its fangs;
And he quaffed at one breath—the quick vintage of death,
While it foamed with humanity's pangs.

Oh! Then I looked back for my cold quiet home,
As the hell-bound looks back for the grave;
But I heard my soul cry—who but cowards can fly,
While a tyrant yet tramples a slave?

Then I bound on my armour to face the rough world,
And I'm going to march with the rest,
Against tyrants to fight—for the sake of the right,
And, if baffled, to fall with the rest.

OUR SUMMONS

Men of the honest heart,
Men of the stalwart hand,
Men willing to obey,
Thence able to command!

Men of the rights withheld,
Slaves of the power abused,
Machines, cast to neglect
When your freshness has been used !

Ye labourers in the vineyard!
We call you to your toil ;
Though bleak may be the furrows
The seed is in the soil!

'Tis not to raise a palace,
Where Royalty may dwell,—
Nor build for broken hearts
The petty parish-hell;

'Tis not to turn the engine
'Tis not the field to till,
That, for the meed *you* gain,
Might be a desert still;

'Tis not to dig the grave
Where the dying miner delves;
'Tis not to work for *others*,
But to labour for *yourselves*.

And nobler coin will pay you,
Than kings did e'er award
To the men they hired to murder
The brothers they should guard.

No glitt'ring stars of knighthood
Shall soil your simple vest:
But yours the star of honour—
Brave heart in honest breast.

No changing Norman titles,
To hide your English name:
But better the one of *freeman*,
And the blazoning of fame.

Up ! Labourers in the vineyard!
Prepare ye for the toil!
For the sun shines on the furrows,
And the seed is in the soil.

OUR RALLY.

My countrymen! why languish
Like outcasts of the earth,
And drown in tears of anguish
The glory of your birth?
Ye were a freeborn people,
And heroes of your race:
The dead—*they* are our freemen—
The living—our disgrace.

You bend beneath your fetters,
 You fear your foes to spurn:
 March ! when you meet your betters
 'Tis time enough to turn.
 Undam the tide of freedom!
 Your hearts its godlike source;
 Faith, Honour, Right and Glory,
 The currents of its course.

And were it death awaits ye,
 On ! Death is liberty.
 Then quails the power that hates ye,
 When freemen dare to die.
 He shall not be a Briton,
 Who brooks to be a slave:—
 An alien to the country,
 And a mockery to the brave.

Down with the cup, untasted!
 Its draught is not for thee:
 Its generous strength were wasted
 On all, but on the free—
 Turn from the altar, bondsman!
 Nor touch a British bride.
 What ? Wouldst thou bear her blushing
 For thee, at thine own side!

Back from the Church-door, Craven;
 The great dead sleep beneath,
 And liberty is graven
 On every sculptured wreath!
 For whom shall lips of beauty,
 And history's glories be?
 For whom the pledge of friendship?
 For *the Free! the Free! the Free!*

OUR WARNING.

Ye lords of golden argosies,
 And prelate, prince and peer!
 And Members all of Parliament,
 In rich St. Stephens—*hear!*

We are gathering up through England,
 All the bravest and the best,
 From the heather-hills of Scotland
 To the green Isle of the West.

From the corn fields and the factory,
 To the coal-belt's hollow zone;
 From the cellars of the city,
 To the mountain's quarried stone!

We want no couriers golden
 And ye no bayonets need,
 If tales of ages olden
 Arightly ye will read.

'Tis justice, that ensureth
 To statutes, they shall last,
 And liberty endureth
 When tyrannies have passed.

We seek to injure no man;
 We ask but for our right;
 We hold out to the foeman
 The hand that he would smite!

And, if ye mean it truly,
 The storm may yet be laid,
 And we will aid you duly,
 As brothers brothers aid.

But, if ye falsely play us,
 And if ye but possess
 The poor Daring to betray us,
 Not the courage to redress

Then—your armies shall be scattered,
 If at us their steel be thrust,—
 And your fortresses be battered,
 Like atoms, in the dust!

And the anger of the nation
 Across the land shall sweep,
 Like a mighty devastation
 Of the winds upon the deep.

OUR DESTINY.

Labour! Labour! Labour!—Toil! Toil! Toil!
 With the wearing of the bone and the drowning of the mind,
 Sink, like shrivelled parchment, in the flesh devouring soil!
 Pass away unheeded, like the waving of the wind!

Be the living record of a tyrant's bloody fame;
 From the trodden pathway for a conqueror's career;
 Give your breath, ye millions ! to elevate his name,
 And die !—when ye have shouted it, till centuries shall hear.

By right divine we rule ye.—God made ye but for us!—
 Thus cry the lords of nations to the slaves whom they subdue,
 Unclasp God's book of nature: Its writings read not thus.
 Hear! Trampers on the many!—Hear! Benders to the few!

God gave us hearts of ardour,—God gave us noble forms,
 And God has poured around us his paradise of light!
 Has he bade us sow the sunshine, and only reap his storms?
 Created us in glory, to pass away in night?

No ! say the sunny heavens, that smile on all alike;
 The waves, that upbear navies, yet hold them in their thrall;
 No ! shouts the dreadful thunder, that teaches us to strike
 The proud, for *one* usurping, what the Godhead meant for *all*.

No! No!—we cry, united by our sufferings' mighty length,—
 Ye—Ye have ruled for ages—now *we* will rule as well;
 No! No!—we cry, triumphant in our right's resistless strength,
 We—we will share your heaven—or ye shall share our hell.

THE TWO RACES.— PART I.

THE OLD.

Up ye gentlemen of England!
 Brace armour to the breast!
 Where are you now, North and South?
 Where are you, East and West?

Up Gentlemen of England!
 Ride up from tower and hall,
 Ye Peers of the Plantagenet,
 And conquerors of the Gaul.

Ye sons of Saxon Chivalry,
 And hospitable state;
 Those champions of old liberty,
 When kings had grown too great.

Who bearded York and Lancaster,
 And John on Runnymede;
 Who tamed the tyrant's tyranny,
 And soothed the people's need.

<p>LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSIT Aldham Roberts L.R.C. TEL 0151 231 3701/3634</p>

Who welcomed honest poverty
 To shelter and to feast,—
 And broke on his own infamy
 The crozier of the Priest.

Now mount your high-blood-chargers,
 And furbish up your mail,
 And let your proudest summons
 Go gathering on the gale!

For nobler work's awaiting,
 Than Tournament and tilt:
 To give its rights to Labour,
 And punish purse-proud guilt.

Arise ! If ye are nobles
 In nature as in name:
 There's misery to banish!
 There's tyranny to tame.

The Lords of Trade are stirring
 With their treasures far and nigh;
 They are trampling on the lowly,
 They are spurning on the high.

With weights of gold and silver,
 They are crushing spirits fast!
 Now, who shall be the foremost
 To break the chains they cast.

Now, gentlemen of England!
 Where are ye, one and all?
 Ye Peers of the Plantagenet,
 And conquerors of the Gaul.

THE TWO RACES.—PART II.

THE NEW.

Go ! Seek them in pale Fashion's haunts
 Where rustling silk is sheen ;
 Or lolling with the courtesan,
 Behind the painted scene.

Not wooers of an English maid,
 By deeds of honour done :
 But kneeling at the shameless feet

Of lust that wealth has won.

Not hunting cheery forests through
In chase of deer or fox:
But pacing Bond street or Pall-mall,
Or sconced in opera box.

Not leading on their yeomen bold,
For hearth and home fight:
But languid exquisites by day,
And ruffians at night.

Not bidding in their father's halls
The general welcome swell:
But pale, and thin, and fevered waifs,
That crowd the rattling hell.

Not righting innocence betrayed,
Like gallant knights and true:
But lurers of the village-maid,
That scorn what they undo.

Then, wrecked by premature excess
By ransacked pleasures cloyed,
They seek on banks of foreign streams
The health they have destroyed.

No champions of the nation!
No men of better kind!
But a worn-out generation
In body and in mind.

They've buried all their manhood
In silk, and plume, and gem:
They look for strength from *us*,
Not we for strength from *them*!

Tho' still some fever-flashes
Of former power are seen,
And still an old pulse dashes,
But few and far between;

Like echoes, that remind us
While some faintly fleeting o'er,
Of some old gallant ditty,
That men can sing no more.

But another strain is sounding,
In music fresh and clear,
And the nations' hearts are bounding

That glorious psalm to hear!

It tells : a race has risen
Of more than knightly worth,
Forth-breaking from its prison
In the lowlands of the earth;

And not by lance or sabre
These nobles hold their lands,
But by the right of Labour,
And the work of honest hands

And not for Crown or Crozier
They till the sacred sod,
But the liege-lord of their holding
Is the Lord of nature—God !

LABOUR'S HISTORY.

Beneath the leaf-screaned vault of heaven
Lay a child in careless sleep,
Amid the fair land, God had given
As his own to till and reap.

From afar three Outlaws came;
Each seemed to each of kindred guise,
For each one thought—felt—hoped the same:
Upon the fall of man to rise!

