

Hannah More

(2 February 1745 - 7 September 1833)

Nicholas R. Jones
Oberlin College

- BOOKS: *The Search after Happiness: a pastoral drama* (Bristol: Printed & sold by S. Farley, 1773; Philadelphia: Printed by James Humphreys, Jr., 1774);
- The Inflexible Captive: a tragedy* (Bristol: Printed & sold by S. Farley, 1774; Philadelphia: Printed for John Sparhawk by James Humphreys, Jr., 1774);
- Sir Eldred of the Bower, and the Bleeding rock: two legendary tales* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1776);
- Essays on various subjects, principally designed for young ladies* (London: Printed for J. Wilkie & T. Cadell, 1777; Philadelphia: Printed & sold by Young, Stewart & McCulloch, 1786);
- Ode to Dragon, Mr. Garrick's house-dog, at Hampton* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1777);
- Percy, a tragedy* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1778);
- The Works of Miss Hannah More in prose and verse* (Cork: Printed by Thomas White, 1778);
- The Fatal Falsehood: a tragedy* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1779);
- Sacred Dramas: chiefly intended for young persons: the subjects taken from the Bible. To which is added, Sensibility, a poem* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1782; Philadelphia: Printed for Thomas Dobson, 1787);
- Florio: a tale, for fine gentlemen and fine ladies: and, The Bas Bleu; or, Conversation: two poems, anonymous* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1786);
- Slavery, a poem* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1788; Philadelphia: Printed by Joseph James, 1788; New York: Printed by J. & A. M'Lean, 1788);
- Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1788; Philadelphia: Printed for Thomas Dobson, 1788);
- Bishop Bonner's Ghost, as "A good old papist"* (Strawberry Hill: Printed by Thomas Kirgate, 1789);
- An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World. By one of the laity* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1791; Philadelphia: Printed for & sold by M. L. Weems & H. Willis, 1793);
- Village Politics, addressed to all the mechanics, journey-men, and day labourers in Great Britain, as "Will Chip, a country carpenter"* (London: Printed & sold by F. & C. Rivington, 1792);
- Remarks on the speech of M. Dupont, made in the National Convention of France, on the subjects of religion and public education* (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1793); republished in *Considerations on Religion and Public Education, with Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont, Delivered in the National Convention of France* (Boston: Printed by Weld & Greenough, 1794);
- The Cottage Cook; or, Mrs. Jones's Cheap Dishes* (London: Sold by J. Evans & J. Hatchard and S. Hazard, Bath, 1795);
- The Sunday School* (London: Sold by J. Evans & J. Hatchard and S. Hazard, Bath, 1795);
- The Apprentice's Monitor; or Indentures in verse* [single sheet] (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795);
- The Carpenter; or, the Danger of evil company* [single sheet] (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795);
- The Gin-Shop; or, a Peep into a prison* [single sheet] (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795);
- The History of Tom White the Postilion* (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795; Philadelphia: Published by B. Johnson, 1798);
- The Market Woman, a true tale, or Honesty is the best policy* [single sheet] (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795);
- The Roguish Miller; or, Nothing got by cheating* [single sheet] (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795);
- The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);



Hannah More (portrait by Henry Singleton; reproduced from a postcard, Lilly Library, Indiana University)

The Two Shoemakers (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795); republished as *The History of the Two Shoemakers. Part I* (Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);

The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain. Part II (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);

Patient Joe, or, the Newcastle Collier [single sheet] (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795; Philadelphia: Printed & sold by J. Rakeshaw, 1808);

The Riot; or, Half a loaf is better than no bread [single sheet] (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1795);

The Way to Plenty: or, the second part of Tom White (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White

and S. Hazard, Bath, 1795; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);

The Honest Miller of Gloucestershire [single sheet] (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1795);

The Two Wealthy Farmers, or, the History of Mr. Bragwell. Part I (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1795; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);

The Two Wealthy Farmers; or, the History of Mr. Bragwell. Part II (Bath: Sold by S. Hazard and J. Marshall & R. White, London, 1795; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);

Robert and Richard; or the Ghost of poor Molly, who was drowned in Richard's mill pond (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796);

