



LEHIGH
UNIVERSITY

Library &
Technology
Services

The Preserve: Lehigh Library Digital Collections

Literature And The Proletariat In The Nineteenth Century: The Work Of William Johnson Fox.

Citation

Wallace, James Michael. *Literature And The Proletariat In The Nineteenth Century: The Work Of William Johnson Fox*. 1989, <https://preserve.lehigh.edu/lehigh-scholarship/graduate-publications-theses-dissertations/theses-dissertations/literature>.

Find more at <https://preserve.lehigh.edu/>

This document is brought to you for free and open access by Lehigh Preserve. It has been accepted for inclusion by an authorized administrator of Lehigh Preserve. For more information, please contact preserve@lehigh.edu.

INFORMATION TO USERS

The most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this manuscript from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book. These are also available as one exposure on a standard 35mm slide or as a 17" x 23" black and white photographic print for an additional charge.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

U·M·I

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

Order Number 8921646

**Literature and the proletariat in the nineteenth century: The
work of William Johnson Fox**

Wallace, James Michael, Ph.D.

Lehigh University, 1989

U·M·I

**300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106**

LITERATURE AND THE PROLETARIAT IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY:
THE WORK OF WILLIAM JOHNSON FOX

by

James M. Wallace

A Dissertation

Presented to the Graduate Committee

of Lehigh University

in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

English

Lehigh University

1989

Approved and accepted as a dissertation for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English.

22 May 1989
(date)

Addison Cross
(Professor in charge)

5-22-89
(date)

Addison Cross
James R. Frakes
Robert M. Hago
Stephen Whitcliffe

Acknowledgements

For their guidance during the writing of this dissertation and during my graduate education, I am indebted to James Frakes, Robert Harson, Stephen Cutcliffe, Peter Beidler, and especially Addison Bross, who has greatly influenced my life and learning. I owe much gratitude and recognition to my wife, Anna, for her patience and support.

For
Rose Krissinger

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	vi
Abstract	1
Introduction	3
1. Culture and Sympathy: The Politics of William Fox	17
2. The Labor of Poets and the Poetry of Labor	54
3. Literary Education and the Function of Criticism	95
Works Consulted	132
Vita	142

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations, indicating the sources of William Fox's writings, have been used in the text.

CW The Collected Works of William Johnson Fox. 12 Vols.
London, 1865-1866.

LWC Lectures Addressed Chiefly to the Working Classes.
3 Vols. London, 1845.

MR Monthly Repository.

WR Westminster Review.

Abstract

William Johnson Fox's understanding of literature is inextricably linked to his understanding of social relationships and to his life-long work for the advancement of the laboring classes. For Fox, literature was both a social product and the personal creation of a toiling artistic segment of the working class. Literature furthermore provided a useful tool in the struggle for intellectual and cultural survival in an industrial society by confronting the prevailing political orthodoxy of that society. Literature, for Fox, offered universal truths of love and sympathy, which exposed hypocrisy and the contradictions of a society built on individualism. In short, he considered literature both a unifying force and a revolutionary one. Literature could prove that man was a communal and sympathetic being, and it could dissolve the belief, held by the political, social, and economic leaders of England, that self-interest was man's ruling passion and competition his life's blood.

Literature, Fox believed, could reconcile contraries and settle controversies by confronting contradiction and offering alternatives. Literature, for Fox, taught not how one should live, but how many could live together. As a

critic, he saw his role as mediator between author and reader, one who used his critical stance to draw attention to the plight of the lower classes and to encourage the reader to turn his recognition of necessity and oppression into behavior that would change the world. Fox continued that mediation as a critic by taking the poet to the people in his lectures to the working classes.

An understanding of the place of literature in the struggle between workers and owners, of the role of the poet in the industrial age, and of the place of literature in the education of workers begins with William Fox. This essay examines Fox's social theories as expressed in his philosophical, religious, social, and literary critical writings (many of which appeared in the Monthly Repository), discusses Fox's notion of the proletarian poet, and analyzes Fox's lectures on poetry delivered to the Working Men's Association. A place among socialist literary intellectuals is claimed for Fox, who contributed much to the understanding of the connection in the nineteenth century between literature and the class struggle.

Introduction

In Portrait of an Age, G. M. Young gives perhaps the most revealing statistic to come from the age of statistics in, appropriately, the dehumanizing form of a table:

1
Expectation of Life at Birth

	Bath	Leeds	Man- chester	Liver- pool
Gentlefolk	55	45	38	35
Traders and Farmers	37	27	20	22
Labourers	25	19	17	15

The growing disparity between the classes was not a simple matter of who could or could not reasonably expect to garner a gentleman's equipage, but a matter of who could expect to live beyond adolescence. Breaking free of one's class in the nineteenth century, the statistics were proving, meant more than the mere acquisition of refinements; it also meant doubling the years one had in which to exhibit those refinements. Perhaps no discrepancy better clarifies the point, made by almost every scholar of the Victorian age, that "the mood of England in the Industrial Revolution is a

mood of contrasts" (Williams 3).

Those contrasts show up in much of the era's literature. At the conclusion of Thomas Peacock's Crotchet Castle (1831), Mr. Chainmail, who has followed his own advice to "Build a great dining-hall: endow it with beef and ale, and hang the hall round with arms to defend the provisions" (280), finds his medieval hall stormed by an angry mob. The Rev. Dr. Folllott, an intolerant Tory, and Mr. MacQuedy, a bourgeois reformer, debate the reasons for the discontent of the people:

THE REV. DR. FOLLIOTT

Ho, ho! here is a piece of the dark ages we did not bargain for. Here is the Jacquerie. Here is the march of mind with a witness.

MR. MAC QUEDY

Do you not see that you have brought dispartates together? the Jacquerie and the march of mind.

THE REV. DR. FOLLIOTT

Not at all sir. They are the same thing, under different names. . . . What was Jacquerie in the dark ages, is the march of mind in this very enlightened one--very enlightened one.

MR. CHAINMAIL

The cause is the same in both; poverty in despair.

MR. MAC QUEDY

Very likely; but the effect is extremely disagreeable.

THE REV. DR. FOLLIOTT

It is the natural result, Mr. Mac Quedy, of that system of state seamanship which your science upholds. Putting the crew on short allowance, and doubling the rations of the officers, is the sure way to make a mutiny on board a ship in distress, Mr. Mac Quedy.

MR. MAC QUEDY

Eh! sir, I uphold no such system as that. I shall set you right as to cause and effect. Discontent increases with the increase of information. That is all. (306, 309)

Mr. Mac Quedy is the quintessential progressive, bourgeois reformer, comfortable in his conviction that the world operates according to discernible principles of cause and effect, authoritative in his pronouncements, convicted in his notions that disparate elements can exist together as long as they avoid physical and even linguistic contact with one another, that reform can be accomplished through appeasement and conciliation and not through revolution, that the march of mind, if brought to the laboring class, would lead only to rebellion, that the hungry populace must remain ignorant to remain content. For all his economic expertise, he remains ignorant of the market realities that govern behavior. His world is separated neatly into spheres of capital and labor, those responsible for progress and those

whose rebellious tendencies must be checked, those destined to live relatively long, those condemned to die young. He represents in Peacock's novel the progressive with a conservative mind, who attempted into the eighteen-thirties to hold on to the certainties inherited from the age of Augustan hierarchical order, the age of imposed propriety, decorum, and causality, and who, while insuring that the Great Chain remained intact, would bring some small measure of happiness to the poorest classes primarily to prevent their interfering with the upper class's pursuit of its own happiness.

A vestige of the previous century, Mac Quedy is equally a spokesman for his own age, and the novel, published in 1831, appears almost as the swan song of a passing age and the herald of a new. A year after the novel's publication the Reform Bill would deepen the division in society between a laboring poor and a wealthy owning class, and the louder clash between capital and labor would shatter Mr. Mac Quedy's secure comfort in the "natural" and apparently consensual balance and harmony of his civilization.

Though the first decades of the century had seen the violence of the class struggle at Peterloo and among the Luddites, and though its poets had depicted those struggles,

they also found solace in the synthesizing power of the imagination, like the moon over Snowden or the aeolian harp, to bring disparate elements into a reconciled wholeness. The poet of imagination could unite past and present, age and youth, innocence and experience, individual concerns and societal ones, intellect and emotion, hope and despair. The romantic poet replaced the certainty of science with the certainty of the all-inclusive and creative imagination, an imagination through which the poet could connect that which industry and a divisive political economy had made increasingly contrasted.² "The Poet," Wordsworth writes, "binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth and over all time" ("Preface to the Lyrical Ballads" 688). McQuedy's order was somehow mirrored in the order and balance achieved in romantic poetry.

But at the height of the Industrial Revolution, with the middle class advancing and the lower classes sinking, the Victorians were less sure of literature's power to create a world out of chaos and considered more carefully, and at times more despairingly, the obligations of the poet in a world that was not listening to him. Wordsworth's binding imagination is replaced by Tennyson's "damned vacillating state"; and the "dialogue of the mind with itself" becomes

the torment of all thinkers. The difference between the Romantic and Victorian periods, to simplify, is the difference between a synthetic age and an age of a renewed and not satisfactorily settled dialectic. True, major Victorian thinkers did inherit and preserve, as Houghton makes clear, "the theory that truth lies in a mediation between opposing doctrines, both of which are partly true, and that therefore the progress of truth depends on the synthesis of opposites" (Houghton 178),³ but there flourished also an intellectual underground that did not ascribe to the Hegelian solution of synthesis, manifested socially and politically in compromise, but that sought instead to resolve conflict by the victory of one "extreme" over another. Whereas the Romantics had found some hope in the reconciliation of opposites, some Victorians sought more certain solutions to the age's greatest contrasts and answers to its greatest problems. It is this rejection of synthesis and this desperate need to discover answers that prompt Mr. Crotchet at the beginning of Crotchet Castle and at the beginning of the end of a literary era to say,

The sentimental against the rational, the intuitive against the inductive, the ornamental against the useful, the intense against the tranquil, the romantic against the classical; these are the great and interesting controversies, which I should like,

before I die, to see satisfactorily settled. (156)

William Johnson Fox worked on the cusp of the synthetic and dialectic ages. His work reflects both the attempts of the Romantics to create a wholeness and unified harmony and the despair of the Victorians confronted with a useless order based on authority and a widening disparity between classes. Fox's greatest concern was the division between classes, a division reflected most forcefully in Young's table, a form of which Fox had himself presented in numbers that drive home even harder the dehumanization of the industrial age. In an article in the Monthly Repository, which Fox owned and edited from 1831 to 1836, he gave statistics showing the number of burials recorded in different parts of England in the preceding year. Fox demonstrated in his table that more people had died, and at a younger age, in towns where "the factory system prevails" than in towns where domestic manufacturing was still prevalent ("On the Factory System" 148). Fox's numbers of the dead and buried proved, he hoped, the need for restructuring and not for abandoning the current system of production. He never argued for the abolishment of a capitalistic economy, and in many respects bore all the earmarks of a bourgeois reformer in the mold of Mac Quedy--optimistic, democratic, unhesitant in his support of free

trade, and unwavering in his belief that the good of England lay in its system of manufacture.

But if Fox was Mac Quedy's contemporary, he was much more uncomfortable and felt more deeply the advancing rift in society. Fox himself is a study in contrasts, and he is spared the label of "middle-class reformer" by his recognition of contradiction, his uneasiness with his middle-class status, his fiery and angry sermons on the corrupt morality of his getting-and-spending congregations, his devotion to the cultivation of what he saw as the working class's inherent sense of community and his exhortations to those workers to demand their rights, his support of revolution and rebellion, his encouragement of dissent and his own dissensions, and his social and political theories, rooted in collective ideals and Christian values. He was one of the foremost of the early Victorian socialist thinkers, heir to Comte, Godwin, and Hardy, and a forerunner of Ruskin, Morris, T. H. Green, and Peter Kropotkin. His background in the Enlightenment and in Romanticism prompted him to struggle for a balanced, unified and harmonious existence among factions, including laborers and owners; but his Victorian sensibilities drew him to examine the contrasts of his day: working-class values against capitalistic ones, cooperation against competition, community against

sectarianism, collectivism against individualism, democracy against aristocracy, equality against privilege, sympathy against pity. These were the great and interesting controversies that William Fox hoped to see satisfactorily settled.

Fox, though remembered primarily for his "impact on younger and greater men" (De groot 119), greatly contributed to the literary criticism of the Victorian period, but except for some notice by Francis Mineka, who examines Fox's work for the Monthly Repository, and by Isobel Armstrong, who suggests that Fox's review of Tennyson's first publication "raises almost every [critical] theme of importance" to the mid-Victorians (14), he has been almost completely overlooked by literary critics and historians.⁴ His understanding of literature is inextricably linked to his understanding of social relationships and to his life-long work for the advancement of the laboring classes. For Fox, literature was both a social product and the personal creation of a toiling artistic segment of the working class. Literature furthermore provided a useful tool in the struggle for intellectual and cultural survival in an industrial society by confronting the prevailing political orthodoxy of that society. Literature, for Fox, offered universal truths of

love and sympathy, which exposed hypocrisy and the contradictions of a society built on individualism. In short, he considered literature both a unifying force and a revolutionary one. Literature could prove that man was a communal and sympathetic being, and it could dissolve the belief, held by the political, social, and economic leaders of England, that self-interest was man's ruling passion and competition his life's blood.

As a critic, Fox shares something with even the most advanced and sophisticated modern sociological critics. In some respects, Fox's notion of literature anticipates Lucien Goldmann's "genetic structuralism" in that Fox, like Goldmann, is less concerned with the language of literature and more with the interrelationship of concepts embodied within literature; and like Goldmann, Fox departs from the Romantic notion that literary works are expressions of the artists themselves. Unlike Goldmann, however, Fox did not see the writer as one who elaborated the mental structures of his own social group, but as one, instead, who gave substance to values that were in fact closer to the world view of working-class citizens, that class as yet uncorrupted by competition and gross individualism and, therefore, still operating under the inherent and natural drive toward collectivism. All true poets were, for Fox, proletarian, all

true literature an encouragement toward unity and social cohesion. His views predate those of Tolstoy, with whom he has much in common, by almost sixty years.

The era, Fox thought, made literature necessary, and in this premise he departed from the doctrine of his Utilitarian brethren. He argued, opposing Bentham, that literature, rooted in love and sympathy and united to the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number, could serve the purpose of uniting man to man in the attempt to create a socialistic society of the kind being constructed by men like Owen, built on theories antithetical, as Raymond Williams notes, to "theories which consistently reduce social to individualistic questions, and which support legislation of an individualist as opposed to a collectivist kind" (139). Literature could reconcile contraries and settle controversies, not in the Lukacsian sense of embodying the contradictory content of a capitalistic society, but by confronting contradiction and offering alternatives. Literature, for Fox, taught not how one should live, but how many could live together. As a critic, he saw his role as mediator between author and reader, one who used his critical stance as Sartre argued the writer must use his--to draw attention to the plight of the lower classes and to encourage

the reader to turn his recognition of necessity and oppression into behavior that would change the world. What David Cauter says of Sartre can be said of Fox: he "rejects a literature of hexis, one which produces a synthetic and explanatory view of life, in favour of a literature of praxis, one which attempts an active role in mediating between the world and man's capacity to change it" (46). Fox continued that mediation as a critic by taking the poet to the people in his lectures to the working classes.

Though professedly liberal in his social thinking, Fox presented a completely socialistic view of literature, which he felt could help settle the controversies of the age and contribute to the creation of a social democracy. He saw literature as the best manifestation of the opposition to a laissez-faire society and the best encouragement toward a society of human relationship and interdependence. Though literally now only a footnote for some historians of the nineteenth century⁵, his place in history set perhaps only because of his relationship to writers such as Carlyle, who scornfully listed Fox among "the friends of the species" (Letters 7: 327). Fox, nonetheless, contributed much to the literary criticism of the Victorian age and to the relationship of literature and literary criticism to the poor and working classes.

An understanding of the place of literature in the struggle between workers and owners, of the role of the poet in the industrial age, and of the place of literature in the lives of workers begins with William Fox. My purposes in this essay are, first, to examine Fox's social theories as expressed in his philosophical, religious, social, and literary critical writings; second, to discuss Fox's notion of the proletarian poet; and, finally, to analyze Fox's use of poetry in the education of the working classes. My hope is to claim for Fox a place among socialist literary intellectuals and to demonstrate Fox's contribution to the understanding of the connection in the nineteenth century between literature and the class struggle.

NOTES

1

Portrait of an Age 24. Young's chart lists also Rutland, Wiltshire, Derby, and Truro. The greatest difference between the life expectancy of gentlefolk and that of laborers occurs in Bath (30 years), the smallest in Truro (12 years).

2

The connection between Romantic literary, political, and social theories is examined fully in Terry Eagleton's Literary Theory. See especially Chapter 1.

3

See, too, Buckley 12.

4More should be said here of Francis Mineka's excellent work The Dissent of Dissidence, which contains the only other extended look at Fox's literary criticism. Mineka catalogues Fox's work for the Monthly Repository and highlights some of Fox's more outstanding topics. Mineka, however, makes no attempt to find a common theme in Fox's work in the Repository or to set Fox's criticism in the context of the class struggle.

5

In fact, one of Young's two brief mentions of Fox occurs in a footnote. For Young, as for most historians and literary analysts, Fox was not a central figure in the Victorian portrait. Even the generous Margaret Oliphant gave him little attention: He "has left nothing in literature, except by his connection with greater names, to preserve any memory of his own" (151).

Chapter 1

Culture and Sympathy: The Politics of William Fox

I. The Religion of Humanity and the Cooperative Society

At the foundation of Fox's philosophy were his dissent from the Anglican Church and his belief that man was free to rebel against all dogma or tradition--religious, political, or social. Against the Evangelicalism of early-nineteenth-century England Fox offered his own religion, rooted in Unitarianism and marked by a humane and sympathetic understanding of Christian and democratic ideals. He did not subscribe to a religion of abstinence and asceticism or to the Anglican interpretation of Christianity as a religion of private, individual salvation. His was, instead, the religion of humanity, which he defined as a belief in the instinctive drive toward cooperation and community preceding the existence of established religions or political states that divided humanity into factions and classes or that espoused doctrines of individual salvation and advancement. The "religion of humanity needs no state patronage," he wrote; "it flows from the same principles in our constitution by which men are prompted not to dwell in solitude, but to form themselves into communities" (CW 8: 295). This human constitution, he felt, was too often

ignored when a coercive state adopted a political constitution that did not allow for the nurturing of man's communal instincts.

Fox gave the most extended examination of what he believed to be the inherent and universal desire for cooperation in a late work Religious Ideas, decried as atheistic by his Tory opponents for the Oldham seat in the Commons in 1852.¹ In the thirteenth lecture Fox came dangerously close to recommending socialism to Englishmen reared on the doctrines of Smith and Hobbes and convinced that man's "natural" tendencies toward competition and individualism could flourish only in a secure and well-structured state. Fox argued that man's neighborliness preceded his feelings of citizenship and patriotism and that attempts by an authoritative state to establish an official religion to promote officially sanctioned ideas and behaviors were doomed to fail. The impulse toward fellowship, he claimed, was "above and beyond all pretence of being a creature of the state, supported by the state, dependent upon the state, or under the control of the state" (CW 8: 295). His theory closely resembles Shelley's: left to his own devices and governed by his instinctual humanity rather than by an established authority, man would get along

2

with man. Government and its institutions (especially the Church) could not hope to establish order through laws or customs that encouraged and approved relationships (based on competition, for example) antithetical to man's cooperative temperament.