The first one wore a golden crown;
The second raised a mystic sign,
And darkened, with a priestly frown,
The faith that *might* have been—divine!

The third flashed forth his flaming blade,
And reeked of blood and sulphury strife;
He gloried in his horrid trade—
A hireling, taking human life!

They bound the child, in slumber's hour,
With chains of force, and fraud, and craft,—
And, round the victim of their power,
King—Priest,—and *Soldier* stood and laughed.

Then centuries raised from time's dark womb
A bloated form, in cunning bold:
The gold-king of the mine and loom,
Who tramples all that bows to gold.

On feudal power denouncing hate,
 He challenged it the strife to bide,—
 For money bought the church and state,
 And money deadened martial pride.

Before their battle they arrayed
 Each sought the slave and promised fair—
 And those, who conquered through his aid,
 Tightened his claims and—left him there!

But now the child has grown a man,
 Thinking, reasoning, strong and bold,—
 And they, who that false game began,
 Are withered, feeble, failing, old!

And, lo! those chains of Priests and kings
 As grows the frame, expanding under,
 Those cankered, miserable things!
 Burst like rotten threads asunder.

Rise then, strong self-liberator!
 Hurl to earth the weak oppressor!
 Scorn the aid of faction's traitor!
 Be thyself they wrongs' redressor!

Kings have cheated—Priests have lied—
 Break the sword on Slavery's knee,
 And become, in manhood's pride,
 That, which God intended,—FREE!

A CHARTIST CHORUS.

Go! Cotton lords ! and Corn lords, go!
 Go! live on loom and acre ;
 But let be seen—some law between
 The giver and the taker.

Go! Treasure well your stolen store
 With crown, and cross, and sabre,
 Despite you all—we'll break our thrall
 And have our land and labour!

You forge no more—you fold no more
 Your cankering chains about us;
 We heed you not—We need you not,
 But you can't do without us.

You've lagged too long, the tide has turned
 Your helmsman all are knavish,
 And now we'll be—as bold and free,
 As we've been tame and slavish.

Our Lives are not your sheaves to glean
 Our Rights your bales to barter!
 Give all their own—from cot to throne,
 But ours shall be—THE CHARTER

BLACKSTONE EDGE ;

OR THE 2ND OF AUGUST, 1846.
 AIR "*The Battle of Hohenlinden.*"

O'er plains and cities far away;
 All lorn and lost the morning lay,
 When sunk the sun, at break of day,
 In smoke of mill and factory.

But waved the wind on *Blackstone*-height
 A standard of the broad sunlight,
 And sung that morn with trumpet-might,
 A sounding song of liberty!

And grew the glorious music higher,
 When pouring with his heart on fire,
 Old *Yorkshire* came with *Lancashire*
 And all his noblest chivalry:

The men who *give*—not those who *take*!
 The hands that bless—yet hearts that break,—
 Those toilers for their foemen's sake!
 Old England's true nobility!

So great a host hath never met,
 For truth shall be their bayonet,
 Whose bloodless thrusts shall scatter yet
 The force of false finality.

Though hunger stamped each forehead spare,
 And eyes were dim with factory-glare,
 Loud swelled the nation's battle-prayer,
 Of: Death to class-monopoly!

Then every eye grew keen and bright,
 And every pulse was dancing light,

For every heart had felt the might
Of truth, presaging victory.

And up to Heaven the descant ran,
With no cold roof betwixt God and man,
To dash back from its frowning span
A church-prayer's listless mockery.

Then distant cities quaked to hear,
When rolled from that high hill the cheer
Of: Hope to slaves! To tyrants fear!
And God and Man, for liberty!

THE COMING DAY.

The midnight hour is passing—The sunrise is at hand,
The watchers on the mountain tops are looking o'er the land.
The world is all expectant for the first grey streak of light,
Where morning's gentlest breath shall break the mighty walls of night;
Then through that rampart's riven path what glorious rays shall pour,
When all its fiery lances rush in gold torrents o'er.
One little cloud of all that mass need but be forced away.
And night's old palsied hand no more can stem the march of day.
Thus faction over England broods, and thus shall freedom rise,
Down-scattering with her mighty hand old mouldering tyrannies.
Needs but one timeworn prejudice be given to the wind.
And soon successive truths will pass the gateway of the mind;
For fallacy is ever placed upon perdition's brink,
And sinks to ground beneath her feet, *when men begin to think.*
Oh! soon across the darkened earth that glorious morn will rise,
That takes the shadow from the heart, the dew-drop from the eyes,
Then man shall cease for aye to bend unto each sceptred clod,
The knee that God made pliant, but to bend unto a God;
Then leading with a father's sway our mighty brotherhood,
By "right divine," co-equally, the *wise* shall guide the *good*—
And prouder pomps be theirs than swell a vain, imperial state,
More safe their open threshold prove, than tyrants' sentried gate.
Who dares assail—their power, must scale—a wall that God has wrought,
A rampart-wall of honest hearts, manned by one holy thought
No need of scarlet grenadiers to guard them where they dwell,
For 'tis the people's self becomes their glorious citadel.
These are the throneless kings that lead the chainless nations on,
The mighty dynasts who have reigned like TELL and WASHINGTON.
No need to guide—suspicious pride—of satellite or spy.
But over every man shall watch the searching public eye.
Then force, and fraud, its demon-twin, together fall and cease,
And tyranny's war-glory dies beneath the feet of Peace,—
While settling down through priestish graves, 'mid mosses grim and gray,
Dim Superstition buries these, and sighs, and sinks away.

Then Fear shall aye be banished hence, and Love resume its place,
 And Earth become one countryand man one household race.
 And God, *a household God*, who dwells in every home and heart,
 Not sought alone in piles of stone—encaged by monkish art!
 No mummer's masque—no leave to ask—no tithe or tax to pay,
 That man may have the privilege unto his God to pray.
 Now, nations! be no laggards.—Now, leaders! take your stand,
 The birds of hope are singing—for morning is at hand.
 Look, watchers on the mountains ! lest it take you by surprise,
 For preparation is the spell that summons victories.

ONWARD AND UPWARD.

Right onward the river is rolling,
 Its fountains are pulsing below,
 And tis not in human controlling
 To turn but a wave of its flow!

Right onward the freeman may ride it,
 And speed in the light of its course;
 For faction no more can divide it,
 Nor dam it by cunning or force.

Right upward the oak tree is growing,
 Forth-waving it leaves in the sun,
 And deep in the green earth is sowing
 The seed of a forest to come!

Right upward are striving the nations
 With high-throned corruption to cope,
 Preparing for new generations
 This earth for the harvest of hope.

Right onward the breezes are blowing
 The rise of the forest and wave:
 Right onward the great thoughts are going,
 Upkindling the hearts of the brave.

Right upward the Eagle is winging,—
 (Leaves serpents to crawl on the sod!)
 Right upward the spirit is springing
 From priestcraft—to nature and God!

Appendix B: Ernest Jones' Prison Poems

The following poems are selected from Ernest Jones's, *Notes to the People*, vol. I, 1851.

BONNIVARD.

To Chillon's donjon damp and deep,
Where wild waves mount eternal guard,
Freedom's vigil long to keep,
They dragged our faithful Bonnivard.

Within their rocky fortress held,
They thought to crush that captive lone !
That captive left their rock, unquelled,
Altho' his foot had worn the stone.

They hoped his gallant heart to slay,
And o'er it bound their chain accurst ;
'Twas not his gallant heart gave way—
It was the chain that broke the first.

O'er Chillon's donjon damp and deep,
Where wild waves mount eternal guard,
Oblivion's ivied fingers creep,—
But all the world loves Bonnivard.

July, 1848.

A PRISONER'S NIGHT-THOUGHT

My life is but a toil of many woes,
And keen excitement, wearing to the core;
And fervently I hope an hour's repose,
My duty done, and all my warfare o'er.

Loud shouts have beaten on my tingling brain;
Lone prisons thrilled the fevered thread of life;
The trophies perish—but the wrecks remain!
And burning scars survive the dizzy strife.

Oh! 'tis a dreadful war, for *one* to wage,
Against deep-rooted prejudice and power;

Crush, in one life, the seeds of many an age,
And blast black centuries in a single hour!

Who dares it, throws his life into the scale,—
Redemption's voluntary sacrifice:
His hope—to be a martyr, should he fail,
Or, at the best, to conquer—as he dies !

August, 1848.

HOPE

Gate!— that never wholly closes,
Opening yet so oft in vain!
Garden ! full of thorny roses!
Roses fall— and thorns remain.

Wayward lamp! with flickering lustre
Shining far or shining near;
Seldom words of truth revealing—
Ever shewing words of cheer.

Promise breaker! yet unfailing!
Faithless flatterer! comrade true!
Only friend, when traitor proven,
Whom we always trust anew.

Courtier strange! whom Triumph frighteth!
Flying far from Pleasure's eye!
Who by sorrow's side alighteth
When all else are passing by.