- The Apprentice Turned Master; or, the Second part of the Two Shoemakers* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796); republished as *The History of the Two Shoemakers. Part II* (Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- The History of Idle Jack Brown . . . Being the third part of the Two Shoemakers* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796); republished as *The History of the Two Shoemakers. Part III* (Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- The Shopkeeper Turned Sailor . . . Part I* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- Jack Brown in Prison . . . Being the fourth part of the History of the Two Shoemakers* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796); republished as *The History of the Two Shoemakers. Part IV* (Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- The Hackney Coachman, or the Way to get a good fare* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796);
- Sunday Reading. On Carrying Religion into the Common Business of Life. A dialogue between James Stock and Will Simpson, the shoemakers* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White, 1796);
- Turn the Carpet; or, the Two weavers: a new song, in a dialogue between Dick and John* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796);
- Betty Brown, the St. Giles's Orange girl* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- Sunday Reading. The Grand Assizes; or, General gaol delivery* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796);
- The History of Mr. Bragwell; or the Two Wealthy Farmers. Part III* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White; S. Hazard, Bath; J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1796); republished as *The Two Wealthy Farmers or the History of Mr. Bragwell. Part III* (Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- A Hymn of Praise for the Abundant Harvest of 1796* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796);
- Sunday Reading. The History of the Two Wealthy Farmers . . . Part IV* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796); republished as *The Two Wealthy Farmers; or the History of Mr. Bragwell. Part IV* (Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- The Two Wealthy Farmers, with the sad adventures of Miss Bragwell. Part V* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796); republished as *The Two Wealthy Farmers; or, The History of Mr. Bragwell. Part V* (Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- Black Giles the Poacher . . . Part I* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- Sunday Reading. Bear ye one another's Burthens; or the Valley of tears: a vision* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White; S. Hazard, Bath; and J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1796; Philadelphia: Benjamin Johnson, 1813);
- Black Giles the Poacher. With the history of widow Brown's apple-tree. Part II* (London: Sold by J. Marshall and S. Hazard, Bath, 1796; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- The Good Militiaman . . . being a new song by Honest Dan the ploughboy turned soldier* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White and S. Hazard, Bath, 1797);
- Tawny Rachel, or, the Fortune teller* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White; S. Hazard, Bath; J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797); republished as *The Fortune Teller* (Philadelphia: Published by B. Johnson, 1798);
- The Two Gardeners* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White; S. Hazard, Bath; and J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797);
- The History of Hester Wilmot; or the Second part of the Sunday School* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White; S. Hazard, Bath; and J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797; Philadelphia: Sunday and Adult School Union, 1818);
- Sunday Reading. The Servant Man turned Soldier; or, the Fair weather Christian* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White; S. Hazard, Bath; J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797);
- The History of Hester Wilmot; or the New gown. Part II. Being a continuation of the Sunday School* (London: Sold by J. Marshall; S. Hazard, Bath; J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797);
- The Lady and the Pye; or Know thyself* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White; S. Hazard, Bath; J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797);
- Sunday Reading. The Strait Gate and the Broad Way, being the second part of the Valley of Tears* (London: Sold by J. Marshall & R. White; S. Hazard, Bath; and J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797);