He was not, however, ready to recommend a state of egoistical anarchy. Though by nature good, man wanted only that his goodness be nurtured by a government that recognized the human rather than the mechanical essence of society; that cultivated the well-being of all citizens, not the privileges of a wealthy minority; and that operated under the premise that feeling was as valuable a human trait as intellect--a government, in other words, that recognized both the "natural rights" proposed by eighteenth century rationalists and the powerful, natural emotions central to the works of the Romantic poets. His greatest hope was for the reconciliation of government and society as they had been distinguished by Paine: "Society is produced by our wants, and governments by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively, by uniting our affections; the later negatively, by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions" (LWC 2: 125). Fox believed that man could live by the dictates of his conscience and the inspiration

of his affections, which compelled him to reject competition and division and to live peacefully within a world community. Man was by nature, Fox thought, a good neighbor first, a good citizen second.

Fox attempted in much of his writing to appeal to the sense of fairness and equality that he assumed existed in all people, including his conservative adversaries, encouraging them to institute reforms. Richard Garnett, Fox's biographer, discusses at length Fox's work for universal suffrage, labor reforms, universal and free education, women's rights, and cheap food. His greatest concern, however, was for the rights of the lower classes. His sympathies were entirely in line with the Chartist movement, whose credo he adopted as his own: "We resolve to assist and give the right hand of fellowship to all men who are essaying to gain any measure of reform that shall elevate the down-trodden masses of our country-men" (CW 4: 323). In elevating the down-trodden, Fox hoped to break the class structure of the early nineteenth century and to introduce a kind of socialism rooted in sympathy and approaching in kind "the cooperative system of Owen and . . . the social anticipations of St. Simon" (CW 3: 117). His goal was a drastic improvement in social relations. In "Men

and Things in 1823," ostensibly a review of a poem by James Boone and the leading article in the new Utilitarian periodical the Westminster Review. Fox writes:

Our social arrangements may stop far short of the forms contemplated by Mr. Owen, but there seems good reason to expect that they will be modified by the influences of his favorite cooperative principles; that combination will in some measure supply the want of capital; and that the prodigious improvements in machinery which have been, and will be made, instead of merely enriching individuals already wealthy, will become directly subservient to the interests of the operative classes. . . . (8-9)3

Part of the objective of the cooperative society, Fox contended, was "the fusion of classes," "the swamping of class interest in the great common interest" (CW 4: 328), a non-violent abolishment of differences between the classes, a "sovereignty of the people" that would abolish all institutions, including the monarchy, that failed to safeguard the liberties of the people or that served only to extend traditions that denigrate workers, and one that would blur all distinctions by making each man both a laborer and a capitalist. Each man, Fox believed, could be all men, because each man worked in the common interest (LWC 1: 224).

Believing that morality was a social product and that a man's duty was to his fellow man, he urged the creation of a society in which humanity and emotions could thrive. He

believed that reform would occur only through the cooperation of politicians, poets, and philosophers. Fox himself hoped to be all three in one man. He wrote to Eliza Flower that he planned to write a "philosophical poetical political article on the true spirit of Reform, as a real spirit in the soul of man" (Garnett 112). From legislators, poets, and philosophers, Fox urged engagement and commitment, not to impose order, but to correct what was wrong. What he sought is made clearer by what he opposed-- what Macaulay most supported. Macaulay ended his review of Southey's Colloquies with a succinct statement of his viewpoint:

Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the nation by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties, by leaving capital to find its most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment, by maintaining peace, by defending property, by diminishing the price of law, and by observing strict economy in every department of the state. Let the government do this: the People will assuredly do the rest. (Macaulay 36)

Though he does not mention Macaulay, it is this sort of God's-in-his-heaven stance that Fox objected to. "Something must be wrong," he said to his working-class audience at Holborn, and something must be done (LWC 1: 52). Fox

rejected the harshness of laissez faire suggested in Macaulay's "leaving," and proposed instead the reconstruction of society and the state to eradicate inequality, introduce social democracy, and turn the nineteenth century from individualism toward collectivism, from selfishness toward sympathy and the cultivation of affection. He encouraged his country-men--poet, philosopher, and politician--to recognize man's natural and instinctual impulse toward cooperation and to correct the hierarchical system that, by preserving existing inequalities and promoting competition, destroyed that impulse. In short he presented an anti-Malthusian belief that human conditions could and should be improved and that it was the legislator's and writer's, as well as the philosopher's, duty to change the world.

II. The Nature of Sympathy

Governments and institutions do not always accommodate nature and instinct; and in Fox's day they likewise placed formal restrictions on behavior and belief. Recognizing, however, that some structure was inevitable, Fox held that so long as the imposition and preservation of governmental and ecclesiastical forms did not conflict with his religion

of humanity, the state would progress smoothly. When governments and institutions forced or sanctioned certain "unnatural" behaviors, however, especially those that favored one group of people over another (such as a worker's "bargaining" for the labor of his wife and children (CW 7: 12)), the state should expect revolution.

Fox saw as most unnatural and most likely to provoke rebellion the hierarchical structuring of society based on arbitrary definitions of superiority and inferiority and intended to maintain a culturally ordained order in which certain classes of people were assigned fixed places in an apparently organized state. Such a view of society had its origins in the work of English thinkers like John of Salisbury, who argued in the twelfth century that in the body politic, of which the king was the head, the worker played the important role of the feet. A central exponent of an imposed order in Fox's day were the Homilies, summaries of Church-and-State doctrines, some dating from the mid-sixteenth century, when economic discontent and an ineffective constitution necessitated a shift from political exhortations toward religious sermons to quiet the murmurs of revolution. In "The Doctrine of Obedience to Civil Powers" Fox quotes from the Homily on Obedience:

"Here let us learn . . . that all persons having souls . . . do owe of bounden duty, and even in conscience, obedience, submission, and subjection to the higher powers, which be set in authority by God; forasmuch as they be God's lieutenants, God's presidents, God's officers, God's commissioners, God's judges, ordained of God himself, of whom only they have all their power and all their authority. . . . St. Paul threateneth no less pain than everlasting damnation to all disobedient persons, to all resisters against this general and common authority, forasmuch as they resist not man, but God, not man's device and invention, but God's wisdom, God's order, power, and authority." (CW 11: 226. Ellipses added.)

Congregations in the established church learned quickly that the divine right of kings stretched easily to all authority figures of the realm. The Establishment, what Cobbett disgustedly called "The THING," married religion and politics to insure domestic peace uninterrupted by the kind of revolutions that had so shaken the order in France that tremors could still be felt in England fifty years later.⁴

The insistence on obedience to secular authorities, Fox believed, contributed primarily to establishing the superiority of one class of people--paternal and, especially, wealthy--over another. As power over the masses shared by religious and political figures moved by way of the Reform Bill into the hands of the new middle class, old means of maintaining control--eliciting reverence for ecclesiastical and noble rulers and respect for laws and

lawmakers--gave way to what Carlyle called "cash payment" and Marx after him "cash nexus." The mercantile class, Fox argued, had melded with the religious and political factions to form almost literally Disraeli's two nations, one a class marked by "a grasping and oppressive spirit . . . [with] a desire to make the most money that can be made by any particular relation of master and slave, of employer and laborer," and the other seemingly destined "to remain slaves, and to have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them" (CW 11: 312, 318). For Fox this growing schism was the most foul violation of his religion of humanity. Although like many progressive thinkers he had given some credit to the bourgeoisie (he called it "the burgesses") for its contributions to society, including "mechanical improvements and contrivances which multiply the power of human labour [and] . . . unite distant regions" (CW 7: 59), he felt its greatest evil to be this perpetuation of classification, the habit of mind that divided humanity and labor into categories, and especially into the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the "oppressor and oppressed" ("Men and Things" 3).⁵

Fox seems to have sensed a strange sort of rationalization among apologists for the divisions occurring in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, an

insistent support of the assumption that division and control were natural and useful. If it were true, as Smith had contended, that a sound economy depended on some people's owning more resources or manufactured goods than they required to fulfill their personal needs, then that economy also depended on a class of people with fewer resources or goods than they required to sustain themselves. The worker could be made to see not only that he contributed to the "wholeness" of society by making up that class of people that produced the goods, but also that he owed his mere existence to the opposing class as silence exists only because of sound. Furthermore, the owning class could define itself as successful because of the level of poverty from which it had risen and against which it could now contrast itself. The poor enjoyed a similar advantage, since classification made poverty bearable: there was always
6
someone poorer. It was a philosophy that Fox saw stretched to its limits in the prejudices founded on the belief in natural divisions, prejudices he listed in "Human Brotherhood":

That there are in the world different classes of men, heaven-born and earth-born . . .; that there are different races, with such disparity that it is for some to be luxurious lords of creation, and others their saleable, fettered, tasked, beaten,

and branded beasts of burden; that a man's clan or country has exclusive title to his affections, exertions, duties, concentrating every thing within that narrow circle except a pitiless hostility to all of humankind beyond its narrow boundary; that there are natural antipathies,--hereditary national antipathies,--which should make mighty and enlightened countries each other's foes from generation to generation, and from age to age, desolating one another and all the world around them, each dreaming that the evil of its neighbour was its own good,--as if the poverty of millions in one country could make a neighboring country rich, as if slavery of one country could make another country free, as if the misery of millions in one country could raise another to the summit of felicity. . . . (CW 3: 202)7

Fox saw reflected in the espousal of "natural antipathies" another conflict: the difference between what was formed in man by his culture--the actual belief in antipathy--and what was truly natural--sympathy. Opposing the notion that contrasts and conflicts in the human community were "natural," that man was inherently an aggressive and competitive creature, Fox suggested that competition was a cultural product and the belief in antipathy a mere rationale for egocentrism.

His opposition was formidable. The doctrines of profit-at-any-price, upward mobility, individualism, and division allowed the Victorians to see conflict as natural and to find the best way of profiting from conflict rather than attempting to reform society by reconciling differences

to establish a more tranquil and egalitarian existence. The division of society into distinct classes was beneficial only to the higher class, who ratified cultural differences by making them appear completely natural, approved the idea of gradation and social stratification, and justified the belief that the individual's purpose on earth was to rise out of his class and into the superior one.⁸

Fox considered the method of personal elevation to be the most corrupting quality of capitalism and the most destructive weapon against his religion of humanity. That method was called

competition, the hardness, the selfishness, the isolation of a person's own interests or those of his family--which may be considered as identical with his own--from those of his fellow-creatures, the constant clashing, the endeavor not merely to realize the greatest amount of useful production, not merely to minister to the public good in fair and equal harmony with a man's own realization of good, but the strife to be foremost, to outrun others even though all be damaged. (CW 7: 62)

Fox noted, as Clough would, that competition was cultural, not natural. "Thou shalt not covet," Clough wrote, "but tradition / Approves all forms of competition" (360). Fox saw middle-class England driven by the obsession to accumulate and to possess, and by possessing to dominate. Even the "Royal Speech" was "couched in the ancient language

of mastery and domination; it abounds with such phrases as 'my parliament,' 'my church,' 'my people,' 'my army,' 'my navy'" (LWC 1: 156). Fox, as well as Carlyle, believed competition for possession to be the downfall of Victorian society. "Call ye that a Society," Carlyle wrote, "where there is no longer any Social Idea extant, not so much as the Idea of a Common Home, but only of a common over-crowded Lodging-house? Where each, isolated, regardless of his neighbour, turned against his neighbour, clutches what he can get, and cries 'Mine!' and calls it Peace . . . ?" (Sartor Resartus 224).

Fox made little concerted effort to prove that man was by nature a cooperative rather than a competitive animal. He did give a very favorable review to Casper Hauser: An Account of an Individual kept in a Dungeon, separated from all communication with the world, from early Childhood to about the Age of Seventeen. Drawn up from legal documents. In the review Fox revealed his fascination with the "noble savage," who "abhorred the usual customs, conveniences, and necessities of life" and whose nature was one of "indescribable goodness," his disposition of "exceeding amiableness'" ("Casper Hauser" 520, 525).

But unlike Peter Kropotkin, who more than sixty years later would support the same theory with scientific

exactness and abundant examples of man's evolution through cooperation rather than competition (the reverse of the argument posed by the Social Darwinists). Fox relied on what he insisted was the "literal, historical fact" of each man's fraternal relation to mankind. The point needed no debating. Against the propositions of Hobbes and Smith that man was motivated by selfish desire and was willing to fight to protect what was rightfully his, Fox proposed the idea of commonality and mutual aid, which began with a recognition of man's physical similarities:

The principles of thought and feeling obtain alike with the operations of the brain and the pulsations of the heart. . . . "His blood is like ours!" shouted a Marseillais peasant, as that of Louis XVI spouted from his headless trunk upon the guillotine. It was--and therefore it should not have been shed. It was--and therefore the expression should have been one, not of vengeance but of mercy. It was--and therefore that should have been, not an exalting shout, but a whispered caution--an admonition of the peril of weak humanity in power. Well were it if the master felt this before his slave had wrested emancipation from him to check his tyranny; and if the freed slave felt it after to check his retribution. This is the basis of all sympathy. This makes us understand, without actual experience, something of the miseries of want and exile. Let the gay and prosperous call them up to their imagination, and then consult their hearts. They may but see as in a glass darkly the extent of the suffering; but that dim reflection will yet be a faithful one--will yet be enough, or should be, to move them to painful sympathy and active aid. (CW 3: 203)

As would Kropotkin, Fox noted the two currents running through the social history of the nineteenth century: one of self-assertion, individualism, competition, and the personal attempt to gain superiority and power; and the other of sympathy and mutual aid.¹⁰ Though Kropotkin would argue that neither love nor sympathy but a "vague feeling or instinct of human solidarity" compelled him "to seize a pail of water and to rush toward . . . [a neighbor's] house when I see it on fire" (xiii), Fox believed that "sympathy" was the word for that same vague instinct:

There is an antagonistic power to the miseries of poverty in the constitution of our nature, the sympathies of humanity. We are framed to feel the pain we see. . . . And let these sympathies be cherished. They were implanted as guardians within us of our brethren's rights. They are as tribunes in our bosoms who uplift their voices against the despotism of a hard-hearted selfishness. Let the remonstrances be regarded and their dictates obeyed by those who possess the conveniences and comforts of life. (CW 3: 116-117)

An impassioned Utilitarian who once argued the connection between Bentham and Christ, Fox added the idea of sympathy to Bentham's ethical calculations. Moral principles, Fox claimed, were eternal and could be deduced by determining which behaviors tended toward "the production of happiness, the greatest happiness of the greatest number--the greatest amount of happiness, the most satisfactory, and the most

enduring species of enjoyment" (CW 7: 6). The amount, degree, and endurance of happiness are strictly Benthamite variables in the calculation of ethical behavior. But to them Fox adds the idea that personal happiness comes from working for the happiness of others. In Bentham's system one works for personal happiness (the end) by acting in the best interest of the greatest number (the means). For Fox the only goal was social happiness. Personal happiness would come, as it did for Mill, by the way.¹¹

In his proposal, Fox rejected Hartley's associationist arguments that social reform was accomplished solely through self-regarding motives, and accepted a system by which the social good was achieved through the individual's abiding by the dictates of "the universal human heart." For Fox, as for Hazlitt and the other Romantics, man was capable through sympathetic imagination of freeing himself from himself and achieving genuine and natural disinterestedness.¹²

Sympathy, as Isobel Armstrong makes clear, was one of the vital words in the vocabulary of Victorian literary critics, and no less vital in the critical reviews published by William Fox in his Monthly Repository and in the Westminster Review, where appeared Fox's notice of Tennyson's poems of 1830, the first review of Tennyson to

appear in a major quarterly (Armstrong 14). The review is, for Armstrong, seminal in Victorian critical discussions of sympathy. She writes: "Fox's analysis of Tennyson's poetry, particularly Supposed Confessions of a second-rate sensitive mind and The Mermaid, are [sic] attempts to demonstrate how the unique processes of feeling of any being can be imaginatively appropriated by the poet" (17). Armstrong credits Fox with recognizing the poet's ability to project himself into the consciousness of another person, and certainly Fox's other criticism, especially his early recognition of Browning's talent for dramatic monologue (Monthly Repository 7: 252-262; 9: 716-727), bears Armstrong out. Fox seems to have seen in the early thirties that though they were greatly influenced by the Romantic idea of the individual imagination, the new poets were adding a greater social role to the poet who escaped the confines of his own being by projecting himself into that of another. But, suggests Armstrong, Fox's notion of sympathy follows the tradition set in motion not by Keats or Hazlitt but by Adam Smith:

What we see, interestingly enough, is that Mill's psychology has given a new meaningfulness to the ideas of his utilitarian forebear, Adam Smith. When Fox says that Tennyson "seems to obtain entrance into a mind as he would make his way into a landscape. . . . The author personates (he

can personate anything he pleases . . .)," and that "Our author has the secret of transmigration of the soul. He can cast his own spirit into any living thing, real or imaginary. Scarcely Vishnu himself becomes incarnate more easily, frequently, or perfectly," he is invoking Smith's notion of sympathy, of dramatic projection, that capacity for "changing places in fancy" with another which is the basis of our understanding both of other people and ourselves. In this review sympathy extends the imaginative world of the poet and throughout the next four decades a minority of critics associated sympathy with a dramatic extension of the self. (17-18)

Armstrong's perceptive analysis of Fox's contributions to the discourse of sympathy in literary reviews hinges, unfortunately, on equating Fox's notion of sympathy with Smith's; yet Fox's use of the term, though owing something to the moral psychology of Smith, is more a reaction against that psychology than a furthering of it. As a Utilitarian, Fox is an indirect descendant of Smith, whose belief that self-interest is the basis of human conduct is a central assumption of the Utilitarians. But in his literary criticism, Fox actually exposed and therefore rejected the contradiction between Smith's economic theory, which is based on self-interest, and his moral theory--that man is bound to man through the faculty of sympathy. It is in his literary criticism that Fox most dramatically breaks from the Smith-Ricardo-Bentham-James Mill heritage of individualism to begin his own tradition of universal

Utilitarianism. In Fox, a Utilitarian comes to literature and arrives before his friend John Stuart Mill. Fox's "sympathy" is based on emotion and love, and literature, Fox believed, opposing Bentham, was the proper test and proof of man's inherent sympathetic nature.

True, Smith's definition of sympathy, or "fellow-feeling," is built upon the notion of mutual responses to certain events. Our ability to recognize and feel one another's joys and pains unites us each to the other in an inextricable psychological commonality. Our reactions, our affective responses, to literature prove this kinship:

Whatever is the passion which arises from any object in the person concerned, an analogous emotion springs up, at the thought of his situation, in the breast of every attentive spectator. Our joy for the deliverance of those heroes of tragedy or romance who interest us, is as sincere as our grief for their distress, and our fellow-feeling with their misery is not more real than that with their happiness.

