

Hannah More and *Cheap Repository Tracts*;  
Lessons in “Religious and Useful Knowledge”

by

Laura Kelly Paprocki

A thesis  
presented to the University of Waterloo  
in fulfillment of the  
thesis requirement for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
English - Literary Studies

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2010

© Laura Kelly Paprocki 2010

## Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## Abstract

My thesis will discuss British Romantic period author and philanthropist Hannah More. I aim to portray her from a perspective that demonstrates her compelling and varying nature, that includes religion and rhetoric as persuasive tools met at times with resistance and at other times compliance. Her work called for educational reform on two accounts: firstly, for a system of education for the poor, and secondly, to reeducate middle and upper class women's philanthropy. I focus on her didactic literature, namely *Cheap Repository Tracts*, and the prevalence of her Evangelical zeal embedded in the tracts. I draw particular attention to the stories of *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, *Black Giles the Poacher*, and *Betty Brown, the St. Giles's Orange Girl*. I argue that traditional understandings of didactic narratives as a low form of literature are misleading and that More's work exemplifies didactic fiction as a form of literature capable of empowering readers and authors alike. Furthermore, I will study the social function aspects of *Cheap Repository Tracts* as they demonstrated a newfound accessibility to a large and varying audience.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to my wonderful advisor, Tristanne Connolly, not only for her support in this project but for her inspiration and guidance as a professor and friend. Thank you to Rebecca Tierney-Hynes for her advice and direction. Also thank you to David Scott for some speedy editing. You have all been such a great help and it is truly appreciated.

## Dedication

For my Mum and Dad, Sandra and Danielle Paprocki, for their love and support. Also for my Golden Retriever, Banana, for always being there.

## Table of Contents

Author's Declaration .....	ii
Abstract .....	iii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Dedication .....	v
Table of Contents .....	vi
List of Illustrations .....	vii
Chapters:	
Introduction .....	1
Evangelicalism .....	12
Education .....	34
The Tracts .....	56
Philanthropy .....	75
Conclusion .....	99
References .....	107

## List of Illustrations

Figure 1: *Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain. Part I.* [London]: J. Marshall and R. White, 1795.

Figure 2: More, Hannah. *Sunday School.* [London]: J. Marshall, and R. White, 1796.

Figure 3: *Black Giles the Poacher with some Account of a Family Who had rather Live by their Wits than their Work. Part I.* [London]: J. Marshall; and R. White, 1796.

Figure 4: More, Hannah. *Betty Brown, the St. Giles's Orange Girl.* [London]: J. Marshall, and R. White, 1795.

“...let it be remembered, that both in reading and conversing the  
understanding gains more by stretching, than stooping”  
(More, *Strictures II*, 52)



## Introduction



British author and philanthropist, Hannah More, was born in Gloucestershire, England, in February of 1745. She was raised by her mother, Mary Grace More, and father, Jacob More, who was employed as a schoolmaster in Bristol: interesting, considering that all five of the More sisters would eventually find themselves working directly in the field of education. In 1758, Hannah's eldest sister, Mary, opened a girls' school where Hannah would attend as a student and later as a teacher. Over the years, Hannah More became involved in numerous philanthropic efforts. She was recognized as an asset to the abolition of the slave trade, a pioneer in chapbook-inspired didactic fiction, and an influential woman in the Early Evangelical Movement. Her *Cheap Repository Tracts* are said to have exceeded two million distributed copies during the three years they were published. However, despite her astonishing success in the Romantic period, her readership declined in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Recently, increased attention has been given to women writers; however, many university students studying English Literature will never meet Hannah More or her works. More's efforts to work within the socially acceptable sphere of her gender aided her success in her day, while such conformity and conservatism creates less interest today.

After the French Revolution, the social and political instability of the British nation was alarming. Groups and individuals who supported revolution began publishing articles and holding demonstrations to further their cause, only to have the English government subdue their acts of rebellion through legal ramifications. The effects of the French Revolution produced a divide in Britain that had some persons intrigued and inspired by the

appeal for Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, while others with more conservative leanings saw the revolution in France as horrific and as a fearful example of the underlying power of the enemy (Moorman 294-95). More's original tract, *Village Politics*, was a direct reaction commissioned by Bishop Porteus against Thomas Paine's recently published *Rights of Man* (1793), which had sold an estimated 200,000 copies (Hylson-Smith 64). Paine continued to write his political works, publishing a second part to *Rights of Man*, and later, *Age of Reason*, that serve as examples of pro-revolutionary writings popular at the time. Soon after his publications, Paine was indicted under the new Royal Proclamation that was issued against seditious writing (Jones 133). More, likewise, continued to publish tracts; however, hers were produced within the organized society of the Cheap Repository that was established in 1795, and supported by many politicians, clergy, and influential members of society such as William Willberforce, William Pitt, and some of the most powerful Bishops in London. For many years, the field of study surrounding Hannah More's publications of *Cheap Repository Tracts* has focused largely on the political and moral nature of the tracts. While acknowledging the importance of these topics, I hope to remedy the imbalance by researching More through the lenses of education and Evangelicalism.

There was a growing fear of a civil revolution that became manifest through the powerful propaganda of the High Church and politically motivated persons of noteworthy religious and social standing. The Church of England, though in somewhat of a decline in the late eighteenth century, began to act as a link between Parliament and the common people of Britain. Their tools were limited, namely due to the fact that their venue, the church, was not an accepted site for a reform movement that was meant to be directed to the very underpinnings of English society – the home and the working classes. Therefore, the

developing subgroups in the church, most pointedly the early Evangelicals, sought to expand the fervor of church doctrine and moral teachings while reflecting political agendas. The early Evangelicals have their roots in the latter part of the seventeenth century and can be characterized by their Puritanism, a devotion to a Christ who dispenses salvation for all who accept Him, and their main objective to share their faith and beliefs with as many people as possible (Moorman 302-3). To accomplish their propagandist agenda, the Evangelicals led the way in establishing Sunday and charity schools, and relied heavily on their most malleable tool – the printed word. Therefore, while the High Church was hesitant to accept the newly blossoming religious sects, the benefits such subgroups provided were continuously praised in philanthropic circles and their work continues to be remembered in today’s accounts of social and religious history.

Eighteenth century Britain had yet to see a state-funded public education system. Few children were provided with schooling comparable to the educational standards in existence today; those who could afford to send their children to school or hire private tutors fell into the highest financial brackets. Likewise, governesses who helped in the care and upbringing of children often spent time teaching lessons, but such persons were only employed by the wealthy. The only schools considered affordable to the working classes were dissenter schools, such as the ones instituted by the Methodists, and the Sunday schools, such as those run by the Evangelicals, that were opened with the financial and moral support of the Church of England. These realities meant that many children were not receiving a complete education, if any education at all, in fact, many would never attend a school of any kind. It was not until 1833 that the first grant of public money was made to education, and historians estimate that before 1833 only approximately 20 percent of children were granted any formal education

(Moorman 324-45). Educational reform began as a social movement that would develop with eagerness in the Romantic period as the perspective on childhood and the responsibilities of government changed. Hannah More and her sisters were all, in one way or another, key to the development of rural schools and reading material designed specifically for the purpose of these institutions and the growing literate poor. With the help of the Clapham Sect, motivated through channels both political (Anti-Jacobin), and religious (Evangelical), More aided in broadening the educational benefits of the Mendip and Somerset areas. In 1789, Hannah and her sister, Patty, established the first of many schools in Cheddar, later adding schools in surrounding rural areas (Stott, *First Victorian*, 338). These schools, as well as many other schools of this time, operated within the framework of the established church, on strict budgets, and with reliance on charitable donations. Nevertheless, subgroups were attempting to establish their own systems of education, especially when it came to boys' and girls' schools and institutions with private, religious agendas such as the Sunday school. That being said, it is not until the end of the Romantic period that the benefits of education began to be pivotal to the standards of living of people from all classes of society, regardless of gender or location.

In this thesis I will argue that *Cheap Repository Tracts*, written as didactic religious literature, is emblematic of late eighteenth century and early Romantic period empowerment and propagandistic literature from the perspective of educational and philanthropic reform. The tracts are often misunderstood and associated with low literature, though the stories written by Hannah More possess qualities that elevate their literary status and serve as examples of the reinvention of literary forms, purposes, and disguises of high literature. Instead of using popular political and instructive outlets such as newspaper articles and sermons, More camouflaged her messages in the growing popular culture of chapbooks.

These chap or penny books included crude woodcuts and descriptive titles, thereby making them attractive to readers who could not afford to purchase expensive literature. However, the cost of a text ought not to be the sole deciding factor as to the status of the contents within, as so often assumed.

In the last few decades, scholars have studied the tracts to emphasize their moral and political grounds. I intend to explore More's position as a female reformist through her use of education and with the guidance and influence of the Early Evangelical Movement. Through the establishment of her schools, she taught the children of the poor how to read and be included in an educational system, thereby grounding children with morals and value systems that would benefit their lives and be passed on to future generations. However, she also taught middle-class women to cross gender divides by encouraging them in acts of philanthropy. Both of these lessons were repeatedly portrayed in the tracts she composed for the Cheap Repository. Through her use of exemplary characters in her tracts and her private works, More made it acceptable for women to enter into a public sphere and be leaders and pioneers in the establishment of charitable societies. Each group, poor children and middle-class women, relied on each other to successfully perform their duties; the poor needed the charity schools and the women needed the children to need their aid. By setting up this dual reliance, More created a system that made classes dependent on each other, while empowering them within the class system. Not least, she was able to accomplish both educational and philanthropic reform while encompassing the mission of the Early Evangelical Movement and remaining loyal to the Church of England. The publication of *Cheap Repository Tracts* was pivotal to her ability to provide an assortment of readerships with

access to her lessons intended to educate society and spread the messages found in her specific curriculum.

The use of didacticism in her tracts was grounded in lived realities and often based on her experiences in rural England. Her tendency to attempt religious conversion in her writing is clearly visible through the literary form of the tracts. Instead of building an imaginative story that incidentally included a moral message, More's work suggests that she began with a lesson she wanted to share, commonly a religious or moral lesson, and from that teaching she concocted a story. Perhaps this is why so many scholars have been unimpressed with the literary quality of her writing. However, I argue that the message is the whole reason for the existence of the text: it is the main point. The problem with this understanding of didacticism is that it leaves a sense of falsehood to her stories, that the characters are simply fillers and the details purely imagined and therefore the goals unattainable. What makes the stories more appealing to the average reader is the part that held the least interest to More – fantasy.

*Cheap Repository Tracts* serve as examples of didactic fiction intended for specific audiences to promote an Evangelical lifestyle. Her targeted readership, the children of the poor, and later, middle and upper class women, gave her agency to provide instruction in a more specific scope. While Matthew Grenby asserts that *Cheap Repository Tracts* “brought political issues to audiences that had not been deliberately politicized before” (144), he fails to mention that it was not only a new political agenda that More preached, but an awakening of a social movement that operated beyond the very discipline and laws of the hitherto known political and literary sphere. More empowered groups that were accustomed to having power revoked, and she did this by reinventing and reforming acceptable elements of society: chapbooks, the reading of Scripture, and women-driven philanthropy. Her writing was highly

effective because each tract portrays a very simple and understandable moral lesson, as was her original intention. Arguments against her literary talent do not fully consider the purposes behind her form and stylistic devices.

Jane Nardin claims that More “reached more contemporary readers than Fanny Burney, Maria Edgeworth, Mary Wollstonecraft, Jane Austen, and Mary Shelley combined”, yet like Wollstonecraft’s, More’s beginnings are quite humble (Nardin, “Perils,” 7). Through a broken engagement to Edward Turner she received £200 annually and £1,000 at his death. Therefore, despite being born into a struggling middle-class household, More’s annual income allowed her to use her financial freedom to pursue her own interests. Some of her early works took the form of plays, such as *The Search After Happiness: A Pastoral Drama*, *The Inflexible Captive*, and *Percy* that earned her £600 on stage and whose script sold 4,000 copies in only two weeks. Throughout her life, More’s publications received great success and popularity and at her death at eighty-eight years of age she left her fortune of £30,000 to over seventy assorted charities (Lonsdale 323-5). Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz assert that More was “the first British woman to make a fortune by her pen”, but she turned her fortune to those in need and lived a humble life (119).

Anne Stott, a recent biographer of More, suggests that part of the misrepresentation of the character and work of More is due to her first biographer, William Roberts, who published *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs Hannah More* in 1834, and created More as a “solemn and sanctimonious” character when she was really “lively, cheerful, [and] warm-hearted” (*First Victorian* viii-ix). Stott’s work claims Hannah More as “*The First Victorian*”, and notes her position as one of the last women to have a significant involvement with the Bluestocking circle (xi). The reputation of the Bluestockings persists as a group of men and

women devoted to the arts who gathered frequently to discuss contemporary ideas and “promote the life of the mind” (Eger and Peltz 16). At 29, More journeyed to London, where she was taken under the wing of Sir Joshua Reynolds and his sister, Frances. As a developing artist she gained the pleasure of highly influential company and support of her work including the well-respected Samuel Johnson, to whom she remained close throughout her days, as well as David Garrick who helped guide Hannah in her writing of *Percy*. In *Hannah More and Her Circle*, Hopkins notes More’s good fortune in respect to time and place, for it was at this time in London that “society was taking notice of women who were merely intellectual and respectable; they no longer needed to be well-born or wealthy” (56). This worked in her favour, for although she likely saw flaws in devaluing the importance of manners, she would have promoted a less-fashionable middle-class value system and disagreed with the superficiality often seen from a bourgeois point of view in exclusive circles of high society. Having come from a struggling middle-class home, More would not have been situated in the same class as the majority of Bluestocking members; it is likely for this reason that she encouraged middle class mannerisms as a social norm. Nevertheless, it was the loosening of class discriminating precepts that allowed her to flourish in her social mobility without having to compromise her value systems. Without the broadening of social acceptance, More may never have had the opportunity to produce her work. Even though her writings might seem contradictory as she tends to argue for all people to be content in their station, More allowed herself to be an exception to her own rule as she made her way to the top of society despite her humble background.

More’s work has been credited with “saving the monarchy of England” (Mellor 15). Although such declarations are obvious exaggerations, her tracts were sometimes mentioned



as the preventative tool in rebellious riots. For example, her tract, *The Riot, or Half a Loaf is better than no Bread*, was reported to have tamed a riot that broke out in Bath in 1796 (Jones 147). She was a strong supporter of the monarchy and felt the need to maintain the stability of England while improving educational and social standards. Under the influence of John Newton she became an Evangelical within the Church of England and, in the process, she opened countless doors to further her productivity and social influence. She gained close ties to the politically and religiously motivated Clapham Sect, and in particular, gained a working friendship with William Wilberforce, who encouraged her to open her Sunday and charity schools, many of which were later absorbed into the state education system in the twentieth century such as those located in Cheddar, Shipham and Nailsea (Stott, “Educational Agenda” 41). Much of the work attributed to her today would not exist without the encouragement and support of her influential friends. While some scholars have debated More’s feminist or anti-feminist leanings, her legacy attests to the fact that she was not one woman standing alone fighting for a cause; she might have been a strong-willed and hard-working woman, but she was indebted for all of her successes to her associates, both male and female, in the Clapham Sect, Bluestockings, and the Early Evangelical Movement, and to her sisters.

The world of Hannah More is shaped by her involvement in many Romantic period movements, but none are as important as her position as an early Evangelical. In my opinion, the role of the church tends to be understated in studies involving More; instead, many scholars focus on the political environment of her time. However, religion was key to More’s life in the literature she wrote, in her physical acts of charity and in the relationships she maintained. While others in eighteenth-century British society may have been gazing at Parliament, More always looked towards the church for guidance and confirmation that her

actions were acceptable to God. She was a deeply religious woman; even in her feistiness she remained loyal to the church and to her one true God.

CHEAP REPOSITORY.

THE  
Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain.  
PART I.



Sold by J. MARSHALL  
(PRINTER to the CHEAP REPOSITORY for Moral and Religious Tracts) No. 17, Queen Street, Cheapside, and No. 4, Aldermay Church-Yard and R. WHITE, Piccadilly, LONDON,  
By S. HAZARD, at BATH: and by all Booksellers, Newsmen, and Hawkers, in Town and Country.—  
Great Allowance will be made to Shopkeepers and Hawkers.

PRICE ONE HALFPENNY.

Or, 4s. 6d. per 100.—2s. 6d. for 50.—1s. 6d. for 25.

[ Entered at Stationers Hall. ]

Figure 1: *Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain. Part I.* [London]: J. Marshall and R. White, 1795.

## Evangelicalism



To study any social condition or social system in late eighteenth century England is ineffective unless it is examined alongside the evolving religious climate and the influence of the Church of England. Groups such as the popular Clapham Sect exemplify the state-church relationship deeply embedded in the culture of the time as a means of further propagating both political and religious concerns. Hannah More is known as an Arminian Evangelical, having been heavily influenced by John Newton. Newton was active in the Early Evangelical Movement, having had a rebirth that prompted him to become a leading abolitionist. He is also known as a supporter of congregational hymn singing and as an esteemed composer of religious music, most famously, “Amazing Grace” (Hylson-Smith 38-40). More was also influenced by Henry Ryder, a neighbouring Evangelist who worked in the field of education and later became bishop of Gloucester in 1818, and then of Lichfield in 1824, and who holds the honour of having been the first Evangelical bishop selected by the Church of England (Hylson-Smith 70). The early years of Evangelicalism can be characterized by frequent doctrinal debates that ultimately led to divisions within the religion. In these matters, More found herself in opposition to George Whitefield’s Calvinist approach that preached predestination, a strain that became popular during its awakening (Moorman 305). Instead, More sided with John Wesley who believed in “free will and salvation to all who accepted Christ” and an inclusion of all people as candidates for conversion and worthy of an opportunity for “growth in grace” (Moorman 303). Arminian Evangelicals operated fully within the larger sphere of the Church of England by maintaining the Anglican Book of

Common Prayer and following the laws set out by the Church of England. Of vital importance to my thesis is the crux of the Evangelical proselytizing system: literature. “Evangelicals lamented their inability to teach the poor how to read the scriptures without enabling them to read immoral books as well” (Nardin, “Problem of Poverty,” 280). The Evangelicals preached to the poor using their finest propagandist methods: the printing press and the Sunday school (Lawson and Silver 232). In many ways, Evangelicals sought to *educate* the masses rather than simply convert them; conversion became a process of both intellectual and theological growth and learning. However, More’s particular focus on religious education asserted that “learning is too often rather considered as an act of memory than of the heart and feelings” (*Strictures* 230). Therefore, her implementation of the Sunday school was, for the most part, an attempt to provide instruction to the heart and value systems of her attending pupils.

The Early Evangelical Movement evolved in a religious climate that was both in decline and, in many instances, bordering on corruption. For example, by 1812, more than half of clergymen did not reside in the parishes they served, and I would add, often became increasingly concerned with their own advancement and their reputations instead of their responsibilities as spiritual leaders (Mellor 21). Therefore, many who were familiar with the Church of England as it was represented by this clergy, in particular those who resided in the rural areas, came to see the church as nothing but a name and a tax-collecting institution – the Church was diminished in the eyes of its adherents. However, post-French Revolution, there was a growth in the number of English who felt a re-awakening of their ties to their church and state. The increased nationalistic support resulted in a renewal of intense loyalties to the Church of England and those sects it favoured, such as Evangelicalism. The

characteristic attributes of the Revolution, from a conservative point of view – frivolity, discontent, and selfishness – were seen to be in conflict with the precepts of Evangelicalism. Therefore, it became the agenda of the Evangelical Movement to iron out the wrinkles of conflict arising from the Revolution that affected the wealthy, middle-class, and the poor from a religious perspective and not necessarily a political one. The early Evangelicals were puritanical, redesigning the lives of adherents by revoking theatre, dance, card games, and certain types of literature (Moorman 302). They thought that the growing trends in fashion were troublesome and felt the need to re-evaluate what it meant to live as a Christian. In doing so, the church was able to create awareness of the more pertinent subjects of concern at the time such as philanthropy, slavery, labour, and justice. As More suggests, “[a]ll the charities of benevolence... [are] so agreeable to the natural make of the heart, that it is a very tender mercy of God to have made that a duty, which, to finer spirits, would have been irresistible as an inclination” (*Manners of the Great* 95-6). Therefore, in regard to More’s understanding of social grouping, no one is to be excluded from acts of charity and good will, although she does acknowledge that there are differences between people based on class. She was supporting the social structure at the foundation of English society while encouraging classes to view each other in new ways that allowed for increased solidarity. The bringing together of a country in faith and charity might lessen fears of social unrest and result in a broader sense of unity than that which is designed purely on the basis of class.