Syren-singer! ever chanting
Ditties new to burdens old;
Precious stone! the sages sought for,
Turning everything to gold!

True Philosopher! imparting
Comfort rich to spirits pained:
Chider of proud triumph's madness,
Pointing to the unattained!

Timid Warrior! Doubt, arising,
Scares thee with the slightest breath:

Matchless chief ! who, Fear despising,
Tramples on the dart of Death!

O'er the grave, past Time's pursuing,
For thy flashing glory streams!
Too unswerving—too resplendent
For a child of idle dreams!

Still, Life's fitful vigil keeping,
Feed the flame, and trim the light!
Hope's the lamp I'll take for sleeping
When I wish the world good-night!

October, 1848.

PRISON BARS

Ye scowling prison bars
That compass me about,
I'll forge ye into armour
To face the world without.

Bold Aspiration's furnace
Shall fuse ye with its heat,
And stern Resolve shall fashion
With steady iron beat.

Experience' solid anvil
The burning mass shall hold ;
And Patience' bony fingers
Each groove exactly mould.

Then with my modern armour
Above my ancient scars,
I'll march upon my foemen
And strike with prison bars.

November, 1848.

PRISON FANCIES.

Composed when confined in a solitary cell, on bread and water, without books or writing materials, May 1849.

Troublesome fancies beset me
 Sometimes as I sit in my cell,
 That comrades and friends may forget me,
 And foes may remember too well.

That plans which I though well digested
 May prove to be bubbles of air;
 And hopes when they come to be tested,
 May turn to the seed of despair.

But tho' I may doubt all beside me,
 And anchor and cable may part,
 Whatever—whatever betide me,
 Forbid me to doubt my own heart!

For sickness may wreck a brave spirit,
 And time wear the brain to a shade;
 And dastardly age disinherit
 Creations that manhood has made.

But, God ! let me ne'er cease to cherish
 The truths I so fondly have held!
 Far sooner, at once let me perish,
 Ere firmness and courage are quelled.

Tho' my head in the dust may be lying,
 And bad men exult o'er my fall,
 I shall smile at them—smile at them dying :
 The Right is the Right, after all!

THE MARINER'S COMPASS.

A mariner, I, on a stormy sea
 By a wond'rous compass steering ;
 My path 'mid the rocks and the shoals must be,
 And the windy waves careering.

But oft, when wisely I'd pilot thro'
 Where the opposite eddies whelm,

My arm grows weak, and the ship, untrue,
Refuses to answer the helm.

And oft, when heav'n is calm and bright,
A strong current, driving below,
Forces, reluctant, my barque so slight,
To glide where the many go!

And, often, my lamp dies out in the dark,
As I sleep on the easy well;
Till I fail to distinguish the signs that mark
The poles of Heaven and Hell!

'Tis thence, in the perilous time I seek
A Pilot my guide to be,
O'er a sea so rude—for a ship so weak,
To the port of Eternity.

I sought him afar—but I sought him in vain
While I fathomed East, South, North, and West;
For he guides from the throne of a right-thinking brain,
The rudder, that beats in the breast.

May 10, 1849.

THE QUIET HOME.

Written in the Prison Infirmary, February, 1850.

To the quiet land I'm steering;
Steering ever, day and night;
A sailor—wreck unfearing—
In the life-boat frail and slight.

No polar compass guides me,
On whatever course I stand
Assured to find my haven
When I least expect the land.

Nor sail, nor oar, nor engine
I need to make my way;
For storms cannot impede me,
And calms cannot delay.

Oh ! the bells above the harbour
 Will sound me solemn cheers!
 An exile home-returning
 From his wayfare of long years.

And in that quiet country
 I own a quiet home;
 'Tis built of quarried marble,
 With a heavy leaden dome.

My banquet hall is narrow,
 But 'tis line with arras light;
 With an oaken couch to lie on
 In a garment waxy white.

And though the door be fastened
 My guests will find their way
 In numbers unexhausted,
 And, uninvited, stay.

And yet my best, ungrudging,
 Before them shall be set;
 They'll feed upon my substance,
 But to thank their host forget.

And, when their fill they've eaten,
 One by one they'll drop away;
 And my stony house shall moulder
 With a gradual, still decay.

And golden wheat and roses
 Shall grow above the spot;
 But my children's children, haply,
 Shall pass and know it not.

EASTER HYMN.

Crucified, crucified every morn;
 Beaten and scourged, and crowned with thorn;
 Scorned and spat on, and drenched with gall;
 Brothers ! how long shall we bear their thrall?
Chorus : Mary and Magdalen, Peter and John.
 Hear ye the question—and bear it on.

Earthquake revelled, and darkness fell,
 To shew 'twas the time of the Kings of Hell!
 But the veil is rent they hung so high
 To hide their sins from the People's eye.

Chorus : Mary and Magdalen, Peter and John.
 Hear ye the tidings—and bear them on.

Like royal robes on the King of Jews,
 We 're mocked with rights that we may not use—
 'Tis the people so long have been crucified,
 But the thieves are still wanting on either side.

Chorus : Mary and Magdalen, Peter and John.
 Swell the sad burden—and bear it on.

Blood and water ! aye, blood and tears!
 Track our path down the stream of years;
 Our limbs they spare—our hearts they break:
 For they need the former their gold to make.

Chorus : Mary and Magdalen, Peter and John.
 Hear ye the warning—and bear it on.

A Sabbath shall come, but not of rest !
 When the rich shall be punished—the poor redressed;
 And from hamlet to hamlet, from town to town,
 The church bells shall ring till the proud fall down.

Chorus : Mary and Magdalen, Peter and John.
 Give ye the signal—and bear it on.

The Pharisees revel o'er manor and loom:
 We'll blow them a blast on the trump of doom;
 It shall raise the dead nations from land to land;
 For the resurrection is nigh at hand!

Chorus : Mary and Magdalen, Peter and John.
 Hear the glad tidings—and bear them on.

Easter, 1850.

HYMN FOR ASCENSION-DAY.

IN THE FUTURE.

Freedom is risen—
 Freedom is risen;
 Freedom is risen to-day !
 She burst from prison—
 She burst from prison;
 She broke from her gaolers away.

“ When was she born?
 “ How was she nursed?
 “ Where was her cradle laid?”
 In want and scorn,
 Reviled and cursed,
 ’Mid the ranks of toil and trade.

“ And hath she gone
 “ On her holy-morn,
 Nor staid for the long work-day?”
 From heaven she came,
 On earth to remain,
 And bide with her sons alway.

“ Did she break the grave,
 “ Our souls to save,
 “ And leave our bodies in hell?”
 To save us alive,
 If we will strive
 Body and soul as well.

“ Then what must we do
 “ To prove us true,
 “ And what is the law she gave?”
 Never fulfill
 A tyrant’s will,
 Nor willingly live a slave!

“ Then this we’ll do
 “ To prove us true,
 “ And follow the law she gave :
 “ Never fulfill
 “ A tyrant’s will,
 “ Nor willingly live a slave!”

Ascension-day, 1850.

HYMN FOR LAMMAS-DAY.

Sharpen the sickle, the fields are white;
 'Tis the time of the harvest at last.
 Reapers, be up with the morning light,
 Ere the blush of its youth be past.
 Why stand on the highway and lounge at the gate,
 With a summer day's work to perform?
 If you wait for the hiring 'tis long you may wait—
 Till the hour of the night and the storm.

Sharpen the sickle ; how proud they stand,
 In the pomp of their golden grain!
 But, I'm thinking, ere noon 'neath the sweep of my hand
 How many will lie on the plain.
 Though the ditch be wide, the fence be high,
 There's a spirit to carry us o'er;
 For God never meant his people to die,
 In sight of so rich a store.

Sharpen the sickle ; how full are the ears!
 While our children are crying for bread;
 And the field has been watered with orphans' tears,
 And enriched with their fathers dead.
 And hopes that are buried, and hearts that broke,
 Lie deep in the treasuring sod:
 Then sweep down the grain with a thunder-stroke,
 In the name of humanity's God!

July, 1850.

Appendix D: A selection of W.J. Linton's poems from, *The National*, *The Cause of the People*, *The English Republic*, and *Prose and Verse*.

HYMNS FOR THE UNENFRANCHISED.

No. I.

Who is the Patriot, who is he,
When slaves are struggling to be free,
Freedom's best-beloved, may claim
To bear her holiest Oriflamb?

He who joineth hands with Power,
When the anarch would devour
Trampled Right insurgent?—He
Is no friend of Liberty.

He who claimeth kin with Right
Perfumed or in ermine dight,
Knowing not the "rabble—He
Hateth Truth and liberty.

Who "for Truth's sake" would embrace
A Lie, who seeks fit time and place
To traffic with his birthright?— We
Follow not Expediency.

He who through distress and scorn
Freedom's Cross hath grandly borne,
The Uncompromising,—he shall be
The banner-man of Liberty.

Though he wear no title-brand
Though he own no stolen land,
Prouder as an upright man
Than to crawl in Fashion's van,
Though his bearing be uncouth,
Though his zeal be rode as troth,
Though he lieth never—He
Shall lead the Bond to victory.