(Moral Sentiments 10)

But Smith's definition of sympathy continues from this point to include the idea of judgment. For Smith, sympathy was the basis for approval and disapproval of the actions of others, based on the observer's ability or inability to feel an "analogous emotion." When the observer's sympathies correspond with the principle's feelings and actions, then

the observer judges those feelings and actions to be proper:

When the original passions of the person principally concerned are in perfect concord with the sympathetic emotions of the spectator, they necessarily appear to this last just and proper, and suitable to their objects; and, on the contrary, when, upon bringing the case home to himself, he finds that they do not coincide with what he feels, they necessarily appear to him unjust and improper, and unsuitable to the causes which excite them. (Moral Sentiments 16)

To simplify, if a man (the principle) touches a candle flame (the object) and shouts in pain, the observer, because of his ability to sympathize, will say that the principle's actions were "just and proper, and suitable to their object." If the same principle shows anger and snaps the candle in two, the observer, unable to sympathize, may deem his actions inappropriate. The observer's sense of what he might do in a similar situation is the measure of propriety and justice.

Smith's egoistic definition of sympathy as a faculty by which an observer determines the justice and propriety of another's actions is antithetical to Fox's definition as expressed in his literary criticism. While for Smith, sympathy is a means for arriving at judgment, for Fox, sympathy ends not in judgment but in a heightened sense of communion with one another despite differences of opinion

concerning appropriate and inappropriate reactions. In Fox's review of Tennyson we get something of an answer to Smith's type of sympathy. Fox noted not only Tennyson's ability to enter into various consciousnesses or to give a range of treatments to the same topic, but also his tendency to withhold judgment on his topics. He first notes Tennyson's ability to make "the feeling within [a character] generate an appropriate assemblage of external objects. Every mood of the mind has its own outward world, or rather makes its own outward world" ("Tennyson's Poems" WR 218). Here Fox makes the object appropriate to the response and gives more importance to the principle and less to the supposedly objective external world. There can be no judgment since the external landscape is a projection of the poet's internal one; his mood and his feelings that at the moment color the external world. The principle is neither praised nor condemned for his responses. Fox calls this correspondence between emotions and objects "congeniality."

But, he writes, this "congeniality" is not always present; there is often a discrepancy, someone following Smith might say, between the object and the principle's response: "It is not always, and perhaps with sensitive and imaginative minds it is seldom, that the external objects

and their qualities will be seen through the medium of congeniality" (218). Of course, to claim that there is a absence of congeniality between the principle and the object would be to suggest that the observer knows what would be congenial. Such an assertion would be a subtle judgment of the principle's response. Knowing this, Fox examines Tennyson's companion poems "All Things Must Die" and "Nothing Will Die" to show that Tennyson could give equal treatment to opposing viewpoints:

There is not less truth, perhaps a more refined observation, in the opposite course which our author has taken in the two poems Nothing Will Die and All Things Will Die. The outward objects, at the commencement of each, are precisely the same; the states of mind are in contrast; and each seizes with avidity on some appearance which is uncongenial with itself. He who thinks that nothing will die, yet looks with wondering, and almost wearied eye on the ever-flowing stream, &c.; and he, who feels that all things must die, gazes mournfully on those same objects in the "gayest, happiest attitude," which his own fancy has unconsciously compelled them to assume. (220)

Looking at the same objects, the two speakers come to vastly different conclusions, neither of which Tennyson sanctions as the proper one. For Fox, Tennyson demonstrates the diversity of opinion and viewpoint and the impossibility of using sympathy, which Tennyson possesses equally for both speakers, to pass judgment. Whereas Smith, in his notion of

sympathy, emphasizes conflict or similarity between an observer's and another's passions in relation to an object that has caused those passions. Fox credits the poet for his ability to sympathize, nonjudgmentally, with the passions of another, independent of any standard of propriety or appropriateness. Tennyson, because he is sensitive and imaginative and because he recognizes that there are various states of mind in various principles, passes no judgment on them whether they see the natural world with "exalting joyousness" or a "reckless and desperate gaiety" (220). Both responses, Fox contends, are human, and Tennyson is wise to avoid sanctioning one or the other as proper or more appropriate. For Fox, Tennyson recognized that there is room in the world for both views, a quality of mind Fox had repeatedly encouraged his readers to emulate.¹³

Toward the end of his essay on Tennyson, Fox shifts his focus from the display of sympathy in poetry to the promotion of it. Apparently concerned that Tennyson would become a mere "poetical harlequin" (224), exhibiting a motley of viewpoints cancelling each other, Fox urged Tennyson to heed his "deep responsibilities to his country and the world, to the present generations, to earth and heaven" (224). For Fox, this meant writing poetry that would quicken men's sympathies toward one another, poetry

that would "act with a force . . . upon national feelings" (224). Fox wanted, first, displays of sympathy--the poet's refusal to take sides, and, second, promotions of sympathy--poems encouraging interdependence and portraying human relationships based on love.

In this regard Fox's notion of sympathy is close to the one held by J. W. Marston and explained in his Poetry as an Universal Nature (1838), which Armstrong condemns as "naive" and "simple-minded" (10). "Marston," Armstrong notes, "equates sympathy with love, felt by both poet and reader . . . , an outgoing impulse which compels us to seek out that which unites us to others, feeling 'common to all'" (10). Though Fox's view of sympathy is closer to this than to Smith's, it is hardly simple-minded, especially given the milieu in which both Marston and Fox worked. Fox, as did Marston, proposed that sympathy, as it appeared in literature, was a form of love between poet, object, and reader, but more so between readers. For Fox, literature both endorsed and encouraged sympathy among readers as a natural element in humanity. The notion of sympathy directly confronted the notions of hierarchical structures and of competition.

The well-springs of literary sympathy are, for Fox,

sensibility and love. Fox believed, quoting Tennyson, that the poet's position was to be "Dower'd with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn, / The love of love" (224). The poet who could, through sensitivity and imagination, cast his mind into all minds would achieve the height of equanimity. The sensitive and imaginative mind could comprehend all possible viewpoints, and, in the absence of judgment, love of neighbor would follow.

Fox's closest literary relative here is Shelley, for whom poetry exposed the

great secret of morals [which] is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively: he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination; and poetry administers to the effect by acting upon the cause. ("Defence" 605-606)

For Shelley, the imagination is the faculty through which the poet connects "the everlasting universe of things" ("Mont Blanc" line 1). The poet proves that in the assimilated world seen by the imagination, no part is subservient to another. In Fox's time the poetic encouragement of love was a necessary response to a factional society. The poetic embodiment and encouragement

of love and sympathy, of true fellow-feeling, contrasted with the economic and social embodiment of self-interest. As Raymond Williams points out,

The emphasis on a general common humanity was evidently necessary in a period in which a new kind of society was coming to think of man as merely a specialized instrument of production. The emphasis on love and relationship was necessary not only with the immediate suffering but against the aggressive individualism and the primarily economic relationships which the new society embodied. Emphasis on the creative imagination, similarly, may be seen as an alternative construction of human motive and energy, in contrast with the assumptions of the prevailing economy. (Culture and Society 42)

Fox found the poem that both displayed and promoted sympathy in Browning's Paracelsus (Monthly Repository 9: 716-727). In his review, one of the few early notices to reveal an understanding and appreciation of the poem,¹⁴ Fox praised Browning for having a purpose in mind as he wrote, for not simply displaying, but promoting as well:

A lasting poem must have a great purpose, moral, political or philosophical. Aimlessness is fatal; and even an erring aim is perilous. The world's heart is only to be won by love and worth. It will only enshrine and cherish for perpetuity the imagination which intelligence has directed to its good and glory. ("Paracelsus" 717)

Browning will please the world's heart, Fox notes, because

his imagination has

essayed the solution of one of those great enigmas which human life in its different phases presents. His Paracelsus is not a personification indeed, but an individualisation of humanity, in whom he exhibits its alternate conditions of aspiration and attainment. (717)

Later Fox notes that Browning brings about this unifying effect--the individualization of humanity (all men in one man)--through the dramatic technique of monologues, each representing a state in Paracelsus's and mankind's mental being, and all combining to make up the "history of his character, both in its individuality and as the symbolic representation of human nature" (718). In making Paracelsus both individual and a sort of everyman, Browning has, Fox seems to suggest, bridged the gap between classical notions of universal types and the romantic ideal of the individual as the focus of poetry. Browning has also demonstrated a high degree of poetic sympathy, being able as he is to cast himself not only into various stages of the individual's mental landscape, but also into the psychologies of other men. As the first writer to note Browning's talent, Fox shows himself to be remarkably sensitive to Browning's use of the dramatic monologue, which some modern critics have claimed was Browning's attempt to escape the confines of the

ego and enter into the consciousness of diverse figures,
withholding judgment on those individuals. ¹⁵

Fox further praised Paracelsus because the protagonist, the embodiment of the human desire for knowledge, begins his quest believing that "truth is not to be found without us, but within us" and finally "attains the conviction that to love must, not less than to know, characterise the emancipator of the human race from the worst evils of their destiny" (719). What Paracelsus becomes is made clear by what he has abandoned: "Hitherto he has aimed at being someone apart from humanity; he would be a benefactor, but not himself identified with the benefited. He had not realised man's feelings, noted how even their prejudices and hatreds belong to the working out of the capabilities of their nature,--made himself one of them without intolerance and superiorities . . ." (720). As an artist, Paracelsus must embrace humanity in all its earthiness, especially its lower faculties, its emotions. The artist legitimizes man's feelings, especially love. Browning's poem demonstrated in both its form and its content the importance of sympathy. ¹⁶

In several of his critical essays Fox faulted authors for failing to promote sympathy and warned his own readers against misreading certain literary passages that may have seemed to support unsympathetic relationships. And he

sometimes used his reviews to expand the idea of sympathy as a unifying and leveling force and an element in the settling of conflict. He showed in his literary criticism his modified Utilitarian background, specifically his rejection of self-propelling benevolence. In his review of Charles Cowden Clarke's Adam the Gardener, Fox attempts to counter the implicit suggestions of Adam Stock's mother, who encourages her son to "Learn to love, and be gentle to every creature, and you will have many happy hours when you think of your conduct'" ("Adam the Gardener" 149). Fox first recommends "Imitation [example], sympathy, and affection" in rearing children, and then corrects Mrs. Stock's selfish exhortations:

How much better to have said, "what delight it will be to see them all happy!" Love is objective and impels with simplicity of aim to the production of good. A loving nature cannot be ever laying schemes for self-gratulation. A man may wrap himself up in the warm cloak of his good works; say to his soul, "Thou art like virtue itself, which is 'the most virtuous of all things'"; and make himself very comfortable, thinking of his conduct; yet all the while nature may be half destroyed in him and love not generated. It is not one's own conduct, but the enjoyment of others that, being vividly realized in the imagination, is the food of benevolence. Mrs. Stock's lesson would only teach Adam to regard love and gentleness as part of a stock in trade, which might yield a balance when he casts up his accounts. ("Adam the Gardener" 149)

Fox, emphasizing as he does natural altruism and not arbitrary judgment, may have had Smith's egoistic and financially rewarding sympathy in mind when he rejected Mrs. Stock's Benthamite notion of kindness. And if young Adam-- Stock, not Smith--is headed for a crisis in his mental state because of, in this case, his mother's adherence to the principles of Utilitarian benevolence, he may find literature to be "the nourishment and enrichment of the passive susceptibilities," the feelings that unite man to man (Mill, Autobiography 110). Literature could fire man's benevolence. The synthesizing force of sympathy, in direct opposition to the selfish dictates of the moral sentiments-- the conscience satisfied through indulgences of kindness-- was for Fox a central aim of literature, as it would be years later for George Eliot:

If art does not enlarge man's sympathies, it does nothing morally. I have had heart-cutting experience that opinions are a poor cement between human souls; and the only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings is, that those who read them should be better able to imagine and to feel the pains and the joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling, erring, human creatures. (qtd. in Houghton 280)

For Fox literature derived from and excited man's natural sympathy--his undeniable and inherent connection to

his fellow man, not the sympathy of judgment, but the sympathy of spontaneous love. Competition and conflict and control over others were for Fox unnatural; art was the corrective, and life could imitate art. Given that the political and social structure of the mid-nineteenth century was founded upon conflict, Fox's reading of literature and, if he is right, literature itself are subversive. Sympathy is a radical idea. Granted, Fox was not the first to discover that sympathy was an innate human characteristic; the Earl of Shaftesbury had suggested a hundred years earlier that sympathy would lead to benevolence and a commitment to the social good. And Joseph Warton and the "School of Sensibility" had already applied such notions to literature. But Fox, working at the height of the industrialization of Britain, saw sympathy and its expression in literature as a corrective to the divisive society growing more segregated. For Fox, the purpose of literature was to offer readers the most revolutionary and elementary of suggestions, expressed by Uncle Toby when he opened the window for the blue-bottle fly to go out: "'There is room enough in the world for you and me'" (CW 6: 193). Literature could provide the inspiration for a society that accommodated human diversity, while encouraging mankind to

make the necessary changes for creating that society. In a review of Robert Nicoll's poems, Fox expressed his hope that the poet's democratic songs would inspire readers to change the world:

And, when they have been moved to laughter, or touched even to tears, or elevated and animated by some stirring strains, or calmed by solemn thought, they may shut the book and depart, as we must, to their proper, and we trust honorable and useful, avocations, with this good moral ringing in their ears:

"But true hearts a'--gae work awa,
We'll make the warld better yet."

("Nicoll's Poems" 770)

Notes

1

Garnett writes, "Religious Ideas . . . was held to be so damaging to his candidature that a Public Notice was circulated saying that 'the book could be seen and examined every day (Sunday excepted) from ten to twelve o'clock in the morning, and from two to four o'clock in the afternoon, at the Hare and Hounds, Yorkshire Street, Oldham'" (293).

2

Caudwell says of Shelley what can easily be said of Fox: "[Shelley's] idealism is a reflection of the revolutionary bourgeois belief that, once the existing social relations that hamper a human being are shattered, the 'natural man will be realised'--his feelings, his emotions, his aspirations, will be immediately bodied forth as material realities" (106).

3

In Benthamite Reviewing, George L. Nesbitt writes that Fox's article, a "strange leading article for the new organ of the Philosophical Radicals," exhibits "Benthamite humanitarianism without Benthamite dogma" (44). Humanitarianism outside the dictates of any sect was to become Fox's life's work.

4

In his "Doctrine on the Obedience to Civil Powers" Fox discusses another of the Homilies, on the guilt that comes of rebellion. This homily urges would-be Jacobins to consider the satanic source of rebellion illustrated in the story of the revolution against authority that failed in the garden. In another lecture, at Holborn, the normally even-tempered Fox displayed some rare anger in addressing the church-state connection. He was infuriated at the Church's insistence that members fast and pray and remember their ancestral guilt on the anniversary of Charles I's martyrdom, while "no lamentations of the Church are offered for deeds of wholesale blood and slaughter at home as well as abroad; no form of fasting, prayer, and depreciation of Heaven's justice, or assertion of our own guilt, for any such transactions whatever, from the massacre of Glencoe to the massacre of Manchester" (LWC 1: 105). Revolutions, the proletariat was reminded, served only to create martyrs for the state.

5

It is of course true that the upper and lower classes of nineteenth-century England were not so clearly delineated as these dichotomies suggest, but the feeling that society was splitting neatly in half--into those who lived long

lives and those who didn't--was prevalent in the early part of the century. Caudwell gives some of the reason for that feeling: "On the one hand organised labour inside the factory progressively increased, on the other hand the individual anarchy of the external market also increased. On the one hand there was an increasingly public form of production, on the other hand an increasingly private form of appropriation. At the one pole was an increasingly landless and toolless proletariat, at the other an increasingly wealthy bourgeoisie. This self-contradiction in capitalist economy provided the terrific momentum of the Industrial Revolution" (102).

6

See Smith, The Wealth of Nations 26: "Compared, indeed, with the more extravagant luxury of the great, his ["the very meanest person in a civilized society"] accommodation must no doubt appear extremely simple and easy; and yet it may be true, perhaps, that the accommodation of an European prince does not always so much exceed that of an industrious and frugal peasant, as the accommodation of the latter exceeds that of many an African king, the absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages."

7

Although perhaps appearing to exonerate his own country by setting his dualisms between nations rather than in them, Fox had in an earlier essay made clear that the poor, miserable, enslaved, nation that made England literally rich and felicitous and by contrast free was Ireland (CW 7: 10). He further noted England's despicable plot "to keep Ireland quiet" by causing "a split between the Catholic Church of Ireland and the repeal or national party of that country" with grants and endowments to the Catholic hierarchy. The policy was intended "to divide those who have hitherto found their strength in union, to separate the Irish Church from O'Connell" (LWC 1: 165-166).

In another note on the dependence of the upper classes on division and conflict, Fox excoriated those who did nothing to prevent wars "originating in the desire to crush the rising liberties of France" and who were instead later heard "cheering for war" on the Stock Exchange "when the peace of Amiens was violated in 1802" (CW 7: 78). The stench was thicker in America, though. While war rages in the Crimea, he wrote, "she looks on, and calculates. If any odds and ends are to be picked up out of the belligerent parties, she is on the alert not to lose them. She will build steamships for the Czar. . . ." "One grieves to see

her become a mere huckster among nations" (CW 5: 269, 270).

8

Smith wrote in The Wealth of Nations that "The causes or circumstances which naturally introduce subordination, or which naturally, and antecedent to any civil institution, give some men superiority over the greater part of their brethren, seem to be four in number" (561). Among those four are the superiority of fortune and superiority of birth: "They are the two great sources of personal distinction, and are therefore the principal causes which naturally establish authority and subordination among men" (562). Civil governments are instituted, he argued, to maintain order, secure property, and protect the rich from the indignant poor (102-103).

9

The practice, Fox notes, continued past death in the markers erected at grave sites. Especially guilty were the clergy. Perhaps thinking of Browning's Bishop at St. Praxed's, he wrote: "How many statues and pompous monuments there are which record under glozing terms the wealth and station of those to whom they were erected! How much of the power and influence of the clergy does not struggle with, but rather serves to cherish the continuance of the distinctions of rank and property beyond that boundary where all ought to be abolished" (LWC 1: 197).

10

See Kropotkin 297.

11

Mill wrote in his Autobiography, "Those only are happy who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end. Aiming thus at something else they find happiness by the way" (Autobiography 146-147).

12

For a thorough analysis of romantic sympathy, see W. J. Bate, From Classic to Romantic: "It is one of the common tenets of English romantic criticism that the imagination is capable, through an effort of sympathetic intuition, of identifying itself with its object; and, by means of this identification, the sympathetic imagination grasps, through a kind of direct experience and feeling, the distinctive nature, identity, or 'truth' of the object of its contemplation" (132).

13

See Garnett 40-41.

14

See Litzinger and Smalley 39-40. "Obscure," "tedious," and "vague," are words used by writers for the Atheneum and the Spectator.