The Evangelicals drew attention to the materialism evolving within the church without necessarily laying blame on a specific class; instead, they frequently critiqued each social group as a unique entity that too often focused on its own advancement. Furthermore, the work of the Evangelicals fostered positive attitudes and exemplary behaviour in all classes. By

designing campaigns specifically in the interest of individual groups, they were able to spread the Word effectively to a greater number of people. In order to counteract revolutionary fears of lower class power, the Evangelicals brought together all the classes in one organized religion, just as the Church of England had intended. In the process, the Church often created conflicts within its own operations that resulted in unrest between church leaders and the leaders of emerging sects, despite their desire to remain united. For example, Hannah More and the Cheap Repository took it upon themselves to work alongside the Evangelical Church in creating literature that fed the appetites of the middle and lower classes, but feeding them different food from the same kitchen. Despite the Evangelical belief in relying on Scripture alone, they realized that a variety of didactic methods were needed for the messages of their faith to have the effects they desired. Although this strayed from Evangelical doctrinal principles it was a purposeful transgression meant to improve the overall situation of the Church of England.

Echoing the social thought of the time, the Early Evangelical Movement had a two-tiered strategy for infiltrating the people of England. Firstly, the middle and upper classes were targeted through new teachings on charity and anti-revolutionary political propaganda such as witnessed in Evangelical newspaper publications and their affiliations with Parliament. The Movement explored new roles for women of moderate wealth, conducting a “domestic revolution” that focused on “religion, home, and family” (Vallone 73). More asserted that the *influence* of wealthy women was their greatest talent and should be used wisely and with religious consideration (*Strictures* 1). Secondly, and with increased strength, the Evangelicals targeted the poor, specifically the young and easily influenced, by providing them with literature and educational services. More witnessed the inadequate educational opportunities

at the time and noted that “if education be a school to fit us for life, and life be a school to fit us for eternity... it may then be worth inquiring how far these ends are likely to be effected by the prevailing system” (*Strictures* 56-7). No longer satisfied with the social standards provided for wealthy and middle class women or for the children of the poor, she took it upon herself to revitalize systems of class and gender and explore how religious instruction can reform a society.

Stephen Neill argues that the Evangelicals “took it for granted that poverty would always exist, and that all that could be done was to mitigate the sufferings which accompanied it” (qtd. in Hylson-Smith 90). On the contrary, many leading Evangelicals in the eighteenth century carved out new arenas for the poor to act in ways that would lead to self-improvement, and in doing so, created avenues for inclusion in a faith that that was not limited to a particular class. In a sense, even the small, seemingly insignificant opportunities allowed those who strove for a better life to grasp that chance at upward mobility. In the Napoleonic era, due largely to the English reformers such as Hannah More and members of the Clapham Sect, Evangelicals emphasized a more tolerant form of Evangelicalism rooted in the scriptures and moral duty. In creating this change, “it became both theologically and socially easier to be an Evangelical” (Hylson-Smith 68). Through the provision of negotiated boundaries promoting inclusivity, as was seen earlier in London’s social scene when they began welcoming daughters from struggling middle class families, the relaxing of rules led to important developments for participants converting to Evangelicalism. Hannah More is one such example whereby an inclusive welcoming of an outsider provided the Movement with a useful and talented woman eager to contribute. As Stott notes, More “was born not into comfort and prosperity, but into a four-roomed cottage, already crammed to bursting with her



parents and three elder sisters” (*First Victorian* 1). The struggling middle class became part of a larger cause and as the volume of Evangelical followers increased so too did their power and influence.

More’s Evangelicalism specifically preached the social theory that the poor were the responsibility of the middle and upper classes. She believed in a religion that emphasized charity designed to re-evaluate the fate of class positioning and assert the necessity of philanthropy. Fate was God-sanctioned and determined where one was cast in a class-structured society, but it did not determine the quality and goodness of one’s life or character. For example, in Somerset, More led a small Evangelical group that spent time distributing Bibles to the poor families in the area and began to host literacy classes so that the families could read and understand the Scripture they were given (Moorman 318). The hope was that the lessons read in the Bible would be reflected in the thoughts and actions of the readers, and therefore, aid them in living more satisfying and holy lives. Contentment within one’s class was key to furthering an Evangelical-Christian character. The Clapham Sect as well as other religious groups followed a similar understanding of a “lived religion” by not simply believing in a doctrinal code but taking actions to *live* or *act* as a Christian. The Clapham Sect in particular focused their attention on the rights of the poor and enslaved. That being said, criticism of these networks observes the lack of concern given to the root causes of the injustices the Sect worked so diligently to ratify. More’s schools provided education to “socially and educationally deprived children” without fully considering why they were deprived in the first place and how one may change their situation earlier for improved and lasting results (Hylson-Smith 89). For all the work the Evangelicals undertook with regard to the poor, serious social subjects such as decent wages and safe homes are rarely a voiced

concern of theirs. Nevertheless, there is something to be said of education as a means of lasting social improvements through the attainment of literacy.

More believed that lessons against frivolity which promoted hard work and discipline would likely lead to greater financial awareness among the working classes. Through improved money management, the poor, in More's opinion, may have a slow rise from poor, to working-class, to perhaps even middle-class positions, if families continued to follow the advice of the Evangelicals. For example, in her tract, *Betty Brown, the St. Giles's Orange Girl*, Betty's ability to earn an honest living allows the narrator to conclude that "by industry and piety, [she] rose in the world, till at length she came to keep a handsome Sausage-Shop near the Seven Dials, and was married to an honest Hackney-Coachman" (More, *Tracts*, 63). Although the advice provided in this tract was not initiated to promote upward mobility, it could very well be considered a side effect.

In that respect, the Evangelicals took it upon themselves to increase the reading population among the poor, even if their explicit goal was to generate religious fervour. Literacy rates and religious texts have historically grown in parallel waves, as evidenced by the first printed book, the Gutenberg Bible. In the past, religious literature and the skill of reading have been in relationships that often required the educated to be closest to Biblical materials and therefore be the *prophets* of religious messages. However, through increased literacy rates such as those sponsored by More, that elitist prophetic position as a dispenser of religious news became available to a greater number of people from various backgrounds.

Hannah More's philanthropic leanings, the Early Evangelical Movement, and the Clapham Sect were the definitive contributions leading to the establishment of More's work both in her school and in *Cheap Repository Tracts*. William Wilberforce, a longtime friend and

colleague of More's, acted as the public face of the Clapham Sect, serving as leader and orator. It was Wilberforce who suggested More open a school for the poor in the Mendips, a rural district in Somerset, and it was with his strong commitment to the cause that the Cheap Repository flourished as it did. Wilberforce (1759-1833) had many advantageous political ties and was a close companion to William Pitt, who was the Prime Minister of Great Britain in 1783-1801, and 1804-1806 (Hylson-Smith 53). Through friends, a schoolmaster, and the instruction of John Newton, Wilberforce became an Evangelical and used his political seat in parliament to further Evangelical causes. Clarissa Campbell Orr describes the Clapham Evangelicals as "a synthesis of science, ethics, and Christianity, rooted in a Baconian conception of the links between revealed and natural knowledge, but which drew the line at skepticism, free-thinking, cultural relativism and materialism" (qtd. in Stott, "Educational Agenda," 43). The Sect prided itself on using fully their members' individual talents in order to benefit the great cause of promoting Evangelicalism, and during More's lifetime, the abolition of slavery. Such theories were also being implemented in More's educational advice that advised parents to "go on to teach children the religious use of time, the duty of consecrating to God every talent, every faculty, every possession, and of devoting their whole lives to his glory" (*Strictures* 110).

It is this model of teamwork, whereby each contributor holds specific skills and assets, that was so often promoted in the stories found in *Cheap Repository Tracts*. For example, in *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, there is reference to a Mr. Jenkins who provides "spiritual food" in the form of Sermons and visits to the Shepherd's home (More, *Tracts*, 39-40). This tract also serves as an example of William Roberts' accusation that More "scarcely ever produced a tract in which it was not a part of her plan to introduce an exemplary parish priest" (456).

Mr. Jenkins does not have the wealth to buy the materials that would improve the lives of the Shepherd and his family but he does what he can with what God has provided. In *St. Giles's Orange Girl*, Betty meets a lady who bestows her with financial advice, and later meets the lady's husband who is a Magistrate. Due to the husband's influential position, he is able to put the villainous Mrs. Sponge in prison and return the money owing to Betty, hence asserting More's claim that "Reformation must begin with the Great, or it will never be effectual. *Their* example is the foundation from whence the vulgar draw their habits, actions, and characters" (*Manners of the Great* 116). Though each participant in charity undergoes philanthropy in very different forms, they act within the boundaries of their social and class positions. In truth, it is the ability for one to do great things within their God-given authority that tends to be the best judge of character and an honest Christian soul.

More is often considered a member of the Clapham Sect by her biographers, yet oddly enough, she is the only female member I have come across. She lent her literary talents and maternal rhetoric to the Sect, and they, in turn, supported her financially and through the contribution of written tracts. It was More's unique view as a woman writer that allowed her to negotiate amongst various readerships, as she had commonalities with many groups including the poor and middle classes. Although she tended to be viewed as middle class, she was of the thought that a humble, frugal life was most befitting to Christianity. The members of the Sect took on specific roles within the operations of the Cheap Repository: Tomas Thornton was treasurer, Babington worked with the publishers, Macaulay acted as an agent, and Dr. Beilby Porteus, who was also a Bishop of London, used his influence to promote the

endeavor.<sup>1</sup> Through More's relationships in the Anglican Church she was able to persuade many clergymen to join the Evangelical cause and become members of the Clapham Sect, strengthening their numbers and their overall influence over English society. The Clapham Sect supported the upper, middle, and working classes by recognizing each layman as an important individual capable of benefiting Evangelical movements from within their specific sphere. Also, by recruiting influential clergymen from the Anglicans, they were gaining the attention of the upper classes that felt the rush of a growing trend in religious affiliation.

Much of the credit for the Abolition Movement belongs to Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect, in which Hannah More played an important role. As a well-respected female author, More was able to promote her abolitionist thinking to an already established and alert audience (Andrews 34). Her poem, "Slavery", was well received and continues to be studied as a key piece of literature from the movement serving as an unique example of a female author speaking to oppressors on behalf of the oppressed. In *Strictures*, More claims that when societies treat women as "mere external charms", "*they are slaves*" (3). Women, like slaves in the eighteenth century, were accustomed to fewer freedoms than their male counterparts; perhaps this is one reason why women authors could claim a better understanding of slavery. The Clapham Sect's paper, *The Christian Observer*, provided another outlet in which they could voice their concerns and arguments in popular debates. Influential Evangelicals such as More and Wilberforce, alongside Thomas Clarkson, John Newton, the Wesley brothers, and William Cowper, were striving to advocate change in the laws condoning slavery (Andrews 23). They were victorious when, on February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1807, the slave trade was declared illegal. However, it was not until 1833, the year of More and Wilberforce's deaths, that slavery was

---

<sup>1</sup> For a full list of Clapham Sect members involved in the Cheap Repository see Jones, *Hannah More* 138.

abolished throughout the British dominions (Moorman 321). The Abolition Movement serves as an example of how the middle and upper classes can use their positions to benefit those who cannot speak for themselves. When the upper classes want justice and reform, they are capable of creating that change and bettering society as a whole. Stories such as this reassert the relationship between the elite leaders of religion and the working classes, for instead of blindly turning their back as the absentee Anglican clergy had the habit of doing, the Evangelicals found an injustice and contributed to righting it to the best of their abilities.

Evangelicalism was meant to change the way people thought about the class structures they were born into and the lives they led within those standings. The poor were poor for a reason and the rich were rich – financial positions were not nearly as important as what one did to benefit others using the tools they possessed. Hannah More lectures time and time again in her tracts that a poor person could also be good. The Shepherd from *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* is quickly recognized as “clean” and “well-looking”, and as having an “open honest countenance” (More, *Tracts*, 33-34). However, More’s idealized depictions of the poor vary. In *St. Giles’s the Orange Girl*, Betty is simply uneducated and, provided with proper direction, she *becomes* good (More, *Tracts*, 53). She is given a list of rules, not to cheat, not to use profane language, and not to be dishonest in her industry, and, only a few paragraphs later, it is said that “by industry and piety”, Betty “rose in the world” (62-3). Having followed a few basic rules, Betty’s whole life begins to change for the better and her good character flourishes.

Then there are the bad sort of poor, such as Giles in *Black Giles the Poacher*, who steals from the elderly and refuses to educate his children, making sure his whole family “kept clear of the school” (More, *Tracts*, 79). His son, Dick, has a desire to attend, as he believes that,

through education, “he might rise in the world” (79). Therefore, More’s tracts demonstrate how goodness of character is less dependent on class than religious instruction. Dick is aware that there is some goodness to be found in education even though he is of a poor class, and Betty suggests that it is proper instruction that allows for self-improvement and not necessarily wealth. In relying on the Bible as the Scripture of faith and practice, the Evangelicals believed that all people were worthy of religious union with Christ if only the adherents possessed a “holiness of heart and life” (Hylson-Smith 35). Of course, to understand these texts one had to be educated enough to read and properly understand the Holy Books. With such basic precepts as justification by faith and leading a Christian life, Evangelicalism became a movement that could be adopted by any class. While each class had a specific function meant to benefit the larger whole, the simplified version of a true believer was the same for everyone.

“Evangelicals regarded the care and nurture of their own children as a sacred charge. All kinds of restraints were imposed in order to protect them from evil. The books they read, the people they met, and the things they were allowed to see, were all carefully and comprehensively supervised” (Hylson-Smith 53). Yet, this protective influence that had previously existed within the family and between parents and children was quickly extended to include a growing public debate as to what literature constituted appropriate reading for children. With the emergence of more schools designed to meet the needs of the poor, there were increased discussions involving what should be taught, who should teach, and what group should be in the position of overseer. The Methodists, though closely linked with the Evangelicals from a doctrinal standpoint, did not adhere to the rules set out by the Church of England, but still wanted to have equal teaching privileges in schools that were governed under the church. Although both Methodists and Evangelicals taught similarly, the schools

receiving aid from church-collected taxes were bound to the rules of the church, whereas dissenting schools relied solely on public donations and could hire whomever they pleased. An example of an educational power struggle and of how friction can occur in this climate will be discussed later in respect to the Blagdon Controversy.

The Evangelicals believed in the reformation of society, a goal that was made possible only through direct attention to the young who would have many years ahead of them to lead and promote the cornerstones of Evangelicalism. More's experiments with genre and the use of the moral tale in *Cheap Repository Tracts* helped to create a disguised scriptural didacticism that could be read by children and then passed along to their parents and friends for further reading. In the tracts, Tommy Price, a student with Giles's son in *Black Giles the Poacher*, is one of the few to visit Giles when he is near death. Tom acts as a living example of a true Christian spirit manifest in his ability to forgive Giles for the times he had wronged him. Due to Tom's Christian act, Giles comes to realize that there is "some truth in religion, since it taught even a boy to *deny himself* and to *forgive an injury*" (More, *Tracts*, 84). A young child, provided with a religious education, is depicted as not only more spiritually wealthy than an elder, but capable of teaching that elder vital life lessons. Despite Giles never having acted as a positive role model for his own children, Tom's example creates a self-awareness of his faulty parenting. The story serves as a warning to readers that they can and should change their morality and that age is inconsequential to religious learning. Likewise, the message provides children with a sense of religious authority that they too can become teachers through their religious education.

It is More's experimental attitude with scripture and lack of participation in social hierarchies that frequently caused her trouble with the High Church. For those groups who



were not given adequate religious and moral attention by the Anglican Church, such as the children of the poor, More adopted the role of a self-instated pseudo-clergywoman. For the clergy who did attend to the poor, More often created a ruckus by critiquing their sermons and trying to convince them of the authority in Evangelical theology (Stott, *First Victorian*, 244). She was often the hostess to the clergy who were sent to preach in the areas where More had created her schools, as those institutions tended to be the meeting places for religious learning. There are no details as to how these instances of critique occurred, but I imagine that More could use her hospitable role to subtly assert her personal convictions. In her work she speaks of times that “may lend... occasions to a woman of principle, to declare, without parade, her faith... [and] some intimation that she is not ashamed to declare that her mind is under the influence of Christian faith and principle” (*Strictures II* 50). She was unafraid to challenge authority but, as always, chose her delivery with care. The second part of *Strictures* speaks to this topic when More questions, “Why, in religion, as well as in politics, should we not act like people who, having their all at stake, cannot forbear now and then adverting for a moment to the object of their grand concern, and dropping, at least, an incidental intimation of the side to which they belong?” (50). Perhaps some clergy considered her criticism worthwhile, but even to those who might be interested in hearing a new perspective, the opinions of women would constitute an explicit challenge to their authority.

Her section on conversation argues for the opinions of women to be heard:

It is not intended that they should be studiously introduced, or affectedly prolonged; but only that they should not be systematically shunned, nor the brand of fanaticism be fixed on the person who, with whatever propriety, hazards the introduction of them (*Strictures II* 52).

That “person” was frequently Hannah More, and her opinions encouraged others to become more like her in their ability to express themselves and their ideas. She felt that the voice of

women was valuable and that women had to gain the courage to speak so “that general society might become a scene of general improvement” (*Strictures II* 51). By having women share their voices in polite conversation their visibility increased, as did their ability to act as role models for young girls. Through More’s conversation with clergy she was teaching a lesson that went much deeper than what was apparent in her religious dialogue – she was telling women that they were intelligent and that what they had to say was worth saying. She wrote in *Strictures II*: “Women too little live or converse up to their understandings; and however we have deprecated affectation or pedantry, let it be remembered, that both in reading and conversing the understanding gains more by stretching, than stooping” (52). Religious conversation was a gateway to gender reform as well as educational reform through the spread of literacy.

More was controlling and administering to the spiritual needs of rural communities in the Mendips; in the process, she appeared to be attempting to exclude the clergyman connecting the Church of England to the community and therefore, the divinely ordained human, from performing his spiritual responsibilities. Not only was More not ordained, she was under constant scrutiny by the church and, on occasion, accused of dissenting. In *Manners of the Great*, readers glimpse More’s clerical leanings, as she checks herself: “But I must remember, that this is not a sermon, but a mere superficial essay” (21). While she had friends in high places within the church, her opinions had also created a few enemies along the way. However, the truth of the matter is that More successfully provided more spiritual education and support for the communities she served than the undependable clergy the Church of England sent now and again. She was truly committed with her money, time, and talent to the communities she served. More’s deeply imbedded concern for manners, her act of

defiance against men, and furthermore, ordained men, is strikingly at odds with what some critics believe More to be: an anti-feminist. More tends to be conservative, staying within her socially sanctioned realm – she writes didactic stories for children, opens schools for the poor, and partakes in polite society, all of which are actions deemed appropriate to a woman of her standing. Why would More have attempted such an un-feminine action as to critique a clergyman? Perhaps, for argument's sake, it was the influence of the Bluestocking Circle shining through her usual womanly domestic façade. Or, more probably, More was not entirely anti-feminist, but actually believed that there was an appropriate time and place for a woman to discuss touchy yet important subjects and she therefore mastered the art of exposing those situations; perhaps she was, in some ways, a feminist. In fact, one might argue that her delivery of the criticism was in itself a form of feminism as a woman using particularly womanly skills in an effort to break gender boundaries. More had propagandistic and rhetorical skills that allowed her to balance a feminist and traditional position while also being a conservative activist. Her phrasing and writing style indicates that she was less interested in literary merit than conveying a moral lesson. Through this observation, it is clear that More was a highly intelligent speaker who liked to control the situations when she chose to use her skills. Her works specifically designed for upper-class audiences indicate her abilities to adapt her writing style and tone, and, understandably, scholars tend not to devalue those texts. Although her spoken criticism remains unrecorded, her lasting connections with influential clergy and politicians indicate her successful use and delivery of her opinions.