The National, p.51

No. III.

WHO is the traitor, worse than Slave,
 Who would build his house upon Freedom's grave;
 Selling his own and his children's good
 For the shame of a ruffian's gratitude?
 Let him be character'd, that We
 May bury him deep in infamy!—

He, worn to the heart with toil,
 Heaping the Property-tyrant's spoil,
 Who sneaketh from Freedom's gathering,
 For fear of a few hours' suffering:—
 Coward and Traitor!—Let him be!
 There is many a sorrier villainy!

Who for the sake of a thriving trade,
 Truth in the balance of Fraud hath weigh'd;
 Who asketh Liberty's market-price;
 Whose life is a grovelling Artifice:
 The man of the smile and the supple knee:—
 Is there a miscreant worse than he?

One-the Vilest, a Thing "well-bred,"
 Fortune's minion, the falsehood-fed,
 Whose virtue playeth the hypocrite
 Who grieveth that Truth is not polite
 And doubteth of God's Gentility:—
 Dastard! Liar! When thou art free,
 Freedom shall wear thy livery!

The National, p.107

No. V

ARISE! the linked Error must be broken:
 Hasten to atone the Past's long agonies!
 The grey world from its old-time dream hath woken—
 The old entanglement of injuries.
 Like a shamed libertine, whose penitence
 O'erclimbeth pledges, Life's new energies
 Circle our Home with giant confidence:—
 Watchers of holiest liberty arise!

Liberty through all forms thy thought is gliding,
 Like God's Word through the Infinite Mystery;
 Too long have tyrants and their slaves been hiding
 The lorn world's peace in wrongful anarchy:
 Amid the world-old tempest unalarm'd
 Thou hear'st the panic-stricken nations' cries:
 "Be still!"—the accustom'd Tyranny is calm'd:—

Watchers of equal Liberty, arise!

Claim we our right of equal interference—
 The natural right of all humanity—
 In the common rule! No longer shall Expedience
 Vex our unheal'd griefs with its sophistry.
 No longer shall the Nation's Will be mute,
 Tongue-fetter'd by unjust monopolies;
 The tree of Liberty must bear us fruit:—
 Hereditary Bondmen, now arise!

Arise, the truth of Love to vindicate!
 Rouse ye, the heart-worn fetters to unbind!
 Rouse ye, to crush all ills that militate
 Against the common-weal of humankind!
 In the name of the Old martyrs memory-tomb'd,
 For the sake of home and living sympathies
 Even for that peace your own hopes have foredoom'd,
 Watchers of human Liberty, arise!

The National, p.177

No. XI.

WHO is the Slave?—Though life-long chains,
 And a dungeon atmosphere of pains
 And toil and shame and ceaseless stir—
 The yoke of another's monstrous gains—
 Though these proclaim him prisoner;
 He is no slave: his unconquer'd thought
 Trampleth his "master" underfoot.

He is a slave-whose mind is made
 The panderer of the man of trade;
 Writing that which he durst not speak,
 Under a gilded Falsehoods shade,
 With hard, cold eye, and sallow cheek:
 Stabbing Truth in the back with a nameless sneer;
 Burying Hope with words of fear.

He is a slave-whose spirit wears
 The fettering of another's fears;
 Who of another's conscience asks
 His ransom from remorseful tears,
 Leave for God to appoint mans tasks—
 Leave, lest the Fashion of Worldly Lies
 Should be outraged by God's "improprieties."

He is a slave-whose uncurb'd Wrath
 Draggeth him out of the even path;

Who of his own Contempt doth make
 A god, to stand in the place of Faith;
 Who boweth to Wrong for his folly's sake:
 Self-torturer! though the world's esteem
 Worship his thoughts:—doth he not blaspheme
 The Master of Thought, even Love? Oh! he
 Is slave to the Wretchedest poverty.

The National, p.289

THE SONG OF THE SCATTERED.

Where shall we meet our friends again?—
 The convict ship has sailed,
 Through the broken foam, to the felon's home:
 For the star o' the rebel paled.
 Welcome! although we meet to share
 The patriot's exile-pain,—
 Till the world turn round, till the unripe Care,
 Blush sunnily: no matter where,
 So that we meet again.

Where shall we meet our friends again?—
 At the storming of Old Wrong
 In the mid-day gloom, where the Holy Doom
 Shouteth its tempest song?

On the edge of the Earthquake? God is there:
 Who rendeth the winter chain,
 Who bows to the lowly his hoary hair,
 Who herdeth the wind-flowers,—He will care
 That we meet our friends again.

Where shall we meet our friends again?—
 In the home of the driven slave;
 When the labour-worn shall have buried scorn
 In the empty Savior's grave?
 To the Future, Exile!— friends are there:
 Nothing endures in vain.
 Ay! we shall meet: what matter where?
 Hoper overlooketh the night's despair,
 Welcoming Toil again.

The Cause of the People, p.32

[Another version of this poem in *Prose and Verse* vol. III, p.136, has
 'battlesong' instead of 'Tempest-song']

NEARING IT

Every minute in the night,
 Be it dark and dread,
 Is a step toward the light
 On the mountain head:
 Till our eyelids reach the dawn,
 And the fearful night is gone,
 As swift as startled fawn
 From the hunter's tread,

Every blow struck in the fight
 On a foeman's shield
 Is a promise for the Right,
 That the Wrong shall yield:
 And each determined word,
 Like some ancient hero's sword,
 Returneth to its lord
 With his hest fulfill'd.

Every step into the light,
 As the dawn-mists fly,
 The hours increase in might,
 Till the noon rides high.
 And as night's black clouds disperse
 At the sun-god's burning curse,
 So drives Oppression's hearse
 From our conquest-cry,

The English Republic, vol. I, p. 345

HONESTY

Honesty is truth in action,
 Truth made manifest in deed:
 Wisdom's weapon, life's attraction,
 Honour's ripeness, triumph's seed.

Thou dost bear God's standard golden-
 Conscience: but the flag is furl'd
 Till by Honesty unfolden
 In the vanguard of the world.

Honesty is firm expression
 Of the spirit throned within:
 Make thy life its clear confession,
 Careless who may call it sin.

The English Republic vol. II, p.148

THOUGHT, WORD, AND DEED (TO JOSEPH MAZZINI).

God thought of his creation, and t'was done:
 For in God's nature *thought, will, deed* are one.
 And he approacheth unto God most near,
 Whose thoughts in acts their true responses hear.
 Action is natural echo of true will.
 Thought is the seed, and will the secret growth
 To accomplish thought: to elaborate, fulfil,
 And realize the Idea in visible life.
 Thought is a prophecy. He puts the knife
 To his own growth, whose being ends in thought,
 Whose thought hath but the stunted growth of words.
 'Tis as if warriors, having forged their swords,
 Should dream the fight was won, that *forged* was *fought*
 I said—Whose life is but of thought and word,
 He is as one who, having forged his sword,
 Sleeps, dreaming victory won: for I was wroth,
 Seeing how thought and action are divorced
 In these dull times, stern principle enforced
 To hide in the closet. I should be most loath
 To speak or think irreverently of those—
 The Lords of Thought—whose words are warrior blows
 In the world-conflict. Yet of them the best
 Not only *spoke* but *did*: as faith had need
 Of utterance, poured forth true word as deed.
 Witness our Milton, his great heart express'd
 In his daily life! And witness thou, my Friend!
 Whose aim steps firmly on to the same heroic end.

The English Republic, vol. II, p.340.

THE SLAVE'S HYMN.

From thine everlasting home,
 Through the open gates of Doom,
 Come unto us,—to the cry
 Of our continual misery!

Speed thine advent Liberty!
 So long have we watch'd for thee,
 We have wasted till we are
 As an echo of Despair.

We have sought thee, till the tone
 Of our weary hope hath grown,
 Moss-like, o'er the earth, that stone
 Of thy sleep, Beloved One!

Wake!—as Love leaps to his bride,
Even as the Beatified
Clingeth unto Love, so we
Would embrace thee, Liberty!

Even as one who in the tomb
Seeks the shadow of his home,
Through all doubt and darkness, we
Would track thy footsteps, Liberty!

Whither hast thou wandered?
'Tis the Widow'd that is dead.
Horribly the dead earth stirs:
What are its inhabitants?

From the deep of Misery
Woes unnumber'd call to thee:
In the wormy darkness we
Wait the Saviour Liberty.
Haste! the hearth o' the world is cold;
Haste! the Titan Hope grows old;
Mute Despair cries out to thee:
Speed thy coming, Liberty!

Prose and Verse, vol. III, p.143

Appendix E: William James Linton's longer poems

Of W.J. Linton's longer poems only *The Dirge of the Nations* and the first part of *Bob Thin* have ever been reproduced before (see Kovalev's *Anthology of Chartist Literature* and Maidment's *The Poorhouse Fugitives*). The following poems, *The Jubilee of Trade* and *To The Future: The Dirge of the Nations* are from the limited edition of collected poetry *The Poorhouse Fugitives* Linton began in 1897, posthumously completed by W.P. Hopson.