- The History of Mr. Fantom, the new fashioned philosopher and his man William* (London: Sold by J. Marshall; S. Hazard, Bath; J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797; Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800);
- Sunday Reading. The Pilgrims. An allegory* (London: Sold by J. Marshall; S. Hazard, Bath; and J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797; Philadelphia: Printed & sold by Kimber, Conrad, 1808);
- Dan and Jane; or Faith and works. A tale* (London: Sold by J. Marshall; S. Hazard, Bath; and J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797);
- The Two Wealthy Farmers; or the Sixth part of the history of Mr. Bragwell and his two daughters* (London: Sold by J. Marshall; S. Hazard, Bath; and J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797);
- The Two Wealthy Farmers; or, the Seventh and last part of the history of Mr. Bragwell and his two daughters* (London: Sold by J. Marshall; S. Hazard, Bath; and J. Elder, Edinburgh, 1797);
- The Plum-Cakes: or, the Farmer and his three sons* (London: Sold by J. Marshall and S. Hazard, Bath, 1797);
- Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education. With a view of the principles and conduct prevalent among women of rank and fortune*, 2 volumes (London: Printed by A. Strahan for T. Cadell Jun. & W. Davies, 1799; Philadelphia: Printed by Bunn & Bartram for Thomas Dobson, 1800);
- The Works of Hannah More, including several pieces never before published* (8 volumes, London: T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1801; enlarged, 19 volumes, 1818; enlarged, 11 volumes, London: T. Cadell, 1830; enlarged, with a memoir and notes, 6 volumes, London: H. Fisher, R. Fisher & P. Jackson, 1834; 2 volumes, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1837);
- Hints towards forming the Character of a Young Princess*, 2 volumes (London: Printed for T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1805);
- Coelebs in Search of a Wife. Comprehending observations on domestic habits and manners, religion and morals*, as "Coelebs" (2 volumes, London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1808; 1 volume, New York: Published by David Carlisle, 1809);
- Practical Piety; or, The influence of the religion of the heart on the conduct of life*, 2 volumes (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1811; Albany: Websters & Skinners, 1811; Boston: Munroe & Francis, 1811; Burlington, N.J.: D. Allinson, 1811);
- Christian Morals*, 2 volumes (London: Printed for T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1813; New York: Eastburn, Kirk / Boston: Bradford & Read, 1813; New York: Published by D. Huntington, 1813);
- An Essay on the Character and Practical Writings of Saint Paul*, 2 volumes (London: Printed for T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1815; Boston: Wells, 1815; Philadelphia: Edward Earle / New York: Eastburn, Kirk, 1815);
- Poems* (London: Printed for T. Cadell & W. Davies, 1816; Boston: Wells & Lilly, 1817; enlarged edition, London: Cadell, 1829);
- Moral Sketches of prevailing opinions and manners, foreign and domestic; with reflections on prayer* (London: Cadell & Davies, 1819; Boston: Wells & Lilly, 1819); sixth edition, with a new preface (London: Cadell & Davies, 1820);
- The Twelfth of August: or the Feast of freedom* (London: J. & T. Clarke, 1819); republished as *The Feast of Freedom; or, the abolition of domestic slavery in Ceylon; the vocal parts adapted to music* by C. Wesley (London: T. Cadell, 1827);
- Bible Rhymes on the names of all the books of the Old and New Testament: with allusions to some of the principal incidents and characters* (London: T. Cadell, 1821; Boston: Wells & Lilly, 1821);
- The spirit of prayer. Selected and compiled by herself, from various portions exclusively on that subject, in her published volumes* (London: T. Cadell, 1825; Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, 1826);
- Miscellaneous Works*, 2 volumes (London: Printed for T. Tegg, 1840).
- Collections:** *Cheap Repository*, 3 volumes (London: Sold by J. Marshall and S. Hazard, Bath, 1795-1798);
- The Entertaining, Moral, and Religious Repository*, 2 volumes (Elizabethtown, N.J.: Printed by Shepard Kollock for Cornelius Davis, New York, 1798-1799);
- Cheap Repository*, 3 volumes (Philadelphia: Printed by B. & J. Johnson, 1800-1803).
- PLAY PRODUCTIONS: *The Inflexible Captive*, Bath, Theatre Royal, 19 April 1775;
- Percy*, London, Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, 10 December 1777;
- The Fatal Falsehood*, London, Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, 6 May 1779.
- OTHER: Ann Yearsley, *Poems, on several occasions*, edited, with a preface, by More (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1785).



More in 1787 (portrait by John Opie; from M. G. Jones, Hannah More, 1952)

The life and literary achievement of Hannah More are extraordinarily varied: she was a noted conversationalist and poet in the intellectual circles of Elizabeth Montagu and Samuel Johnson; successful dramatist and intimate friend of David Garrick; abolitionist reformer and partner of William Wilberforce; tireless educator in the poverty-stricken villages of western England; principal author, editor, and moving force for an influential series of tracts, circulated in the millions; author of many philosophical works reshaping the education of women, the moral and philanthropic responsibility of the upper classes, and the role of evangelical religion in daily thought and life.