15

In A Reader's Guide to Robert Browning, Norton B. Crowell suggests that Browning's dramatic poem "avoids the marked self-revelation which Mill found so alarming in Pauline and which Browning resolved to conceal thereafter" (8). For an analysis of the "tension between sympathy and judgment" in Browning's monologues, see Robert Langbaum, The Poetry of Experience, pages 75-108.

16

Fox praised Pauline for similar reasons. After the speaker of the poem, he said, had "run the whole toilsome yet giddy round, and arrived at the goal, there arises, even though that goal be religion, or because it is religion, a yearning after human sympathies and affections, which would not have assorted with any state or moment of the previous experience; he could not have loved before: at one time it would only have been a fancy, a cold and yet perhaps extravagant imagining; at another, a low and selfish passion. Some souls are purified by love, others are purified for love" ("Pauline" 26). Interestingly, while Fox easily saw what Browning was doing in the dramatic form of this poem, Mill's failure to see the speaker as someone different from the author caused him to fault Browning for an excess of self-consciousness. Fox, more perceptively, recognized and appreciated this unusual technique.

Chapter 2

The Labor of Poets and the Poetry of Labor

Fox's early appreciation for Browning's work is primarily the reason Fox is still remembered. Browning himself, of course, would easily have survived a bad review or even complete neglect from Fox, but in view of the reception some critics gave Browning early in his career and Browning's adverse reaction to that criticism, Fox can be given some credit for at least encouraging Browning to continue working despite the lack of public or critical acclaim. In fact, in a letter to Fanny Haworth, Browning called Fox his "literary father," not because he had inherited any literary skills from Fox, but because Fox had graciously and personally praised even Browning's earliest attempt, a book of verses written when Browning was twelve or thirteen.¹

But Fox's published reviews of Browning's first major works are not the simple flattery of a close friend hesitant to discourage a young writer. His very favorable criticism of Pauline and Paracelsus demonstrates an aesthetic sensitivity and reveals an intelligent theory of poetry and poem-making. In drawing the world's attention to a new poet, Fox was also offering his own poetic treatise. Since

he left no manifesto, no essays titled, as one of Mill's had been, "What is Poetry?" Fox's doctrines must be arrived at inferentially and inductively.

Knowing the content and themes of the poems he chose to review is the first step toward establishing Fox's literary theory, since he almost never reviewed at length works that violated his notions of what literature should be. "We are not obliged to cut up calves," he wrote ("Retzsch's Fancies" 677), and he usually confined his negativity to works he found "mawkish" and sentimental--the poetry of Felicia Hemans, for example. Fox's failure to review a new work can almost be taken as a negative review; he devoted his time, rather, to only those works that supported his social and political goals. That should be considered, I suppose, the worst sort of pragmatic criticism, but for Fox, politics, philosophy, and poetry all worked toward a common end--social reform and universal happiness. All writing that failed to promote the end simply failed to gain his attention.

He was not, however, quick to praise the proselytizing poet, nor did he encourage poets to work for the common good at the expense of beauty. Fox insisted that purely didactic matters be addressed in prose, and he showed a great appreciation for the personal happiness poetry could bring.

This capacity to enjoy poetry and to recognize value in something that could be enjoyed by only a small number sets Fox apart from his Utilitarian predecessors. He was willing to accept the idea that poetry pleased fewer people than did the game of pushpin, but he was not willing to ban poets on those grounds.² Arguing that all men possessed the capacity for enjoying literature, he supported literary education for laborers and the lower classes to cultivate their aesthetic sense as well as their intellect. Because he thought that literature and society were inexorably linked, he believed that no members of society, especially workers, should be excluded from the class of readers.

Fox's review of Paracelsus shows that his understanding of the relation of literature to workers was not limited to an attempt to introduce them to one another in the classroom. While the review provides insight into Fox's notion of sympathy and the role of literature in the industrial age, it also provides an indication of his sense of the relation of literature to working-class citizens.

Fox sees working in Paracelsus the same ideas Shelley had promoted in Alastor and Prometheus Unbound.³ But he shows in his review an important departure from Shelley's poetics. For Shelley, the poet was inspired toward his

articulation of truth by an inexplicable and undiscoverable force, a magnetic and powerful attraction to write for the good of society, even though the poet's sense of "good" might challenge the prevailing ideology. The poet was, in any case, usually unaware of the source of his vision. Shelley ended his "Defence" with a tribute to those "persons in whom this power resides," who are "compelled to serve . . . the Power which is seated upon the throne of their own soul," who "measure the circumference and sound the depth of human nature with a comprehensive and all-penetrating spirit, and . . . are themselves perhaps the most sincerely astonished at its manifestations. . . ." Often unaware of, and "unacknowledged" for, their legislative role, "[p]oets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration" (611-612).

Concurring with much of Shelley's definition, claiming, for example, that "Poetry is its own conscience" (LWC 1: 137), Fox, nonetheless, broke with the romantic notion of poetry as inspired "creation" in his opening line of the Paracelsus review: "This poem is what few modern publications either are or affect to be--it is a Work. It is the result of thought, skill, and toil," a work that requires as much labor to appreciate as it did to create ("Paracelsus" 716). For Fox, poetic power did not channel

itself through the "hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration"; nor did it burst forth from them like "a mighty fountain" from a "deep romantic chasm," as it does in "Kubla Khan," or pound tumultuously through Mont Blanc's Ravine of Avre.

Where Power in likeness of the Avre comes down
From the ice-gulfs that gird his recent throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning through the tempest. (lines 5-8)

For Fox, the poet's insight was not purely a matter of inspiration, but a matter of hard work. His opening line of the Paracelsus review is Fox's tribute to a young writer who earns his praise not through rivers of inspiration, but through the sweat of labor. Although writers had already justified the writing of poetry as a profession (Coleridge in the Biographia Literaria, for example), and though it was not unusual for someone to be just a poet (Wordsworth and Byron), Fox seems in his dramatic and important opening sentence of the review to be claiming for poets a place in the laboring class, emphasizing not only the poet's station in society, but the nature of poetry as well. In the widening schism between the nation of wealth and the nation of labor, Fox places the poet among those who toil and celebrates poetry as a result of their work. The three

elements that Fox believes contribute to Browning's "Work"-- thought, skill, and toil--reveal a central idea in his literary criticism and its relationship to the industrial age. For Fox, a praiseworthy poem like Paracelsus was the product of a thinking mind long practiced in its art; the poem was produced through a sincere and often desperate labor by a worker-poet who toiled in the service of someone else.

Fox's admiration for work was certainly not unique in the early nineteenth century. "Except for 'God,'" Walter Houghton writes, "the most popular word in the Victorian vocabulary must have been 'work'" (242). Fox considered hard work to be one method by which man cleansed his soul and conquered his demons. The Calvinist work ethic was the injunction of a commercial society to its ambitious members; it gave the floundering man a sense of usefulness and duty; it became the means of discipline in the Evangelical's service to God and country; it marked man's progress from barbarism to civilization, carried on the shoulders of inventors and manufacturers; and it provided an "alternative to fruitless speculation but also a practical means of exorcising the mood of ennui and despair which so often accompanied the loss of faith" (Houghton 251). This last

Carlyle examined through Sartor Resartus as the means by which man could defeat the notion that the universe worked mechanically to break his spirit. "Work thou in well-doing." "Know thy work and do it." "Work and therein have well-being," and "Do the Duty which lies nearest thee" were for Carlyle maxims for curtailing doubt and quieting anxiety, at least on a small scale. The greater salvation would come afterward, as Teufelsdröckh makes clear:

"I too could now say to myself: Be no longer a Chaos, but a World, or even Worldkin. Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name! 'Tis the utmost thou hast in thee: out with it, then. Up, up!" (Sartor Resartus 189)

But unlike Carlyle and other preachers of the labor ethic, Fox recognized that the majority of Englishmen were not consoled by exhortations to work their way through despair and ennui (if workers felt "ennui"), since these conditions were not the result of either intellectual befuddlement or the difficulty of reconciling Lyell's Geology with the Old Testament. The worker who polished glass beads all day long knew despair, but it would most likely remain unassuaged by Carlyle's recommendations to the happy laborer. While Carlyle ignores social arrangements and the difference between an operative's work

and an investor's. Fox shows that the current social relationships made Carlyle's indiscriminate comments to the "worker" meaningless for that class whose members truly deserved to be called workers.

Fox hammered out his own ideas of labor in the hostile environment created by Carlyle's encouragements and mild chastisements to the captains of industry, whom he enjoined to replace capitalism with a semi-feudal aristocracy: "Ye shall reduce them [the workers] to order, begin reducing them. To order, to just subordination; noble loyalty in return for noble guidance" (Past and Present 339). Fox's pleas to his middle-class audience did not include such a recommendation to subordinate the worker or to demand his loyalty. In fact, he chastised that class he saw oppressing workers. He began his "The Law of Labour" (CW 3: 220-228) with a re-examination of a quote cited again and again as an argument against establishing a welfare state: "For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (CW 3: 220). Fox held that Paul's comments applied only in an agricultural society in which the land must be worked to produce food, and that it was hardly applicable in an industrial system based on wage labor, and even less in a nation where the cultivators of the land are exploited by its proprietors.⁴

Fox saw a fundamental inconsistency in just such an application of the verse: those who used it most often ate heartily though they seldom "worked." Landowners, especially, were spared the sanctions that ensured compliance from laborers:

When by the social and legal guarantee to a man of property, which his own hands have not earned, but those of another, we tell him, that for him this law of God shall be suspended, and that though he work not, yet shall he eat, and revel in luxurious abundance, we minister to the worst passions and propensities. His pride is inflated with his immunities. He is a creature of privilege, not a brother of mankind. He belongs to one caste and the hewers of wood and drawers of water to another. . . . His chief public concern is with the defence of the interests of the few against those of the many. He is essentially an immoral character. Society has claims on him, though not enforced by the penalty of literal starvation. (CW 3: 223-224)

Fox argues that a man of property is obligated by moral law to repay that class of society which has secured to him his own labor; he must "create for himself a work" that "elevate[s] the condition of the most numerous class" (CW 3: 224). For Fox, the value of work could not be measured, as it could for Carlyle, in how far it drove an individual "Up, up!" Salvation came through labor directed toward the elevation not of an individual, but of a class of people, toward the fusion of all classes, and toward the elimination

of the dualisms of privilege and brotherhood, owner and worker, few and many. Fox adapted the fundamental capitalist social arrangement (man toils for the profit of another) to the Utilitarian doctrine: man must work for the profit of the greatest number, the lower classes. All work was to be evaluated on utilitarian principles; only work that contributed something to the greatest number and not just to the individual was considered valuable. Man could no longer redeem himself by mere accumulation of wealth, no matter what he might suffer personally in gaining his profit. He must point to the effects of his work in the society that has claims on him, adding to it physically, socially, intellectually, or politically. The toil of the teacher or author, as it contributed to the greater good, constituted an intellectual labor "no less noble" than the work of an operative who through his physical labor produced useful goods (CW 3: 224). The writer, in fact, could accomplish the goal of contributing to his fellows even if, Fox claimed, his political affiliations were questionable. Though Fox despised Sir Walter Scott's politics ("Reform was a trouble to his mind; he dwelt in the fading shadows of feudality, and was appalled at the growing glare of democracy") and his social conscience ("[H]e knew not the

people; and as the people he loved them not), Fox, nevertheless, praised Scott's contributions to mankind:

In theory he was no disciple of Bentham; no advocate of the "greatest happiness principle"; but practically, and considering only the immediate result, who is there of our time, either among the living or the dead, that has generated a greater amount of enjoyment? ("On the Intellectual Character of Sir Walter Scott" 727-728)

But Scott was not Fox's ideal worker-writer. As the title of Fox's essay indicates, he examines here, in what was Scott's obituary for the Monthly Repository, the "peculiar character of that intellect which is now extinguished" (721). Fox claims that Scott "occupied a midway station between the man of memory who merely reproduces what he found as he found it; and the man of poetical imagination, or of creative power" (722).

This combination of traits Fox admired, but Scott lacked a more important quality that Fox looked for in the worker-writer--"thought." For Fox, "thought" had several meanings. The worker-writer, rather than channelling an unknown inspiration, conceptualized a finished product, knew what he wanted to accomplish, and set about to do so. This meant remaining conscious of time and place. In the poet, "thought" was both the opposite of sensation and the faculty

through which the poet, rather than engaging merely in imagination and abstraction, engaged the specific problems of the age to promote rational solutions. Scott had failed to address his age or to change it: "In a literary sense, he thought little of the world to come; his heart was in the bygone world" ("On the Intellectual Character" 727).

Fox's worker-poet, working for the common good, would first be a man of thought and wisdom, one who would not bury his insights in obscure personal visions, but write publicly about public issues. Literature that engaged society would be the product of a philosophical and reflective mind--of "thought," rather than the product only of a subjective and sensitive poet. Whereas Hallam had preferred poets "susceptible of the slightest impulse from external nature," whose "fine organs trembled into emotion at colors, and sounds, and movements" (850), critics like Sir Henry Taylor decried what he believed to be the absence of thought and reflection in the works of the Romantic poets, to their detriment and that of their readership. Taylor wanted poetry that would "thread the mazes of life in all its classes," that would "infer and instruct," that would not "stand aloof from everything that is plain and true" or show such "little concern with what is rational and wise" (862). The poetry most admired by Hallam was for Taylor "scarcely

connected with the intellectual faculties" (862) and therefore unconnected to a generation that needed guidance.

Showing his proclivity toward Taylor's type of criticism, Fox, too, was delighted to find signs of reflection in the poetry appearing in the eighteen-thirties. Modern poetry, he suggested, was becoming more reflective, "[a]nd this reflective character of modern poetry, which is, in a peculiar degree, the character of Mr. Tennyson's productions . . . pervades almost every verse." By opening itself up to thought, poetry had "acquired new and exhaustless worlds" in addition to both the external world best suited for descriptive poetry and the internal world of the sensitive poet ("Tennyson's Poems" MR 33). Through reflection (which Fox also called "philosophy") the poet worked beneath description and beyond his personal reactions and sensations to roam the public domain, the "diversities and changes in the human spirit . . . , the loftiness of its pride, the splendours of its revelries, the heavings and tossings of its struggles, the bewilderment of its doubt, and the abysmal depths of its despair" ("Tennyson's Poems" MR 33). These were, Fox had argued in his reviews of Browning, no longer personal emotions, but ones shared by all thinking men confronted with the discoveries of the

nineteenth century. In his suggestion that reflection, thought, philosophy, and intellectual engagement contributed something to poetry, that poetry was not exhaustible, Fox reverses some of his Utilitarian associates who had argued that, the age having outrun literature, reason and poetry were to remain forever at odds.⁵

But Fox was unwilling to praise, as Taylor had done, the purely philosophical poet. Tennyson deserved attention because he was a "true poet," one "compounded of the philosopher and the artiste," the latter a writer like Hallam's "Poet of Sensation." The artiste, Fox clarified, is "tremulous as the strings of an Aeolian Harp, that quiver in every breeze, but ever tremble tunefully" ("Tennyson's Poems" MR 31). The debate that set the objective, reflective poet against the subjective, sensitive poet was, for Fox, settled in an appreciation for both poetic natures in one writer. Hallam, who could with certainty classify the poets of his and the preceding generation with one label or the other, gave way to Fox and later to John Stuart Mill, who, in "What is Poetry?," published in Fox's Monthly Repository, defined poetry as truth and thought colored by emotion and as emotion "painted with most scrupulous truth"⁶ (64).

But Mill, however sensitive he had become to the

authenticity of emotions, encouraged Tennyson to temper his gift for sensation with an increased seriousness of thought. Fox, likewise fearful that Tennyson might upset the balance he had achieved and succumb to his sensitivity, opted for utility over pleasure and thought over sensation. He reminded Tennyson to remain committed to his purpose: "Mr. Tennyson must have more earnestness" Fox wrote; "His power must have a more defined and tangible object. Let him ascertain his mission and work his work . . ." ("Tennyson's Poems" MR 40). The admonishment to "have more earnestness" would echo in some of the criticism heaped on Tennyson over the next thirty years, and some critics, following Taylor, would demand inference and instruction in the extreme--moral and intellectual lessons to live by. In an age demanding answers, a poet had no time for trifling. He must be serious, convicted, moral, sincere, in a word, earnest. Fox, whose desire for certitude and social improvement was stronger than his willingness to allow Tennyson to reconcile reflection and sensation, questioned Tennyson's awareness--his conscious and thoughtful recognition--of a proper social objective for his poetry. Fox's final suggestion to Tennyson was to work harder in the service of his fellows.

For Fox, poetry was a form of thought, offering to man

if not answers to his questions, at least a rendition of the "pride, struggles, doubts, and despair" that had inspired those questions. But if the answers were impossible to discover, the questions themselves were no easier to articulate. The writer's craftsmanship and labor--his "skill and toil"--were, for Fox, the essence of poetry. Aware, perhaps, that readers might believe that poetry came to an "artiste" as effortlessly as the wind came to the Aeolian Harp, that even the "Poet of Nature" need only be sensitive to his surroundings, Fox explained in his review of Tennyson the nature of the poet's efforts at creation:

The great masters (of poetry) may have boasted themselves "to feed on thoughts that voluntary move harmonious numbers"; but the seeming spontaneity was only a facility derived from their general powers of excellence. Only the habitually laborious can extemporize. Great poets have become so, however rude the age in which they lived, by acquired mastery of the powers of language, as an instrument not only of sense but sound. The construction of their verses grows into a study, in which the elements and principles are traced, derived from nature and the genius of language, of the art of verbal harmony. . . . ("Tennyson's Poems" MR 32)

For Fox, the art of verse was the result not only of inspiration, but also of laborious attention to details of prosody and diction. As a craftsman, a well-skilled artisan, the poet labored with the materials of thought,

sense, sound, and, if he was to address his era, the topics of the age to produce a valuable social commodity. The poet, like a laborer, turned raw materials into something useful.

Fox's preeminent craftsman is Ebenezer Elliott, who, Fox contended, differed in kind from the generation of poets preceding him. Wordsworth had shied away, Fox perhaps inaccurately suggests, from political matters and infused the "light" of his

individuality and originality . . . into some old and moss-grown figure, some monumental image in a mouldering chapel. Elliott would prefer to incorporate it with a steam-engine, and hammers language or imagery, as it were a bar of iron, into any unprecedented shape that may best serve his purposes. (LWC 1: 226)

Fox thought Wordsworth too hesitant to make use of the raw materials of the age. Elliott, on the other hand,

has earned his title to the name of poet, and has vindicated his claim through the whole range of political topics--the topics of the day; those of party strife, or the great contention of the many against the few, for the recovery of their rights and the assertion of their interests. (LWC 1: 227)

Fox shows here his recognition of the poem as a social artefact, a product of the writer's laboring with the materials of language and experience to make something

rooted in a particular time and place.