Noteworthy to the study of More as an educator is the fact that she was not as shepherded by Evangelicalism or political involvements as some scholars would assume. She might have been influenced by them but she was largely a woman who relied on personal

reflection. *The Teston Letters*, published in 1861, record More's correspondences with Lady Chatterton: letters that were not edited by Roberts and therefore do not display his eager editing of textual realities that he is so often accused of taking liberties with. Instead, *The Teston Letters* are said by scholars to be a more accurate portrayal of More's character, and a testament to a More who took time to examine the very institutions she believed in and worked for (Nardin, "Problem of Poverty," 274). In *The Teston Letters*, More admits to having taken Holy Communion at a Presbyterian Meeting House (when Presbyterianism was a dissenting sect), and gives written allegations that the unrest felt within the Church of England is the fault of "internal rottenness [rather] than outward attack" (qtd. in Nardin, "Problem of Poverty," 272). It is evidence such as found in these letters and the uproar resulting from the Blagdon controversy that demonstrated More's ability to question a higher authority. More, always a crowd-pleaser, appears to have had varying opinions on subjects designed to satisfy each of her acquaintances as individuals by agreeing (if only partially) with their own leanings; hence, her doppelgänger ability to be both a traditional woman and a feminist reformer, selective and dependent upon her present audience. Due to her ability to perform for her audience, one is led to question the actual accountability of any of her correspondence. If, as argument has it, her works edited by Roberts are inaccurate because he edited to fashion a certain personality, so too does More herself edit her own opinions and writing in order to present a character that is not necessarily who she was in reality. While the Roberts correspondence could be viewed as doubly layered by audience-driven agendas, so too could Lady Chatterton's letters. That being said, internal evidence such as her confessions of unorthodoxy indicate an unguardedness with this particular correspondent and therefore the increased accountability of these letters.

The Blagdon controversy, which occurred between 1799 and 1803, involved Hannah More and Thomas Bere, the curate of Blagdon, yet in its wake managed to include an assortment of political and religious leaders and influential members of society (Stott “Blagdon,” 319). Not unlike More’s controversial run-in with Ann Yearsley, More refused to change her opinions and always reasserted her point of view even when the majority of onlookers saw the flaws in her reasoning. Having opened numerous schools in the Mendip and Somerset regions with her sister Patty, More was confronted with charges of dissent both professionally and personally. The purpose of More's work was to teach the poor to read scripture, but these allegations still generated conflict within the churches that had supported and sustained her work. Stott’s essay, “The Blagdon Controversy”, argues that the dispute stemmed from two concerns: the very idea of educating the poor, and the fear that the educators were Methodists who were not adhering to church regulations (319). The Toleration Act of 1689 states that dissenting places of worship must be registered, and the Conventicle Act of 1664 declares “punishment by fine, imprisonment, and transportation for all meetings of more than five persons for worship other than the established forms of the Church of England” (Hopkins 186). Although More never intended for her schools to be meeting houses for dissenters, some of the teachers More hired were known Methodists and their actions led to her unwilling involvement. Henry Young, a teacher at the school in Blagdon, was one such teacher and was found to have been conducting meetings separate from the lessons approved by More and these meetings did indeed resemble Methodist services. By sanctioning himself as an authority in spiritual matters, Young was taking the power away from ordained clergy, thereby overthrowing the understood positions between

laymen and clergy (Stott, *First Victorian*, 233). Also, by hosting religious services, he was quite pointedly breaking the law.

Young was not the only one to overstep the boundaries of laymen. Hannah More also took great liberties involving the preaching and organization of the clergy who appeared in the communities she had her schools. Apparently, More had invited Evangelical clergy to preach in her schools during anniversaries and was therefore rejecting the established church procedure and taking away opportunities from the Anglican clergy. Like her criticism of sermons and theology, the control More possessed with regard to who preached at what time and where demonstrates her unfeminine actions when balancing her schools with her Evangelical zeal. The only time she seems to find it appropriate for women to cross gender boundaries is when there was a situation that threatened their religious beliefs. Furthermore, the crossing of invisible boundaries constructed by society and upheld by More seems only to be acceptably broken by More herself. The Blagdon controversy is an example of how More felt threatened by the church she believed in but that failed to believe in her. Despite the facts, (that More and her associates had broken the law on various accounts), she remained faithful to her religion and refused to keep her schools open without the support of the parish clergyman (Stott, “Blagdon,” 326).

The schools that the More sisters had opened were vilified as “seminaries of fanaticism, vice, and sedition” but the argument was really about power and control – two things that both Bere and More thrived upon (More, *Correspondence II*, 69). The so-called ensuing “pamphlet war” included approximately twenty-three pamphlets written by or on behalf of More and Bere (Hopkins 191). The controversy would appear to drag on as schools opened and closed and Bere’s positions in the church were revoked and reinstated until the

end resulted in the closure of the Blagdon school and, therefore, the loss of Young's position (he would later teach in Ireland). What is most interesting about this event is how two people, both powerful in their own way, battled very publicly and drew upon their valued friends and associates for support, when the decision ought to have been made under the direction of a higher church authority. Instead, More used her religious ties with the Bishops of London, Durham, Lincoln and Rochester to gather their influence within the church to her benefit (Stott, "Blagdon," 340). The intervention of the *Anti-Jacobin* newspaper played a crucial part in making the controversy a public discourse, and with that discourse there came allegations on both sides that resulted in long-standing rumours and falsehoods. In April 1802, the *Anti-Jacobin* published a headline that stated More had taken "THE SACRAMENT from the hands of a *Laymann!!!*" (qtd. in Stott, "Blagdon," 337-38). This short headline confirmed More's losing position in the controversy, as William Cobbett wrote to Windham, "It is a fearful thing to think of, that this woman had under tuition the children of a large portion of England"(qtd. in Stott, "Blagdon," 338). Nevertheless, despite a seeming loss, it is of interest that the opponents in the matter were fairly equal for the duration of the pamphlet war despite one participant being a man of the church and the other a woman writer and teacher.

However true the claims were, I am of the opinion that More did not view her choice of teachers or clergy as a purposeful political or religious rebellion against the norm; she chose who she thought were the best teachers to instruct in her schools and the clergy who had religious theologies in tune with her own understandings. More claims that the most important quality to be found in a teacher is "*a strong impression of the corruption of our nature*" (qtd. in Nardin, "Educational Reform," 223). She relied on a person's "godliness" and understanding of humanity above their denomination, hence the "charge that the

Evangelicals represented a Church within a Church” (Stott, “Blagdon,” 338). When it came to the church politics, More was more concerned for the *people* of that church and their paths to moral living than she was with the politics of church laws. Stott suggests that the controversy may have simply been a targeted clerical reaction to More’s “assertive female activism” (*First Victorian*, 240). If this is true, and More was in a sense being “checked” on a public stage and in a maddeningly destructive argument, why would she not back down and allow the dominant forces to have their way? In my opinion, she either never fully understood some of the reasons for the conflict that were later pointed out by scholars, or, and this is quite likely, she saw herself and her schools as an exception to the established rules. Like on many other occasions, More made efforts to assert a female influence, especially in matters pertaining to the church, while failing to consider the lack of feminine manners she at times displayed. The whole notion of a Romantic period woman’s power in clerical matters or in the public sphere is at odds with the gender roles that were the basis of society. Episodes such as the Blagdon controversy shine light on More’s personality, a personality that is far more pro-female than one might expect. She knew that she could not win every battle but she fought long and hard and was able to gain considerable attention, although not always of the reassuring sort. Her defiance led to the exposure of a female voice confidently critiquing the Church of England. In a sense, her ability to assert herself emasculated and chastened old religious traditions and institutions metaphorically predicting the future More had in mind for the whole of English society.



CHEAP REPOSITORY.  
THE  
SUNDAY SCHOOL.



Sold by J. MARSHALL,  
(Printer to the CHEAP REPOSITORY for Religious and Moral Tracts) No. 17, Queen-Street, Cheap-side, and No. 4, Aldermay Church-Yard, and R. WHITE, Piccadilly, LONDON.

By S. HAZARD, at Bath, J. ELDER, at Edinburgh, and by all Booksellers, Newsmen, and Hawkers, in Town and Country. Great Allowance will be made to Shopkeepers and Hawkers.

PRICE ONE PENNY,

Or 4s. 6d. 100.—2s. 6d. for 50.—1s. 6d. for 25.

A Cheaper Edition for Hawkers,

[ Entered at Stationers Hall. ]

Figure 2: More, Hannah. *Sunday School*. [London]: J. Marshall, and R. White, 1796.

## Education



The Cheap Repository published *Cheap Repository Tracts* as well as *Stories for the Middle Ranks*. Scholars have repeatedly noted that one of the stories in *Middle Ranks*, called “The Sunday School”, conjures an almost biographic representation of More’s establishment of her schools. In the story, Mrs. Jones possesses the trait of good judgment, the “one talent that eminently qualified her to do good” (3), for as the text highlights, “it is not necessary to be rich in order to do good” (7). In short, the tale follows Mrs. Jones as she attempts to find proper instructors for her school, “mistresses [who] must not be without, *goodness, activity, and piety*” (5). Mrs. Jones has a keen insight into the social climate of the community she serves and places herself as their leader on matters of spiritual development for children and as an advisor for good parenting. Mr. Simpson, who is helping Mrs. Jones, contemplates the effects of their work on future generations: “For how can we calculate the number which may be hereafter trained for heaven, by those very children we are going to teach, when they themselves shall become parents, and you and I are dead and forgotten?” (6). More’s educative goal – to reform the working-poor into a Christian driven nation – was boldly displayed in her writing. Perhaps More’s wish was for her schools and her relationships with the communities she served to be as successful as those of the seemingly beloved Mrs. Jones.

Throughout England, schools, including the schools established by the More sisters, frequently used literature from *Cheap Repository Tracts* as reading material for their lessons. Existing correspondence from More indicates that the tracts were originally written as educational material (Weiss 33). Part of her intention in promoting the tracts to charity children was to “cause the books to be known among the parents of these children and [that]

should get them introduced among a greater number of the lower class” (More, *Letters*, 473).

The greatest proportion of More’s work relates to educational systemization with an attention given to teachable materials. The two-pronged method of establishing educational and literary networks in tandem with each other and sending a parallel and propagandistic message to the poor and middle classes aided in supporting More’s social theories. The Mendip schools began in 1789 when, upon visiting the poor in the area, Wilberforce asserted the need for an educational facility to tend to the working class families in the area. With his financial and emotional support, Hannah and Patty More began their work. The schools spread to Cheddar, Shipham, Rowberrow, Sandford, Banwell, Congresbury, Yatton, Nailsea, Axbridge, Blagdon, and Wedmore and at the height of their existence had over 1,000 children enrolled (Stott, *First Victorian*, 103).

The years More spent working at the schools provided her with valuable insight into the lives of the working poor and she used those early experiences to write some of her tracts for the Cheap Repository. For example, the character of Rebecca in “Hester Wilmot” is said to be a representation of a woman she visited in the Mendips (Stott, *First Victorian*, 115). In a letter to John Newton, More writes that she “thought it lawful to write a few moral stories, the main circumstances of which have occurred within my own knowledge, but altered and improved as I thought would best advance my plan” (*Correspondence* 457). The tracts were frequently marketed as non-fiction pieces, and two-part tracts, there was a sense that the reader could follow the lives of the characters. Although didactic literature can be criticized for being formulaic and unrealistic, More allows for a reevaluation of the literary genre. Considering that the source and muse of her tracts tended to exist in real life, one cannot assume that the tracts are pure invention but that they merit literary talent in their ability to

combine didactic functions while bordering on the genres of memoir and biography. More encouraged her audience to believe in the achievability of rewards. The tracts served as testimonials to Evangelical and moral living, even if they were written by More's hand, they were intended to speak on behalf of those she had encountered and who had followed her guidance with successful outcomes.

*Cheap Repository Tracts* is comparable to the type of education the Gospels provide to readers in that their main intention relies on an eagerness to convey a didactic message and not to purely entertain readers. In *Strictures*, More advises parents to teach religious lessons through parables, guiding them along the same paths as she took her students (230). The tracts have many entries that include "God-like" figures whose purpose it is to shine a light on truth and justice, right and wrong. These characters are most often portrayed by a middle- or upper- class individual who offers the poor an opportunity for growth on the condition that they come to realize a situation in the same manner as the "God-like" character. In *Hester Wilmot*, Mrs. Jones suggests good living depends on "Whether those who say they *believe* in God, really *obey* him. Whether they who profess to *love* Christ keep his *commandments*" (*Tracts* 106). The tracts suggest that those who claim to be guided by God naturally know right from wrong. If the poor come to believe in God and his infallibility, they are, in short, trusting those in positions of authority. Therefore, the middle and upper class characters, or "Saviors" of the texts, are made to appear infallible. As the Gospel stories retell parables using fact and fiction, More drew upon ordinary life and her own imagination to portray her didactic lessons. Each tract includes a character in need and a character with the tools to help the other. The charitable character performs his or her acts in a manner that might be unusually accepting of others who are different from themselves. They are likely to possess a deep sense

of compassion and understanding that allow them to focus on an individual's needs. Each encounter can stand alone as a testimony to the genuine good character of the philanthropist. Through the use of parables, More asserts the importance of Biblical stories and raises the ego of the wealthy and charitable. She makes it acceptable to be on the receiving end of charity, and, most importantly, she describes how good deeds create good "gossip". Good "gossip" is not that different from the Gospels, in that they both rely on telling the stories of others. The Gospels record and remember the good deeds performed by Jesus that became the basis of the Christian religions. These stories, told over and over with variations, prove that the good deeds of one person can touch many, and that furthermore, they are capable of transforming a nation. From this perspective, charity creates opportunities for people to perform like Jesus, and the tracts provide examples of how one could do this in circumstances that arise in real life.

In some respects, Biblical role-playing goes against the precepts of the Church of England and Evangelicalism, religions that believed in self-instruction and self-reliance while emphasizing specific scriptural materials. One of the main differences between Evangelicalism and High Anglicanism lay in its teachings that participants do not need facilitators between themselves and God but that one's relationship to God be mediated only by individual conscience. Hannah More made the doctrine flexible by allowing laymen, and therefore not necessarily ordained clergy, to play the parts of spiritual guides not only to themselves but also to others. Acts of charity are a repeated trope in the Gospel whereby a character, divinely ordained by God, performs a good deed for the benefit of others; for example, Jesus befriends the outcasts of society such as tax collectors, lepers, and prostitutes. The charity that occurs in the *Tracts* is that of a life turn-around, one that provides a

reawakening to new levels of happiness and life satisfaction. Often these are momentous events, such as the Shepherd's attainment of a new house and employment as the Master of a Sunday school (51), or Betty Brown's ownership of a shop and her marriage (63). However, in *Cheap Repository Tracts*, the performance of a good deed is executed by middle and upper class participants who are acting as servants of God. These servants come to be depended upon for their ability to create improvements; in a sense, they are the prophets of God. Through acts of charity and good deeds the middle and upper classes were provided with a valuable opportunity to bring themselves closer to Jesus.

More, being keenly aware of a social order even amongst the working poor, saw to it that the establishment of her schools would bring people together within trusting relationships. Just as she personifies a "God-like" character in her tracts for the attainment of narrative authority, More used rhetoric that promoted the interests of farmers when she sought their support in the opening and attendance of her schools:

[She] learned to appeal to the prosperous farmers' self-interest. More would confide that she "had a little plan which [she] hoped would secure their orchards from being robbed, their rabbits from being shot, their game from being stolen, and which might lower the poor-rates" (Roberts, 1:339). More hoped to improve the material and spiritual prospects of the Cheddar poor, but she learned to pretend that her only wish was to fortify the existing social hierarchy (Nardin, "Problem of Poverty," 278).

Nardin argues that More only "pretend[s]" to support the social hierarchy. However, considering that her work did not take premeditated steps to enhance social climbing, I do not believe that More was simply pretending. Instead, I believe that she did support the hierarchy. While her plans were, first and foremost, to educate children spiritually, and although she often did "pretend" to have certain inclinations in order to gain the support of

the audience she was addressing, she did not encourage revolutionary thoughts along the lines of the French Revolution or Paine's writings. She never showed support for movements that intended to overthrow the government or the upper classes. Perhaps she was less concerned with social advancement beyond very acceptable parameters – her personal life and rise to popularity supports this claim. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that More's intentions cannot be seen as purely anti-revolutionary. The educational reformist agenda More attends to in *Cheap Repository Tracts* is often misrepresented, not unlike the goals for her schools. The concern at the forefront of her endeavors was literacy. To teach the poor to read was the first pivotal step towards a Biblically educated society, and therefore, a religiously moral community. Similar to More's premeditated plans with the farmers of the Mendips, she again cloaked her intentions for educational reform in a manner most acceptable to her audience. In the case of literacy, she adopted the use of Sunday schools, and later, the establishment of the Cheap Repository to implement her plans.

Sunday schools were quickly becoming one of the most socially acceptable forms of philanthropy of the eighteenth century. Part of their accessibility and popularity relied on the schools' desire to teach "literacy, enabling the pupils to read the Bible," and to inculcate "the socially desirable virtues of punctuality, cleanliness, and honesty" (Stott, *First Victorian*, 105). The Sunday School Movement began in the 1780s with Robert Raikes, an Evangelical churchman and editor of the *Gloucester Journal* (Lawson and Silver 239). It has since been suggested that Sunday schools were the first step towards an organized lay religion (Laqueur 231). Although the Sunday school programs broke the Sabbath, it was deemed an acceptable deviance due to the common thought that attendance kept children out of trouble and away from potentially negative influences in the home (Laqueur 90, 231). The teaching structure of

the Sunday school was comparable to other educational institutions already in place that based their reward program on honouring good behaviour and not necessarily intelligence (Vallone 76). The More sisters ran a variety of programs including day schools, evening classes for adults, boys' and girls' schools, and their greatest success in both number of buildings and enrollment population, the Sunday schools. All of the schools established and maintained by More strove to work within the boundaries of educational theories of the time, and by doing so, positively contributed to the reputation of the schools. However, the pedagogic conversation did not produce a set of standardized teaching practices. Therefore, More's greatest concern in the development of her schools was to please those persons who supported her establishments financially (often the upper-class). By operating within a non-threatening teaching procedure, More and her sisters may have minimized the grief they experienced during the disastrous Blagdon controversy during which all of More's controversial decisions were exposed and used as markers of her character. At least her theories on teaching were sound, if not her schools overall.

The daily routines of the More schools were premeditated; they taught children to read from approved texts such as the Bible and the *Tracts*, sang Anglican and Evangelical hymns along the lines of those composed by John Newton, and at some Sunday schools such as the one in Cheddar, a penny was paid for each chapter of scripture a child memorized (Lawson and Silver 166). Students were not, however, taught to write – not because of a rule based in Evangelical teaching or The Church of England, but in all likelihood due to the More sisters' caution in crossing social boundaries too freely. While More might not have been breaking a constitutional law by having poor children learn to write, it was a delicate matter when it came to the upper classes who felt the poor ought not to become overly and



needlessly educated. This would go for reading as well; however, Evangelical precepts placed such a strong emphasis on scripture that they saw reading as an exception so long as the texts were appropriate to the teaching environment. The expectation was that reading material would, for the most part, be limited to what had been published, and therefore be almost completely exclusive to the upper classes who could afford an education and writing as a career. So long as the accessibility of education that included writing remained dominantly within the scope of the upper classes, the written texts would be controlled by the agendas and propaganda of those classes. To teach the poor to write was to commit a social taboo. The concern was that the poor might come to gain higher life expectations if they were to become as equally educated as some of the wealthy men and women in England. Becoming equal in one area of learning necessitated the thought that the poor would come to expect new levels of equality in *all* areas of life. Such thoughts were yet again reminiscent of the French Revolution.

Reading served propaganda-motivated education far more than writing. To read is in many ways non-active: one cannot change the words on the page but can be encouraged to receive it a certain way. The ability to write one's own thoughts is an active endeavor that could be dangerous and lead to an increased production of radical literature such as that written by Paine. Eighteenth century culture witnessed a growth in authorship among the labouring classes, thereby troubling the established order. That being said, the political and often revolutionary concerns of the labouring classes were not regularly delivered to Parliament or selected for use in the established channels of print, and when they were, they were often harshly criticized. Some may have viewed writing as a practical skill, but in the highly politicized environment of the late eighteenth century it was a risk too great for many

educators working among the poor. From the perspective of the church, once the almost exclusive leaders of education and literacy, the prospect of increasing the able writing population led to greater concerns involving dissenters and challenges to religious authority. The illiteracy of the poor and working class was not seen as problematic, although that is how the matter is often viewed by today's standards. In the late eighteenth century, illiteracy was a welcome friend to the literate.