The span of More's life, across four reigns and almost a century, links at least three major and quite distinct literary cultures: the

late-eighteenth-century urban Enlightenment, the turn-of-the-century "Romantic" fascination with the life and language of the common person, and the post-Romantic pietizing of literature in the ascendancy of didactic prose. The breadth of change during her life can be seen most vividly when we consider that her own nurse had once worked in the family of a Restoration poet (John Dryden), while More herself was the godmother and childhood mentor of a Victorian sage (Thomas Babington Macaulay). Though few of her substantial literary productions are now read, the best of these, her lively ballads and tracts for distribution to the laboring poor, are beginning to receive critical attention in the light of contemporary interest in issues of class and gender.

Hannah More was born in Stapleton, near Bristol, where her father, Jacob More, was master of a foundation school (a free grammar school

for working-class children). The large More family—Hannah was the fourth of five daughters—lived in the school itself; all five daughters were educated by their father, but Hannah was the prodigy. She learned Latin and mathematics with such alarming speed that her father broke off the lessons; Hannah persuaded him to resume Latin but not mathematics. In 1758 the thirteen-year-old Hannah moved to Bristol to join her older sisters at the boarding school they had founded; there she was first a pupil and later, for a few years, a teacher (she was, with short interruptions, to live with her four sisters for the rest of their lives). More expanded her formal education not only with tutorials in Latin but also by plunging into the active cultural life of Bristol—with lectures and meetings (she was well acquainted with Charles Wesley), politics (the sisters supported Edmund Burke's candidacy for Parliament), and plays (Bristol had an active theater and More was a close friend of its finest actor, William Powell).

At about twenty-two, More became engaged to a well-to-do country gentleman, Edward Turner. On the prospect of marrying him, she stopped teaching at the school, but over the next six years, Turner broke three successive engagements to More. When she at last called a halt to the relationship, he settled two hundred pounds a year on her in compensation for breach of promise. This unexpected and at first unwelcome annuity (soon enhanced by substantial profits from her publications) enabled More to spend her professional life in writing and to join the social and literary world of London on lengthy winter visits for more than two decades.

More came to London in 1773, furnished with introductions from her well-connected Bristol friends, allowing her entry to several major intellectual circles of the day. She soon became a close friend of Garrick, and from 1776 on the Garricks' lodgings were her winter home. Through Garrick, More entered the world of the theater. She had already written a play at the age of sixteen: *The Search after Happiness*, a moral pastoral for schoolgirls, was tremendously popular on the school circuit both before and after its publication in 1773. Even in this first work, More allegorizes her lifelong concern that women must improve their status through education, yet at the same time maintain the traditional bounds of decorum, piety, and obedience.

With Garrick's active encouragement and direction, she began to write tragedies for the profes-

sional stage. The first of three was *The Inflexible Captive* (1774); though it was well received on-stage at Bath in April 1775, the author declined to allow it to be produced at Drury Lane. The play's self-sacrificing Roman actions and grand speeches about glory catch with More's usual fluency the indispensable qualities of the heroic drama of its age. Garrick added an epilogue in which he wittily but problematically defends the notion of a woman as playwright.

Over the summer of 1777 More wrote her second tragedy, on medieval Border material. *Percy* (1778), in a powerful and well-publicized production, took London by storm in December 1777. Theatrically, financially, and critically this play was an unmitigated success, earning More some £750 and an international reputation. The play centers on the dilemma of its heroine, Elwina, acted in its first production by the distinguished Ann Barry. Elwina, though once engaged to Percy (and still in love with him), has been forced by her vengeful father to marry Percy's enemy Douglas; as Percy returns from the crusades—still not knowing of Elwina's marriage—she must deal with the conflicts resulting from his love, her husband's jealousy, and her own emotions of love and duty. Abstract diction, unvaried scene construction, and monolithic characterization make this play difficult to read or to imagine acted today, but it clearly touches on themes of importance to More and her audience—in particular, the role of the privileged woman in a world of powerful and conflicting male demands. A third tragedy, *The Fatal Falsehood* (1779), was interrupted in the writing by the death of Garrick in 1779. Without Garrick's careful management of the production, and with More's own indifference to its fate, the play—though received with great applause—ran only three nights in May 1779.