Fox's review of Elliott moves through the various topics Elliott addressed: "The Ballot," "the enclosure of footpaths," "the geometrical ratio of Malthus" (which, Fox says, Elliott makes "sound on the ear like the dirge of domineering classes which transgress the legitimate limit of their power, and bring down an avalanche of destruction upon their devoted heads" [LWC 1: 238]), the Corn Laws, and "the trials, endurances, strivings, and progress of the working man." The worker, in fact, was, Fox felt, a most appropriate subject for poetry:

[T]here is a kind of life as true, grand, touching, tragic, and every way as poetical as any or all of these [traditional figures in poetry]; the kind of life which is in our day the life of the great majority; and that is the pervading theme of Ebenezer Elliott's poetry--the life of the working man; the epic of him who toils, and yet while he is toiling knows how to think as well as labor. . . . (LWC 1: 240-241)

Fox elsewhere praised Caroline Norton for addressing child labor abuses and Joanna Baillie for devoting her skills to the "Condition of England Question." For Fox, all human experience was appropriate for the poet's attention. Because politics are part of that experience, and in some sense central to it, Fox considered politics an important poetic topic. "Burns," Fox wrote, "was a politician: his

clear mind saw at once the absurdity of excluding from poetry the subjects by which social man is most engrossingly occupied and most stormily agitated . . . ("The Poor and Their Poetry" 192).

As a toiler, one who hammers the iron bar of language and experience into shape, the poet was a member of the working class, which included the "hewers of wood and the drawers of water" and excluded the property owner and the "creature of privilege." Placing the poet in this class, Fox argued that the poet, if he were a "true poet," avoided writing lines that would flatter the upper classes and affirm their assumptions. Fox believed that the poet-worker was in the best position to break down all cultural distinctions while remaining true to universal and timeless principles that poetry attempted to enunciate, specifically the principle of human brotherhood. Fox believed that all true poets, possessed of working-class values--cooperation especially--would prove that man-made distinctions were invalid. Fox was not abandoning his belief that the writer must address his age. Though the poet must engage the problems of his society, he must not forget the eternal verities of poetry: "The life and soul of poetry are always the same; but to make them visible and tangible, they must

become incarnate in various forms, which forms bear the peculiar feature of age, class, or country" ("The Poor and Their Poetry" 190). The poet could address class issues, but he could not support any class doctrine that was not universal.

Insisting that "poetry is not the privilege of a class, either in its production or its enjoyment, that it belongs to humanity" ("The Poor and Their Poetry" 189), that it is the "democracy of song" ("Nicoll's Poems" 764), Fox considered literature the embodiment of universal truths, a mirror of natural law, especially the law of natural sympathy and cooperation. Literature, to be considered literature at all, must work always against division and conflict. The writer was burdened with the obligation of all

intelligent and benevolent men. . . . They should all labour to destroy the mutual ignorance, antipathies and prejudices of the different classes of society, to discover to them their common interest, unite them, in its pursuit, and point out the means of its attainment. ("The Village Poor House" 536)

Literature that failed to unify man or that supported the assumptions of a particular class, Fox simply condemned as non-literature. True literature, he contended, was "the natural product of humanity," of which "elements may be

traced in the earliest stages of society" and which, like religion, "ascends to elemental principles in human nature," principles independent of the influences of markets and individual concerns (CW 8: 55, 57). "All literature is probative," Fox wrote; it contains "propositions, profound and universal ones" (CW 6: 181), and it substantiates those propositions in any society at any time:

[T]he security for its [poetry's] being subservient to the interests of humanity lies in its own nature and tendencies. It is not mere power, but good as well as power. I do not call the talent of verse-making poetry; that, like other descriptions of talent, may be perverted to purposes of the grossest licentiousness or tyranny; but the perception of the beautiful and sublime in nature, the strong response to them in inward emotion, and facility of melodious utterance of that which is felt, so that the hearts of others are touched thereby--this, as it increases, is not the more likely to become the minister of selfishness, or the tool of base purposes; because, in so far as it does so, it loses the perception of the true, the lovely, and the grand; that is to say, it ceases to be poetry. So long as it retains any title to that character, its tendency is to refine, purify, expand, and elevate; and wherever, therefore, you discover a true poet there you find also, in as far as he is a poet, a friend of humanity, and an advocate (though unconsciously) of its rights, enjoyments, and progress. (LWC 1: 137-138)

The poet, then, need not be aware of the political nature of his work. If he were a true poet, he would naturally work for the common good and against tyranny and

gross individualism. Because the poet makes no conscious effort to support a cause or even to point a moral, his goal is not propaganda or didacticism. The poet's role is not to argue sides in debate. Nor is he to rouse his readers to support Chartism or to defend the Tractarians. Poetry, Fox wrote, is "not sectarian and cannot be made so; it looks beyond creeds, restrictions, votes of convocations, articles, and forms. It must breathe more freely than these will allow" (LWC 1: 150).

For Fox, all poets, especially working-class poets, must reject any connection with the upper-class that would weaken the writer's commitment to human "rights, enjoyment, and progress." Burns, for example, had made his topics the "universal elements of poetry [love and nature], freed from the modifications which belong to an educated taste, and coloured with the modifications which belong to the condition of those who toil" ("The Poor and Their Poetry" 194). Fox especially detested the system of patronage by which a poet could be supported by someone from a higher class. He condemned patronage, first, because hopeful poets might make even less money as poets than as operatives, and, second, because it fused the classes in a way that merely subordinated one to the other, the resultant poetry

reflecting that unnatural connection:

We set no store by the twaddling verses of sundry rhyming laundresses, dairymaids, and butlers, who have been cockered into a very transitory reputation by the pious charity of some well-disposed and respectable persons, who found their milk and water effusions congenial with their own mental and moral mediocrity. When Apollo and the Muses sojourn, as they sometimes do, in the cells of poverty, it is certainly not that they may be sent to an adult Sunday school, be put into livery, and the whole marched to church to sing a hymn of thanksgiving, composed expressly for the occasion by Mrs. Hannah Moore, in honour of the condescending benevolence towards them of the upper class. . . . The productions of these people are usually the humble reflections of the taste of their masters and mistresses. ("The Poor and Their Poetry" 193)7

The poets Fox considered most able to communicate the real feelings and thoughts of the working classes were Elliott and Burns, though Fox had been mistaken about Elliott's working-class status. These poets codified workers' experiences and spoke to them in their own language, expressing the class struggle in terms more accessible than those used by Shelley, Byron, or Blake. But Fox was especially happy to find poetry written by actual mechanics and artisans. In a review of "Saint Monday," a poem by a writer Fox felt had every reason to call himself an "Artisan Bard" ("Sunday" 623), Fox celebrated a poet of the people who had avoided falling into the clutches of

patronage and popularity:

Laughable as it might lately have been deemed, the "producing men" are actually producing their own politicians and poets; and such too as feel it to be a grander and nobler part, to make common cause with their brethen, raising their minds and refining their tastes, than to become, as was the old practice, the flattered appendages of superior station, tame monsters, with the range of the kitchen, rising up into the livery dignity of patronage, hot-pressed paper, and a subscription list. ("Saint Monday" 829)

Poetry by mechanics was important, Fox contended, because it exposed the "suffering and privation" of the lower classes, but was not without a "poetical spirit" that would appeal to any discerning critic. Fox quotes abundantly from "Saint Monday," arguing that certain "stanzas of the poem alike deserve the attention of the poet and of the politician. They [stanzas] are strong breathings of the spirit which is abroad amongst the operatives, a spirit which will speak with many tongues" ("Saint Monday" 834).

By remaining in his class and by remaining free of the corrupting influence of competition and accumulation, the poet-worker would produce his best work, even if his work bore the flaws and infelicities of toil. Inspired by his knowledge of truth and by the degradation surrounding him, the worker-poet would produce not verse "manufactured" merely for public consumption, but a poetry of public

concern inspired by personal insight. Of Elliott, Fox writes:

He never drops, as the songs of Burns sometimes do, from the verse which was inspired to the verse which is manufactured. His mind is healthful and vigorous; always knows its work, and does its work; and the prominent passages are such as the subject naturally throws out, not such as are elaborated and polished with infinite pains for the production of effects. ("The Poor and Their Poetry" 198)

Fox does not lay the blame for such overly polished verse on the laborer alone, but on those who demand certain qualities from their poets, thereby stripping those writers of their natural imaginations and talents. Because, Fox contends, the idea of a working-class poet is not well accepted, readers and buyers force poets out of their class:

[Talent] . . . has . . . fallen into the train or into the ranks of aristocracy. It has been taken from its den to be tamed, and trained, and domesticated in a mansion. If excellence has been attained, it has not been excellence bearing the peculiar stamp of the poet's native station; all traces of that have been deemed blemishes and carefully obliterated. In former times, the poet was pensioned by some noble patron,--he has now the better patronage of a reading public; but in either case, he ceases to be identified with those who are now commonly described, and who begin to glory in the name, with a portentous pride, as the working classes. ("The Poor and Their Poetry" 193)

The kind of poetry that could be produced unblemished and well-polished was a linguistic version of Ruskin's glass beads, flawlessly made for mass consumption, bearing no marks of the workman's insight or imagination, or, as Ruskin puts it, no sign of "invention." Excellent poems of the sort demanded by the aristocracy and by a burgeoning reading public are merely another commodity, devoid in the mind of the buyer of all indications of social relationships, "utterly unnecessary," with no "design or thought employed in their manufacture" (Ruskin 372). That the working class poet would be expected to scrub his work clean of any hints of its having been produced by a worker proved to Fox that the consumers of literature in the industrial age wanted poetry, as they wanted most other things, for the sake of appearances. Poems were certainly not, to their purchasers, the products of social forces or bundles of human relationships.

By favorably reviewing the work of poets who were in fact operatives, Fox could prove to his readers that the working classes were intelligent and inventive--thinkers as well as toilers--and that they could create literature pleasing to their supposedly more refined economic superiors. They therefore deserved the respect of all other classes. His exhibitions of working-class talent are

somewhat like tacking the drawings of school children to the classroom wall, but Fox believed that by showing his readers the accomplishments of their supposed inferiors, he would prove conclusively that upper-class notions of distinction were false. Fearful perhaps that his readers might not see that point despite his copious quoting and favorable remarks on the poet's literary skills, Fox ended his review of "Saint Monday" with a summary of his politics and a shout:

With minds clear enough to pierce through the mystifications of the class above them, they [operative poets] ought not to lose themselves in any fog of prejudice which may float around them; nor will they for any length of time. We have great faith in their vigour of intellect and honesty of purpose. We rejoice in the indications of these qualities in the writer before us, as much as we rejoice in his poetical spirit. We say to him and his fellow labourers, Go on and prosper; and so saying we have a common purpose with him and them. We adhere to the St. Simonian maxim, even though the "Times" should recommend our being pelted for the same. We contend that the legitimate object of all institutions is the "improvement of the condition, physical, intellectual, and moral, of the poorest and most numerous class." We hold that this object is paramount in social arrangements. We believe in no real discrepancy; but if there were, coute qui coute, the progression of humanity must be exhibited in those who toil. Their rights and interests should be pursued by all honorable means and at all real risks; by unions, by meetings, by cheap publications, by petitions and remonstrances, and by whatever else circumstances may require; and that, whatever becomes of churches, corporations, or monopolies, of peers or princes. The Physical Comfort, the Mental

Cultivation, the Political Rights, of the Working
People of England, that is the motto on our
banner. We nail that flag to the mast, and will
sink or swim with it flying. SO HELP US GOD!
("Saint Monday" 837)

Because Fox started with the premise that the truth
spoken in literature was universal and classless, he judged
authors according to how carelessly or unwittingly they
supported the assumptions of one class or excluded the needs
of others. He had in one essay dismissed Franklin's
aphorism

Early to bed and early to rise
Is the way to be healthy, wealthy and wise

because Franklin had failed to see that the lines were not
widely applicable: "I turn around and ask, with my old
friend the mathematician, 'what does the poem prove?' I do
not see the connection between the first line and the
second. The poor factory children are bundled to bed the
minute their work is over, and up early enough; but they are
neither healthy, wealthy, nor wise" (CW 6: 181).

The poet, though assuredly Franklin is not one, should
not condone, but should revolt against, oppression. The
author, because he was the voice of sympathy, was a
dissenter whose compassion would dissolve individualistic
ideologies and fuse classes. The poet's adherence to

natural law and opposition to cultural laws make him the vanguard in Fox's struggle for a cooperative state. Literature was a more effective revolution than the one in which looms were destroyed and wheat was burned.

The first duty of revolutionary authors was to reject all conventional and worn-out forms. In his defense of the inexhaustibility of poetry against the Macaulayan position that literature had lost its meaning in a philosophical, industrial, class society and that poetry had declined while civilization had advanced, Fox suggested that only the old forms were no longer useful, not the old themes. Though the "the world was quite right to be no longer tolerant of the repetition of conventional, traditional, unfelt, and unmeaning phrases," it was not right in rejecting the profound and universal propositions--"the meaning, truth, and power"--illuminated in poetry ("Tennyson's Poems" WR 212, 214). Though the writer risked unpopularity in his attempt to find new means of expression, falling back on old forms did nothing to promote the progress of mankind. For the revolutionary writer, form must follow function. Disraeli's failure in Alroy, according to Fox, stems from his attachment to traditions, including those governing literary production:

There was a return of artificiality, and here he is blundering, both in design and execution: in design, because, from the strong necessity of his nature, he who is capable of singing a revolution, must be employed in making the revolution; and in execution, on the same principle, because he is resting on forms outworn, obsolete, and not objects of even poetical faith either to the writer or to the reader. (CW 6: 274)

Disraeli could not expect to capture the age of transition in customary language. The new era required a new form to replace that which custom had worn thin.

Poets who challenged readers risked losing their favor. It was a risk poets must be willing to take, Fox argued, and he worked to offset the negative reception such poets might receive by granting them high praise in the Monthly Repository. Leigh Hunt had suffered disapproval, Fox felt, because of his political affiliations and poetic insights. For Fox, Leigh Hunt was a good example of a poet who had remained loyal to the mission of poetry despite the drawbacks of failing to appeal to popular taste. Hunt, Fox claims, refused to say what his readers wanted to hear, refused to flatter them. Though Fox considers Hunt a true poet because of Hunt's willingness to instruct his age, Fox notes that the consumers of poetry often expected their lessons simply to approve and verify what they already knew. Literature more in tune with expectations and assumptions

sold better than literature that challenged the status quo.
Hunt paid heavily for his loyalty to poetry:

He has not consulted the sale of his productions, the attainment of ephemeral reputation and hot-pressed morocco-gilt glory, at the expense of that which every true poet would seek for, though he knew he was to be a loser in immediate profit and praise. Leigh Hunt has not done this; and this is much to say in this age of versifiers and poetasters. He has not "cried aloud in the worship of an echo." ("The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt" 179)

The echo, Fox explains, is achieved by poets who merely piece together imitations of past poets, thereby giving the modern reader only what he is accustomed to and what he has come to expect. Hunt, though an "emulator" of "old English poetry," is saved from self-serving imitation by his originality of style, by his confrontation of illusory political notions, and by his refusal to betray poetry to its consumers. Because Hunt has refused to support aristocratic notions,

The poet has suffered martyrdom for the heresies of the politicians. Yet these heresies, like some others which it is sufficient to allude to, have been such, in many respects, as to do credit to the heretic's heart and understanding. The world is gradually discovering that they were truths in disguise. (179)

Though Fox usually made poets his spokesmen for truths

independent of popular assent, he claimed that all writers were obliged to speak against falsehood and misconception. Writers from the lower classes, however, were always the best spokesmen. In a review of a "threepenny tract" called "The Examination of an Independent in Church and State," by a "poor Irishman, by name Francis Ross, a journeyman printer," Fox quoted Ross's preface and concurred with its sentiments: "A few simple truths are expressed in a manner which may probably give offence to some, who are favorably disposed toward things as they are . . ." ("An Independent in Church and State" 779). Fox placed Ross among a host of writers from the "lower orders" (quoted, I assume, because he found the appellation distasteful) who were challenging "things as they are."

It was to this radical function of literature that Fox devoted much of his criticism. The poet, as a member of the laboring class who understood the natural equality of man and opposed upper-class values, was for Fox a revolutionist, fighting in language for the rights of his fellow workers. Fox encouraged all poets to follow the example of Ebenezer Elliott, the "denunciator," forever "making fight in language" (LWC 1: 236), who "knew how to wield the weapons he selected for the conflict" (LWC 1:

230). In the last several pages of Fox's lecture on Elliott, Fox argues against Carlyle's notion that literature should be constructive. Fox contends, instead, that literature's destructive tendencies are part of its creative ones, and as such contribute something to the cause of progress.⁹

Fox believed that his worker-poet could bring about broad changes through his fight for human rights. In his review of "The Village Poor House," he unified social Utilitarianism, political revolution, and poetic theory:

The spirit of utility has seized upon the harp of poetry. . . . [P]oetry is no longer a plaything, or a mere drawing-room ornament. As in times of popular commotion, any implement of labor, or article of furniture, may become a weapon of strife; so, in the great struggle for improvement, much may be done for the good cause by a species of composition which has been generally cultivated merely for amusement. Here is a little volume of light and satirical verse, which yet has in it more pith and substance; which, while it moves to risibility, impels to stern reflections also; and, while it touches the feelings, engenders "thoughts which lie too deep for tears." These things are signs of the times, and good signs too. They are indicative of that extended mental co-operation by which barriers to human improvement must be overthrown, and the condition of society, especially in the lowest and most numerous classes, be permanently ameliorated. . . .

[T]he revolution has reached even the La Vendee of literature. The Muses cease from dreaming of the past to prophecy of the future, and begin to pour forth the glowing predictions which are self-fulfilling. ("The Village Poor House" 537-538)

In his review, Fox praised the anonymous author (the Reverend James White) for his willingness to confront bourgeois assumptions (as he had censured Franklin for upholding them) and for White's emphasis on the destructive nature of the belief in natural antipathy:

He is a poetical mediator who speaks to the affluent and instructed on behalf of the ignorant and the famishing. But he shows unsparingly the viciousness of the system which perpetuates ignorance and want, while he does not hide the vice which in turn they generate. . . . For it should never be forgotten that the depravity of slaves is the crime of oppressors. The ignorance of the governed is the fault of governors. (531)

For the most part, Fox felt, White's portraits make clear the political reality that the sins of the lower classes are the results of the sins of the upper classes, that the lower-class monstrosities considered most horrifying were upper-class creations. Fox extended that idea to include gender distinctions. He ended his review of White's poem arguing that the poet is too hard on "the benevolent ladies" of charity, who, Fox contends, are merely following "the blind promptings of their native and uncorrupted kind-heartedness" (542). White has not noticed that gender conflicts are the result of the same social factors and assumptions that create class conflict and that

the social role of women, "condemned as they are by the education and condition of their sex to a helpless ignorance" (542), has been determined by men. Fox, perhaps the first Victorian sociological literary critic to bring a feminist viewpoint to his reviews, faults White for failing to remember of women, "on their behalf, that it is man who has sold them for slaves to 'Vanity Fair'" (542). He continues, referring to White's portraits of women:

"The error" and "the shame," we repeat, are in the opinions, institutions, and modes of education which condemn the sex to ignorance and frivolity. Let the Curate, when he writes again, and soon may that be, level his bitterest sarcasm at the cant so prevalent in society about "blue stockings," "learned ladies," "female politicians," "popes in petticoats," and all the rest of the slang by which a female is frightened from showing that she has a soul. No great harm, perhaps, will be done meanwhile, if his wit should be so caustic as to burn a few fair fingers; but such a writer as he ought not to stop there. He should teach them that to play, dance, read novels, do charities, and, as the aim and crown of all, get married, and delegate all thought, improvement, and action to their lords and masters, is not the end of their intellectual and moral being; and he should teach the world that the times are gone by when such a system can continue to be the object at once of its patronage and of its scorn. (543)

Fox's support of feminist causes in the early part of the century is evidenced by his strong support of the female writers he goes on to mention in his review of White's poem--Mary Wollstonecraft, Marie Edgeworth, Joanna Baillie,

Amelia Opie, Anna Letitia Barbauld, and especially Harriet Martineau, whose work he favorably reviewed in the Monthly Repository. Though he usually found disdainful the sort of didacticism Martineau practiced, Fox praised her for her politically correct collection of stories, Illustrations of Political Economy and her stories for Brougham's Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. For Fox, Martineau accomplished in literature what political leaders of the day had failed to do--"to strike at the heart of any of the great evils of the political and social condition of the country" ("Poor Laws and Paupers" 361). "Those evils must be exposed," he wrote, and Martineau's work exposed them, specifically the evil of slavery. Fox, after giving the writer some credit for her narrative capabilities, illustrates her commitment to the destruction of social evils by extrapolating the "logic" from her tales. For example, the "principles inculcated" in "Demarara" include

Property is held by conventional, not natural right.