More is often quoted for her remark that children “bring into the world a corrupt nature and evil dispositions which it should be the great end of education to rectify” (*Strictures* 57). To her, children were not “innocent beings” but humans capable of good and evil depending on their early development and community influences (Thompson 441). Without education, and with a well-established cycle of severe poverty and sinfulness, reality dictated that young children were often participants in thievery. From the point of view provided in the tracts, these children, who parents neglected to provide with religious instruction, would not repent their sins; instead, they would be raised as liars and often commit crimes under the guidance of said parents. The development of a criminal child encouraged by poor parenting occurs in More's tract, *Black Giles the Poacher*. In part II, Giles has his sons steal apples from Widow Brown while she and the neighbours are in church on Sunday. Finally, when Dick finds himself in a classroom discussing the Ten Commandments, his guilt overwhelms him and he confesses to the crime. School becomes a confessional whereby sin can be eradicated and awaken believers to new beginnings, and in a sense, to a rebirth through faith; this act of rebirth is known by many including the Evangelicals as a conversion.

During the Romantic period, More's thoughts on the child as a “potential revolutionary”, and/or a potential “well-mannered and content subject” were well-received

theories already gaining vast popularity (Vallone 74). The key word is *potential*, for, although she was not a Calvinist, she believed that the child was a constructed entity and that education could “rectify” an “evil disposition”. This was the thinking of many Evangelicals, hence why it became vital for their message to reach the greatest population. They sought to ensure that one good set of character traits would dominate the minds of young listeners versus the other negative traits that in an uneducated or irreligious upbringing might go unchecked or even be encouraged. The education promoted at More’s schools was not the same as the education she and her sisters had themselves received as children: an education that had included a variety of subjects, levels, and goal motivations, not to mention differences in their educational purposes that, for the Mores, included female independence. Despite More’s obvious success that could never have existed without her educational upbringing, she seems to assume that she and her sisters were an exception to their own opinions of the limits of educational structures and curriculum. Instead, the education encouraged by More taught specific lessons geared to develop predefined outcomes; it was not an education for the sake of upward mobility, it was a social lesson in the essentiality and inherency of class structure. More’s father, Jacob, felt his daughters ought to be educated so as to ensure the possibilities of their futures, whereas More educated so as to ensure a restriction on the possibilities held in the futures of poor and working class children. Salvation in heaven and contentment with one’s earthly lot were positive rewards in theory but they did not grant inspiration regarding radical social possibilities or create much needed developments for the poor.

Perhaps More’s method of education sounds unsympathetic, indeed, even pretentious. The Romantic period saw an emphasis on the “mind that grows”, and the management of people emphasized their “subject[ion] to internalized observation and self-regulation” (Siskin

qtd. in McGovran 28). More did not wish to encourage seemingly unattainable dreams for the poor because such dreams, in their attempt to be fulfilled, would endanger her own social position and that of those within her social sphere. On that note, if the poor did attempt a revolution, they would likely be harshly punished and therefore, in some ways, More was protecting them from their own potential irrationality. More's social theories indicate her relationship to the English reformers of the 1790s who saw education as a way to tame the working poor by educating younger generations into being supportive of "a just and sensible social order" (Laswon and Silver 22). More did not intend to encourage upward mobility but to have each social class functioning fully and contently within their status while exhibiting Christian morals. She did not suggest that the working poor replace the wealthy, but that they live happily within their class; as it were, that they follow the plan God designed for them at their birth while still attempting to strategically improve their lives.

Mitzi Myers states: "Educated children presupposes educated mothers; cultural change depends on improved instruction" ("Governesses" 40). Hannah More and other reformist educators such as Sarah Trimmer acted as those so-called "mothers", instructors, and as Myers notes, the "governesses" to the poor who would otherwise receive no formal education. The "educated mothers" Myers refers to are the biological mothers; however, by Evangelical and social standards, these mothers were not always considered examples of good mothering. The title of "mother" became a metaphor for an instructor of life skills, and on that platform, More was indeed a mother. She believed that the work of mothers and female instructors was dignified as "no less than that of preserving the ark of the Lord" (*Strictures* 54). By adopting the role of a maternal figure, More could contribute to the developments of her pupils from the perspective of that child's particular familial social standing, which would define his/her

future. More felt it was her duty to supplement the role of the mother with her own spiritual education and philanthropic work. She wrote: “the chief purpose of christian knowledge is to promote the great end of a christian life” (*Essays* 171). She took this role very seriously in both public and private environments.

More encouraged all women of some means and good social standing to partake in a type of benevolent foster parenting whereby they could attempt to offset negative influences in the homes of poor children with the manners and values of middle and upper class households. In *Strictures*, she outlines the responsibility of women of wealth and influence to act in “appropriate exertion[s] of power, to raise the depressed tone of public morals, to awaken the drowsy spirit of religious principle, and to re-animate the dormant powers of active piety” (4). She continues to assert that “Christianity calls upon them to bear their decided testimony against every thing which is notoriously contributing to the public corruption” (30). In many respects, this meant that women had a responsibility to ensure that children were educated against corruption and irreligion. In all actuality, More’s methods of education were in tune with the forms popular in her day: studies regarding human nature and the morality of the soul, an encouragement of women’s education that was both modest and, I would add, feminine, and John Locke’s theory of character development (Nardin, “Educational Reform,” 214-15).

Philosopher John Locke’s concerns with children were less interested in what they were specifically taught than in *how* they were taught. Like More after him, Locke focused on the inner being of the child, and on the development of character, while supporting the claim that the production of a solid interior would exhibit itself through the disposition and actions of an individual. Rather than teach lessons that may or may not be useful to the child, Locke

and More thought that by producing inner character development the child would gain the greatest and most lasting life lessons. Virtue, as Locke understood it and arguably More as well, was not an outward characteristic, but an inner disposition. He explains in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) that “a virtuous and able Man must be made so within” (182). His essay also suggests, “*Esteem* and *Disgrace* are, of all others, the most powerful incentives to the Mind... If you can get into children a love of Credit, and an apprehension of Shame and Disgrace, you have put into them the true Principle, which will constantly work, and incline them to the right... shame them in their Faults... and make them in love with the Pleasure of being well thought on” (185). By raising the personal expectations of a child’s mind, educators hoped to raise pupils into self-aware beings who would feel poorly after a wrongful act and feel bad after a Christian act.

In the case of More’s lessons, both in the classroom and didactically inserted into *Cheap Repository Tracts*, the “love of Credit” is both a heavenly reward to be received in the afterlife and a goodness of character that creates a happy life while on earth. For example, in her tract, *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, the shepherd’s daughter, Molly, runs out of the house to greet her father, “plump [and] cherry-cheek[ed]... with a smile on her young happy face” (More, *Tracts*, 37). Although the family is poor and her mother is “sickly”, Molly remains a face of health, innocence and joy. On meeting Mr. Johnson, Molly curtsies and is prompted by her father to mind her manners, an indication that her parents have tried to teach her in the ways of a moral and mannered education. The shepherd also says that his wife “breeds up [their] children to such habits of industry”, not unlike More’s execution of education (37). In part two of the story, the reader will discover that the shepherd and his wife set such an excellent example of parenting that they would be promoted to the position of Master of a

Sunday school, a high attainment by More's standards. More aims to teach her understanding of right and wrong that enables children to mature into specific ways of thinking and reasoning that follows the principles of the English class system. Molly is portrayed as an ideal and esteemed character because she found happiness in her situation. The reward for one's acceptance of class in this life is simply to be "well thought on", such as parental appreciation, good standing within one's church and community, and respect from the morally upright. The hope is that children will develop into "self-regulating mechanism[s]" that are constantly aware of an omniscient viewer mindful of the morality in every thought and action they possess (O'Malley, *Modern Child*, 14). For most, that viewer is God; however, in the *Tracts*, that viewer could also be the main characters and the omniscient narrator who tends to unearth or is naturally aware of the secrets of the poor.

The *tabula rasa* was a main metaphor of Locke's, meaning "blank page" and referred to the mind of the child (Laqueur 48). He believed it was the role and duty of parents, caregivers and teachers, to fill a child's blank pages with goodness, and therefore, as More put it, "fix the destination for eternity" (qtd. in Stott, "Educational Agenda," 48). According to a Lockean model, by properly educating and disciplining children at a young age, one increased the chances of that child becoming an adult that would generate the same principles and beliefs as he or she had been instructed in. Locke used the example of manners to argue that lessons ought to be taught "by example", so that "children, if kept out of ill company, will take a pride to behave themselves prettily" (189). Hence why More's *Cheap Repository Tracts* and most of her school programs target children and youth, an impressionable and malleable age group that has the lengthiest future to set examples for others and to apply the lessons to their daily lives. Unfortunately, like Locke and Wilberforce, More believed that inclinations toward

virtue were not natural; they needed to be given proper attention and care to ensure a positive end result (Laqueur 47).

More's belief in an innate wickedness possessed by children can, in my opinion, be viewed in two ways: firstly, as an innately polluted mind that must be cleansed, or secondly, as a mind created by bad examples from poor parenting in a child's early years that acted so quickly upon the mind of the young that he/she knows no other way of thinking. Although she agreed with Locke's notion that children were indeed "rational creatures" (Locke 184), she knew that there was a fine line between physical discipline and the exertion and necessity of an authority figure. She reminded teachers and parents that they were "Not educating cherubims and seraphims, but men and women; *creatures...*" (*Essays* 151).<sup>2</sup> This belief was translated into her lack of physical discipline at her schools and her insistence on rewarding exemplary behaviour through praise and with small, useful gifts, such as food (Stott, "Educational Agenda," 53-4). By consistently relying on Locke's philosophy regarding instructional choices, More was able to reform education while following one of the dominant educational theories of her day. Like many other Romantic period writers such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Lamb, More was compelled to believe that the mind of a child was malleable; without that standing theory she would not have had the same basis of support for her work (McGovran 25). Given the opportunity to literally build a young nation through her literary tools, More jubilantly attempted to create Evangelical beings while asserting a spectrum of hierarchical standings.

In a letter to the Duchess of Gloucester, More said she was "particularly sedulous in inspiring young persons with a right view and a sound judgment in religious matters, even

---

<sup>2</sup> My emphasis.



though [she] was sure they would be drawn into perpetual errors by their mixing with the world” (*Correspondence* 480). In the case of many of her pupils in the Mendips, she aimed to teach women who sought husbands and families how to best fulfill the duties most apparent in those specific roles (Nardin, “Educational Reform,” 219). The positions students would eventually inhabit in their working or personal lives necessitated the type of learning they would receive early on in their lives. Her educational theories were more concerned with the development of the mind and the building of a moral character than the ability to entertain or be artistic. More’s father, Jacob More, had operated in much the same manner in regards to his own daughters. He provided them with an education in the hopes of increasing their attraction to prospective husbands, or, if they did not marry, with enough education to ensure their careers as teachers that would enable them to support themselves financially (Jones 3). Despite the broad education they received, the More sisters did not have educators who focused on the fine arts and fashionable learning. They tended to be focused on the subjects that they might have to teach one day as governesses or instructors in schools.

Education was a gift, it was not an expectation for everyone, and therefore whatever lessons were received ought to benefit one’s future; that being said, there was a striking double standard within educational expectations. While on one hand, the poor were meant to receive lessons pertinent to their lot in life, the wealthy classes took it upon themselves to praise their young who were educated despite the uselessness of their studies. It was as though the more frivolous the industry the more worthy of elitist praise it became. This elite group inhabited a leisurely position in which they could afford to spend time and money on what might be otherwise considered expendable learning. That means that even though theories on the mind of a child and how to educate them were speaking to *all* children equally, as they

are physically born with the same physical body and mind, the execution of the theories varied vastly depending on class opportunities.

Catherine Macaulay Graham, a longtime friend and fellow Bluestocking with More, wrote in *Letters for Literary Ladies* (1790):

They [girls] are told indeed, that they must abstain from those vices which are contrary to their personal happiness, or they will be regarded as criminals, both by God and man; but all the higher parts of rectitude, every thing that ennobles our being, and that renders us both innoxious and useful, is either not taught, or is taught in such a manner as to leave no proper impression on the mind (qtd. in More, *Coelebs*, 423).

Both More and Macaulay saw an overemphasis of the fine arts, specifically in the education of women. They felt that the most useful lessons to a woman's future were lacking attention. In *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1799), More cites one example when she writes, "Since, then, there is a season when the youthful must cease to be young, and the beautiful to excite admiration; to learn to grow old gracefully is, perhaps, one of the rarest and most valuable arts which can be taught to a woman" (*Strictures* 59). The power sought by leading female thinkers involved in women's reform movements was not grounded in improving one's ability to paint or play the piano, it was found in reforms targeting preexisting gender spheres. The accomplishments of young ladies tended to assert these gendered spheres by narrowly defining the capabilities and desired skill sets of women. On the other hand, many female reformists wanted to recreate the very basis of such spheres and the oversimplified requirements of the female sex. To constantly motivate young women to become accomplished (but not expert) in the fine arts undermined the potentiality of their minds. In reality, the education deemed frivolous and elitist, furthered stereotypes on what women were capable of learning and teaching based on their gender. Reformers whose leanings were

comparable to More's supported the notion that a woman possessed a gendered power and that she ought to use it; however, the logistics in regard to the exertion of that power were in need of refinement. The home, the upbringing of children, and women's extensive philanthropic efforts were appropriate venues for their opinions to be expressed. Following More's model of audience-specific conversation, women were told that there were *ways* of reasoning with their husbands and authority figures. As exemplified by More's life story, women, from disguised and tactfully rhetorical perspectives, might find themselves surprised by the capabilities and opportunities available to their gender.

One of More's frequently quoted lines reads: "To teach the poor to read without providing them with *safe* books, has always appeared to me an improper measure" (qtd. in Richardson 120). Mary Wollstonecraft, in *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1787), suggests that female youth are "mostly fond of stories, and proper ones would improve them even while they are amused" (qtd. in More, *Coelebs*, 420). Indeed, in the notion that females are in desperate need of educational reformation, Wollstonecraft's sentiments are not unlike those of More. She even wrote moral texts designed to educate the young with Christian values, not unlike More's purposes in *Cheap Repository Tracts*. In *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters*, Wollstonecraft asserts "reading [as] the most rational employment"; she further discusses reading material when she encourages texts in which "instruction and amusement are blended" (369-70). Regarding educational instruction, she suggests that "[t]he mind is not, cannot be created by the teacher, though it may be cultivated, and its real powers found out" (370). It seems that Wollstonecraft and More did, at times, have coinciding opinions. Nevertheless, Wollstonecraft's desire for state-supported education was far broader than the education More claimed for children. Wollstonecraft was also a supporter of the opposing

children's book culture that believed that fancy and imagination were necessary tools in writing effective children's fiction. Such instances of conflict, as well as their radically opposing politics, may have been why the two are not noted as personal acquaintances but only in reputation. However, despite the two authors' similarities on some subjects, specifically the demand for education linked to the advancement of women's roles, the two refused to read each other's work and never joined forces for the profit of a women's movement. One can only imagine how the late-Victorian period may have developed had More and Wollstonecraft fought side-by-side for renewed female power and educational reform.

In the late eighteenth century, the topic of what constituted "proper" reading materials designed for the pleasure and learning of children gained public and literary attention. At this time, two sides were formed in the argument: one that was conservative and didactic and another that encouraged the use of fun and delight for educational purposes. Not surprisingly, Hannah More sided with the conservative side sometimes called the "cursed Barbauld crew", termed by Charles Lamb who said that the group failed to appreciate "traditional children's culture" (qtd. in McGovran 36). More's opponents saw her work as stifling the imaginations and natural growth of childhood by restricting stories to dull religious cloaks. The "Barbauld crew", consisting of rational and conservative children's writers, wanted to replace the traditional and pre-established fairytale literature and chapbook "filth" that, in their thinking, damaged the development of children. Lynne Vallone suggests that:

Both Anna Laetitia Barbauld and Hannah More attempted through their writing to raise the morals of their Child Readers by revealing Scriptural injunctions and exhorting their readers – gently in the case of Barbauld, and rather aggressively in More's – to respect God, themselves, and their neighbors. Barbauld and More – albeit with differences in literary genre and

audience – articulated a program of social reform dedicated to the *spiritual* equality of believers in a materially heterogeneous world (83).

Sarah Trimmer is another example of a female author who promoted “*spiritual* equality”. Following the theory of Locke’s *tabula rasa*, Evangelical/religious fiction gained strength as educators attempted to mold a certain set of doctrines into the mind of a child from a young age. Vallone suggests that Evangelical/religious fiction promotes “a vigorously ideological program of social control by attempting to prescribe and regulate the ‘nourishment’ upon which children feed” (75). Yet Hannah More never attempts to evade such accusations. She states her purpose of religious conversion continuously through her life and in the legacy of her works. In response to Vallone, one might suggest that it was More’s almost obsessive goal of mass conversion and promotion of Evangelical zeal that allowed her to achieve her personal goals and public fame, for it was her hope to change the face of religion in England and that ambition provided her with the energy and commitment to strive in the causes she supported.

For More, the passionate emotions such as scenes of romantic love did not belong in children’s literature, unless of course that love was translated to a love of God. She believed that stories involving such passions could actually cause harm to children: “They teach that no duty exists which is not prompted by feeling”, wrote More, “that impulse is the main spring of virtuous actions, while laws and principles are only unjust restraints” (*Strictures* 34). Flaunting stories of passion in front of young minds was thought to increase the likelihood of them acting out similar behavioural patterns. Showing a child something that is forbidden is the surest sign that they will, at some point, break the rules. Similar to a good parent, More attempted to restrict what her students saw and read. She hoped that by reducing the “filth” children

were exposed to they would be less likely to accept or partake in such activities. As much as More is ridiculed for her conservative teaching, her main concern was to protect the impressionable minds of children; hence, why she so often confronted parents who failed to allow their children to attend class on a regular basis. She felt that the more time students spent in the classroom the greater the likelihood of them developing a good character.

However, the realities of eighteenth century rural lifestyles restricted many young people from attending any formal school whatsoever; hence More's efforts to spread religious lessons in a form that might extend beyond the classroom through the circulation of cheap literature.

CHEAP REPOSITORY.

BLACK GILES the Poacher.

WITH THE

History of Widow Brown's Apple-Tree.

PART II.



Sold by J. MARSHALL,

(Printer to the CHEAP REPOSITORY for Religious and Moral Tracts) No. 17, Queen-Street, Cheap-side, and No. 4, Aldermay Church-Yard, and R. WHITE, Piccadilly, LONDON.

By S. HAZARD, at Bath, and by all Booksellers, Newsmen, and Hawkers, in Town and Country. Great Allowance will be made to Shopkeepers and Hawkers.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

On 4s. 6d. per 100.—2s. 6d. for 50.—1s. 6d. for 25.

[Entered at Stationers' Hall.]

Figure 3: Black Giles the Poacher with some Account of a Family Who had rather Live by their Wits than their Work. Part I. [London]: J. Marshall; and R. White, 1796.

## The Tracts



“A very small book,  
At a very small charge,  
To learn them to read  
Before they grow large”<sup>3</sup>

Victor Neuburg claims that the first religious tract compilation was published in 1643. *The Souldier’s Pocket Bible* was sixteen pages in length and was initially published for mass distribution to Cromwell’s army (*Popular Literature*, 249). Although it was relatively similar to the form of the chapbook, its didactic intentions caused it to be overlooked in accounts of chapbook history. Nevertheless, the *Pocket Bible* remains relative to historical studies of cheap tracts and hybrid materials as an example of inexpensive reading material. All in all, *The Souldier’s Pocket Bible* and *Cheap Repository Tracts* are similar in that they are both representatives of literature that embodies quality moral values cloaked in a cheap generic form. However, Cromwell’s army held a different set of values than those urged by More in her tracts, especially in terms of militancy, that in More’s case, might have appeared too close to revolutionary thinking. That being said, both Cromwell’s army and More agreed in puritan values and obedience; the true differences lay in their varying political environments. In the early years of print history, a large proportion of published work was classified as religious; however, these texts did not necessarily appeal to the intellects of early Romantic period readers of popular literature who tended to prefer the escapist tales typically found in chapbooks (Jackson 226). Tales of romance, adventure, fantasy, jealousy, and the woes and pleasures of the passions, lined the pages of chapbooks containing inexpensive stories that were guaranteed to entertain and were sold by street hawkers throughout England and

---

<sup>3</sup> Cover of a Kendrew Chapbook printed in Neuburg *The Penny Histories* 39.