Cooling to the secular theater as her religious convictions began to take precedence over literary aspirations, More turned to biblical themes, publishing but not producing on stage a series of short *Sacred Dramas* (1782). In her introduction she specifically cites the "moral instruction" of young persons as her goal. In these brief biblical episodes on the lives of Moses (in the bulrushes), David (and Goliath), Belshazzar, and Daniel, precedence in characterization and incident is given to the Old Testament originals, with the poet supplying expansion but relatively little in the way of novelty. The pietizing of More's career was complete by the turn of the century

when, in her collected works (1801), she reprinted the secular tragedies, but prefaced them with the disclaimer that there was an “essential radical defect” in the genre. Their dependence on honor, she asserted, must inevitably destroy their Christian quality, and their need to give pleasure to their audiences must conflict with Christian needs for instruction and personal reformation.

In the 1770s and 1780s, however, More balanced her piety and her life in the beau monde, enthusiastically participating in—and working to reform—London theatrical, poetic, and conversational life. She became part of the intellectual circles of Elizabeth Montagu, entering the upper-class women’s discussion groups called the “Blue Stockings.” She also became a close friend of Samuel Johnson in his old age. He seems to have enjoyed her combination of piety and wit, but she was not a favorite with James Boswell. More wrote several poems imbued with the taste of these fashionable literary environments. Her first poetic publication, *Sir Eldred of the Bower* (1776), is a Gothic-revival ballad, sentimental and tragic; it contains a stanza by Johnson and was given a memorable reading by Garrick. Others are slighter productions—*Ode to Dragon* (1777), addressed to Garrick’s dog; *Bishop Bonner’s Ghost* (1789), a brief Gothic fantasy given elegant life in print by her friend Horace Walpole at Strawberry Hill. A more ambitious poem, *Florio* (1786), is a witty look at a vapid and frivolous city youth fortunately converted to a taste for the good old pleasures and pieties of the country landowner and his lovely if domestic daughter. This “tale, for fine gentlemen and fine ladies” is an early, upper-class, and consciously clever version of More’s cautionary tracts of the 1790s.

In a wholly different mode, *The Bas Bleu*, published with *Florio*, is a clever mock-heroic about the Blue Stockings, in a grand style excoriating the dullness they compete against and praising the brilliance (combined of course with virtue) they represent. Near the end of its five-hundred-odd lines, the poem speaks seriously to the “pure delight / When kindling sympathies unite,” the excitement that an intelligence such as More’s might have experienced in the conversations of “enlighten’d spirits,” the “sparks electric [that] only strike / On souls electrical alike.” As M. G. Jones points out, More’s poems of this period “advertised” and “popularized” the Blue-Stocking assemblies “in an easy and pleasing manner” that had not been at hand when others (such as Montagu) wrote.

More’s major editorial contribution to poetry was her work in support of the impoverished “milkmaid” poet, Ann Yearsley, on behalf of whom More assembled an impressive subscription list, supervised the publication of her poems in 1785, and generally tried to manage her career and life. The patronage ended in a bitter and well-publicized quarrel over the control of the proceeds of the subscription, and a permanent breach between the two poets.

By 1788 More’s work had turned away from the aestheticized productions of her early career to take on increasingly serious rhetorical and didactic strategies. Causes for the change may be sought not only in More’s age—she was forty in 1785—but also in the political upheaval of the American war; in the deaths of Garrick (1779), of her father (1783), and of Johnson (1784) and, most important, in the rise of evangelical Anglican piety and its corresponding abolitionist fervor. Of tremendous significance in More’s life are two charismatic leaders of the Evangelical movement: John Newton, a former atheist and master of a slave ship who had become rector of a fashionable London church and a preacher of a robust and demanding faith, and William Wilberforce, the energetic young reformer, abolitionist, and politician. In January of 1788 as Wilberforce mounted his campaign for a parliamentary bill of abolition, More rapidly composed and published her most significant poem, *Slavery* (later known as *The Slave Trade*), a fierce and energetic plea for British abolition. More had begun to read William Cowper intently, and the compassionate acuity of his vision informs her poem. For More every soul has the same universal religious needs: religious instruction, faith, and consolation. The personal and societal consequences of slavery—“the dire victim torn from social life, / The shrieking babe, the agonizing wife!”—are important, but more so are the effects of the slave trade on the souls of slaver and slave. Both, by this system, are alienated from God: the slaver, and his nation, by “deepest, deadliest guilt”; and the slave by his terrible suffering. In More’s Evangelical perspective, that suffering demands a Christian consolation, which, of course, is denied the slave because of the slaver’s perversion of Christian life. The fiercest indignation comes when More imagines the slave dying in passage, denied understanding and faith:

When the fierce sun darts vertical his beams,
And thirst and hunger mix their wild extremes;

When the sharp iron wounds his inmost soul,
And his strain'd eyes in burning anguish roll;
Will the parch'd negro own, ere he expire,
No pain in hunger, and no heat in fire?