As the agreement to hold man in property never took place between the parties concerned, i.e. is not conventional, man has no right to hold man in property. ("Poor Laws and Paupers" 361)

Fox continues with an entire page of these principles, many of them illustrating the contradictions inherent in the

logic of slave-holders.

Because Martineau's tales exhibit just the sort of didacticism Fox often decried, the reader of his reviews is forced to conclude that Fox's literary criticism was inextricably linked to his social and political ideals, that despite his insistence to the contrary, he sometimes judged the literary quality of a work based on the work's support of what Fox considered sound principles, that, in short, the loudest voice among dissenters trying to create a classless society fused with sympathy was not necessarily the poet's, but, rather, Fox's own. He freely exercised that voice in the pages of the Monthly Repository.

Fox's use of a review to promote his political views might shock modern readers who have divorced literature from its political and social contexts, but Fox felt his role as critic to be less a judge of aesthetic value or an elucidator and more an extender of the political and social views inherent in the poetry of any committed writer. He called the "Village Curate" a "fellow labourer," meaning not only that they shared the occupation of clergyman, but also that in the cooperative society, the poet and critic, indeed all writers, were co-operatives, fellow laborers united by thought, skill, and toil--committed to hard work, to social

change, and to the opposition of competition and stratification. Criticism, for Fox, simply continued the work started by the poet. The abundance of favorable reviews in the Monthly Repository and the lack of censure prove that Fox believed himself to be contributing in prose to the revolution the poet was waging in verse.

NOTES

1

The story is told in several places. See Devane 7; Ward 100.

2

See De groot for an analysis of Fox's respect for literature as a departure from Utilitarian and materialistic attitudes toward poetry.

3

Fox wrote in Local Logic (CW 6: 192) that Browning's tree had sprung from the seeds Shelley had sown. Although he does not elaborate, Fox must have had in mind both Prometheus Unbound and, more likely, Alastor as sources of Browning's theme. The connection has become, of course, commonplace. William Devane notes the similarities between Shelley and the young Browning in A Browning Handbook and cites Shelley's preface to Alastor as a partial explication of Paracelsus: "Those who keep aloof from sympathies with their kind, rejoicing neither in human joy nor mourning with human grief; these, and such as they, have their appointed course. They languish, because none feel with them their common nature . . ." (51).

4

See also LWC 2: 257.

5

See Sullivan, who examines the attitudes toward poetry expressed in the Utilitarian journal The Westminster Review: "One reviewer indicated that the sciences--of politics, law, economy, commerce, mathematics, and mechanics--and not 'mere literature' had brought civilization to its height; in fact, 'to be literary . . . is the disease of the age'" (424).

6

F. Parvin Sharpless notes in "William Johnson Fox and Mill's Essays on Poetry" that Mill, like Fox, felt that Tennyson embodied both the poet of intellectual strength (the "Poet of Culture" in Mill's words) and the poet of emotional sensibility (the "Poet of Nature"). Sharpless notes that Mill's friendship with Fox may be a partial source for Mill's poetics. Noting that Fox's "artiste" and Mill's "Poet of Nature" are the same, as are the "philosopher" and the "Poet of Culture," Sharpless contends that the similarities between Fox's ideas and Mill's, due in part to their shared Utilitarian heritage, call into question the confessed importance of Wordsworth on Mill's interest in poetry. Sharpless suggests instead that Fox probably deserves the credit, though Mill went on to eclipse

Fox: "Mill's association with Fox is an example of what was to become Mill's customary procedure: to evolve broader and more comprehensive views from study of the authorities and the history of the question, to move carefully from older dogmas to newer and better syntheses" (21). Mill's synthesis is, admittedly, more strongly argued, more complex, more thorough, but Fox's, coming as it does at such an early stage in a new era of literary expression and literary criticism, gives a starting point for an age long "wearied out with contraries" and beginning to consider reconciliation as a solution to the problem of opposing doctrines, but still not entirely comfortable with compromise.

7

See also CW 5: 319-320.

8

For the view that working-class poets failed to introduce anything new to the poetry of the nineteenth century, see Louis James, who does find hope for one poet, John Critchely Prince: "At times, too, he could use his experience of suffering and poverty--he and his wife watched one of their children starving to death--to bring something fresh to the conventional themes of poetry" (173).

9

Toward the close of the lecture, Fox quotes at length Carlyle's review of Elliott in the Edinburgh Review. Carlyle, though he gave Elliott a generally friendly notice, felt that the poet should spend more time "considering what in his own sphere could be done, than what in his own or other spheres, ought to be destroyed; rather in producing or preserving the true, than in mangling and slashing asunder the false." Carlyle believed that Elliott's complaints were misguided: "Spite of "Bread tax," he and his brave children . . . have yet bread." For Carlyle, Elliott should simply devote himself to promoting the value of work ("[W]hat will there be or can there be for the Son of Adam but Work, Work, two hands quite full of Work!"), and should "lay aside anger, uncharitableness, hatred, noisy tumult; avoid them, as worse than Pestilence, worse than "Bread-tax" itself . . ." (All quotes in Fox, LWC 1: 243).

Fox responded with the fullness of his rhetorical skills: "'Do not destroy.' And why not destroy, when destruction will liberate the good? What is the aim of what is called destruction? The destruction of tyranny is political freedom. The destruction of bigotry is spiritual and mental emancipation. Positive and negative are mere forms. Creation and destruction, as we call them, are just

one and the same work, the work which man has to do--the extrication of good from evil. In this dread of destruction some one [sic] might have pleaded for Pandora's box, when all the mischiefs had flown out, and hope was shut in, 'Oh, do not hurt the box; it is an old box, and there are venerable associations around it; it if be a rotten box, its breaking up is destined of heaven, and will surely be accomplished; let it alone.' Had Ebenezer Elliott been there with a good sturdy iron mace of his own hammering, he would have stopped for no such reasoning; round would his weapon have swung, smash would have gone the box, and in that work of destruction, liberated Hope would have mounted and sung aloft her songs sweeter than the lark, gladdening human hearts with a prospect of liberty and happiness. . . . Those who 'in patience possess their souls,' turn away from political questions, such as corn-law repeal, suffrage, ballot, and the like, and think only of metaphysical abstractions, of light, and tide, and time; they are art and part of this prolonged influence which goes on destroying human life, with all that makes it valuable, and spreads its venom through society" (LWC 1: 243-244).

Chapter 3

Literary Education and the Function of Criticism

I. Backgrounds: The Utility of Education

In 1866, John Bowring, who had been the editor of politics for the Westminster Review, published a sprawling, meandering review of the first several volumes of William Fox's Collected Works, a review in which Bowring gave more ink to listing his own departures from and agreements with Fox than to Fox's literary or rhetorical merits and shortcomings, proving that reviews of the day often served as podiums for reviewers and not as illuminators of writers. The reader-reviewer, it might be argued, was more significant than the writer, the response more important than the text. Among his departures from Fox, Bowring argues that Fox's belief in universal equality is unfounded, that rights are neither "self-evident" nor "inalienable" (Fox had, obviously, backed his political and social theory with Jefferson's), and that "money-getting" was not the great object of modern man, as Fox had contended in the opening article for the first issue of the Westminster Review, which Bowring incorrectly gives as "Men and Things in 1824."¹

Bowring most vehemently disagrees with Fox's comments

that society had been divided into the owning and working classes, into the "oppressor and oppressed." The new age had dawned, Bowring argues, in which oppositions had been finally reconciled:

A generation ago, it was almost a truism to announce that the world was "divided into two great classes, the oppressors and the oppressed, each having their holy alliances;" but we have now certainly reached an era in which an influence has arisen greater than either---strong enough to help the "servile many"---strong enough to influence the ruling few. (447)

The "influence" Bowring had in mind in 1866 was the literary education of the working class, which had provided for an increase in both the amount of popular literature produced and the number of newspapers and journals published. That new literature had supposedly helped members of the "servile" class learn to accept their proper and inevitable place in the structure of society ("servile" was now just an inappropriate word), and the nervous ruling few were assured that the revolt of the ignorant masses had been avoided before mid century by those educational movements and developments (such as Mechanics' Institutes) propagated in the thirties and forties to educate the working classes.

Bowring, supporting literary education as a means of quieting disaffection, had, ironically, met strong

opposition in the early part of the century from middle-class industrialists, politicians, and intellectuals who felt that educating the working class would have more negative than positive results, that the lower classes might practice their new found skills by reading Paine or Cobbett, whose prickly diatribes might encourage sedition simply for its own sake. Discontent increases, many, like Mac Quedy, were convinced, with the increase of information.

Explaining why their tutorials in reading must be kept secret from Mrs. Joe, Joe Gargery tells Pip "Your sister is given to government . . . which I mean to say the government of you and myself. . . . And she ain't over partial to having scholars on the premises," Joe continued, "and in partikler would not be over partial to my being a scholar, for fear I might rise. Like a sort of rebel, don't you see?" (Dickens 58. Ellipses added). The fear that a reading public might rise appeared in its most full-blown form in the statements of a president of the Royal Society, who couched his argument in terms of concern for the well-being of the ignorant:

However precious in theory the project might be, of giving education to the labouring classes of the poor, it would in effect be found to be prejudicial to their morals and happiness; it would teach them to despise their lot in life.

instead of making them good servants in agriculture, and other laborious employments to which their rank of society had destined them; instead of teaching them subordination, it would render them fractious and refractory, as was evident in the manufacturing counties; it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books, and publications against Christianity. (qtd. in Russell 20-21)

The fear that education might upend the pyramid of societal order found its way even into Pugin's Contrasts. Though no friend to the monied aristocracy, who he believed had no taste and who built upon principles of utility and profit rather than upon a recognition of form's relationship to function especially in the design of churches, Pugin was equally opposed to the kinds of social and religious reforms Fox was a part of. In contrast to a "Catholic Town in 1440," with the vertical lines of its spires and steeples, he offers "The same Town in 1840," with its wide and horizontal Unitarian Chapel and Socialist Hall of Science. In his sketches of modern architecture, Pugin uses printed language to show the degradation of society: graffiti, placards, "for sale" signs, advertisements, directions, and, in one sketch, the words "For Dissection" on the side of a coffin being loaded onto a conveyance. And outside the ugly gates of King's College, a man bears a sign that reads

Cheap
Knowledge
Lecture
Mechanics
Institute
Mr. Gab
on
The Power
of the
People.

Some writers, however, felt that rebellion was best avoided not through overt obscurantism but through a more subtle form, a thorough-going bourgeois inoculation of the working class, through which education all classes could benefit in the way Bowring indicated. Following such thinkers as Smith, who had written that "an instructed and intelligent people . . . are always more decent and orderly than an ignorant one" (Wealth 621),² Macaulay wrote, "It is the duty of government to protect our persons and property from danger. The gross ignorance of the common people is a principal cause of danger to our persons and property. Therefore it is the duty of government to take care that the common people shall not be grossly ignorant" (qtd. in Knickerbocker 143). The belief that the rights to property and the maintenance of distinction were best protected through education appears most forcefully in Richard Hamilton's The Institutions of Popular Education. Hamilton's book was awarded "the Manchester Prize" in 1846 as the best

work submitted to a contest conducted by the Lancashire Independent College to discover "the best Method of extending the Benefits of Education to the People of England" without expecting the intervention of the State (vii-viii). Hamilton's book is a compendium of the kind of thinking that had so infuriated Fox:

True inequality . . . we consider a most important principle. It is the great incentive to industry and competition. Too rife and too easy a provision for our wants would weaken the mainspring of every social movement: he who will not work ought not to eat. . . . (7-8)

The mere justice of educating the poor,--it being supposed that the education of the other classes may confidently be relied on,--is apparent from that equal obedience which is required from all by our laws. Each subject is supposed to know them. But not only should every man be generally acquainted with them, but there are lines of distinction, and principles of conduct, which are superior and antecedent to them. . . . Let them see the manifold evils, as well as guilt, of every encroachment on property. (107-108)

But while Hamilton openly claimed that education would draw more clearly the lines of distinction, other theorists, echoing Macaulay's belief that education would instill respect, argued that education would actually bring the classes closer together by uniting them in a common cause, thereby preventing workers from uniting in causes detrimental to the goals of the upper classes. Education

as a unifying factor in the quest for social control is, in fact, the theme of the best summary of British adult education published in the nineteenth century, The History of Adult Education (1851), by J.W. Hudson. He begins his study with an excited announcement of the current situation:

The unexampled efforts now making in every part of the kingdom for the intellectual and physical improvement of the lower classes of the community, distinguish the present, as the age of philanthropy and good-will to all men. The middle classes vie with the rich in promoting the great and good work of education. The brightest minds in literature and science direct their talents to its development; preparing the ignorant by addresses, by lectures, and by their writings, to receive and understand the great and interesting truths which the Creator unfolds before them. . . . [T]he manufacturer finds it profitable to form schools and factory libraries, to rear amateur bands of musicians amongst his workmen, to encourage frugality by savings' banks, benefit societies, sick clubs, clothes clubs, burial associations, and by occasional tea meetings, at which he and his family partake, to destroy that barrier between men, which pride and wealth sometimes ungraciously erect. (v.)

Hudson's evangelical delight in the moral enlightenment and "preparation" of the working class brought about by the destruction of barriers through the use of libraries and tea meetings is further reflected in the tangible outcomes of education. The concept of destroyed barriers can be seen in the behavior of the educated: "such was the love of order

and peace infused into these poor men from the lessons they had received, that in 1830, when incendiary fires were prevalent, they spontaneously came forward, and formed themselves into a band of police, for the protection of the property of the neighboring farmers" (Hudson 11). These beneficial results had been insured by influential and wealthy citizens who subsidized Mechanics' Institutes and who insisted that political and, often, literary subjects be excluded from the course offerings, thereby creating a purely useful and scientific education that "acted upon the spirit and purposes of political disaffection" by giving operatives a better understanding of their part in the smooth operation of the societal machine (Hudson 43). Pugin's concern with the cheap knowledge lectures being delivered at the Mechanics' Institute was somewhat unfounded. Mr. Gab's lectures on the power of the people were rare occurrences early in the history of the Mechanics' Institutes, and any Institute that attempted to combine education with political dissent risked alienating middle-class supporters. The London Mechanics' Institute, Hudson writes, was "brought down" when the lecture hall there had been let to "the Owenites, Cobbettites, Huntites, and the anti-religious Carlisle and Taylor" (51).

Though attempts to introduce literary subjects often

failed (Shakespearian readings, Hudson notes, contributed to the demise of one institution, while the engagement of both Emerson and the popular lecturer George Dawson, who rendered biographical sketches of great writers, "prematurely checked" the prosperity of the Glassgow Athenaeum [Hudson 84]), the cultivation of correct taste was not to be ignored, and successful attempts were made at several institutes to establish workers' libraries and reading rooms stocked with poetry, novels, and journals. At some schools, such as the Sheffield Mechanics' Institute, the distinction between literature that cultivated proper taste and that which did not was apparent only to the board, which gave no reasons for its allowing Byron, Bulwer-Lytton, Thackeray, Harriet Martineau, and Washington Irving while banning Scott, Shakespeare, Disraeli, and the Vicar of Wakefield (Hudson 158-59). In most cases, however, whether through lectures on the biographies of great men or through approved works considered by the board appropriate and enlightening, the aim of the institutes of higher learning in the mid-nineteenth century was generally to expose the new reading public to "the best that had been thought and known" according to particular, if arbitrary, standards of refined taste.

Advocates of literary education and the expansion of culture to include the common man continued to explain their efforts as an attempt to break class barriers and to create harmony through the introduction of common historical and literary backgrounds. Culture, according to Arnold, works not to "indoctrinate the masses" or "win them for this or that sect" but as something that "seeks to do away with the classes" by promoting those grounds of culture called social, "in which all the love of our neighbor, the impulse towards action, help, and beneficence, the desire for removing human error, clearing human confusion, and diminishing human misery, the noble aspiration to leave the world better and happier than we found it" (459) would motivate men to create an atmosphere congenial to the establishment of human perfection, which is "an inward spiritual activity, having for its characters, increased sweetness, increased light, increased life, increased sympathy" (472). Though he insisted that culture was universal and non-sectarian, Arnold spoke often of the humanizing influence of literature and of literary study (both of them modes of culture) and their potential, as Chris Baldick notes in The Social Mission of English Criticism, "to wean . . . [the masses] from class-conflict and intellectual turmoil" (62). That Arnoldian viewpoint was

held by almost all theorists of education as the rationale for teaching literature in the institutions of adult education. Literary study, it was argued, especially the study of English literature, and specifically the study of England's most acclaimed authors, would serve as an "impressive cultural example, a museum of national genius" (Baldick 82), uniting the classes, showing the insignificance of gradation and barriers, and encouraging the creation of a national culture founded on the universal and common origins and destinies of Englishmen, rich and poor. Baldick cites H. G. Robinson, a teacher at York Training College in 1860:

"Large views help to develop large sympathies; and by converse with the thoughts and utterances of those who are intellectual leaders of the race, our heart comes to beat in accord with the feeling of universal humanity. We discover that no differences of class, or party, can destroy the power of genius to charm and to instruct, and that above the smoke and stir, the din and turmoil of man's lower life of care and business and debate, there is a serene and luminous region of truth where all may meet and expiate in common." (66)

Robinson seems to have been reading Fox, with whom he shares an unfaltering idealism and a hope for "large sympathies" and "universal humanity." But if Robinson had been reading Fox, he had been misreading him. For Robinson, as for

Hudson, education offered mankind a refuge from conflict in the regions of idealism and truth, regions already inhabited by the "intellectual leaders of the race," who were above the "smoke and stir, the din and turmoil of man's lower life." Educating the worker meant charming him into respect and admiration and instructing him in proper class values. Robinson's notion of sympathy actually perverts Fox's belief in universal brotherhood. For Fox, educating the worker meant making him conscious that he already inhabited the region of truth.