THE JUBILEE OF TRADE

'Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell.'

'Gold, yellow, glittering gold.'¹

AS I lay in the shadow of Slavery,
Watching the shrieking Moments flee
From the grasp of the cold Night, damp and drear,
Like flame from a reeking sepulchre,—

[Ever the shrieking Moments fled,
Each with its agony burdened,
Heavily laden, so that they
Ever went stumbling on their way.]

As I lay on a waif of the mighty sea;
Where homeless weeds companion'd me,
[When the dull winds stir'd them to and fro,
Their clammy fingers cross'd my brow.]—

Through the drizzly fog and wilder'd crowd
The voice of a stern Commandment strode,
Bidding me quit my dreams to see
How the Spirit of Trade kept jubilee.

Through the desert of grim Death
For all things were black beneath
The hoof of Slavery, as it trod
On God's earth, eclipsing God.

Lord of Pity! let me flee!—
But that Voice of Potency
Led me on, and lighted me
The horrors of the night to see.

¹ The wording of this quotation differs slightly from the 1848 version, which has 'Gold, yellow gold' instead.

Ever where it lured me on
 Rotting human hearts were strown
 In my path; and hollow cries
 Told me of their agonies.
 In their foulness monstrous worms—
 Monster-mask'd in human form
 Wallow'd filthily, their hunger
 With repletion growing stronger

Wrecks of men, long-travail-wasted
 Tore out their own hearts and hasted
 To supply the hellish rage
 Of those worms; nor might assuage

Their own famine,— tasting nought
 Of the sacrifice they brought;
 Idol-feeding, yet unfed,
 Never priests so ministered.

Other some, more decent-guised,
 At due seasons christianized,
 Fed on living children,— they
 Coax'd their murderers' knees alway.

Children, fair and promise-full,
 Their own parents blind and dull
 Drove, like beasts, to be the food
 Of the monster multitude.

Little children, such as Christ
 Blessed, were to them as grist
 To the miller: their strong teeth
 Ground them easily to death.

Women beautiful and young,
 With lewd eyes and lolling tongue,
 Writhed upon the highway-side,
 In the dust of their own pride.

In their wombs Despair lay hidden,
 Like a foul abortion, chidden
 As a hound is, if he dare
 To stir from his accustom'd lair.

As I gazed, the Gluttonous
 In embraces venomous
 Lay with them; and still they chew'd
 Gory fragments of their food.

Over the Devourers there,
 And o'er those who victims were,
 Hung a noisome reek, the sweat
 Of their pain corruption-wet.

And the reek was speech-imbued:
 As the dawn-mists are when, dew'd
 With Spring's kisses, Earth doth lie
 Moist-eyed and voluptuously.

With a weird confused sound,
 Slowly as o'er the slimy ground
 A black slug crawleth, lamely so
 Crept the Plague-Voice to and fro.

Human words may not express
 That unclean confusedness:
 Whirl'd the thick waves, like the shout
 Of a witches' sabbath rout.

Yet at intervals was heard
 Each one taking up his word,
 Riving the din, as with a sword :
 'Glory be to Trade, our Lord!'

Ever onward as I pass'd,
 Shaking even as one aghast
 At his own conscience, my sore eyes
 Were smitten with calamities.

Till, exhausted with the woe
 Of that travel [none can know
 How worn,—I seem'd almost to be
 A portion of that misery,

Breathing the most tainting breath
 Of that universal death],
 I sank down by a little heap
 Of yellow grass, a mournful heap,
 Silently bow'd o'er One asleep.

Rest is not. The old Command,
 As one leadeth by the hand
 A little child, constrained me
 To follow the steps of Misery.

Denser grew the wretched crowd,
 'And their shout more fierce and loud:
 Their wide discord-voice did say—
 "This is Trade's high holiday!"

Like mad cattle, one and all,
 Rush'd they to the festival :
 Driving on, with reeling gait,
 Horribly intoxicate.
 From the palace, from the hut,
 From the mine [where men are shut
 As in a dark and loathly den,
 Till they know not they are men],

From the shop, from forge and loom,
 From the factory- that womb
 Of life-abortions, bank, and hell,
 Brothel, church, conventicle,

Lazar-house, and justice-hall;
 From all places where men fall
 Before the bastard Wealth with prayers
 That his leprosy be theirs;

From all corners wherein Trade
 Is owned, honour'd, and obey'd,
 Came his subjects, one and all
 Hungering for his carnival.

Slave-hawking philanthropists,
 Hooded Hate on their clench'd fists,
 With straight lip and horny cheek,
 Silver-toned, precise, and sleek;

Mowing apes in saintly guise,
 Lawn-sleeved, mitred Blasphemies,
 Ulcerous, full of bile and phlegm,
 Biting all who jostled them;

Bloody-visaged, laurel-brow'd,
 Drunk with fraud and lust and blood.
 Rapine's purchased servitors,—
 Their vile backs were housed with scars;

With dead eyes, in parchment shrouds,
 The vampires of the Law, dark clouds
 Harpy-featured,— wheresoe'er
 They come, at once that place is bare;

Journalists; with inky masks
 And poison'd javelins, empty flasks
 Slung at their backs, a pitchy smoke
 Hung around them as a cloak;

Plague-spotted anatomies,
 Laden with quack recipes,
 Jackals of slow Death,- Disease
 Sent them forth as missionaries;
 Daintily caparison'd,
 Mammon's minions, richly zoned
 By a gilded snake which had
 Gnawn their hearts out,—they with mad

And furious leapings bacchanal
 Stagger'd on, and aye did crawl
 From within them gout of blood
 With a ghastly life endow'd;

Trade's more dunghill rabblement,
 Ever cringing as they went,
 Like foul bladders wind-distent,
 Glutted with obscene content;

Statesmen, with irreverent cares
 Nestling in their hoary hairs,—
 On lame asses did they ride,
 And lolloping from side to side

Went drunkenly: so madly all
 Rode riot tow'rd the festival,
 With strange shouts of ribaldry;
 Horrible to hear and see.

With strange shrieks of ribaldry,
 Taunting their own misery,—
 Trampling over the world's graves,
 Tumbling headlong, like mad waves

He is trampled in the press
 Of that moving wilderness:
 Vain was the late-lifted hand,
 Vain the frown of old command.

Then a shout burst from the crowd :
 Seem'd all earth to cry aloud—
 "Ancient Precedent is down;
 Trade shall reign in Babylon."

Eager-eyed and breathless-hearted,
 Either way the rabble parted,
 As the chariot din drew nigh
 Of the new Trade-Monarchy.

Herald pomp rode on before,

Thundering like the ocean roar,
 Trumpeting the stable worth
 Of the traffickers of earth.

Then came heaps of merchandize,
 Surfeiting the greedy eyes
 Of the multitude; and then
 The stern array of armed men;

Heaps on heaps of merchandize,
 Borne by ghestliest Miseries,
 Painfully, as slaves may bear
 Their own funeral urns, Despair

Goading them; and then again
 Follow'd hard the armed train,
 And the pomp and clanging roar
 Of the heralds, as before.

Wrinkled Lies in royal dresses,
 Wigg'd and ermined Hollownesses,
 Bore the ensigns of the Lord
 Of the Balance and the Sword.

And then upon an iron car
 Came the God of Fraudful War,
 'Mid the whirl of myriad wheels,
 A sound as of a navy's keels.

Naked women, worn and wan,
 With their heart-strings drew him on,
 Women even with daintier skins
 Than are hid in English mines.

Aye the fiend with venom'd thong
 Drove his lewd-eyed team along,
 Through a plausive gaping throng,
 None objecting to the wrong.

He was clothed in the hide
 Of a labourer; and did ride
 Softly, for his carriage swung
 On human sinews, deftly hung.

So above the crowd rode he,
 A new-featured Trinity:
 The old triple-headed thief
 Who did hold Hell's gate in fief.

Fear and Loyalty and Trade

Are his names, by liars made
 As vizors, whereon knaves may see
 The pleasant leer of sophistry.

What is Fear but slothful Shame?
 Loyalty a coward's name
 For slavish Custom? Trade no less
 Than corruptest selfishness?

On his hand the Priest did lean:
 Like a whited tomb, obscene,
 The first blasphemer stood bewray'd,
 Even the God-father of Trade.

Following them, with saintly glance,
 Crept the vile fiend Tolerance,
 Inquisition rebaptized,
 The old brute Torture spiritualized:

Deformity, and sore Disease,
 And crippled Wretchednesses,—these,
 With myriad other forms of pain,
 Did complete the MERCHANT'S train.

To his palace him they brought;
 And in vessels noblest wrought
 Served him; the while he ate,
 Famine moan'd before his gate,

When the least was at its height,
 When the noontide of his might
 Shone in heaven, self-glorified,
 He did raise him in his pride,

And bade a herald voice be purl'd
 For his Godship through the world:
 "LET MANKIND BOW DOWN TO ME,
 THE GOLDEN-IMAGED DEITY!"