For him, when agony his frame destroy,
What hope of present fame or future joys?
For *that* have heroes shorten'd nature's date,
For *this* have martyrs gladly met their fate;
But him forlorn, no heroes pride sustains,
No martyr's blissful vision soothe his pains;
Sullen, he mingles with his kindred dust,
For he has learn'd to dread the Christian's trust;
To him what mercy can that God display,
Whose servants murder, and whose sons betray?

By the late 1780s, particularly as the French Revolution focused British attention on social disjunction and upheaval, More's calling as a writer was becoming clearer: to bridge the gap between the classes in order to prevent unrest and possible revolution. She set out to teach a new philanthropy, by educating the fashionable world of Britain, whose language and manners she knew well, about its responsibility toward the unfortunate—slaves abroad and the working poor at home. In an extended literary endeavor that secured the approval if not the direct support of the newly founded Society for the Reformation of Manners, More produced three prose volumes designed to reform the manners and morals of the rich. First, in 1788, she published a loose series of *Thoughts on the Importance of the Manners of the Great to General Society*, which sold out in seven large editions within a few months. Though anonymous, the work's authorship was soon determined, and (despite her fears of being shunned as an "enthusiast" among polite society) More found herself widely celebrated among the rich as a religious and moral adviser. According to the premise of this short book, the lower classes are infected with sins of degeneracy—gambling, loose talk, scorn for moral life, Sabbath-breaking—but these sins are not the book's focus. Rather the book fiercely attacks the hypocrisy of what More ironically labels "the good sort of people," the upper class, whose flagrant disregard for decency, truth, and uprightness sets the example for their servants, tenants, and employees. While the rich believe themselves to be Christian, they are in fact the enemies of religion: "you, like an inadequate and faithless prop, overturn the edifice which you pretend to support."

More's second volume on the fashionable world, *An Estimate of the Religion of the Fashionable World* (1791), is longer and even more critical of

the manners of the rich. No longer does More focus on the effect on the poor; the inconsistencies, hypocrisies, and sins of the rich themselves bear the brunt of her examination. The argument is not pragmatic, but pietistic: "Piety is not only necessary as a *means*, but is itself a most important *end*. It is not only the best principle of moral conduct, but is an indispensable and absolute duty in itself." The book, like her earlier treatise, sold in vast quantities, but More—seeing little actual reformation in manners—increasingly grew to distrust the mere success of numbers.

In 1799 she published a third appeal to the upper classes, *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*. Like her contemporary Mary Wollstonecraft, from whose Jacobinism More of course carefully distanced herself, More saw the education of women to be a failure, creating vapid, dependent, licentious, and useless members of society. Girls' schools stressed external and decorative acquisitions at the expense of sound foundations for moral decision making and action—in particular, piety and Christian principles. In its rambling way, the book sets out a model for reconstituting female education on useful, moral, and Christian grounds:

I turn, with an earnest hope, that women thus richly endowed with the bounties of Providence, will not content themselves with polishing when they are able to reform; with entertaining when they may awaken; and with captivating for a day, when they may bring into action powers of which the effects may be commensurate with eternity.

More warns, however, that these "strictures" are far from a call for feminism:

I am not sounding an alarm to female warriors, or exciting female politicians: I hardly know which of the two is the most disgusting and unnatural character. Propriety is to a woman what the great Roman critic says action is to an orator; it is the first, the second, the third requisite.

The talents of women are to be developed only within the framework of modesty and propriety—the proper duties of the gender. Even so, recent historians such as Mitzi Myers have asserted the need to see the feminist project of More and other conservative Evangelicals as parallel to Wollstonecraft's—essentially critical of social norms, even subversive and "revolutionary."