II. William Fox and the Function of Criticism

Among educators and literary critics of the Victorian period, Fox was sensitive to the prevailing notions of the utility of education and literary study among those who "aim at fixing their own seal and stamp on others, making the next generation, the reflex of this, instead of being an advance on it" (LWC 2: 227). Despite their disclaimers, Fox contended, a particular class did see education and literary study as a means of cultural indoctrination, as a

wholesome thing for the lower classes; as a means of training them to dutiful and respectful habits towards their superiors; a sort of subsidiary agency, in aid of the police, to keep the peace and preserve the framework of society in smooth

and equable motion--a motion which is pleasant to those who look on the profits of others' work as their own perquisites. (LWC 2: 226)

Though those who proposed to educate the working classes spoke much about sympathy and the need to unite the classes, most middle-class recommendations, as Fox knew, were simply devices for maintaining institutions and hierarchies which, in effect, reversed Fox's idea of unity and merely extended the dominant culture to absorb those who had been long excluded by it or to intimidate them from desiring a place in it. As Baldick notes, literary education intended to bring "all classes into the luminous realm of universal humanity" actually forced "an awareness of class inferiority upon its unrefined readers, making them ashamed of their 'insignificance' before the intellectual leaders of the race, and numbing their own creative capacity." As a form of "cultural intimidation," then, literary study shared with great poetry a tendency "to immobilize its consumers in a contemplative attitude disengaged from their own action and experience" (67). The guardians of a culture built on classical learning and on "the profits of others' work," including the profit of intelligence and sophistication gained through the consumption of poetry, offered a bite of the golden apple to the working class primarily to keep them

from seizing it by force or in the hope of blinding them with its gleam.

Fox considered the tossing of literature's great names to the working class as valuable to workers as pelting them with Bibles. The attempt to inspire respect and admiration for what they had no background to comprehend constituted more proof of the ruling class's penchant for contradictory and self-defeating behavior and, more important, a basic misunderstanding of the role of literature and especially of the study of literature in the establishment of a truly collective society. Poetry written for the wealthy and full of allusions to classical works should not, he insisted, be foisted upon the working class, for it offered them no chance to establish their own culture, founded on the principles of sympathy and humanity. He considered highly allusive poetry to be the production of a closed and self-perpetuating culture, the realm of individuals who wrote for individuals exactly like themselves, or even, it might have seemed to Fox had he lived to the end of the century, for themselves. Allusive poetry, which T. S. Eliot showed to be the height of pure and personal literature rooted in private experience, Fox believed to be the poetry of a society not yet come into existence; that is, a society in which all readers would share a common education and background.

Before art was produced for the artist's sake, Fox could still believe that the proper response to the loss of a shared culture was not escape into one's own reading list but the establishment of a new and wider culture, rooted in the social values of the lower classes and not in the personal and individualistic values of a wealthier, self-contained, restrictive class that barred intellectual and creative access to workers and made art the private property of a select few.

Fox, believing that education could nurture man's instinctual sympathy and that the worker possessed sympathy in its most untainted and uncorrupted form, would have agreed with Gramsci that all men, having the power to reason, are "intellectuals," and that the "organic" intellectuals of the working class would progress toward hegemony by the development of a proletariat culture. And because Fox held out no hope for a purely proletarian culture entirely cleansed of bourgeois influence, he would have accepted the idea that the working class could benefit in some way from the assistance of the more advanced bourgeois intelligentsia. But the poet born outside the laboring class would not serve as this mediator who would fuse the classes into a collective whole. In "The Poor and

their Poetry" Fox remarks that the work of George Crabbe, though he was a poet of the poor, is useless to them since he was not "himself of them," and can offer only an exercise in personal sympathy for the plight of the lower classes: "He makes us sympathize, not in what they feel, but in what he himself feels in the contemplation of their emotions. It is poetry concerning the poor, but neither by the poor, nor for the poor. It is made up of observation and sympathy," by which he means in this case "pity" (191). Though himself a worker, by Fox's extended definition of that class, Crabbe could only surmise the emotional turmoil of the poorest class and could not, therefore, organize those emotions in poetry free from the extremes of pity or naturalistic detachment. Crabbe's poetry, in other words, if studied by working men, would disengage them from their own action and experience and bind them merely to Crabbe's. Poetry about poverty and not from poverty was, Fox correctly noticed, actually about the poet and therefore provided no means for the fusion of classes or for the advancement of a proletarian culture. A romantic portrait of the poor and laboring classes did little to end the system that had created that class. And because the poet should not commit himself to a cause, even the worker-poet could not be expected to argue overtly for the creation of a proletarian

culture. His work would, by its nature, confront class prejudices, but he could not be expected to work alone.

He shared his work, Fox believed, with the reader, especially with the critic-teacher. It is the reader-critic-teacher who must arrive at moral judgments and determine whether the poet challenges or supports traditional bourgeois values, unmask prevailing ideologies, redefines the relationship of class to class, contributes something to the understanding of social forces, and does something to change the world. The critic-teacher bears the burden of labeling what he reads as either poetry or verse-making and of assessing the political application of the moral and social power contained in poetry. If the poet is unaware of his legislative power, the educated reader, Fox insists, cannot be.

Fox established a new role for the literary critic-teacher in the age of industrial capitalism--to mediate between reader and author, between poet-worker and reader-worker, to examine the values and ideals proposed by poets, to judge those values in the context of the real political struggle of the working class, giving special attention to the poet's handling of men's relationship to the traditions and illusions that had shaped their social lives, and,

finally to counter those illusions with a lesson in political reality. If the artist, whose political views might run counter to the goal of furthering proletarian concerns, abstained in his art from dogmatic and grossly didactic intervention in the world, but portrayed social relationships as they were and was at least peripherally in touch with the significant movements of his time and with the instincts and needs of men, the critic would use that art to expose contradiction and to encourage men to abolish those contradictions in real life. The critic-teacher, Fox thought, could, through art, change the worker's experience and consciousness by changing his aesthetic. Though far from being a Marxist critic, Fox was a forerunner of what Frank Lentricchia calls the Marxist literary intellectual, one who

engages in . . . the activity of interpretation, an activity which does not passively "see," as Burke puts it, but constructs a point of view in its engagement with textual events and in so constructing produces an image of history as social struggle, of, say, class struggle, an image that is not "there" in a simple sense but is the discovery of the active intellectual soul. This sort of interpretation, when worked through the traditional texts of the humanities, will above all else attempt to displace traditional interpretations which cover up the political work of culture. . . . (11)

The critic, Lentricchia argues, works toward

a critical consciousness of texts: the act of "knowing" the text as a product of struggle, a way of "interrogating" the text so as to reproduce it as a social text in the teeth of the usual critical lyricism that would deny the social text power and social specificity in the name of "literature." The activist intellectual needs a theory of reading that will instigate a culturally suspicious trouble-making readership. (11)

Almost anticipating Lentricchia, Fox engages the text as a social document--a product of culture and of struggle--that confirms or denies prevailing social structures and relationships, and sees the critic's task as the application of that document to current social and political circumstances. For Fox, as for Lentricchia, the literary act, whether writing or reading, is a social act. And the culturally suspicious trouble-making readership that act creates will replace the culturally hypnotized one that joins police forces.

Fox found the most appropriate forum for his critical views in the National Hall of the Working Men's Association at Holborn in the mid-forties. Founded by Lovett, Hetherington, Cleave, Watson, and others, the Association consisted "exclusively of the 'intelligent and influential portion' of the workers" and "proclaimed its purpose as the achievement of 'the political and social rights' of the

working class by every legal means but particularly through
the dissemination of knowledge" (Simon 233).³ Between May
1844 and May 1845, Fox delivered sixty lectures to an
audience often numbering 2000 on various political,
religious, social, and literary topics, "designed," the
preface to the collected lectures tells us, "to promote the
objects and interests" of the Working Men's Association, "in
which plans of education and of general self-culture are
combined with the inculcation of political truths and the
assertion of political rights"⁴ (1). Among Fox's lectures
is a series which he called "Living Poets; and Their
Services to the Cause of Political Freedom and Human
Progress." In choosing only living poets, he exercised his
right as a critic unfettered by the canon of acclaimed and
teachable great writers. Though his series contains
luminaries such as Tennyson and Wordsworth, it also contains
Joanna Baillie and Caroline Norton, no longer appreciated or
taught, the latter recognized more today as the inspiration
for Meredith's Diana of the Crossways than as the poet of
The Child of the Islands. Always disturbed by the poet's
financial burden in a community whose economic and social
leaders considered poetry useless and inappropriate for a
technical age, Fox further considered public discussion to
be at least some compensation for the poet's work. Finally,

he chose poets who he felt were attuned to the specific political struggles and cultural collisions of which his listeners were part. There would be no need to reconstruct the milieu since his audience was sitting in the midst of it. His purpose was unabashedly political, and he promised to suspend questions of aesthetic value and to refrain from "criticism," by which he meant a "minute analysis" of the poet's powers, and to concentrate on the political and social impact of the poet's work.

Fox's belief that the poet is unaware of his connection to the universal and humane allowed him to show great respect for Wordsworth after the poet had revealed himself to be a "conservative," a "church-and-state man," "a supporter of ancient practices and beliefs," "not friendly to any broad foundation of democratical right as a basis of a state" (LWC 1: 140). But Wordsworth's poetry, Fox noted, could be seen as the bulwark of a "great revolution" against the "stilted and sonorous conventionalisms" of the poetry of the preceding century, a revolution in taste that was "among many concomitants of that mighty rising up of human nature which shewed itself first in the American and afterwards in the French revolutions. . . . Humanity . . . learned to cast off frippery in language as well as in institutions"

(LWC 1: 141). But more important than this long-recognized and often-cited trait in Wordsworth's poetry were the political ramifications of the unemployment and poverty suffered by the country weaver in "The Excursion." Though Wordsworth gives no direct causes for the weaver's plight, Fox finds in the romantic portrait of a single, suffering weaver a classical emblem of an entire country's suffering brought on by its leaders:

All the accumulation of suffering in the history of this individual is but the reflection of the lot of multitudes; this bitterness and anguish of heart is multiplied by thousands, tens of thousands, and millions of instances. And this killing not only the physical but the moral being; this murder by wholesale of souls as well as bodies, was perpetrated by that good man, as the world called him, George the Third, and William Pitt his minister, and the Lords and Commons, the aristocracy and clergy. (LWC 1: 146)

Fox urges his audience to consider the poetry of the past, since nothing has changed (this being not the poet's fault), as applicable to current circumstances, and "to do that with Wordsworth which he himself does with Milton," when Wordsworth invoked the "defender of regicides" in a sonnet of protest against the stagnation of a selfish people, a plea for the regeneration of the country. While Mill read Wordsworth to cultivate the feelings, Fox read him--and read him aloud to an audience of workers--to

cultivate in them the feeling of indignation and the desire to do something, to protest. The mere fact that the poetry of an avowedly conservative poet evokes a feeling of protest against aristocratic selfishness proves, Fox thought, that all poetry emanates from and speaks to the innate desire for democratic compassion. But more important, Fox's use of Wordsworth proves a Victorian radical's understanding of the place of the critic-teacher who brings literature to workers not to entice them into the police force, but to advance their class and to encourage them to raise themselves up, like sorts of rebels.⁵

Fox continued his sociological interpretation and applications of poets throughout his lectures, choosing poets--like Elliott--whose work he felt he could best turn to the purpose of promoting political freedom. And, again, since the poet need not, in fact should not, root his work in ideologies or form his inspiration toward some ulterior end and should by no means step directly into the political arena ("we do not want a man to plead for our having the right to vote" [LWC 1: 143]), Fox needed nothing even as direct as "London, 1802" to carry his point. For Fox, Tennyson, as did Wordsworth, proved that the citizen and the poet were not necessarily the same. He was not surprised

that the poetry of Tennyson, whom Fox considered too much a "liberal Whig," was more radical than the normal Whig line.

Of course, it is Fox's reading of Tennyson that is more radical than Whig. One of the better examples of Fox's sociological interpretations is his reading of "The Goose," Tennyson's rewriting of the famous fable of the "Boy and the Goose that laid the golden eggs." In Tennyson's version, a stranger delivers the goose to an old woman, who grows tired of the cackling and cries to have the goose's neck wrung. For Fox, the poem is a political allegory in which the stranger is commerce, the old woman the aristocracy, and "the goose manufactures" by which the aristocracy grows rich.⁶ Fox's reading of the poem is stated simply:

"Perhaps, indeed, in our times, the goose may have learned to cackle less, and to aim somewhat strenuously at having a share for itself of the golden eggs which it had hitherto laid chiefly for the benefit of others" (LWC 1: 257).

He reveals in this reading his sympathy with the industrial interests in the Anti-corn Law agitation and in his literary criticism gives an indication of the years of work he had performed for the Manchester Free Traders. But delivered in the Hall of the Working Men's Association, which opposed the corn laws for reasons far more democratic than those argued by industrialists and their sympathizers,

and delivered to an audience of workers, whose right to cheap bread was the fulcrum of his Manchester speeches, Fox's reading seems to contain an exhortation not to industrialists against aristocrats, but to his audience--workers, who perform chiefly for the benefit of others--to turn vocal protests into physical ones, or at least into more strenuous ones. In any case, he suggests that vocal protests--the cackles of geese and the words of poets--can be turned, and in the case of poetry through the help of the mediating critic-teacher, first into knowledge, understanding, awareness, and then, if knowledge is to bring change and not simply skills in interpretation, into action, from gnosis to praxis.⁷ Fox's audience would be only more enlightened with Fox's interpretation of the text before him, and as a critic-teacher he would have fulfilled only part of his obligation in translating into the worker's culture an art form from someone else's. Fox seems aware that mere interpretation often indicates acceptance of convention and a propagation of the status quo: the student-reader learns in deciphering the allegory what devices poets use to convey a thought. But simple recognition of poetic techniques and forms is not the same as the assertion of rights and the establishment of freedom from convention.

Recognition, for Fox, must become power. Whether he was encouraging the workers rather than the middle class, and I think he was, it is clear that Fox considered criticism as more than mere interpretation, more than the literal rendering of an allegory. The protests of the poet must pass through interpretation into action by his readers. Until this process becomes an integral part of the reader's culture, the critic is responsible for its implementation. "Criticism," Frank Lentricchia writes, "is the production of knowledge to the ends of power and, maybe, of social change" (10). Fox would have agreed.

Throughout his lectures, Fox praised poets whose work corrects the prejudices, contradictions, misconceptions, and illusions perpetrated by the upper classes upon the lower to prevent praxis. He thanks Tennyson and Baillie, who, in their portraits of women, are far different from "those who merely lecture and admonish her upon the fulfilment of such duties as immediately relate to man's comfort--who tell her to mind her spinning and puddings, and leave matters of higher import to the exclusive consideration of the lords of creation. . . ." (LWC 1: 258).⁸ He praises Moore for setting straight the historical accounts of Irish rebels twisted by the "cunning politicians of the day" who would rob the people of their heroes (LWC 1: 327). The poet,

because he cannot help being honest, revises the official version of Irish revolutionists and brings the English reader by contrast a revelation of his own country's historical biases: "Who is there that would not prefer . . . to the greatness which was achieved by the tyrants of that day, to all that was won and worn by your Pitts and Castlereaghs--who would not rather choose the errors, failures, and destruction of their Emmetts and Fitzgeralds?" (LWC 1: 327). He appreciates Hunt for his ironic portrait of Captain Sword, which, Fox hoped, would lay to rest forever the childish and fanciful illusion of the glorious conquering soldier. In many of his lectures, on literature and other subjects, Fox unleashed his greatest fury against war. In his discussion of Hunt, Fox faults all writers given to praise "the hireling dealers of death and destruction," the creations of aristocratic gentility and the industrial class:

Many are whipped into this mechanical order, cruel enforcements under the name of strict discipline being the motive power by which they become thus grand and shapely to the eye, and move with the accuracy of machinery, as if there were in them no individual existence, no life, breath, thought, or moral sense, but all was one vast contrivance, of which human beings were the elements, combined and welded together into an engine of destruction that should let loose its fury on an unoffending people. (LWC 2: 177)

For Fox, Hunt's poetry challenged the student-reader to reexamine his relationship to the militarism that was almost the centerpiece of English culture in the nineteenth century. Poetry, Fox contended, allowed the reader to recognize the reality beneath the illusion.⁹

Fox was quick to correct poets who allowed the prevailing ideology to invade their work, especially faulting Tennyson for succumbing without a fight to the arguments against democracy. In "'You ask me, why, tho' ill at ease'" Fox sees Tennyson giving voice to an "impulse of his nature to seek even a despotism . . . in preference to staying in a country where independence of thought should be altogether overborne and trampled down by the intolerance of the majority" (LWC 1: 252). Fox interprets the fifth stanza of the poem--

Should banded unions persecute
Opinion, and induce a time
When single thought is civil crime,
And individual freedom mute . . .

--as Tennyson's disparaging comment on the movement for suffrage, which Tennyson apparently sees festering into a majority-ruled society in which individual dissenting voices are no longer heeded. Fox corrects Tennyson, telling his working-class audience that the poet has missed the mark by

failing to see that the tyranny of opinion originates not among the people, but in

high circles, with those among whom opinion is a conventionalism; with whom creeds and forms, political and religious, are taken in their external shape, with no soul or spirit in them, but are parroted from one to another because they are the adjuncts of pecuniary emolument and political influence. There is the danger.

(LWC 1: 252)

In failing to fault the true culprit and in confusing a working-class movement with the habits of those in high circles, Tennyson has, Fox suggests, furthered the corrupting conventionalism of a soulless and spiritless class and contributed nothing to the workers' attempts to free themselves from cultural domination.

In the end, Fox's own most significant rebellion is one of which he was not completely aware. In some of the criticism delivered at the Working Men's Association Fox reveals a slight and unarticulated tendency to reject the conventional aesthetic theory of the early nineteenth century, based on the Romantic creed of harmony and unity and most forcefully articulated in Coleridge's Biographia Literaria: the synthetic power of the imagination "reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposites or discordant qualities . . ." (455). Fox never fully

repudiated this idea, and through all of his criticism shows an appreciation of the poet's ability to bring into harmony the discordant and conflicting elements of life. In fact, the Romantic poets' recognition of the connection between their apparently contrary roles as citizens and poets, a quality upon which Fox often commented, reflected their power to reconcile what seemed irresolvable. In few periods of literature were poets as socially committed as those of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, and, as Terry Eagleton makes clear, poetic form, specifically the Romantic symbol, provided the means by which the poet could resolve conflict and restore the chaos of life, and the divisiveness of contemporary social structures, to a meaningful wholeness.