In the blasphemy of will
 Stood He up and, strong in ill,
 Spake the Word whose fearful breath
 Sold the eternal LOVE to Death.

And the Spirit of that Spell,
 Like a Gospel out of Hell,
 Grew in stature till its shade
 Over all the earth was spread.

Till his chin sank on his chest,

And his brow dropp'd on his breast,
 And his lank and weedy hair
 Drew Him earthward; till the air

Shriek'd with anguish for the sore
 Of the Pestilence He wore;
 Till the Plague which He became
 Choked itself,- and, as a flame

In its own smoke and stench, He died
 In the very fulness of his pride:-

And men were without Trade, and free
 In the Heaven of Love's wide charity.

TO THE FUTURE

1848

AGAIN the Song of Freedom through the Nations
 Leapeth triumphantly again is heard
 God's jubilant thunder ; yet again are stirr'd
 The depths of life, and living acclamations
 Echo the storm. Our want bath found its voice.

Rejoice Rejoice!
 The Day of Pentecost is fully come;
 The Comforter is in our desolate home:
 The forked lightning of the clouded sky
 Cleaveth the o'ercharged air,
 And everywhere
 Kisseth the peaks of Liberty.

Upon the Alpine brow
 The tongued flame alights. The sturdy Swiss
 Beareth aloft the beacon of the world.
 How Jesuit hopes are hurl'd
 Down the steep mountains! Melteth like the snow
 The Souderbund at Ochsenbein's command.
 Hear it, Diplomacy! again the vow
 Of Grutli is repeated; yet again
 The heirs of Winkelried have made a lane
 For Freedom, gathering in one heart the sheaf
 Of Austrian dissensions. Switzerland
 Is one. A, tyrant! to thy grief,
 The arrow of Tell, once aim'd, can never miss.

And Paris hears thy shout,

Helvetia and Parisian deeds, responding
 To the Believer's Words, rebuke our doubt.
 The fraud of Orleans hath not eaten out
 The heart of Carrel. O no more desponding!
 The seventeen years are counted. Hark the groans
 At Guizot's portal hark that vengeful cry
 Rushing through Paris, that one night's reply
 From the Barricades — "Peace! Peace!" —The very stones
 Rise up in judgement. Thou untaught of Fate,
 Thy dreaded forts are nought against a People's hate.
 O glorious People with your swift success!
 Well hast thou watch'd the planets, Arago!
 The star o' the Lowly rises. Prophecy
 Our future, Lamartine! For unto thee
 The eyes o' the world are yearning .Do no less
 Than Poet should: with statesman hand maintaining
 Thy equal course—true to thy France at home,
 True to the world abroad, the world to come,
 Whate'er the woe
 But ne'er with wrongful strife thy sword angelic staining!
 Build your Republic on the stable base
 Of Justice—which is Duty, that dares face
 A world in arms rather than shrink from Right!
 Make the true word of France a tower of might
 Against Oppression; flinch not from defence
 Even of the weakest ! your best shield shall be
 Against all calumny,
 Your innocence.
 Found your Republic on the Nation's heart:
 Securing unto every one his part
 In the harmony of life; aye keeping free
 The course of progress, aye protecting both
 The right of weakness and the right of growth.
 O ye Forerunners of the Nation!
 Pour forth your splendour as a constellation:
 Smile down our night
 With your pure starry light,
 Radiant as angel eyes to shepherd watchers.
 Lo, unto us forlorn,
 To us the labor-worn,
 To us the hungry snatchers
 O' the crumbs of Wealth,—lo, unto us is born
 New Strength: the Saviour cometh to the Poor.
 Goddess of Poverty! throw wide the door
 Of heart—deep thankfu'ness ; make clear our way,
 Thou true Aurora of the hastening Day
 Of work made worth!
 In Labour's cabin Mirth
 Weeps at thy feet, Lamenniais! Blessing thee,
 Thee and our brother—workman, Beranger.

The sun shines on the Boulevards, though clouds
 Yet linger. All along the pavements edge
 A narrow ribbon keeps the passage clear
 For the procession. No police are here.
 Nor bayonets bristling hedge:
 That narrow tricolor in place of guards,
 That and the People's care which henceforth wards
 The public order. In the Madeleine
 France who hath so much sinn'd and so much loved,
 Atones her sin in tears; yet tears of joy,
 Gemming her patriots' shrouds
 For they have fallen gloriously for France:
 The old Republican, the daring boy,
 The exile and the stranger:—brigitly glance
 Glad sunshine through the rain!
 For they have fallen gloriously for France.
 "Live the Republic!"—echo we again
 That noblest dirge! The mighty train hath moved.
 March on! march onward I' through applausive crowds,
 Housetops and streets and balconies all throng'd
 With glorious sympathy. March on! march on!
 Arm'd Populace of Paris, no more wrong'd
 By governmental fears. Lo, in your ranks
 The People's Government, on foot. March on!
 To lay your sacrifice within the shrine,
 Beneath the Column of July. Upon
 The urns of former triumph hang your thanks.
 And then emerging, as your hands entwine,
 So wreath your hearts, and raise toward the sky,
 Strong as a c'olumn'd triumph, your life_cry—
 For France and Liberty!

From Paris to Berlin —Again the Streets.
 Rise to protest again the stripling's stone
 Hath struck the giant's brow. Thy guard retreats
 Before the People: stand, bareheaded, King
 And listen to the tempest's threatening,
 Not past, but just beginning; stand and mark
 The words of the Inevitable hark!
 Two hundred dead men, passing one by one,
 Proclaim the downfall of the Prussian throne.
 Thou at the head of Germany? thou lead
 The march of German Freedom?—never freed
 Until her hydra —headed monarchy
 Have disappear'd. Lo over Frankfort gathers
 The storm whose whisper shook thee in Berlin.
 The Spirits of the Dead in the upper air
 Renew their fight for Freedom. Mark'st thou where
 Arminius heads them? Hearest thou the din

Of that old contest ever recommenced
 On the morrow of Death? O most securely fenced!
 The tempest leaps thy walls, it bursts on thee;
 The double-headed vulture droops his feathers,
 Drench'd and dejected. Austrian-Prussian Thief!
 Prometheus riseth from his agony
 And grasps thy throat with power. Shout, shout, O world!
 Vienna's Jove is hurl'd
 Out of his heaven. Our Titanic grief
 Hath rent its fetters. Metternich is gone!
 The Execrable One
 At last dethroned. O world!
 Shout joyfully!

Joy to the Future! Austria is no more.
 Our steps have trampled o'er
 The Immovable. Yet is the world in motion,
 Despite your prison-bars. Dark Spielberg ope
 Thy horrible gates. O, shatter'd Pellico
 Renew thy hope.
 It moves, Galileo!
 O weak old man! from thine own starry heaven
 Lead on the spring-tide of the mighty ocean
 Of our Italian Freedom. Bright, pale Star!
 Belio thy Beatrice through the war
 That veileth Lombardy! She holds to thee
 Her beautiful arms, thine own adored Italy.
 O Sicily, who first the chain riven!
 O Milan, echo brave of that emotion!
 O Genoa, with thy past and present glory!
 O Venice, true republican! O Rome!
 O Italy ! renew the twice-told story.
 O Italy, my home
 O, heavy—hearted, though his load is gladness,
 Thy Exile comes to thee:
 Over his prophet spirit broods the sadness,
 The shade of memory.
 Look through the clouded future, Genoese!
 Across the dreariness of those wide seas
 Between thee and thy world. Look radiantly!
 For thou shalt reach it. O, be witness these
 Warm kisses, snatches at thy hands, and sobs
 Of friends first seen—eloquent-hearted throbs
 Of thine Italia.—
 Prince of Carignan!
 We trust thee not: our life republican
 Sorts not with traitors. Spiritual Lord of Rome!
 Bow to the Master-Spirit !—The To-come
 Makes dim the past magnificence. I see
 The fires on the free Appenines; I see

The Tribune in the Capitol: I see
 The Spirits of the Gracchi;—and I hear
 The Bandieras' voice, rung through the ages clear.
 From northmost Alp to farthest Maltese coast
 Speedeth the martyr host;
 And Italy respondeth to their cry— Mazzini and Italian Unity.

Poland and Italy—twin sufferers!
 One triumph shall be yours.
 Prometheus of our modern Europe! thou,
 Chain'd on the rock of years,
 Hast not endured in vain. O martyr Nation,
 Whose fearful expiation
 Atones all, errors, the rejoicing Hours
 Bring thy Redeemer; Strength is with thee now;
 Thou art unbound.
 Even thy Galician wound
 Is heal'd. Again shall Sobieski's sword
 Bulwark us from the Cossack; yet shall be
 A Polish nation. Lo, Konarski's word
 Is pledge for future Freedom. Lelevel
 Yet shall complete his history, and tell
 Of Poland, a Republic, wise and free,
 Built for Humanity.