Europe. Hannah More despised the chapbook genre because she thought it polluted young, impressionable minds. In 1796, in a letter to Zachary Macaulay, More wrote: “though it is easy to furnish shops with our own tracts, it requires great influence to expel the *poison* of the old sort” (More, *Correspondence*, 468).<sup>4</sup> In fact, the editor of her most widely read correspondence, William Roberts, suggests *Cheap Repository Tracts* was written “by way of counteraction to the *poison* which was continually flowing through the channel of vulgar, licentious, and seditious publications” (More, *Correspondence*, 485).<sup>5</sup> Parallel to More’s growing distaste for the chapbook, the reality of eighteenth century culture, and the satisfaction of chapbook readers, there was an expansion in population of the reading public that worked to the financial advantage of every writer, printer, and hawker in England. While taking increased literacy rates and interest in reading into consideration, More soon realized her concern with literature was simply a matter of turning the public eye towards her didactic tracts and having them discard their irreligious chapbooks for something of real value. There was nothing wrong with more people reading, it was what they were reading that disturbed More.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, literacy rates reached 50-75 percent for men and 15-40 percent for women throughout England (Pedersen 99). Building on Locke’s theory that the minds of children were like blank pages, parents and instructors began to take these early years more seriously, thereby increasing demand for children’s educational and reading materials. “Childhood was the preparatory period used by wise parents (and a moral society) to plant the seeds of religious training, schooling, and whatever social forms or occupational skills the child was destined to by birth” (Jackson 22). That being said, the so-called “destiny”

---

<sup>4</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>5</sup> My emphasis.

of children was also vastly changing. The books by John Newbery and his colleagues in the early to mid-eighteenth century, witnessed this change and used their stories to encourage children to dream of a life beyond their birthright, attainable through hard work, virtue, and education (Jackson 171). This change in social thinking led to an increased demand for cheap, simple literature designed for children and their early education years in the hope of advancing social mobility and success in life. Later, in the Victorian period, the literacy debate would not focus on *who* should be taught to read but on *how to control* what was being read (Brantlinger 95). The reading public was not only expanding, it was reforming people's thoughts on what literacy meant to the larger community and country. As it was, literacy was becoming less monopolized by an aristocratic education and more part of a basic education that was accessible to the working class and even the poor. Printers could now compete in different markets and specialize within specific genres for the wealthy and the poor, the young and the old, the extremely educated and the barely literate. The new wave of exposable markets generated an increase in the overall production of reading material, number of publishing houses, range of authors, and varieties of genre options for the pleasures of the reading public.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, religious tracts and chapbooks constituted the only inexpensive reading material available in England. More was upset by the materials found in many chapbooks, and in the same letter to Macaulay she wrote: "Vulgar and indecent penny books were always common, but speculative infidelity, brought down to the pockets and capacities of the poor, forms a new era in our history" (473). To counteract the literature More speaks of, she chose to write didactically while purposely competing with popular understandings of "cheap" literature. Chapbooks were usually bought and sold for a

small cost, whereas religious tracts were initiated by philanthropic groups and freely distributed (Neuburg, *Popular Education*, 127). However, despite the seemingly uneconomic status of the tracts, there were financial gains to be made in their production. Many philanthropic groups spent their money liberally to see to it that the working classes were educated and hopefully converted to religion, and it was the publishers who were able to benefit most from the agendas of these groups. Andrew O'Malley notes how chapbooks and religious tracts, both forms of inexpensive literature, created what he calls "*transitional*" or "*hybrid*" literary works ("Chapbook Residue," 20). He describes these transitional texts in regards to the works by John Newbery and John Marshall, both of whom wrote for an audience of children and experimented with ideas involving social class structures and class identity. These *transitional* texts melded traditionally cheap literature with the agendas of new reform movements in an effort to make contemporary ideas seem less obscure, if only due to the context in which they were found.

It is not until the end of the eighteenth century that commercial publishing of children's literature became an acceptable specialty within the print industry, though it continued to be in constant competition with chapbooks (Shavit 420). As the school systems expanded, the demand for children's books and instructional manuals escalated and simple books of ABCs and didactic fiction became necessary to the print market. Also, O'Malley suggests that the ownership of written material was gradually becoming more author-based ("Chapbook Residue" 22). Although storytellers often overlapped their plots and didactic messages, many authors created a personal signature, such as Hannah More's "Z". These designations and the author's writing style, voice, religious background, etc, were meant to compile a persona for the writer, a set of values and an individual perspective that was literally

owned by the creator and displayed in their productions. However, in More's use of an alias, "Z" could be anyone who wrote for the Repository. Considering the variety of contributors who partook in the creation of the tracts, readers could recognize the work of the repository due to More's selective editorial skills, and therefore, she could lay claim to all the tracts in one way or another. Her position as editor meant that she alone controlled what was published and could therefore ensure that all entries fit her "brand" of didacticism. Nevertheless, the success of specific tracts was not credited to one person but to the Repository as a whole, with the knowledge that the symbolic owner and face of the Repository was, of course, Hannah More. Printers and authors gained reputations through the form of the material they encouraged and the social and political messages involved in their texts. Readers seeking new work could often rely on printers or writers they had previously purchased good work from and return to that printer or group of writers to replenish themselves with similar reading materials. Additionally, this grouping was to the benefit of teachers who could find material similar to that which had been productive in past lessons.

Tract societies were also gaining popularity at this time and enabled readers to find a series of works that embodied one spirit and were commonly of the same mind as the readers themselves. The influence of committee and board membership in the tract societies, as well as their subscribers, created an influx in publishing driven by the opinions of the editor and supporters; for example, the Association for the Reformation of Manners subscribed to the Cheap Repository (More, *Correspondence*, 459). In 1698, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge was established, and, like the Soldier's Pocket Bible before it, sent 15,500 copies of the tract, *The Souldier's Monitor*, by Dr. Josiah Woodward, to the troops in Marlborough's army in 1704 and 1705 (Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, 250-51). The Cheap Repository was not

established until 1795. Henry Thornton, in words much like those seen in More's letter to Macaulay, wrote in an early advertisement, "The object of this institution is the circulation of Religious and Useful Knowledge as an antidote to the poison continuously flung thro' the channel of vulgar and licentious publications" (qtd. in Stott, *First Victorian*, 174). As the Repository gained a reputation for being both Evangelical and non-sectarian, it became a huge success among the middle classes, and furthermore, had a subscription list that was more than two-fifths female (Stott, *First Victorian*, 176-8). Considering how few women were both literate and wealthy enough to subscribe to such societies, this statistic is quite unusual. More's acquaintances in the Bluestocking Circle may have had some influence over these numbers as they themselves likely subscribed and encouraged others to follow their example. Mrs. Boscawen was a Bluestocking member who shared a correspondence with More throughout the period of the tract publications and praised More's work, saying, "nothing can equal your poetry but your prose" and remarked that she was supporting More's work by attempting to "attract some subscribers among our ladies" (More, *Correspondence*, 467). Under More's leadership, the Cheap Repository continued to operate under the same system as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, whereby they sold their works at discount rates for private individuals to buy in larger stock and then distribute cheaply or at no cost at all to those of lesser means (Neuburg, *Popular Education*, 130). In theory, the plan seemed sound but what was effective for one publication appeared not to have had the same success with others.

The Religious Tract Society was established a year after *Cheap Repository Tracts* concluded in 1799, and made it their policy to "produce tracts in which the Evangelical message was more explicitly set out" (Stott, "Educational Agenda," 54). New societies continued to flourish into the 1800s, coat-tailing on what Richardson notes as "class-

literature”, in which the material is specifically designed for the working classes and for children (Richardson 120). In 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society began distributing cheap copies of the Bible to the masses (Maxwell and Trumpener 322). Through their diligent service to the cause between 1804 and 1819, two-and-a-half million copies of the Bible were distributed in England and abroad (Richardson 45). In 1817, twenty years after *Cheap Repository Tracts*, a revival was attempted under a London committee; however, despite More’s participation, this particular tract society did not have the success of the initial Repository (Hopkins 211-12). However, popular tract societies were not the only developing form of publishing taking flight at this time; the newspaper was also gaining political significance. The newspaper was capable of reaching a large number of people at a low cost, and, furthermore, papers had more frequent circulations that allowed the societies to publish up-to-date propaganda that created a necessary support and anticipation to their causes. Notable pioneers in the industry include the publications of The London Corresponding Society, composed of English Reformers proclaiming solidarity with the French Revolutionaries, and the Clapham Sect’s newspaper called *The Christian Observer*, in which they promoted their causes and worked in tandem with, yet independently from, the Evangelical paper, *The Christian Guardian* (Hylson-Smith 64). In 1822, following the example of the Evangelicals, the Methodists began a tract society (Neuburg, *Popular Literature*, 253). The best tactic in frequent use by these religious tract societies was the lowering of the cost to the customer and producing a greater quantity of tracts, instead of providing unneeded attention to the tracts’ physical quality, thus allowing many societies to publish without having to be extensively wealthy or well-connected.

Books for children, albeit for varying purposes, shared one common denominator: their chapbook rival (Shavit 419). Chapbooks had a powerful control over the reading public and the printing market because they were able to satisfy the tastes of many while keeping production prices low. They were, by today's terminology, popular print, described by Newcomb as "miscellaneous print that reached far-flung markets, including but not restricted to entry-level readers, objects of a commercial but not abominable nature" (Newcomb 65). It was to the great advantage of hawkers and booksellers to create a solid inventory of these inexpensive materials, as they tended to be quick sellers and had a consistent turn-around rate with new tales frequently being added to the market. Lori Neuburg has composed a list of London printers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that includes over 25 chapbook printers, not to mention the 140 that were operating in the provinces (Pedersen 98). Needless to say, there was no shortage of chapbook literature. The chapbook, most commonly produced in a soft cover if any cover at all, had between 4 and 24 pages, and is said to have measured 3 1/2 inches by 6, and selling for between 1d. and 3d (Stott, *First Victorian*, 171). Historians tend to have different definitions of the chapbook, although the basic concepts are fairly standard. Nevertheless, for More's purposes, the important part of chapbook culture was the created conventions that she was able to adopt and mold to best suit her intentions. For example, John Feather describes the mid-eighteenth century chapbook as "a 12-page book, with a crude woodcut illustration on its title page, and a closely printed text set in abominable type on the cheapest available paper" (qtd. in Newcomb 61). Despite the small discrepancies, it is clear that the chapbook was not created for the libraries of the wealthy but for the majority of the population composed of the struggling middle class or poor. Likewise, the stories found within the books tended to amuse first and educate second.

The tales were fantastical or passionate, meant to entertain and excite, in accordance with Susan Pedersen's label of them as "escapist literature" (105). For example, in the ballad of *Patient Joe*, Joseph has his lunch stolen by a dog and, while busy tracking down his dinner, the mine he works in falls in and, in an odd turn of events, his life is saved by mischance (More, *Tracts*, 119). The action of the story, Joe's involvement with the dog, captures the attention of the audience, but the real message is happening behind the scenes. Joe is as surprised as his audience, exclaiming, "How cou'd it appear to a short-sighted sinner,/ That my life would be sav'd by the loss of my dinner?" (121). The chances of this situation occurring in real life are slim, but to More the episode is effective in its ability to spread a didactic lesson. Due to the range of adventurous stories and the compact size, and despite their original intention to please working class adults, the chapbook gained attention from young readers. The appeal to adults and the younger generations provided the chapbook with even greater power and success and it soon became a concern to printers and writers of the more serious sort.

Evangelical and religious authors made efforts to ensure that chapbooks not be the only material read by the working poor. Religious and moral chapbooks often centered on, but were not limited to, sermons, prayers, hymns, abolitionist material, stories of conversions, dialogues between heavenly creatures and humans, the histories of well-known Biblical characters, and parables from the Bible (Weiss 31). Although specific storylines varied, they always included an underlying religious message that came to define them as a whole. John Marshall, one of the common printers of *Cheap Repository Tracts*, had a reputation for publishing chapbooks of a didactic nature, and S. Hazard, another of the *Tracts* printers, was a well-known publisher of chapbooks. Apparently, behind-the-scenes supporters and contributors to the Cheap Repository threatened and bribed the chapbook sellers to replace



their regular books with *Tracts* (Maxwell and Trumpener 227). By choosing these particular printers, More was able to disguise her spiritually didactic tracts as simple chapbook literature and thereby gain the trust of loyal chapbook readers without appearing irreligious. Most books printed by Marshall attempted to negotiate reading material as a means of satisfying the whims of children and the pedagogical emphasis desired by parents (O'Malley, "Chapbook Residue," 29). Ever the propagandist, More planned to create chapbooks that appeared to follow the same physical layout and included exciting storylines but that were of a predominately didactic and Evangelical nature. Previously, religious tracts tended to be un-illustrated and printed in close type without much, if any, storyline (Neuburg, *Popular Education*, 127-8). Although some of the tales were thought to be entertaining, they were by no means as intriguing as the stories commonly found in a book that physically appeared to be the same (the chapbook). The tracts that were written by More herself are known to represent a balance between pleasure and didacticism best, yet still do not entertain with the ease or imagination of a seasoned chapbook author. Her correspondence indicates that she sometimes turned down tract and ballad submissions for the Repository because they did not meet her literary and/or religiously didactic standards. Any similarities that existed between More's writings and the chapbook genre were deliberate and stemmed from More's studies of other popular chapbooks that she purposely used as guides for her own work (Pedersen 106). Under disguise, Hannah More attempted to steal readers away from the regular chapbooks pervading the literary markets and convince readers to opt for a morally fulfilling alternative.

Considering More's distaste for chapbooks and her overt agenda to supplement them with her own books, one would assume that the purchasers of her work were mostly composed of the same readers as the regular chapbook audience; however, that was not entirely the case.

Due to the high moral calibre of her work and the support of her wealthy friends, it became common for middle and upper class families to purchase More's tracts. Through her social networking in powerful and often elitist circles, More introduced new groups of readers into the chapbook genre, but also, into a new literary sphere where the upper classes could exert their influence. Hence why chapbooks, although accountable for opening new reform movements in children's literature, also determined "the character of the texts themselves" (Shavit 421). By providing didactic messages within the texts, More increased the applicability of the texts to a greater assortment of readerships and extended the appeal of popular literature to the upper classes. *Cheap Repository Tracts* were breaking cultural classifications of library-intended material, often appealing to classes who had previously shunned the whole chapbook genre. The material found in chapbooks was becoming less confined to a pre-established readership and becoming more applicable to broader reading public. Carl Fisher notes that More's audience was double-coded and, furthermore, he proposes that the two groups were the less literate and the growing literate youth (6). However, the market dictated two slightly different audience groups: working class children and adults (as noted by Fisher and intended by More), and more surprisingly, the middle classes.

Firstly, the working class and the poor, literate, somewhat literate and illiterate, were purposely targeted by More. One need not look further than the woodcuts adorning the title pages of her tracts to witness the extra details provided so that those without strong literacy skills could gain some understanding of the text. John Lee, a frequent engraver of the tracts, tried to create illustrations that matched the stories within the book, and in the process, developed chapbook woodcuts that were superior to competing illustrations of the time (Stott, *First Victorian*, 175). The audience, composed namely of the working poor, were targeted by

the initial publications of the tracts in their chapbook or broadside form that were either purchased in bulk by the wealthy for free distribution or sold for a penny on the street. However, when More realized that her tracts were frequently missing the targeted audience and frequently being purchased by the middle or upper classes, she wrote to Zachary Macaulay, “the purpose next month to being to print two different editions of the same tract, one of a handsome appearance for the rich, the other on coarser paper” (*Correspondence* 473). She hoped that any profit gained through the expensive editions could be used to increase the production of the cheaper tracts that could then be given away to charity schools, the army, navy, prisons, workhouses, factories, parishes and private families (Smith 95). These annual collected volumes of a fashionable design and higher print quality were intended to line the walls of libraries and the broadsides and ballads were also produced in a format designed for easy binding and storage (Stott, *First Victorian*, 176-77). This further suggests that the tracts were not considered merely ephemeral, despite their cheap and popular status.

Indeed, the idea of melding moral values and chapbook forms and themes became a growing trend that was further developed by such writers as Maria Edgeworth, Thomas Day, Sarah Trimmer, and Dorothy Kilner (O'Malley, “Chapbook Residue,” 18). Nevertheless, despite their best efforts, the anti-chapbook campaign rallied by More failed and as the nineteenth century progressed imaginative books became widely accepted by adults and children of all classes and of many religious and political persuasions. Materials previously labeled as “trashy” were being published by respectable booksellers and expanded beyond the confines of the chapbook genre (Jackson 226). More’s mission against Paine’s work is difficult to judge in levels of success but it is quite clearly the subject given the most attention in the last few decades of criticism. However, the tracts can be reviewed in other ways that would have

held little concern to Paine – their form. In some ways, one might conclude that More’s extension of the chapbook’s popularity into the middle classes backfired on her, allowing the form to gain popularity in previously uninterested classes. However, if one’s opinion suggests that her main purpose for writing was Evangelical conversion, as I personally believe, then any success of her mass marketing campaigns must be regarded as a positive step towards a growing Evangelical public. Comparing her two agendas in *Cheap Repository Tracts*, which she most longed to triumph over is an interesting question: to combat Paine and revolutionary writing, or to minimize the popularity of the chapbook? I would argue that her crusade against frivolous literature was her greatest personal concern simply because it was thought to pull people away from religious practices and tendencies, but, having said that, More’s intentions do not necessarily reflect the concerns of those who supported her endeavors. Her interest in education and good parenting suggests that literature held the capacity to invoke a religiously sound message and, therefore, instruct in the building of individual character, and in a larger sense, the reform of a nation. More continuously attempts to persuade readers and students to rely on God and religion for personal and social improvements and not blame the instabilities facing the political sphere and government for their lot in life. That being said, her tracts convey political undertones that are arguably a means of pleasing her subscribers and financial supporters rather than fulfilling her own desires.

Looking more closely at the tracts themselves and delving beyond their disguising form, it is apparent that they were not composed solely of religious doctrine but actually made attempts to entertain, if only minutely. The ballad of *Patient Joe* tells of a near-death experience with a comedic result, as Joe says his “life would be sav’d by the loss of [his] dinner” (121). The thefts in *Black Giles the Poacher* are exciting and the moment when Dick is

made to feel guilty at school is suspenseful and takes up half the length of the second part. More, like any entertaining author, attempted to maintain the interest of her readers through typical methods of suspense not only within individual tracts but also in her ability to postpone full conclusions and disclosure. Many of her tracts fall into two parts, such as *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* and *The History of Hester Wilmot*, all in an effort to keep the audience participating with the stories even after they are finished reading. As Nardin thoughtfully supposes, “she allowed herself to use one or two literary techniques she knew to be suspect, but she selected those which, in her view, posed the smallest moral threat to her intended audience... the artistic results were unimpressive” (“Perils” 7). I disagree with Nardin on this point, for although the delivery of the tracts is simple and repetitive, they were impressive because they were successful in developing into religiously intended literature. They were not intended to be of high literary quality; they were, first and foremost, material to be easily read and understood by children and the poor. One does not judge ABC books as “unimpressive”, but in regards to their ability to fulfill their duties as a text. In short, *Cheap Repository Tracts* were impressive in many ways but not necessarily in their calibre of literary writing style. The majority of the tracts follow a basic plot outline: the main character (of the poor or working class) is put to some kind of trial that is witnessed by the middle or upper class character. If the main character responds by displaying good Christian morals, he or she is rewarded; however, if they act poorly, they will suffer and, often, repent. The wealthy character routinely *saves* the main character in a dramatic turn of events (Smith 93). The language is simple, as “complexity is described as irrelevant to meaning...the ignorance of the listeners does not imply their moral deprivation” (Smith 92). More realized that her work did not have to be defined as high literature to be worthy of moral instruction. In writing strategically, yet

simply, More attempted to elicit a common language that could be shared by both her middle and working class readerships while also sending the message that middle class values are desirable to all people regardless of class distinction. Through her use of simple language she exposed a sense of unity among all her different readerships, and perhaps it was a united patriotic sentiment regarding, in the least, language, and in the most, country, that More meant to publicize in her tracts. Her continuous striving to assert a united religion is evident in all of her tracts and furthers her ambition to create, at the very core of the matter, religious partnerships among readers.