Though he never rejected the idea that the best poets reconcile opposites and balance incongruities, Fox added to the Romantic theory he had inherited a notion that the harmony reflected in the poetry of the early and mid-nineteenth century carried a strange and contradictory message. Those poets, so committed to social change, offered in their works a solution to conflict based on reconciliation, which Fox had throughout his writing condemned as mere compromise and the establishment of order

through synthesis rather than through a dialectical struggle. The poet who brings contraries into peaceful coexistence subtly suggested to his audience that the proper and most effective solution to the conflicts of life, especially political struggles, is compromise and propitiation. The poetic rendering of contraries could do nothing to establish collectivism since side-by-side existence, he had argued in much of his social criticism, necessarily meant subordination rather than balance or harmony. A served class cannot exist without a servile one. True reconciliation, Fox had long contended, was the elimination of all distinctions. To be consistent, then, to erase the inherent contradiction in combining a Romantic aesthetic theory and a Victorian social consciousness, Fox had to himself reconcile his acceptance of the harmonizing nature of poetry and his insistence that social struggle could be resolved only with the victory of the lower classes over the upper.

Fox pursued this line of thinking in his lecture on Caroline Norton. Fox throughout praises Norton for her steadfastness in giving poetic treatment to the "Condition of England Question" in the face of much critical adversity. Norton, like Elliott, Shelley, and Blake, refused to believe that political matters were not the stuff of poetry. He

read to his audience selections of her poem The Child of the Islands to illustrate Norton's use of conflict and tension settled through reconciliation. In The Child of the Islands, Norton sets against one another, literally and figuratively (through the use of such conflicting elements as the seasons), excessive wealth and abject poverty, and places in the middle of that conflict the young Prince of Wales, to whom the poem is addressed.

Fox contends that Norton's poem becomes misdirected didacticism in its appeal to the conventional sympathies of the upper-class reader (represented by the Prince), who is expected to solve class conflict not by shattering distinctions to create a collective whole, but by instituting policies for the charitable amelioration of the suffering of the poverty-stricken class. That reconciliation is a hopeless impossibility, since the one class is the creation of the other.¹⁰ Fox sees Norton's poetry as bringing into contrast what were for the Victorian reader the two most disparate elements of social life, the two nations "of gaiety and gloom," to show the possible connection between the two, a connection that could be made, Norton suggests, through the poet's vision and the reader's charity. Her purpose, Fox feels, is ill-served by her

recommendation of cosmetic reconciliation and her expectation that the reader, given in poetic, concrete form a view of the life he leads and the life he never sees, will become the agent of reconciliation. Poetry, for Fox, cannot have that kind of impact by itself. Life will not simply imitate even the most didactic literature. The reader will not emulate the Prince of the poem. For Fox, the solution to social problems was not attainable merely through the literary portrayal of those problems or through upper-class charities, but through an active engagement by readers, critics, teachers, and workers, who, inspired by literature, would demand fusion rather than reconciliation, and sympathy rather than tolerance.

The convergence of life and literature occurs, for Fox, in the critic, who sees the essential irreconcilability of oppositions and the imbalance and disorder at the heart of what seems to be well-contained and tamed within the confines of poetic form. The poem is, in the end, entirely illusory, representing its elements in a most organized and formal way, but incapable of substituting for experience (the reader-Prince cannot live through the poem, Fox argues) since it is diametrically opposed to experience. The poem unifies what is tremendously at odds, and in doing so sets itself at odds with reality by reconciling what

contradiction has made impossible to reconcile. Poetry is, in the criticism of William Fox, a comment on life created by opposing, and thereby exposing, the contradictions of systems and institutions of social life. The perfection of the illusion draws in relief the imperfection of reality. Noting that disparity, the critic, the teacher of the working man, moves his listeners to action, moves them to "claim what is due to the toil in which they spend lives, due to them from society and the world" (LWC 2: 219).

While numerous critics were urging poets to give the nation a portrait of its peaceful, industrially progressive, happy society, and while educators, theorists, and reviewers such as Bowring were claiming for literary education a humanizing and harmonizing tool for the behavioral control of the workingman through the guise of societal reconciliation, Fox was turning literature to the purpose of creating a culturally suspicious readership. Education and literature, as the teacher-critic Fox combined them in his lectures to the Working Men's Association, would provide the worker not a place in the "luminous regions of truth," but a place in a new society, created by him and for him.

Notes

1

Fox's essay "Men and Things in 1823" is as sprawling and unfocused as Bowring's. The essay, ostensibly a review of a poem by James Shergold Boone, begins on page one of the Review and ends at the top of page eighteen. Fox's first mention of the poem appears on page sixteen. The article is an examination of what "education, habit, society, government, and events . . . are doing just now with us" (1). By the end of the article, Fox has added literature to his list.

2

About an instructed people Smith goes on: "They feel themselves, each individually, more respectable, and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and they are therefore more disposed to respect those superiors. They are more disposed to examine, and more capable of seeing through the interested complaints of faction and sedition, and they are, upon that account, less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of government" (621).

3

Simon quotes further from the organization's Address on Education. Though speakers at the Association's meeting were not required to prove their ascription to the group's objectives, the Association's political argument for independence gives further indication of Fox's allegiances: "Think you a corrupt Government could perpetuate its exclusive and demoralising influence amid a people this united and instructed? Could a vicious aristocracy find its servile slaves to render homage to idleness and idolatry to the wealth too often fraudulently exacted from industry? Could the present gambling influences of money perpetuate the slavery of millions, for the gains or dissipation of the few? Could corruption sit in the judgment seat--empty-headed importance in the senate seat--money-getting hypocrisy in the pulpit--and debauchery, fanaticism, poverty and crime stalk triumphantly through the land--if the millions were educated in a knowledge of their rights? No, no friends; and hence the efforts of the exclusive few to keep the people ignorant and divided. Be ours the task, then, to unite and instruct them; for be assured the good that is to be must be begun by ourselves'" (233-234).

4

Fox continued to lecture at the Hall into the following year, but because of the character and unity of the lectures on literature delivered in the first twelve

months, I have limited my discussion to the lectures of 1844-45.

5

The work of George Dawson, the popular lecturer of the Manchester Mechanics' Institute, creates an interesting contrast to Fox's teaching of literature as protest against corrupting values: "Most of us have had our Byronic time, and we are glad to get rid of it. It was the time of protest and disgust, when we gathered ourselves up majestically, and fancied ourselves some mighty Manfred, upon our lonely mountaintop of solitariness and grandeur. That day, and its uneasiness have passed away; and having thus, as by some eruptive, feverish attack, ridded ourselves of that 'perilous stuff which weighed upon the brain,' we turn with open, longing hands to this calm, wise, cool prophet of humanity; and, having thus cleansed ourselves from what was dark and perilous, we are prepared to receive the pure, the healthy, the wholesome, and the sanitary. The one was a mere negation, striving to protest; the other is a building up in the vacant place, in the waste and howling wilderness which protest has left, of a fair, quiet temple of calm wisdom, of deep feeling, without the fire, and fury, and phantasy of the days of our youth, when scepticism, and darkness, and doubt were upon us. This, then, is Wordsworth's peculiar position. When our first youthful fancy is over, he will come to us and be beloved" (306). Close thy Byron; open thy Wordsworth, Dawson says to the mature worker, for Wordsworth will make thee "meditative, calm, thoughtful, quiet, deep-feeling, pious, charitable, and devout men" (307).

6

The word "manufactures" gives some trouble here. I suppose it could simply be a typographical error for "manufacturers" and that is probably what it is. But it can also be read as the process of manufacturing, which would include owners and laborers.

7

See Lentricchia 18.

8

See also LWC 2: 83-84.

9

In his discussion of Baillie, Fox is more direct. After reading a poem of hers on the alienation and isolation of an Irish recruit, he tells his listeners: "Such are the sentiments, which communicated from breast to breast through the peasantry of the country, would make them unwilling-- would make them determined not, on any inducement--to become

hireling soldiers, at the command of others, for a cause they care not about, to shed their blood in distant countries, fighting with those who never injured them" (LWC 2: 76).

10

Fox's rendition of that contradiction is worth reprinting (the "You" is conversational; "them" is the middle class): "You give them power--irresponsible power, as it is in fact--while they are the predominant class: you put them in a position of temptation to be unjust. You say, 'Here is a prospect of wrong; here is a wrong that you may commit with impunity, that will enrich you individually, and the whole order of which you belong. Commit that wrong--we regard that as an error of judgment--it is politics, or something or other; but then be kind and charitable to the people you have wronged; and having half starved them, give them a chance of work, with wages something more than a trader pays; or provide baths and washhouses, that may, if possible, wipe away the recollection of the injustice under which they have been suffering.' The help wanted is not that which charity will give, but justice. The appropriate agency to realise that remedy is not the compassion of the higher class, bending from its lofty sphere to bestow its alms, but the resistless demand of the multitudinous classes who have endured the injustice, who claim what is due to the toil in which they spend their lives, due to them from society and the world--claim it with a voice which must command attention, and make themselves the agents of ameliorating their own condition" (LWC 2: 219).

Works Consulted

- Fox, William Johnson. "Adam the Gardener." Rev. of Adam the Gardener, by Charles Cowden Clarke. Monthly Repository ns 8 (1834): 139-50.
- . "Casper Hauser." Rev. of Casper Hauser, by Anselm von Feuerbach. Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 517-25.
- . Collected Works of William Johnson Fox. 12 Vols. London, 1865-66.
- . "Demerara; a Tale." Rev. of Demerara; a Tale, by Harriet Martineau. Monthly Repository ns 6 (1832): 429-431.
- . "An Independent in Church and State." Rev. of The Examination of an Independent in Church and State, by Francis Ross. Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 777-84.
- . "The Indicator and the Companion." Rev. of A Miscellany for the Fields and the Fireside, by Leigh Hunt. Monthly Repository ns 8 (1834): 101-3.
- . Lectures Addressed Chiefly to the Working Classes. 3 Vols. London, 1845.
- . "Men and Things in 1823." Rev. of "Men and Things in 1823," by James Boone. Westminster Review 1 (1824): 1-18.
- . "Nicoll's Poems." Rev. of Poems and Lyrics, by Robert

- Nicoll. Monthly Repository ns 8 (1834): 764-70.
- . "On the Factory System." Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 145-53.
- . "On the Intellectual Character of Sir Walter Scott." Monthly Repository ns 6 (1832): 721-28.
- . "Paracelsus." Rev. of Paracelsus, by Robert Browning. Monthly Repository ns 8 (1834): 716-27.
- . "Pauline; A Fragment of a Confession." Rev. of Pauline; A Fragment of a Confession, by Robert Browning. Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 252-62.
- . "The Poetical Works of Leigh Hunt." Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 178-84.
- . "The Poor and Their Poetry." Rev. of Corn Law Rhymes, The Village Patriarch, and Love, a Poem, by Ebenezer Elliott. Monthly Repository ns 6 (1832): 189-201.
- . "Poor Laws and Paupers." Rev. of Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated, No. 1: The Parish, a Tale, by Harriet Martineau. Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 361-81.
- . "Postscript to the Monthly Repository for the Year 1833." Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 868-71.
- . "Retzsch's Fancies." Rev. of Fancies, by Moritz Retzsch. Monthly Repository ns 8 (1834): 677-84.

- . "Saint Monday." Rev. of Saint Monday, a Poem, by "the Author of 'The Mechanic's Saturday Night.'" Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 829-39.
- . "The Story Without an End." Rev. of The Story Without an End, trans. by Sarah Austin. Monthly Repository ns 8 (1834): 70-76.
- . "Sunday." Rev. of Sunday, A Poem, by "the Author of 'The Mechanic's Saturday Night.'" Monthly Repository ns 10 (1836): 623-26.
- . "Tennyson, Poems, Chiefly Lyrical." Rev. of Poems, Chiefly Lyrical, by Alfred Tennyson. Westminster Review 14 (1831): 210-24.
- . "Tennyson's Poems." Rev. of Poems, Chiefly Lyrical, by Alfred Tennyson. Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 30-41.
- . "The Village Poor House." Rev. of The Village Poor House, by a Country Curate. Monthly Repository ns 6 (1832): 536-44.
- Armstrong, Isobel. Victorian Scrutinies: Reviews of Poetry, 1830-1870. London: The Athlone Press of the U. of London, 1972.
- Arnold, Matthew. Culture and Anarchy. Buckler 457-486.
- Baldick, Chris. The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932. New York: Oxford UP, 1883.

- Bate, Walter Jackson. From Classic to Romantic: Premises of Taste in Eighteenth-Century England. New York: Harper and Row, 1946.
- Bowring, John. "W. J. Fox." The Theological Review 3 (July 1866): 413-448.
- Buckler, William E., ed. Prose of the Victorian Period. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1958.
- Buckley, Jerome Hamilton. The Victorian Temper: A Study in Literary Culture. 1951. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.
- Carlyle, Thomas. The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle. 7 Vols. Ed. Charles Richard Sanders and Kenneth J. Fielding. Durham, North Carolina: Duke U. P., 1977.
- . Sartor Resartus: The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh. Vol. 1 of Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works. 17 Vols. London, 1843.
- . Past and Present. Vol. 13 of Thomas Carlyle's Collected Works. 17 Vols. London, 1843.
- Caudwell, Christopher. Illusion and Reality. 1937. Rept. New York: International Publishers, 1977.
- Caute, David. The Illusion: An Essay on Politics, Theatre, and the Novel. New York: Harper and Row, 1972.

- Clough, Hugh Arthur. "The Latest Decalogue." Victorian Poetry and Poetics. Houghton and Stange 360.
- Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. Biographia Literaria. Perkins 448-491.
- Crowell, Norton B. A Reader's Guide to Robert Browning. Albuquerque: U. of New Mexico P., 1972.
- Dawson, George. Biographical Lectures. Ed. George St. Clair. London, 1886.
- De groot, H. B. "The Status of the Poet in an Age of Brass: Isaac D'Israeli, Peacock, W. J. Fox and Others." Victorian Periodicals Newsletter 10 (1977): 106-122.
- DeVane, William Clyde. A Browning Handbook. 2nd ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1955.
- Dickens, Charles. Great Expectations. 1861. New York: Signet-New American Library, 1963.
- Eagleton, Terry. Literary Theory: An Introduction. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983.
- Ford, Newell F., ed. Poetical Works of Shelley. Boston: Houghton, 1974
- Garnett, Richard. W. J. Fox: Public Teacher and Social Reformer, 1786-1864. New York: John Lane Company, 1910.
- Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from the Prison Notebooks. Ed. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith.

- New York: International Publishers, 1971.
- Hallam, Arthur Henry. "On Some of the Characteristics of Modern Poetry and on the Lyrical Poems of Alfred Tennyson." Houghton and Stange 848-860.
- Hamilton, R. W. The Institutions of Popular Education. Leeds, 1845.
- Heilbroner, Robert L., ed. The Essential Adam Smith. New York: Norton, 1986.
- Houghton, Walter E. The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870. New Haven: Yale UP, 1957.
- Houghton, Walter E. and G. Robert Stange, eds. Victorian Poetry and Poetics. 2nd ed. Boston: Houghton, 1968.
- Hudson, James William. The History of Adult Education, in Which is Comprised a Full and Complete History of Mechanics' and Literary Institutions, Athenaeums, etc. London, 1851.
- James, Louis. Fiction for the Working Man, 1830-1850: A Study of the Literature Produced for the Working Classes in Early Victorian Urban England. New York: Oxford UP, 1963.
- Knickerbocker, William S. "Victorian Education and the Idea of Culture." The Reinterpretation of Victorian Literature. Ed. Joseph E. Baker. Princeton: Princeton

- UP, 1950. 97-129. Rpt. in Backgrounds to Victorian Literature. Ed. Richard A. Levine. San Francisco: Chandler, 1967. 139-69.
- Kropotkin, Peter. Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution. New York: Knopf, 1917.
- Langbaum, Robert. The Poetry of Experience: The Dramatic Monologue in Modern Literary Tradition. New York: Random House, 1957.
- Lentricchia, Frank. Criticism and Social Change. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1983.
- Litzinger, Boyd and Donald Smalley, eds. Browning: The Critical Heritage. New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc. 1970.
- Macaulay, Thomas Babington. "Southey's Colloquies." Buckler 20-36.
- Mill, John Stuart. Autobiography. Vol. 1 of The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill. Ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger. 25 Vols. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1981.
- . "What Is Poetry?" Monthly Repository ns 7 (1833): 60-70.
- Mineka, Francis. The Dissidence of Dissent: The Monthly Repository, 1806-1838. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: U. of North Carolina P., 1944.
- Nesbit, George L. Benthamite Reviewing: The First Twelve

- Years of The Westminster Review, 1824-1836. New York: AMS Press, 1966.
- Oliphant, Margaret. The Victorian Age of English Literature. New York, 1892.
- Pagin, A. W. N. Contrasts. 1840. New York: Humanities, 1969.
- Peacock, Thomas Love. Crotchet Castle. London: Macmillan and Company, 1895.
- Perkins, David, ed. English Romantic Writers. New York: Harcourt, 1967.
- Ruskin, John. The Stones of Venice. Buckler 361-392.
- Russell, Bertrand. "Introducing the Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians." Ideas and Beliefs of the Victorians: An Historic Revaluation of the Victorian Age. New York: Dutton, 1966. 19-23.
- Sharpless, F. Parvin. "William Johnson Fox and Mill's Essays on Poetry." The Victorian Newsletter 27 (Spring 1965): 18-21.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "A Defence of Poetry." Ford 603-612.
- . "Mont Blanc: Lines Written in the Vale of Chamouni." Ford 357-59.
- Simon, Brian. Studies in the History of Education, 1780-1870. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960.

- Smith, Adam. An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations. 1776. Ed. Edwin Cannan. New York: Modern Library, 1937.
- . The Theory of Moral Sentiments. London, 1853.
- Sullivan, Alvin. British Literary Magazines: The Romantic Age, 1789-1836. Vol 2 of British Literary Magazines. 4 Vols. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983.
- Taylor, Sir Henry. "Preface to Philip Van Artevelde." Victorian Poetry and Poetics. Houghton and Stange 861-65.
- Tennyson, Alfred. The Poetical Works of Tennyson. Ed. G. Robert Stange. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1974.
- Thompson, E. P. The Making of the English Working Class. New York: Random House, 1963.
- Tylecote, Mabel. The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire Before 1851. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1957.
- Van Doren, Mark, ed. William Wordsworth: Selected Poetry. New York: Modern Library, 1950. 675-698.
- Wallas, Graham. "William Johnson Fox." In his Men and Ideas. London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1940. 49-64.

- Ward, Maisie. Robert Browning and His World: The Private Face, 1812-1861. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967.
- Williams, Raymond. Culture and Society, 1780-1950. New York: Columbia UP, 1958.
- Wordsworth, William. "Preface to the Lyrical Ballads."
Van Doren 675-698.
- Young, G. M. Victorian England: the Portrait of an Age.
3rd ed. New York: Oxford, 1956.

Vita

James Michael Wallace, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Francis Wallace, was born on December 19, 1958. He attended Wilkes College and received his B.A. in English in May 1980. In 1981, Mr. Wallace was awarded a teaching fellowship from Lehigh University and was the Lucy G. Moses Teaching Fellow from 1984 to 1986. He received his M.A. from Lehigh in 1986. A member of Sigma Tau Delta, he was awarded the Sigma Tau Delta National Graduate Scholarship in 1987. Mr. Wallace has taught part-time at Allentown College of St. Francis de Sales and at Northampton County Area Community College. He is currently an assistant professor of English at King's College, Wilkes-Barre and resides in White Haven, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Anna.