The cloud comes o'er the sun —My heart is sad
 Amid your paeans. They who at our hearth
 Claim'd hospitality, whose spirits had
 The power to vivify our colder earth,
 Who kept our faith warm with their fiery worth,—
 They, the sad exiles, shake me by the hand
 For the last time, each his beloved land
 Seeking in Freedom's name. No more, no more,
 The earnest glances whose magnetic flame
 Help'd to sustain our altars ! You are gone,
 Gladly or hopefully. Our triumph-tone
 Is faltering-voiced. You bore
 Our hearts upon your banners: and our own
 Droops in our feeble hands.

O friendly bands!

We will not be unworthy of your love.
 Still our dark life inherits
 Some sparks of your pure spirits.
 Soul of the lands!

Breathe on our northern ice till England move.
 Alas for our old pride!
 An empty crown, and nobles crown'd with shame,
 A selfish oligarchy fed on wrong,
 A people dwarf'd and servile; nothing strong

But hate,—not that, our banded lords deride
 The disunited : even our hopes are tame.
 O all ye Martyrs true
 What have these slaves to do
 With Europe's hopes or triumphs? what have we
 To do with Liberty?

Yet shall it be!—
 The land of Alfred, who without surcease
 Toil'd for the Future's peace,—
 The land of Wickliffe, hearsed by God's own sea
 Into eternity,—
 The land where Eliot dared a prison-doom,—
 The land of Vane and Hampden, not their tomb,
 But the high altar of their sacrifice,—
 The land of Milton, whose prophetic eyes,
 Beyond the shadows of the passing time,
 Gazed on the Future's face, with calm sublime,—
 The land of crowned Cromwell,—yet shall build
 A Home for Freedom: her high destiny
 Shall surely be fulfil'd.

Diplomacy hath fallen, no more to rise.
 The Golden-visaged with the feet of clay,
 Whom monarchs idolize,
 Even as a broken treaty vanisheth away.
 Not all the Tartar hordes,
 Nor England's feudal lords,
 Our triumph can delay:
 The triumph of the People. Thou, who fearest
 Climb to the height of faith, as clomb of old
 To Pisgah's top the Patriarch. Thou hearest
 The crash of thrones beneath insurgent Right,
 The rushing of the Nations like the might
 Of mightiest hurricanes, the thunder-shout
 Of Liberty. And now the sun bursts out;
 The clouds steam up as from a cauldron's lips;
 Their frail forms driven past thee scarce eclipse
 The distant splendor: pass they: lo, unroll'd,
 A silver map—the promised land. Behold
 The European Future; and delight
 Thy soul in what thou, contemplating, nearest!

Madrid hath sown the dragons' teeth; and Spain
 And Portugal join hands to reap the harvest.
 O Italy, how lovely, free from pain,
 Thy look divine, Madonna of the Nations!
 Forgotten Greece, how, Phidias-like, thou carvest
 New glory for thy coming generations
 Thou German Commonwealth, so wise, so grand,

All heart-beats equal for loved Fatherland
 And thou new-born Slavonic Federation.
 Growing like several flowers from one strong stem,
 Or as bright jewels in one diadem
 Thou Scandinavia, Northern Constellation!
 And thou, Republic of the Islands, free
 As thine own waves, a triple Unity
 Bound in the bond of Love, a God-like Symmetry.
 Fair as a temple with its many shrines,
 Fair as a garden in whose sweet confines
 Each flower in its own perfect bloom rejoices,
 And beautiful as song which many voices
 Pour in one stream of heavenliest harmony,
 Even so fair shall be
 Our human Future plann'd and harmonised:
 When faith is realised.
 When the regenerated lands with eager hands
 Pass the bright flame as they in turn advance
 In life's eternal dance.
 The flame of Love, of Truth and Liberty.—
 As the Greek maidens in their dance upheld
 The rapid torch, or as the stars fulfil
 Their radiant circles even from utmost eld,
 Or as the tongued flame that passeth still
 From brow to brow wherever two or three
 Are gathered together, so will we
 Cherish, dear Liberty! thy flame divine,
 Making each life thy shrine,
 Till all commingle in one central fire,
 Whose spirit shall aspire
 Even as a beacon-light for all Humanity.

THE DIRGE OF THE NATIONS

NOVEMBER, 1848.

YET the gory-headed Vulture
 Teareth the Promethean heart;
 Yet dead Hope, denied sepulture,
 Roams a weary ghost apart:
 On this side of Charon's river
 Wandering for ever, ever.
 O to be graved with Hope, to see
 The shore of our eternity!

Agonistes, as I lean'd
 On my rock, whose age was green'd
 With my sorrow's ceaseless falling,
 While the fierce winds curse-like drove

Full in my face that could not move
 For its weight of snowy hair
 And the chain of my despair,—
 Even then I heard thy calling,
 Music's Loved Disciple! thou
 Stir'dst the Etna of my brow,
 As thy presence fill'd the den
 Of my torture, Beethoven!
 Thy sublimest words were driven
 Down my thoughts precipitous,
 With the force by which are riven
 Rock-grown walls acclivitous;
 Through my spirit's winter chasms
 Burst thy song in mighty spasms,
 With a shout like cannon-thunder
 And the tramp of Nations under;
 As an army through an arch
 Tempest-span'd, thy Funeral March
 Rush'd along, Time's feeble wings
 Out-speeding with its imagings.

Vision of the fearful Now,
 Glaring through the cloven snow,
 Whence my lava thoughts are pour'd,
 Echoing thee, as word by word
 Falls the fire-shower of my verse
 Underneath the smoky hearse
 Hurrying the Present on
 To the tomb of the Unknown!
 Yet dost thou my sense controul ;
 Through the ruins of my soul
 Is thy sad procession pouring,
 And between the cannons' roaring
 Yet I hear the heavy tread
 Of the Nations with their Dead,
 And their voices call to me
 Through the mist of agony.

O weary Earth! thine eyes are wet
 With bloody tears; thou waitest yet,
 In the shade of desolation
 Where thou crouchest motionless,
 For the long-delay'd redress.
 Thou incarnate Lamentation,
 Mourning many a murder'd Nation,
 Weeping that thy children are not,
 Canst thou live and yet despair not?

O woe, woe, woe! O brief sad Spring

Of our Republic, perishing
 Even in its cradle! winter June,
 Wild hail-storm, ruining so soon
 The ripening of assured hopes!
 O woe, woe, woe! adown the slopes
 Of fraud and hate the hoary Shame
 Pusheth his victim, in the name
 Of Order, that Hypocrisy
 Which is masked Anarchy.
 Hear his cannon booming ever!
 Corpses heap'd by mad Endeavour
 Vainly barricade the stride
 Of the giant Fratricide.
 Shade of Godfrey Cavaignac!
 Dare he follow on thy track?
 Lo, where Duty fronteth Right,
 Grappling in despairing fight:
 Paris streets are soak'd in blood
 Of the Revolution's victors;
 And the wrong'd mad multitude
 Of their own ill-chosen lictors
 Must endure the axe and rod,
 Till Despair becomes their God,
 And men trapp'd and weary die
 For Death's sake, not Liberty.

Well may Power, the Hydra, laugh,
 Echoing that deadly strife,
 Knowing he again shall quaff
 The red wine which is his life.
 See the Royal Bourbon clutch
 At his lazzaroni knife!
 Bow thee, Naples! to the touch
 Of royal blessing; yet endure
 Thy king's-evil without cure.
 O brave Milan, traitor-cursed,
 Whom the Carignan has hearsed
 Into thine old Austrian tomb!
 O ye Hundred-Thousand whom
 Your Milan homes not! may your steps
 Into exile seal his doom:
 The least foot-fall, as it creeps
 Wearily from Milan, be
 An oath to damn his perjury!
 O Italy! woe worth thy hope.
 With thy weak half-Austrian Pope,
 And those slaves of Carignan,
 Who hate thy faith republican.

Hark again! the iron plague

Haileth o'er devoted Prague.
 Yet again! Prince Murder leaps
 O'er Vienna's reeking heaps,
 'Mid red ruins Croat-strown;
 And exultant on his throne
 Austria's idiot Kaiser sits,
 "By the grace of"—Jellachich;
 Pointing threateningly to thee,
 Vacillating Hungary!
 Hush! again the Vultures fan
 Poland's woe promethean.

Yet is peace in England, Peace
 In Ireland: a most beautiful Peace
 Lying on Famine's knees! the nurse
 Rocketh her gentle babe to sleep;
 Sweet Peace, with thy grave-universe
 Wherein the lean worms scarcely creep.
 Yet is peace in England, peace
 In the vile coward hearts that cease
 Even to feel their slavery:
 The peace of hounds in their kennel, awed
 And scourged: such peace remains to thee,
 Shop-keeping England! who hast flaw'd
 Thy honour for the price of shame
 That buys not even thy children's food;
 And sold thy once respected name,
 Thine own and Europe's future good,
 That thy fat insolent lords may be
 At peace to murder Liberty.