Something in *Cheap Repository Tracts* was quite obviously working in More's favour, for records indicate that by July of 1795, 700,000 copies had been sold and by March 1796 that number had reached two million (Jackson 177). A problem appears, however, in the suspicious "sold", for although distribution numbers were high, statistics regarding the actual number of people *reading* the tracts may have offered a different picture. Knowing that people were receiving copies did not mean that they used them for their intended purposes – to be read. How many tracts and ballads became kindling to a fire? The Harvard Collection contains a surviving seventy-two, "twenty-two are Marshall's later, rather sensational, imprints. A further substantial portion are ballads and stories, and only three are from the weighty 'Sunday readings' that made up almost one-third of the Cheap Repository" (Pedersen 113).

Neuburg suggests that even among those who read the tracts, the variety of audiences would have led people to find different parts of the text relevant. The textual reading was the same, yet the messages one focused upon could vary widely depending on one's life situation. Since the didactic message was meant to apply to a lived reality, the application of those

messages saw many forms. Referring back to the story of *Patient Joe*, it is likely that some middle class readers would have found the ballad amusing and of educational value to the working poor, whereas the poor might find the tale to be comical and not take it seriously as a moral lesson. Working class readers who undermined More's lessons might actually be well versed in politicized propaganda and therefore see through her façade of didactic ploys to the underlying lessons pertaining to middle class values. More's concern for religious promotions was not unheard, but one imagines that her idealistic stance on the environment of the poor would cause some to doubt and make fun of her naïveté. However, it is likely that More would have been satisfied to some extent with the tracts' varying influences as that indicated an understanding of human boundaries that depended on their class.

Susan Pedersen notes, and I agree, that the main message of the Cheap Repository was to support the idea that the business of God ought to come before all else (94). The notion that the law of God is infallible was in direct accord with Evangelical teachings. Therefore, the didactic instructions found in the tracts are based on becoming good Christians and Godly citizens. Passive obedience, hard work, self-reliance, patriotism and the unity of the family were key initiatives for each reader to consider and act upon (Eger and Peltz 120). By encouraging a strong belief in Christianity, More ties faith with appreciation and gratitude, even in situations of poverty. "Belief supports poverty," writes Mona Scheuermann, "making any burden not merely less irksome but simply not burdensome at all" (243). More repeatedly argues that one is literally born into God's plan and therefore ought to live sensibly within one's designated class, and take pleasure in one's lot in life. Accordingly, any attempt to alter one's class position would be deemed an act against God's plan (Scheuermann 242-3). Rhetorically astute as she was, More argued that those poor who felt in despair were in that

position because they failed to utilize the gifts God had provided for them. Her theory put the poor in unfair, self-perpetuating positions, even if it did accord to More's assumptions about Christian truth and justice: to the poor it's a vicious circle, to More it's the primacy of God's justice. If they mended their ways and acted as Christians who managed their money and worked diligently, they would find happiness despite their class position. One's misery was not the fault of God or society but of that individual's own misguided life choices.

Neuburg criticizes *Cheap Repository Tracts*, saying, “[r]arely can so misguided an effort have gone on for so long with so little result” (*Popular Literature* 264). Unfortunately, many critics agree – the main plan of More and her team at the Cheap Repository was not fulfilled to the Repository's liking, and the Repository did stop production after only a few years. That being said, that does not mean that the tracts did not serve *any* purpose. Pedersen suggests that the greatest success of the tracts is not in their involvement with the poor but in their “effective recruitment of the upper class to the role of moral arbiters of popular culture” (109). The tracts were effective tools in More's crusade to religiously educate the public, regardless of gender or class. Since more people were being educated to read than ever before there was a direct increase in the number of Biblical publications that ensued, and therefore, a growth in religious learning. The disguise of the chapbook remains an interesting choice on the part of More, yet the redefinition of literary models remains valuable to society today. The overall success of the tracts affirmed a larger realization that popular literature does not *have* to be frivolous, it can be many other things (political, educational, didactic, Evangelical), and still gain the respect of the public and a large following. Even though Hannah More is not frequently studied in English classes, it is noteworthy that Romantic period anthologies tend to publish at least brief samples of her works from her time as editor and frequent author of the



Cheap Repository tracts and ballads as well as her writings concerning education, most specifically, female education.

CHEAP REPOSITORY.

BETTY BROWN,

THE

St. GILES'S ORANGE GIRL :

WITH

Some Account of Mrs. SPONGE, the Money-lender.



Sold by J. MARSHALL,

(PRINTER to the CHEAP REPOSITORY for Moral and Religious Tracts) No. 17, Queen-Street, Cheap-side, and No. 4, Aldermary Church-Yard, and R. WHITE, Piccadilly, London. By S. HAZARD, at Bath: and by all Booksellers, Newsmen, and Hawkers in Town and Country.

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

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Or 4s. 6d. per 100.—2s. 6d. for 50.—1s. 6d. for 25.

[ Entered at Stationers Hall. ]

Figure 4: More, Hannah. *Betty Brown, the St. Giles's Orange Girl*. [London]: J. Marshall, and R. White, 1795.

## Philanthropy



Hannah More's position in the previously discussed Blagdon controversy is typical of eighteenth century gender debates that occurred on public platforms: More's eagerness to voice her opinion demonstrated "gender conventions that damned a woman if she kept silent and damned her still more if she defended herself" (Stott, *First Victorian*, 250). The legacy of More's work has often been criticized for its reaffirmation of female stereotypes and domestic roles, despite the fact that in her personal life she inhabited positions that indicated a different kind of feminist thought altogether. The question for scholars remains, was Hannah More a feminist? It is fairer to judge More in the feminist spectrum of her period, and in doing so, one may attempt to explore feminism in the eighteenth century specifically in light of More's thoughts on women and her personal life choices. She lived at a time when gender defined one's abilities and capacities for learning. However, although More sought to comply with eighteenth century notions of femininity, she acted in ways that lent extensions and revisions to the very definitions of womanhood.

While possessing characteristics attributed to early Romantic period feminists, as seen in her reactions to authority, More expressed her personal beliefs and furthered her ability to succeed in business endeavors. She used common feminist characteristics as tools to benefit her own maternal ambitions, hence making herself an exception at the expense of female solidarity. Her written work provides many theories on women as a distinct and classifiable gender, yet when compared to her own life there are discrepancies between what she taught and how she lived. Some of the tracts draw attention to the obstacles working class women

faced such as seen in *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*. In this tract, the mother, despite rheumatism and a damp, cold house, manages to overcome her suffering and “patch a rag or two for her family” (More, *Tracts*, 39). The Shepherd’s family, as well as other industrious, honest yet struggling poor, and those whose lives come under scrutiny in the tracts, are told that they ought to suffer through their burdens without complaint. Yet More’s correspondence indicates that when she felt physically ill she was unashamed to seek the pity of others. She wrote to Wilberforce of her “violent spasms in [her] head” that were “intolerable” and “left [her] nerves in a high state of irritation” before she suffered a “fainting fit” and “dashed [her] face against the corner of a stone wall, and lay a very long time without giving any signs of life” (*Strictures II* 23). The heroism More designs in the tracts is not necessarily the same heroism she promoted through her lived examples. In many respects, she portrayed a condescending lady bountiful who tended to feel morally superior to her readers, and faulted the sins of others above her own humanness. Her correspondence suggests that any pain or ill health More suffered was cause for the concern and sympathy of others who were expected to aid in her catharsis. Her tracts imply that women ought to be happy and even industrious under oppression and pain, and to focus on their blessings instead of their trials, but she frequently had difficulty following her own advice.

The particular role of motherhood or womanhood required the female sex to work to the utmost of their ability within that role if they were to be considered *good* females. However, More seemed to promote herself as a unique and individualistic female character while encouraging other women to define themselves as one single and uniform group designed by gender. More’s promotion of female philanthropic reform is actually a clever disguise for her to market her projects (the schools and religious programs), and products

(specifically, sponsorship to the Cheap Repository). However, despite her self-promoting motivations, More created an end result that spoke a language common to feminist reformists, albeit as a side-effect and not an overtly intended goal. Living and preaching in a society that emphasized static gender roles, More took it upon herself to be the exception to the rules and granted herself flexibility in her endeavors. In the process, her life's accomplishments act as examples that encouraged women to take steps to becoming independent and self-assertive. Charity became the focal point where women nourished each other. Following a long feudal tradition, the late-eighteenth century believed that it was the responsibility of the wealthy to care for the poor. Likewise, it was the responsibility of lower class mothers to pass on lessons involving moral charity through the raising and educating of their own children, thereby granting mothers of both classes domestic authority. As Dorice Elliott suggests, "[i]n order to fill and maintain this position of power and authority, women thus *need[ed]* for the poor to remain poor" (186). Each woman had a duty depending on her class, but could not perform her duty without the cooperation of women from other classes. The middle classes were morally obligated to care for the poor, not only from a social perspective, but also from a human one. As the Shepherd tells his family: "it is our duty to compare our own lot with the lot of those who are worse off, and this will keep us thankful. On the other hand, whenever we are tempted to set up our own wisdom or goodness, we must compare ourselves with those who are wiser and better, and that will keep us humble" (More, *Tracts*, 43). Part of the political and social value in codependent charity was the requirement that one be obligated to function to the best of their ability while remaining in one's class position. Any reforms that occurred through charitable acts were therefore less threatening to the political environment and structure of English society.

Over the last few decades, scholars of More have created various impressions of her role in feminist reform movements. Emily Rena-Dozier argues that More did not want women to step into the roles of men, but “to have access to a peculiarly female set of responsibilities and to uphold those responsibilities in a more appropriate manner” (209). Such arguments suggest that the female reform More supported was purely domestic and parallel to socially-defined gender boundaries. However, Anne Mellor points to a very different type of female activism that emphasizes “women’s *public* role[s] as mothers of the nation... [and] downplays their more private sexual roles as females” (28). The sexual roles, those that link women to their domestic and biological positions as mothers and wives, acted as metaphors for their responsibilities towards the greater community that extended beyond their gender spheres. On the other hand, combining both domestic and public venues, Elliott proposes that More implements notions of charity in domestic roles while expanding upon them to include political, economic, and social functions that are typically governed by men, but that she believed required the participation of women (197). In More’s own work, her role as exemplar and instructor to her readers is found both in print and through the accounts of her actions. She writes within a feminized didactic genre with the aid of men such as the Clapham Sect, yet her messages have an underlying tone of female empowerment and often advocated for frequently neglected voices. Working within a female sphere, More was able to slowly stretch the boundaries she evolved within.

It is in this manner, both comfortably residing inside and gently pushing outside her gender-defined functions, that More repeatedly advocates the need for charitable deeds and philanthropic ideologies that built on middle-class Evangelical morals. “If the decay of states resulted from a general depravity of manners, woman provided a focal point for moral

regeneration” (Myers, “Reform or Ruin,” 199-200). One of the topics under heightened debate in the Romantic period, partly spurred by the concept of the Rights of Man and social reform movements, was the defining and allotting of roles according to gender. The Evangelical movement, in their attempt to regenerate the Church of England, reconsidered the position of women, and in doing so, molded them as moral beings that were responsible for themselves, and in some respects, for the larger society (Hunt 11). Taking into account More’s deep concern for the church and her desire for the Evangelical movement’s support, it is not surprising to find that she followed dominant social thoughts regarding gender issues. She agreed that the innate differences between the sexes made them inclined to possess different qualities, yet her religious thoughts attested to the moral capacity and virtues *characteristic* of women. Due to women’s innate qualities that aligned and supported Evangelical teachings, More believed it was the “requirement” of women “to be leaders of moral and religious reform” (Mellor 26). In *Strictures*, she asserts that mothers “are responsible for [educating children in] the exercise of acknowledged *power*: a power wide in its extent, indefinite in its effects, and inestimable in its importance” (52). In this matter, she was a shining example of what she preached, but she took liberties in breaking some of her own rules regarding class mobility, layman/woman defiance of church authority, and participation in expected roles of domestic motherhood.

More’s primary concern pertaining to her advocacy of a specific women’s movement was the conservative regulation of that movement. Her plans were meant to operate on a very methodical platform whereby each woman played a part that aided the success of the whole system. As Rena-Dozier asserts:

Given the influential position that women hold as moral exemplars, any error in behavior on their part would have

disastrous effects on the morality of the entire nation. Women must regulate themselves by regulating the poor, and this self-regulation would then serve to discipline and purify the nation. Women were thus placed in a position of responsibility and, to fulfill this responsibility, it was necessary that they develop a particular type of authority (212).

The authority spoken of by Rena-Dozier had traditionally operated within the female sphere but was gradually becoming reformed through the combined efforts of women's growing concern for other women, and, more concisely, in the development of wealthy and middle-class women working together to create philanthropic societies. More believed that women had a special talent that was exhibited in deep, almost omniscient insight into the human soul and the ability to gauge the quality of character in those they encountered. The multi-class publications of her tracts and the visibility of her person allowed her to sell her ideas involving charity to a wider public. In an essay, "On the Importance of Religion to the Female Character", More wrote: "None are too wise to be excused from performing the duties of religion, nor are any too poor to be excluded from the consolations of its promises" (*Essays* 160). Therefore, even if a middle class woman chose to remain in her designated gender sphere, she was, as a religious woman, obligated to perform acts of charity. Likewise, the poor had a right to feel happiness and possess religion. These duties were said to be gifts from God and therefore *must* be used with His best interests in mind. Therefore, even though some of More's campaigns supported the extension of women beyond traditional gender boundaries, she did so under the direction of God's will. In fact, part of what it meant to be a good woman was to be charitable and religious. For example, More allowed women to develop new skills such as reading and the performance of charitable deeds, roles that were likely to put women in the public eye, yet at the same time their work was socially acceptable as a means of promoting religious conversion. More's publication, *Thoughts on the Importance of the*



*Manners of the Great to General Society*, affirms this perspective, she wrote: “We cannot but rejoice in every degree of human virtue which operates favourably on society, whatever be the motive, whoever be the actor” (8-9).

In a letter to a friend, More said, “it is a part of Christianity to convert every natural *talent* to a religious use” (*Correspondence* 468).<sup>6</sup> She truly believed that there was no pre-established image of benevolence and therefore women could become equally involved in charity by utilizing their gifts from God. The Parable of the Talents is a well-known Biblical tale of a man “*who* called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods” (Matt 35:14). At a later date he asks each of these servants what became of the goods he had given to them. The servants who invest their goods to increase their wealth are celebrated and the servant that buries his goods for safe keeping is ridiculed for not having put them to use; “And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matt 25:30). Contemporary understandings of talents are based on this particular parable that encourages people, as servants of God, to use their gifts effectively in the world. From a feminist point of view, More suggests that God’s servants are not labeled by gender but by their human qualities. The wise shepherd from *Salisbury Plain* furthers this point when he says, “a man must give... according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not” (More, *Tracts*, 37). More makes it clear that to be honoured with a gift, whether it be money or a more specific talent or position, is a “good” provided by God, with the expectation that it be used with care and, in her opinion, charity. Her promotion of people as servants of God helped assert notions of Christian stewardship in the late eighteenth century.

---

<sup>6</sup> Here, I have emphasized “talent” as it holds multiple meanings in this context. Firstly, traditional understandings of talents, as skills and abilities; secondly, the use of talents in a Biblical context.

These new responsibilities caused women to organize themselves in female-led societies that came to benefit participants on both ends of charity. The empowerment of organized societies encouraged women to broaden their predetermined roles. Middle-class women, specifically, did not just *act* charitably, they became the corner-stones and initiators of charities. *They* were the organizations behind good deeds, the building of new schools and hospitals, and the nourishment (both physically through the provision of food and morally through educational and religious instruction) of the less fortunate. These positions, while reforming women's roles and social functions, benefited other women in the public sphere such as Hannah More, as well as other teachers and writers. Due to the increased attention and financial aid pouring into philanthropic societies, the maintenance of schools and tract societies became more financially secure as they gained popularity in women's circles. The advocates of women's movements were empowered through their successes, as were the women who became involved as converted philanthropists. Eventually, the leadership of philanthropy would be almost entirely exclusive to women's movements. More noted, prior to the tract publications, "an increasing desire to instruct the poor, to inform the ignorant, and to reclaim the vicious, is spreading among us" (*Manners of the Great* 115). By "us", she was referring to the "Great", those with the wealth, means, and influence to make charity and inclusion of the poor an acceptable and encouraged pastime.

The majority of philanthropic groups functioning in the Romantic period were composed mainly of wealthy and middle-class women who had the time and money to partake in such societies. However, while the upper classes possessed the means, the working classes and beneficiaries of the philanthropic deeds were still indebted to the cycle of charity. The working poor were expected to perform their payment through honest and diligent

service to the other classes and in gratitude to God and adherence to religious doctrine (Elliott 186). Patricia Comitini explores this two-tiered perspective of charity when she writes, “Morality comes to be defined, in terms of the poor, as the ability to produce material benefit from those personal attributes of virtuous quality.... In contrast, virtue for the middling class is defined in terms of their ability to ‘direct’ the poor to financial independence – the only proper form of charity” (89). The reform movement for the working poor was imbedded in frugal living and financial discipline and independence. However, for middle class women, the reform movement was rooted in ideology, values, domesticity, and womanhood. Family, morals, and religion were the basic precepts for the philanthropic groups that developed under the guidance of More’s proposals for middle-class women’s empowerment. Having been raised in a home that was frequently under strained finances and that taught the children of the household to expect to *earn* an income, More, like many others in her predicament, idolized the class above her and strove to match them in every way. As a woman preaching to women, she intended to demonstrate females’ innate potentiality as mothers and moral leaders that ought to be extended outside the confines of domesticity. However, the poor and working class, despite having the same potential values as the middling classes, lacked wealth, and in this case, as in many, money was a vital tool that provided one with the liberty to tread the public sphere.

More’s emphasis on a class-determined role-playing within philanthropy created an infantilization of the poor. Wealthy philanthropists became surrogate parents to the less fortunate, similar to how More attempted to become a surrogate mother to those she instructed. As Eileen Janes Yeo suggests, “The Mores tended to treat their poorer sisters [in their Benefit Clubs] like naughty children... Yet the Mores insisted that they were treating the

poor with kindness and love. The discourse of motherhood and love was riddled with contradictions” (13). Much of the literature produced by More instructs the upper classes how to parent (and therefore be charitable) to the poor. To do good deeds was important, but by inserting paternal and maternal qualities into the equation, More asserted a deeply personal and compassionate care-giving inclusive to philanthropic acts. Gender is another area that often treads on infantilization whereby a woman tends to be parented by a male figure. However, these examples of infantilization are but a glimpse, for in reality, any use of condescendence could be representative of infantilization. The role of female authorship, specifically More’s, negotiated issues between and within classes that made the author appear to be a parent to a child readership. Children, women, minorities (such as the slaves defended by the abolition movement), and the poor were all groups habitually spoken down to within social networks, and in writing, including writing on their behalf. The whole topic and terminology of infantilization is interesting and could be further explored in relation to More’s involvement with the abolition movement. Hannah More, sliding away from the infantilization of the female, acted as a parent so to reinterpret notions of parent-child relationships and issues of superiority. She had to be careful in her role as mother/instructor not to be an oppressor as is commonly attributed as a problematic issue arising between genders. Kathryn Sutherland suggests that More feminized the poor to make them appear submissive and dependent upon the charity of the dominant classes, yet, I would add that dependence does not necessitate infantilization (Fisher 11).

As more wealthy and middle-class women began to develop philanthropic societies, a new topic of interest arose that focused on who ought to *receive* charity. Interestingly, the debate, one that affected the social, public and political arenas of England, was being

discussed and decided on by groups of increasingly influential women. Hannah More hones in on this topic in *Cheap Repository Tracts*, where she has the tendency to create storylines exemplifying how a philanthropic character may go about ranking the needs of the poor and the suitability of a family for one's charitable endeavors. For instance, in *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, Mr. Johnson provides "a rule of judging, by which one may seldom be deceived", which is the tidiness of one's clothes and home (More, *Tracts*, 33). The story suggests, "poor people who have little regard to appearances will seldom be found to have any great regard for honesty and goodness" (38). Although More sometimes failed to notice that her single standards were unfairly harsh on the poor, her commitment to discovering the true character of a person demonstrated a deeper compassion to the poor and their ways of life. She was seeking a way to visibly see honesty and goodness, and she found that the greatest indicators were pride of home, happiness of family, and work ethic. Since these indicators could be easily reviewed during visits with the poor, they allowed charitable persons to feel confident in their work while attempting to prevent the charitable from being taken advantage of. Perhaps More's critiques of the poor appear quite crude, but they were, in effect, a starting point for the middle and upper classes to feel a sense of admiration and a compulsion to provide charity, which was her ultimate strategy.

Therefore, More instructed charitable persons to visit the houses of the poor, keep watch of how well they maintained themselves and their family's appearances, and by those accounts rate their candidacy for charity. The middle-class character ought to be mindful of the candidates' spending habits, and upon visits, expect to see frugal living. This is also shown in the story of *The St. Giles's Orange Girl*, whereby Betty is advised to "live hard for a little time, till you have saved five shillings out of your own earnings. Give up that expensive supper at

night, drink only one pint of porter, and no gin at all” (More, *Tracts*, 59). By organizing tableaux such as this, pictures that were literally designed and embellished by her own Evangelical ideology, More selected a few worthy individuals and families as potential candidates and made it justifiable to ignore others. Her encouragement of a selective charity had positive intentions but caused many families in need to be neglected, often because one member was judged immoral. The middle and upper classes assumed that they were the only persons who deserved any of life’s delicacies, and More was also drawing attention to this misunderstanding. In *Salisbury Plain*, Mr. Johnson “secretly resolved to be more attentive to his own petty expenses than he had hitherto been; and to be more watchful that nothing was wasted in his family” (38). Instances of inter-class relations cause, in this case as in others, a middle-class reflection that leads to positive leveling effects. Readers witness new learning from the vantage point of the middle or upper classes, and are thereby empowered in their abilities to master frugal living, not as a topic of embarrassment but as a respectable way of life. Selective charity encouraged the poor to work hard and follow God, because the better they were at trying to be good the more charity would be bestowed upon them. Such a system worked well for the Shepherd but not for all families as the husband/father figure was often judged as a representation of the entire household, therefore casting unfair assumptions about the eight, or ten, or twelve residents on the basis of one. An alcoholic male placed in charge of a family would prevent that family from receiving charity, yet, as disappointing as that may sound, the reality was that any financial aid provided in such a case would likely have been drunk and not used for its intended purposes. The system was not foolproof by any means, but it was an attempt to reward those who were committed to bettering their lots in life.

More and much of society assumed that any unemployed person without ownership of property must be into illegal activities (Thompson 60). Charitable persons may have wished to aid the families of these individuals but their actions would have been futile, if, in exchange for acts of kindness, the poor were not willing to make an effort to better their own lives. According to the tracts, it was often the children who were hurt most greatly in consequence of the behaviour of parents. Eger and Peltz assert that many of More's works were "based on the premise that Britain was suffering a crisis of moral and spiritual dissipation that would not be alleviated until the ruling classes attended to their paternalistic duties to those beneath them" (116). Therefore, the wealthy and middle-classes had a responsibility to live lives that served as positive examples of upper-class morals and values, again supporting the claim that the charitable were acting as surrogate parents to the poor. Indeed, the tracts argue for a change in morals and a reawakening of religion that would cause the poor to lead better lives, but would not result in a change in government or economic revolution (Comitini 73). Never is there a hint towards social upheaval; if anything, there are recommendations for silence and passivity among the poor and working classes.

In *Cheap Repository Tracts*, More frequently portrays two characters from different classes who play roles that are within their social positioning but come into communication and build an inter-class relationship. For example, in the conclusion of *Salisbury Plain*, Mr. Johnson tells the shepherd: "I do not pity, but I respect and even honour thee" (41). Furthermore, Mr. Johnson becomes a frequent visitor to the shepherd's home and the language suggests that their meetings are enjoyable. More is unafraid to write stories of friendship between the wealthy and the poor. In these portrayals, she is reforming the underlying thoughts about how classes feel and act towards those above and below them in

the social hierarchy. Even in *The St. Giles's Orange Girl*, More occasions a woman of wealth and means to intercede on the behalf of a poor girl and goes so far as to involve her powerful husband in the matter. Shortly after his involvement, "This worthy Magistrate went directly to Mrs. Sponge's with proper officers; and he soon got to the bottom of many iniquities. He not only made her refund poor Betty's money, but committed her to prison for receiving stolen goods, and various other offences" (61). This scene has a double effect; firstly, it is noteworthy because, with the intervention of a male figure, there is a sense of action in charity, whereas the female tends to permit a different form of charity through guidance and quiet action. Secondly, instead of continuously demonstrating the faults of the poor, More tells stories such as this to demonstrate the potential goodness of character and moral grounding possessed by many individuals regardless of wealth and class. Through the help of the Magistrate and his wife, Betty does become a better person and the villain, in the form of Mrs. Sponge, receives a less desired outcome. A biographer of More's, Charles Ford, argues that overcoming "cultural polarization between the gentry and their laborers" is simply an attempt for More to "reduce the resentment of the poor" and therefore decrease the likelihood of a revolution such as witnessed in France (137). Although this is arguably true, I do not believe that it was More's fear of social upheaval that caused her to include these class relationships in her tracts. More relied on the social functioning of each class in their natural state in order to further her own personal success. In a letter to John Newton, More claimed that "one great benefit" arising from her rural religious programs was "the removal of that great gulf which has divided the rich and poor in these country parishes" as the structures of her lessons required people to "meet together" (*Correspondence* 477).



She, like many others of her class involved in philanthropy, depended on the neediness of the poor, and furthermore, expected them to feel grateful for any acts of charity the middle classes may dispense. Likewise, in an attempt to truly benefit the poor, More expressed her desperation for private funding from the upper classes and therefore had to fashion her argument to appropriately match the image her wealthy clientele expected. So much of More's work is about marketing, propaganda, and convincing people to follow her directions, and to succeed in each division she was forced outside of conventional notions of femininity. She assumed a respectable female role to be convincing, and in some ways, to market herself along with her product. However, in having created a public persona, she gained an authority that was outside the female sphere. To persuade potential subscribers into partaking in her plans for philanthropic reform, she needed to direct a play; to set a stage, a cast of characters, and an entertaining and humanizing storyline that would make the play, and those involved in it, likable. Hannah More performed the same notion of a play in her engagement with the Sunday schools, and she relied on it again in her philanthropic efforts, with the help of *Cheap Repository Tracts*.

If charity was, in More's opinion, part of the female sphere, how did one define charity? The eighteenth century provides no agreement as to the cause or cure of poverty and hence the century's lack of any cohesive implementation of a plan to counteract the despair of the poor (Nardin, "Problem of Poverty," 275). The tracts echo a humanist and puritanical thought that teaches self-discipline and Christianity as preconditions for charity (Ford 129). Evangelicalism, in its moralistic teachings and Anglican historical perspective, viewed poverty as an "intrinsic part of the human condition" (Nardin, "Problem of Poverty," 275). In 1795, Edmund Burke wrote to philanthropists interested in helping the poor: "Patience, labour,

sobriety, frugality, and religion, should be recommended to them; all the rest is downright fraud” (qtd. in Thompson 61). Notice how education is not included in Burke’s list, attesting to the fact that it remained mostly elitist at the time. Reflecting Elizabethan Poor Laws, More felt that the deserving poor must be frugal, God-fearing, sober, and tidy, and if they exemplified all of these qualities it should become the responsibility of the local government to relieve them from their distress (Ford 138-155). Nevertheless, very little work was done to satisfy the particular needs of the poor in the eighteenth century, partly because the government was controlled by, and partial to, the upper classes rather than the working poor. Men may have had active roles in politics and felt the need to attend to the poor in a paternalistic sense, whereas women, as More understood, should ensure that no family was left in complete despair and therefore operate in a type of domestic philanthropy.

More once said that the poor have “the same tastes, appetites, and feelings with ourselves, ay, and the same good sense, too, though not refined by education” (qtd. in Schofield 278). Education was the point in which the two classes saw a divide. Another difference was, of course, financial wealth, yet More tends not to focus on financial differences perhaps because it would only draw attention to her own humble beginnings. However, middle-class women filled the gap between the uneducated poor and the wealthy. In general, women were less likely to be literate; married women’s wealth belonged to their husbands and women could control money for domestic purposes only. They were told *not* to become too educated or politically involved but literally stay in their domestic spheres. Likewise, the poor were repeatedly told to stay in their class positions, to apply themselves to their particular labours and not concern themselves with matters beyond their station. Just as friendships form in the tracts, the borderline between the two classes is made less visible through the joint

efforts of the middle-class woman and the struggling working-class family. In More's novel, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife*, Mrs. Stanley says: "I have often heard it regretted that ladies have no stated employment, no profession. It is a mistake. Charity is the calling of a lady; *the care of the poor is her profession*" (228). Mrs. Stanley is often attributed to be a stand-in for More herself, and it can be seen that the sentiments of the fictional character are largely in accordance with More's beliefs. Considering More's strong defense of social order as a hierarchy administered by God, it is no wonder that she relies on "a call from God" to support the charitable deeds performed by women of the middling classes (Elliott 193). Women were inclined to be charitable and to help others in their personal lives, especially in regards to sustaining the *domestic* lives of the poor and the education of children – typical roles for women in their own families, though not previously encouraged when involving families outside their own. A large part of the charity More taught involved getting to know another family and their worth as persons and inclination to improvement. This involved observable and discussable research that in real life is achieved by the gossip of women, and in fiction such as the tracts, by a third-person omniscient narrator (Rena-Dozier 213). For example, although the first sentence about Betty Brown from *The St. Giles's the Orange Girl* asserts that she "was born nobody knows where, and bred nobody knows how" the narrator is able to provide many details to her situation and how she is perceived as having the shrillest voice and nimblest barrow driving "in all the streets of London" (More, *Tracts*, 55). This is significant because it indicates a reputation, a beginning that does not determine an end result but helps to exemplify one's movements as witnessed through external judgments of character. Instead of drawing attention to a rise in class positioning, More uses reputations to advance the state of her characters and their improvements and successes over the course of her tracts.

More was able to transform the terms of acceptable feminine behaviour by arguing that domestic management provided the best experience and model for the management of a national or state economy (Mellor 28). Both required frugality, discipline, morals, and the early training of the next generation to maintain the balance of national and domestic livelihoods. Myers suggests:

Subordinate groups like women must shape their world views *through* the dominant models, transforming their own perceptions and needs as best they can in terms of received frameworks. If women's alternative of counterpart models are not acceptably encoded in the prevailing male idiom, female concerns will not receive a proper hearing ("Reform or Ruin," 202).

It is for this reason that More emphasized women's natural qualities and traditional modes of action and relocated them to a more public sphere without having them develop new skill sets believed by society to be in the possession of men alone. As it were, moral reform was becoming a predominantly female issue that was regulated by women, particularly mothers and female educators such as governesses. More's *Essays for Young Ladies* address many of the issues involved in female parenting and instruction required by a "prudent mother" (131), "a tender mother" (130), "a good and wise mother" (129), a "munificent mother" (206). She asserts that "all the beneficial effects which a mother can expect from this watchfulness [guidance] will be entirely defeated if it is practiced occasionally, and not habitually; and if it ever appears to be used to gratify caprice, ill-humour, or resentment" (*Essays* 146-7). Not only were mothers given a responsibility to teach their sons and daughters, they were encouraged to follow through on education in daily living. This role provided mothers with domestic authority as not simply biological parents to their children but as builders of character and distributors of influence.

Female moral reformers, including Hannah More, sought to re-evaluate the confining roles of women. The gender-defined culture dominant in eighteenth century England was, to these reformers, capable of producing “constructive channels through which women can aid in revitalizing the world to conform to the values of home, not the materialistic marketplace. Defining domesticity in terms of social responsibility, they negotiate available ideologies into habitability” (Myers, “Reform of Ruin,” 204). Middle-class women could exert their reformist power on two fronts: one, in the traditional domestic realm, and two, in the newly acceptable public and philanthropic arena. More’s work occupies both areas as she clearly places herself in the public eye and in political discussions while also asserting her femininity as an instructor and mother-like guide. To be charitable was in itself a form of a middle-class woman’s education that assured the occupation of one’s leisure time in an appropriate manner, not wasted on frivolous things such as dress, music, and trashy novels (Rena-Dozier 210). Not only were the poor being given more attention and aid, but the respectability of women increased with their ability to act rationally and be productive and publicly visible agents for the betterment of society.

In the eighteenth century, the highest levels of a woman’s education focused on *accomplishments*, talents that made women producers of entertainment and decoration. However, most Sunday and charity schools that educated women from working class families would have had their pupils be instructed on how to be good mothers and wives in their own working class families. In these roles a woman acted as an exemplar to her children and as a representative of her family that depended on, but was not limited to, her class, since women of all classes had the same maternal expectations with their children. Elliott suggests that More’s associations between women and philanthropy stem from their “domestic values,

modesty, and domestic frugality” (194). However, there is much more to be said about the characteristics that inclined women to be the best administrators of charity that are given attention in More’s writing. For example, many of the middle-class female characters in the tracts tend to possess insight into the true character of those they encounter, with the result that they act as teachers in the home and in the classroom. In the tale of *The St. Giles’s Orange Girl*, the reader learns early on, and from an unknown source, that in her work history, “Betty was faithful to both her employers, which is extraordinary, considering the greatness of the temptation [to steal], and her utter ignorance of good and evil” (More, *Tracts*, 56). The omniscient narrator is positioned in a role that accords well with those roles traditionally held by women, but More strives to reach beyond these limitations. The woman is also the judge and the gossip about Betty’s reputation, but with a purpose that is vastly different from how gossip is understood in society at large. If women remained exclusively in their sphere without reforming it from within, it would be less acceptable for More and other women, particularly those involved in the Bluestocking Circle, to act and write as freely as they did, particularly as supposedly non-fiction authors. More had to contend that it was admissible for women to assert themselves on certain topics despite the ridicule of gossip because she was already personally involved in the broadening of gender borders. Her tracts provide a sense of malleability to the roles and speech of woman as defined by society.

Through the extension of women’s domestic roles, More’s call for a middle-class women’s reform was viewed as tolerable. Also, because it was meant to encompass a domestic ideology of the family as one integrated working unit, she suggested that the husband’s role in philanthropy was to accumulate money and the wife’s role was to manage that money once it reached the family account and to choose how to it would best be spent (Elliott 189). The

wife/mother was not expected to invest an income from her spending but to disburse it in ways that made a good impression of the family and benefited their reputation.

Stereotypically, this spending involved squandering money on expensive dresses and furnishings, pretty things and fancy food, but now Hannah More was telling women that philanthropy was the latest fashion and to uphold a good reputation one must contribute to social causes. Comparable to Shakespeare's metaphor of the world as a stage, More said, "action was the life of virtue, and the world is the noblest theatre of action" (*Manners of the Great* 99). Likewise, in her essay, "Thoughts on the Cultivation of the Heart and Temper in the Education of Daughters", More suggests that "an amiable and wise woman will always have something better to value herself on, than these advantages, [*accomplishments*] which, however captivating are still but subordinate parts of a truly excellent character" (133). For middle-class woman this meant practicing a new set of management skills when it came to finances and she challenged their abilities to dispense funds in the most effective manner. Upper-class women did not often meet the poor in face-to-face encounters but used their money to act charitably in their place. While the avoidance of serviceable charity may have seemed pretentious and at odds with the cultivation of virtue in the exercise of charity, it was exactly what Hannah More was asking from them – support gained purely by their money and influence. More and the growing number of women's societies needed the funding and they were often willing to do the work as well. The middle and upper classes were arguably thought of as being closer to God: their position in society allowed them to open doors for those who were less fortunate and keep a close watch on the behaviour of those beneath them in the class system. More invited these women to partake in voluntary benevolent societies and in the foundations of hospitals, orphanages, and schools to relieve the working poor, but

the acts of that relief would be made by other women such as herself. Her call was heard and in the early nineteenth century literally thousands of voluntary societies appeared under the guidance of women (Mellor 27).

*Cheap Repository Tracts* supports claims that More was propagandizing the middle-class as well as the poor. Rena-Dozier notes that “More was as concerned with educating the charitable in how to give properly as she was with educating the poor in how to deserve charity” (216). In the tract, *The St. Giles’s Orange Girl*, readers see how the poor, especially those with uneducated minds, can be exploited through the greed of their own class. Betty, an orphan inhabiting the streets of London, is swindled into a bad deal with Mrs. Sponge (she is fittingly named as she leeches off the vulnerable). However, in an act of fate, Betty encounters a lady of wealth who helps to explain the faults of Betty’s lifestyle and guides her towards righteousness and freedom from Mrs. Sponge. The charitable lady reflects that it is the fault of tricksters such as Mrs. Sponge that the innocent poor remain in their condition. Her husband reflects that the poor are in “poverty and bondage all their lives; but [he] hope[s] as many as hear of this will get on a better plan, and [he] shall be ready to help any who are willing to help themselves” (More, *Tracts*, 61). The effects from a chance encounter with the lady change Betty’s future. The tracts consistently depict encounters with the middling classes, who are portrayed as judicious, virtuous, and helpful, and provide indispensable advice to those in need. Often, the spoken guidance will be accompanied with some small reward for good behaviour such as those administered by More in her schools, whereby a pupil who learns a lesson receives a token prize to encourage further studies and moral living.

The role of the female teacher, commonly the mother, was a steadfast institution of learning in the eighteenth century, and arguably remains so today. Any lesson a child



retained from school would be tested in the home. More wrote: “Even the excellent institution of Sunday schools for training religious servants, will avail but little, if, as soon as the persons are educated, [and] come into the families of the great, they behold practices diametrically opposite to the instructions they have been imbibing” (*Manners of the Great* 116-7). In her advice regarding the education of daughters, More suggests that the “prudent mother... be more careful to have the talents of her daughter *cultivated* than *exhibited*” (*Essays* 131). Like the food More provides as a supplementary award for religious nourishment, so too does she expect mothers to educate their daughters so to nurture their souls and society rather than waste their potential in frivolity. Rewards were not tokens in a game but an acknowledgement of having been spiritually and morally nourished. “Those who have children to educate ought to be extremely patient; it is a labour of love” wrote More, “They should reflect, that extraordinary talents are neither essential to the well-being of society, nor the happiness of individuals” (*Essays* 147). More truly felt a maternal duty to educate children and share her religion, knowing fully that her tasks would not be easy or without conflict. Education was meant to be nourishing; to be moral and virtuous was to feed one’s body and soul. More sought to draw further attention to the important yet often underappreciated roles of those who nurtured with the food of education. The role of the mother and the daughter, though considerably underdeveloped in historical educational systems, was restored in light of new educational terminology and understandings of potentiality. Charitable women were sending messages; More’s tracts prove that their voices challenged society’s restrictions of the feminine voice.

Myers suggests that More’s success exceeded that of Wollstonecraft or any other female reformist in the eighteenth or nineteenth century (“Reform or Ruin,” 209). However,

More may also have been one of the most self-interested female crusaders of the time. She attempted to live within the precepts of her teachings but allowed for a certain amount of personal freedom that in other circumstances she would not have been inclined to condone. Her main philanthropic concern was to locate funding for her own plans and ambitions. However, her business was laced with Christian motivations that, truthfully, did not hurt others. Nevertheless, in hindsight, she likely failed to provide as many charitable benefits as may have been in her power to dispense. In her study of moral or Christian capitalism, Mellor suggests that money was and is not evil, and in More's time as in today's, wealth ought to be sanctioned in terms of how the money was earned and where it was spent (32). How it was earned fell into the hands of men, but where and how it was spent became a growingly female concern, and for her impetus in asserting control of this newfound responsibility, scholars ought to credit Hannah More.

## Conclusion



Hannah More was a member of the highly talented and distinguished Bluestocking Circle. The Bluestockings were an eighteenth-century reformist group that realized that gender did not dictate literary intelligence or artistic invention. From the bringing together of like-minded thinkers, the Bluestockings formed a society that encouraged the mutual support of authors and accepted intellectuals based on their ability to become successful rather than on their class or gender. At the foundation of the Bluestocking agenda was the encouragement of conversation and friendship between intellectual men and women that recognized the potentiality and intelligence of the female sex (Eger and Peltz 29). As their fame grew, members of the Bluestockings became pillars of the literary scene. The group is noted for hosting the likes of Samuel Johnson, Elizabeth Montagu, Edmund Burke and Sarah Fielding. Bluestocking approval, support, and influence in higher circles could propel a writer's popularity in the mass literary market. Norma Clarke remarks that "being noted by the notables" was a strong indication of just how far an author could go in the literary world (166). To be a Bluestocking was not only to embed oneself in a feminist literary movement but also to be an emblem of success in direct relationship and frequent competition with male counterparts.