O Tyrant-trampled! synonym
 Of baffled Hope! thine eyes are dim
 With ceaseless tears. O weary Earth,
 Moveless in thy straiten'd girth!
 Though thy heart no more upheave,
 Even though human freedom hath
 No echo, though thou cease to grieve
 For wrong, yet will I wake thy wrath:
 Though I rend thee with the cries
 Of thine offsprings' agonies.
 Yet the Nations' woes shall pierce
 Through thy darkest lids, thou Tomb!
 As the flame-swords of my verse
 Fire the horizon of thy doom.
 Thou shalt hear me, though thou be
 Dull as English Infamy,
 Though thou diest hearing me.

Through my brain your shrieks are ringing,

And my thoughts responsive singing,
 Your sad dirge, king-stricken Nations !
 Let us strive no more, but perish
 With the hopes we may not cherish !
 Let the Earth be Desolation's,
 On its own pain whirl'd, and wear
 Our curses for an atmosphere!
 Like a corpse hung in the sky,
 An Austrian Eternity.
 Round the dead Earth sweep the cries
 Of our ghostly Agonies.

"Let us die! Endeavour lives
 But to count the wounds it gives
 To its own life when, mistaking
 Present policy for truth,
 It grows selfish, without ruth
 Of the Future, Truth forsaking.
 O that One, enthroned strong
 On the prostrate form of Wrong,
 Had no friendly arm outreaching!
 O that One were wise to say—
 Free men dare not turn away
 From the lowest slave's beseeching.
 O that One should choose the shade
 For the substance! O afraid
 To worship Truth in scorn of fashion!
 One "for peace" sake' has betray'd
 Hope to Murder, and delay'd
 Peace herself for false Compassion."

"Lo! we have given
 Ourselves for Freedom, our strong arms have riven
 The fetters of the King. Now let us die!
 Since human Liberty
 Is but a shadow, human Right a lie.
 Have not we given
 Our lives to Freedom? take them! we have striven
 Even with Despair: now we but seek to die,
 Since human Liberty
 Is but a dream, and Hope a trader's lie."

"Lead us to death!
 Our lives were sworn to thee,
 Beloved Hope! but since the slaves can see
 Our ruin, yet scarce mourn,
 Why should we shun the wreath
 Of shameful thorn?
 All things are stoop'd to shame, all hug the chain :
 Why should we linger when our Hope is slain ? "

" O Faith! why hast thou fled
 Out of the land of Milton ? O brave Spirit,
 Who our forefathers led !—
 Let us curse God and die! since we inherit
 Nothing of English valour, but"—
 The rest
 Died 'mid choking sobs, the breast
 Of the pale ghost so was loaded
 With vain rage and grief repress'd.
 Then again came utterance, goaded
 By the furies swift and fierce,
 The wrath-winged thoughts that pierce
 Ever, with relentless zeal,
 In the old wounds ere they heal;
 And compel without remission
 Torture's fiercer repetition.

Wherefore die for Man's redemption,
 When defeat hath Toil's pre-emption?
 Wherefore should we care to struggle,
 Slaves to the false smile of Rope,
 Whose best promise is a juggle?
 How may the Prophetic cope
 With the Absolute? We pile
 Mount on mount-top: Power the while
 Shakes the basement of our might,
 From his inaccessible height
 Laughing on us thunderously.
 O ye Titans! are not we
 Mad to vex Almighty Wrong?
 Though our giant Woes be strong,
 What can they against God's hate
 Throned above the reach of Fate?—
 Ye have answer'd :—At your forges
 Ye are singing reckless hymns
 To the stooping Fiend that gorges
 In your hearts. The garbage dims
 The Vulture's gory eyes; but ye,
 Dull'd by pain's monotony,
 Care not so he be content
 Nor increase your punishment.
 Ye have done well ! so, exempt
 Even from honest self-contempt,
 Crawl through your untroubled graves,

Loathliest of Heaven's slaves!
 I, on this bare rock tear.dew'd,
 With my anguish aye renew'd
 By my own rebel will that ever
 Seeks the eternal links to sever,

I alone the torture bear,
 I alone the red crown wear
 Of my pain's eternity.
 Hell's own Furies pray for me,
 Seeing in my lidless eyes
 The fore-looking Agonies.

Croat and Cossack make their lair
 In Europe's palace-dens; and there
 Metternich's detested Ghoul
 Darkly prowleth. Europe! howl
 Under the hoofs of trampling War,
 Prey to the eternal Tsar.
 Poland's wounds new-rended bleed;
 Prussia reaps the bloody seed
 Of Posen; when shalt thou be free?
 King-divided Germany!
 Italy leans on the sword
 Of Ramorino's falser lord;
 Switzerland in vain would hide
 Mid her Alps; the Cossack tide
 Of the Exile's prophecy
 Rolleth westward whelmingly;—
 "Not so!"—Near me, on the ground,
 Lay One with a ghastly wound
 In his side, through which I saw
 His heart beating.

 "Yet the maw
 Of Hate shall be o'ergorged; and Power,
 Powerless grown from its excess,
 Lie beneath the Avenging Hour,
 As we watch now, motionless.
 I, let us bear, and let us toil!
 Though the Future hide our spoil.
 We have wrung the secret out
 From the Inscrutable; our shout
 Hath o'er-ridden Fate's decree;
 And the thunder of our glee
 Yet shall roll through Heaven's gates
 On the western clouds of Doom:
 Lo! the Morrow, past the gloom
 Of the midnight grief, awaits
 The clear dawning of our fame."

And, as Mazzini spoke, like flame
 Ascending from a sacrifice,
 Did the Beautiful arise
 In those smiles that never fail
 To glorify her features pale;
 And the song of her delight,

Ere She faded from my sight,
 Fell like star-beams on my soul,
 With the musical controul
 Of God's voice, a spell enweaving
 For the universe believing.—
 And their echoes rest on me,
 Like snow-flakes, so tenderly,
 Folding, as might an angel's wing,
 Flower-roots that wait the spring.

Through thy pain, and through the langour
 Of despair, and from the anger
 Of long-disappointed hope,
 Thou, O Human World! redeeming
 The pale phantoms of thy dreaming,
 Shalt have strength with Time to cope.
 Though thy weary feet be tender,
 Though thy lids bear not the splendour
 Of the Coming of thy Lord,
 Yet, fond Hope! shalt thou behold him,
 And thy powerful arms enfold him,
 And thou know thyself adored.
 Yet shall Love, O Hope pursuing!
 On thy heart his life renewing,
 Speed with thee his tireless flight;
 And the wake of his star-tresses
 O'er earth's untrack'd wildernesses
 Guide Man to the far delight.
 Lo! I hear the acclamations
 Of the Faith-awaken'd Nations;
 And the sweet low chaunted song
 Of their organised endeavour:
 It soars upward ever, ever,
 On the swift wings, angel strong.
 A wake, Despair! the tyrants of the earth
 Are passing like night-shadows: though some clouds
 Seek to prolong their reign, those lingering shrouds
 Cradle the Morning in its hour of birth.
 Ye "Dead," come forth!

Upon the broad firm ground
 Base ye the temped round
 Of human Right, where men as Gods shall be!
 O ye Republic Nations !
 Lay wide the deep foundations
 Both of your own and Man's Equality!—
 Uprear the varied columns
 In their own ample volumes,
 Upbear the sacred roof of Country, ye
 Who know what Freedom meaneth!

When each on other leaneth:
 Best power of service is real Liberty.—
 Devote upon that shrine
 Your lives to the Divine!
 Render to Heaven the worfhip of the Free!
 The Heaven of sure progression,
 Whose harmonised expression
 Is thy perpetual song, Humanity!

From the depth of night
 I have taken flight
 Into the dawn of a pure delight :
 And my song upsprings
 Upon mighty wings

To the light of thy smile's imaginings;—
 Into the Heaven
 Where Faith was driven,
 When Earth by the winter storm was riven;
 From the rock and chain
 Of a hopeless pain,
 Up to thy Heaven I soar again;—
 From the lowliest grave
 That Truth dared brave,
 Seeking even Death, to redeem the Slave;
 Like an angel's psalm,
 To the realms of calm,
 Where Love is heal'd with immortal balm;
 To the azure sky
 Of Faith's visions high
 Of a serene Eternity,—
 Where Toil is blest,
 And where Hope may rest
 To gaze in the eyes of the Loveliest.

Love ascendeth from the Tomb;
 And the Future through the womb
 Of the Present. Strength is ours,
 With the Inevitable Hours,—
 Whether 'neath Time's feet they crawl
 Silent as slaves, or bear the pall
 Of Earth's Kings with hymns loud-chaunted.
 Wear thy thorns on brow undaunted!
 Be the prophecy but spoken
 Through thy ruin'd heart woe-broken,
 Whispering, as spring winds do,

Through the flaws of frozen snow,—
 Though all things but Grief be slow,—
 Yet thy griefs are conquerors.

Ever climbs my song to Thee,
O Love! O Hope! Eternity!

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