Contrary to More's own beliefs regarding social duties, the Bluestockings supported women in their efforts to "pursue a life of the mind", one that did not require domestication or the maintenance of standard femininity (Eger and Peltz 24). The Bluestockings encouraged women to seek a life beyond what was defined and expected in society and to instead become

successful as female intellectuals who were proud of their sex. On the other hand, More encouraged a different form of deviation from the norm that was principally concerned with a philanthropic path. Although More was close to the Bluestockings upon her arrival in London, her correspondence and biographers depict a gradual distancing from the group and a transition into more religious-minded societies. The Bluestockings encouraged women to reinterpret notions of gender identity (especially in terms of authorship) and in the process attempted to dispel gender boundaries in highly publicized and competitively masculine forms that highlighted female opinions in a man's world. More's agenda for female reform was less vocal; it occurred in small parishes, in the materials and teachings found at her schools, and in back rooms while sipping tea, yet it was effective and helped transition women into a broader domestic sphere without shedding a women's sense of femininity and domestic duty.

Mindful of this theory concerning female reform movements, Hannah and Patty More opened their own clubs for women; however, these clubs were quite different from the Bluestocking Circle. Clubs and societies were vastly gaining in number and membership in the late eighteenth century (Clark 351). Of the growing societies, Peter Clark notes that almost half were stationed in rural areas and that only 5 per cent were created for women and in those, the membership was often smaller than male and female or exclusively male clubs (351 and 364). While the middle and upper classes tended to place themselves in leadership positions within the clubs for women, the concerns of those clubs was frequently less with politics and working conditions and instead placed an emphasis on moral reform and manners, a trend that was growing in the 1780s and 1790s (Clark 357). The Benefit Clubs the More sisters established in the English countryside are examples of this trend. In exchange for a weekly subscription fee of 1½ d. the female members were provided with sick pay, rewards

for the birth of a child, a 6 d. payment to their families upon their death, annual meeting days with tea and cakes, and a gift to a bride of “good character”, of “a pair of white worsted stockings...five shillings and a Bible” (Stott 116). All of the benefits provided to the subscribers were created to emphasize a moral life based on chastity and the fulfillment of maternal roles of motherhood and domesticity. The bride of “good character” was chaste, and the more children one had the more rewards they were given, all in an attempt to standardize life paths for the members; a path that was deeply rooted in traditional English culture and Evangelical spirituality and morals. Although the system the Mores created was established as an effort to allow poor women to become self-sufficient, the finances for the clubs were frequently delivered through the private funding of Hannah More (Stott 116). In a sense, More ended up paying poor women to live the life dictated by the lessons she taught and the religious beliefs she upheld. Without money, More’s influence might not have been as effective.

However, despite the differences between the More Benefit Clubs and the Bluestocking Circle, there were also some crucial commonalities. Both groups were organized by women and had a female majority membership. They both offered possibilities that women did not previously possess in vast types of reformist and social roles that allowed for organization and camaraderie. The revolutionists such as Paine and those in France created societies for the underprivileged; however, the reformist groups they focused on consisted of the working classes and therefore were not divided by gender but by class positioning. However, what the Benefit Clubs and Bluestockings were attempting was not an organization for the *people* but for *women*; a different, yet strongly reformist notion propelled not by the voices of the poor but by the influence and financial backing of women from the middle and

upper classes. The female clubs were asserting their power and continuing their growth while embedding themselves in reformist movements already forming in many avenues of society. By assimilating into current social trends, clubs for women were able to move forward without drastic scrutiny on political fronts. Likewise, due to More's affiliations with the Early Evangelical Movement that was also gaining acceptance in the period, her clubs were particularly encouraged as a means of re-educating the poor in the ways of religious thought and Christian doctrine. In the midst of a gender and class reformist trends in society, More's religious agenda was always an underlying theme and a direct influence on her works of writing and social activism.

Peter Clark suggests that the clubs "provided respectable lower-class women with important opportunities for socializing, recognition, and mutual support" (354-5). Described in these terms, the clubs dictated a movement grounded in reshaping socialization patterns that gathered women together for the purpose of reforming and uniting women in their own unique society. Clubs for women began as a relatively small movement that grew rapidly, yet England was not as intimidated by them as they were the French Revolutionists, largely due to the emerging societies sense of respectability, femininity, and connections and support from the Church of England. The Benefit Clubs began under religious instructions that stressed "the life of active goodness" (Stott 119). From the perspective of the church, Clark suggests that the societies were an "ideal solution for curbing parish expenditure and encouraging self-help among the lower orders" (371). Having witnessed a decline in the visibility and support of the clergy from the Church of England in rural areas, the whole notion of a self-sustaining club for the poor provided relief to an already failing church system. With the aid of the clubs, the church likely found themselves less burdened with the blame and financial sorrows

of their rural adherents. Therefore, the clubs created an opportunity for parishioners to be active in the church without the church having to make any changes to their operations. Stott suggests, and More's letters support, that More saw the combination of clergy and the female members of her club as "a warm atmosphere of class harmony, and the careful intertwining of ritual, food, patriotism, and moralizing", seen especially in the annual club feasts (*First Victorian* 117). Hence earning her nickname of the "Bishop of Skirts", More and her sisters and friends virtually replaced rural clergy (Yeo 3). The leaders of the Evangelical movement, both male and female, transitioned themselves as replacements for the unimpressive Anglican clergy.

Although More contributed to many acts of charity, she was often one of the key benefactors as her efforts provided her with the satisfaction of having shared Evangelicalism with as many people as possible in her lifetime. Her agenda to inculcate Evangelicalism into the hearts and minds of those she encountered was furthered by her unyielding commitment to charity and the successful publications of her tracts and other works of literature. She played the part of saviour, director, and clergy, yet she fulfills these seemingly masculine roles while maintaining an aura of femininity. In reality, it was her unlucky state of a failed engagement and the effective annuity that allowed her these freedoms and leadership roles. In a letter to Marianne Thornton, More said that she had appointed two Trustees to manage her clubs and 14 or 15 hundred pounds at her death to see that they were well-maintained, all thanks to her annuity and the income from her publications (Stott, *First Victorian*, 118). Through her last efforts to ensure the lasting success of her clubs, she made it possible for them to exist into the twentieth century when England established the welfare state. It was More's ability to portray eighteenth century femininity that licensed her to break the mold of gendered domesticity.

Considering that part of being a woman of her time included a dependency on a male, whether it was a husband or father, More was not in the same circumstance as other women. Her annuity placed her in a position parallel to widowhood, one that fulfilled a womanly obligation to at least *attempt* marriage and motherhood, but upon the end of the attempt, offered a window to a different life path that still held social acceptance. There is an interesting contradiction between the womanly status quo and the female reform movements in respect to More's teachings and lifestyle. Although she regarded traditional gender roles as adaptable and necessary to social stabilization, it appears that she lived a life that spoke another truth: that womanhood did not dictate a husband and children, that a woman could do as she saw fit and become successful, and furthermore, that in doing so that same woman could maintain a feminine role in society. In fact, none of the More sisters married, yet all exceeded expectations for unwed women from struggling middle-class families. Although they taught domesticity and femininity, manners and morals, they did not live out the applications of their lessons. While Hannah More climbed the social ladder through her involvement in politics and literature, she did not marry above her as is so commonly portrayed in the novels of Jane Austen. Instead, she listened to Wollstonecraft, who, in her contention for the rights of woman, argued the "simple principle, that if she [women] be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, she will stop the progress of knowledge, for truth must be common to all, or it will be inefficacious with respect to its influence on general practice" (*Rights of Woman* 66). More asserted herself in masculine spheres and in complete disregard to private or maternal obligations. Her responsibilities in life were drastically different from those of the women she wished to reform.



Hannah More was an emblem of future female reform movements. She was a woman *of and for* women who was situated in a social position that made her the same and different; a place that qualified her as a woman to be watched and admired by other women. In her advice to girls, she wrote that they “should be taught to give up their opinions betimes, and not pertinaciously to carry on dispute, even if they should know themselves to be in the right” (*Essays* 144-5). Although it might appear that More was silencing women, she was actually giving them credit for their knowledge as they “know” they are “in the right”. She wrote, “I turn to them with a confident hope, that women, thus richly endowed with the bounties of Providence, will not content themselves with polishing when they are able to reform” (*Strictures* 3-4). Instead of devaluing the opinions of women, More realized that there was a need to find new forms of female expression that allowed their thoughts to be voiced and for woman to gain power without causing conflict within pre-established understandings of gender. In *Strictures*, More suggests that the “valuable part of society [the middle class] is declining in usefulness”, and that “this rapid revolution of the manner of the middle class has... altered the character of the age” (62-3). However, it was arguably not a matter of what class was at work in defining the age, but of what voices were speaking on behalf of that age. If one considers More’s work with the poor and with women, it is evident that she was eager to boost the manners and “character of the age” through these particular groups, groups that were often given little attention when it came to the building of empires and creating of history. Like her work with the abolitionist movement, these endeavors with class and gender promoted an awakening into a new state of being in the world and how that world would come to be defined.

All in all, More believed that “mischief arises not from our living in the world, but from the world living in us; occupying our hearts, and monopolizing our affections” (*Manners of the Great* 98-9). To live in the world is to partake in human relationships. In the case of More’s work, this human participation was realized in the transactions of philanthropy, for, if performed correctly and with religious intention, it would not be for the sole benefit of the individual but for higher spiritual causes. In all she did, More sought to remove the worldliness from her interactions with society. In the principles of her education system in her schools, in the assortment of her literature, and in the way she lived, she was motivated by her religion and not by personal gains (although she did enjoy the rewards of her successes). As previously mentioned, the wealth she accumulated over a lifetime of hard work was all donated back into the charities she supported. She reformed what it meant to live in the world as a woman and within a class system in the Romantic period. In a sense, More was theorizing on what it meant to be human, to be a creation among other equal creations in a society that did not, could not, view them as equal; a society that feared class and gender equality on the basis of revolutionist undertones. A society that believed deeply in God and in a God of all people but could not commit themselves to act on a theory of Christian equality. As written in Galatians, 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”. More went into the world not to change it, but to come to a better understanding and respect for her country and its people, to see it for what it was: God’s stage.

## References

- Andrews, K. "More's Polish'd Muse, Or Yearsley's Muse of Fire: Bitter Enemies Write the Abolition Movement." *European Romantic Review* 20.1 (2009): 21-36.
- Bere, Thomas. *The Controversy between Mrs. Hannah More and the Curate of Blagdon, Relative to the Conduct of Her Teacher of the Sunday School in that Parish, with the Original Letters and Explanatory Notes*. London: W. Hughes, Smithfield for J.S. Jordan, 1801.
- The Bible, Authorized King James Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Bibles, 1987.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. *Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth Century British Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.
- Clark, Peter. *British Clubs and Societies, 1580-1800 the Origins of an Associational World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Clarke, Norma. *Dr Johnson's Women*. London: Hambledon and London, 2000.
- Comitini, Patricia. *Vocational Philanthropy and British Women's Writing, 1790-1810*. England: Ashgate Publishing, 2005.
- Demers, Patricia, ed. *Heaven upon Earth: The Form of Moral and Religious Children's Literature, to 1850*. Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993.
- Dimmock, Matthew, and Andrew Hadfield. *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England*. Farnham, UK ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009.
- Eger, Elizabeth, and Lucy Peltz. *Brilliant Women: 18th-Century Bluestockings*. New Haven, Ct.: Yale UP, 2008.
- Elliott, Dorice Williams. "'The Care of the Poor is Her Profession': Hannah More and Women's Philanthropic Work." *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 19.2 (1995): 179-204.

- Fisher, Carl F. "Politicizing Childhood: Hannah More, the Riot, and Children's Books in an Age of Revolution." *CEA Critic* 65.1 (2003): 5-13.
- Ford, Charles Howard. *Hannah More : A Critical Biography*. New York: P. Lang, 1996.
- Gilmartin, K. "Study to be Quiet: Hannah More and the Invention of Conservative Culture in Britain." *ELH - English Literary History* 70.2 (2003): 493-540.
- Grenby, Matthew O. "A Conservative Woman Doing Radical Things: Sarah Trimmer and the Guardian of Education." *Culturing the Child, 1690-1914: Essays in Memory of Mitzi Myers*. Ed. Donelle Rae Ruwe. Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2005.
- Hilton, Mary, and Jill Shefrin. *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*. Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009.
- Hopkins, Mary Alden. *Hannah More and Her Circle*. New York: Longmans, Green, 1947.
- Huijer, M. "New and Unexpected!: Female Life Practices Resonating in the Philosophy of Time." *Time and Society* 19.1 (2010): 72-80.
- Hunt Linda, C. "A Woman's Portion: Jane Austen and the Female Character." *Fetter'd Or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*. Eds. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski. Athens: Ohio UP, xvii, 1986. 8-28.
- Hylson-Smith, Kenneth. *Evangelicals in the Church of England, 1734-1984*. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1989.
- Jackson, Mary V. *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in England from its Beginnings to 1839*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989.
- Jones, Mary. *Hannah More*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1952.
- Kelly, Gary. "Revolution, Reaction, and the Expropriation of Popular Culture: Hannah More's Cheap Repository." *Man and Nature/L'Homme Et La Nature*. Eds. Kenneth W.

- Graham and Neal Johnson. Edmonton: Academic Printing & Pub., xiv, 1987. 147-159.
- Laqueur, Thomas Walter. *Religion and Respectability: Sunday Schools and Working Class Culture, 1780-1850*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1976.
- Lawson, John, and Harold Silver. *Social History of Education in England*. London: Methuen, 1973.
- Locke, John. "Some Thoughts Concerning Education." *Philosophy of Education: The Essential Texts*. Ed. Steven Cahn. New York and London: Routledge, 2009.
- Locke, John. *Philosophical Works and Selected Correspondence of John Locke*. Charlottesville, V.A.: InteLex Corporation, 1995.
- Lonsdale, Roger, ed. *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1989.
- Maxwell, Richard, and Katie Trumpener. *Cambridge Companion to Fiction in the Romantic Period*. Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- McGavran, James Holt, ed. *Literature and the Child: Romantic Continuations, Postmodern Contestations*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999.
- Mellor, Anne Kostelanetz. *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000.
- Moorman, John. *History of the Church in England, by John R. H. Moorman*. 2nd ed. London: Black, 1967.
- More, Hannah. *Betty Brown, the St. Giles's Orange Girl*. [London]: J. Marshall, and R. White, London, 1795.
- . *Black Giles the Poacher with some Account of a Family Who had rather Live by their Wits than their Work. Part I*. [London]: J. Marshall; and R. White, 1796.

- . *Coelebs in Search of a Wife: Comprehending Observations on Domestic Habits and Manners, Religion and Morals*. Ed. Patricia Demers. Peterborough, Ont.; Orchard Park, NY: Broadview Editions, 2007.
- . *Essays on various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies*. London: T. Cadell, 1791.
- . *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*. 2 vols. 2nd ed. London: R.B. Seeley etc., 1834.
- . *Questions and Answers for the Mendip and Sunday Schools*. 14th ed. Bath: John Binns, 1800.
- . *Shepherd of Salisbury-Plain. Part I*. [London]: J. Marshall and R. White, 1795.
- . *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. with a View of the Principles and Conduct Prevalent among Women of Rank and Fortune*. 2 vols. London: T. Cadell Jun. and W. Davies, 1799.
- . *Sunday School*. [London]: J. Marshall, and R. White, 1796.
- . *The Sunday School*. Dublin: Ann Watson, Printer to the Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts, 1800.
- . *Tales for the Common People and Other Cheap Repository Tracts*. Ed. Clare MacDonald. Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2002.
- . *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*. Fourth ed. London: T. Cadell, 1788.
- More, Martha. *Mendip Annals: Or, A Narrative of the Charitable Labours of Hannah and Martha More in their Neighbourhood*. Ed. Arthur Roberts. London: J. Nisbet and Co., 1859.
- Myers, Mitzi. "Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books." *Children's Literature: Annual of The Modern Language Association Division on Children's Literature and The*

- Children's Literature Association* 14 (1986): 31-59.
- . "Reform Or Ruin: 'A Revolution in Female Manners!'" *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 11 (1982): 199-216.
- Nardin, Jane. "Avoiding the Perils of the Muse: Hannah More, Didactic Literature, and Eighteenth-Century Criticism." *Papers on Language and Literature* 36.4 (2000): 377.
- . "Hannah More and the Problem of Poverty." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 43.3 (2001): 267.
- . "Hannah More and the Rhetoric of Educational Reform." *Women's History Review* 10.2 (2001): 211-27.
- Neuburg, Victor E. *Penny Histories; A Study of Chapbooks for Young Readers Over Two Centuries*. London: Oxford University Press, 1968.
- . *Popular Education in Eighteenth Century England*. London: Woburn Press, 1971.
- . *Popular Literature: A History and Guide, from the Beginning of Printing to the Year 1897*. London: Woburn Press, 1977.
- Newcomb, Lori Humphrey. "What is a Chapbook?" *Literature and Popular Culture in Early Modern England*. Eds. Matthew Dimmock and Andrew Hadfield. UK: Ashgate, 2009.
- O'Malley, Andrew. "The Coach and Six: Chapbook Residue in Late Eighteenth-Century Children's Literature." *Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children's Literature* 24.1 (2000): 18-44.
- . *Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century*. New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Pedersen, Susan. "Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century England." *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986): 84-113.

- Peterson, L. H. "From French Revolution to English Reform: Hannah More, Harriet Martineau, and the "Little Book"." *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 60.4 (2006): 409-50.
- Rena-Dozier, Emily. "Hannah More and the Invention of Narrative Authority." *ELH - English Literary History* 71.1 (2004): 209-27.
- Richardson, Alan. *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994.
- Roberts, William. *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*. 2 vols. 2nd ed. London: R.B. Seeley etc., 1834.
- Ruwe, Donelle Rae. *Culturing the Child, 1690-1914: Essays in Memory of Mitzi Myers*. Lanham, Md.: Children's Literature Association and Scarecrow Press, 2005.
- Scheuermann, Mona. "In Praise of Poverty: Hannah More Counters Thomas Paine and the Radical Threat." *History of Political Thought* 26.1 (2005): 169-70.
- Schofield, Anne, and Cecilia Macheski, eds. *Fetter'd Or Free: British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*. Ohio, London: Ohio UP, 1986.
- Shavit, Zohar. *Cultural Notions and Literary Boundaries: On the Creation of the Systemic Opposition between Children's Literature and Adult Literature in the Eighteenth Century*. Pp. 416-22 in *Space and Boundaries of Literature / Espace et frontières de la littérature*. (Proceedings of the 12th Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association, Munich, 1988.) Edited by Roger Bauer, Douwe Fokkema, and Michael de Graat. Vol. 4. Munich: Iudicium, 1990.
- Shaw, Clare MacDonald. "Introduction." *Tales for the Common People*. Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2002.
- Sitter, John, ed. *Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*. Cambridge, UK; New York:



- Cambridge UP, 2001.
- Smith, N. D. "An Unidentified Translation by Hannah More in the London Magazine (1773)." *Notes and Queries* 51.4 (2004): 414-5.
- Smith, Olivia. *Politics of Language, 1791-1819*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1984.
- Stott, Anne. "Evangelicalism and Enlightenment: The Educational Agenda of Hannah More." *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain: Beliefs, Cultures, Practices*. Eds. Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin. Surrey: Ashgate, ix, 2009. 41-55.
- . *Hannah More: The First Victorian*. Oxford; New York: Oxford UP, 2003.
- . "Hannah More and the Blagdon Controversy, 1799-1802." *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51.2 (2000): 319-46.
- Thompson, Edward. *Making of the English Working Class*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968.
- Vallone, Lynne. "'A Humble Spirit Under Correction': Tracts, Hymns, and the Ideology of Evangelical Fiction for Children, 1780-1820." *The Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children's Literature* 15.2 (1991): 72-95.
- Watt, Tessa. *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991.
- Webb, S. "One Man's Trash is another Man's Dinner: Food and the Poetics of Scarcity in the Cheap Repository Tracts." *European Romantic Review* 17.4 (2006): 419-36.
- Weiss, Harry. *Book about Chapbooks; the People's Literature of Bygone Times, by Harry. B. Weiss*. Hatboro: Pa., Folklore Associates, 1969.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. *Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*. Ed. Janet M. Todd and Marilyn Butler. Washington Square, N.Y.: New York University Press, 1989.
- Yeo, Eileen. *Contest for Social Science: Relations and Representations of Gender and Class*. London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996.