Arguably the most influential of More's actions and writings was her work in Somerset,

founding and maintaining a series of schools for the poor, and her related work with the Cheap Repository Tracts. In 1789 the More sisters had retired from managing their school and moved to Bath; from this time Hannah More began to spend her winters in Bath and her summers in a small cottage at Cowslip Green in Somerset, near the romantically beautiful landscape of Cheddar Gorge. On visiting Cowslip Green, Wilberforce awoke the Mores to the nonromantic ugliness of poverty in the local mine workers—ignorant, blasphemous, and despairing, in a place “where there was not any dawn of comfort, temporal or spiritual.”

With extraordinary speed and energy, More activated a plan for establishing schools for the children of these families. By the end of the century, she had a dozen schools operating in the area, all teaching the rudiments of practical and religious education. More speaks for her own class conservatism, and that of much of the English reform movement of her age, when she writes that her plan was “to form the lower class to habits of industry and virtue. . . . To make good members of society (and this can only be done by making good Christians) has been my aim. . . . Principles not opinions are what I labour to give them.” The schools achieved amazing success, despite the opposition of local farmers, squires, parents, and curates; despite continual administrative demands on the sisters; and despite one vicious, public, and exhausting controversy over control of teachers and curriculum (the “Blagdon controversy” over alleged Methodist tendencies became a national issue for several years). The schools continued to attract children and patrons and clearly improved the levels of literacy and knowledge in those outlying hill villages.

As she worked with the schools, More saw a vicious circle of lower-class ignorance and moved to break it at two points—with schools for the ignorant children and with Cheap Repository Tracts for the ignorant parents. Her first pamphlet, published separately before the advent of the Cheap Repository, was *Village Politics* (1792), an explicit refutation of Thomas Paine’s *Rights of Man*, the second part of which was flooding England with libertarian sentiments in 1792. In More’s tract, Tom Hod, a simpleminded mason, has read Paine and is agitating for “liberty and equality, and the rights of man.” His friend Jack Anvil, a blacksmith, patiently refutes his feeble notions, until Tom accedes, “I begin to think we’re better off as we are.”

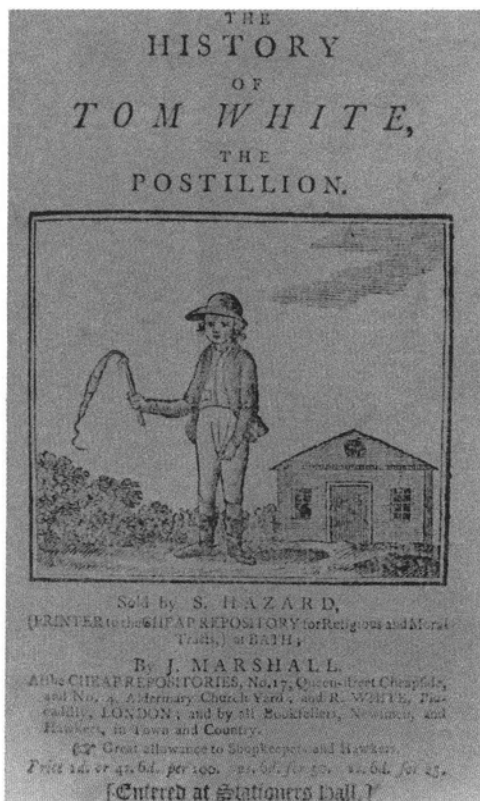
Swift, direct, lively, this brief dialogue spoke to the potentially seditious in their own language; apparently the many upper-class readers whose reactions are recorded thought nothing amiss with its patronizing tone. Though More herself later declared it “as vulgar as heart can wish . . . the sort of writing repugnant to my nature,” she clearly wrote it with enjoyment and verve, and part of the success of this and the many tracts to follow is due to her remarkable ability to write vital fictional prose even while practicing the most class-based propaganda. When Tom complains of the extravagance of the aristocracy, Jack replies without mincing words:

They do spend too much, to be sure, in feastings and fandangoes; and so far from commending them for it, if I was a parson I’d go to work with ’em, but it should be in another kind of way; but as I am only a poor tradesman, why ’tis but bringing more grist to my mill. Now in this village, what should we do without the castle? Though my lady is too rantipolish, and flies about all summer to hot water and cold water, and fresh water and salt water, when she ought to stay at home with sir John: yet when she does come down, she brings such a deal of gentry that I have more horses than I can shoe, and my wife more linen than she can wash.

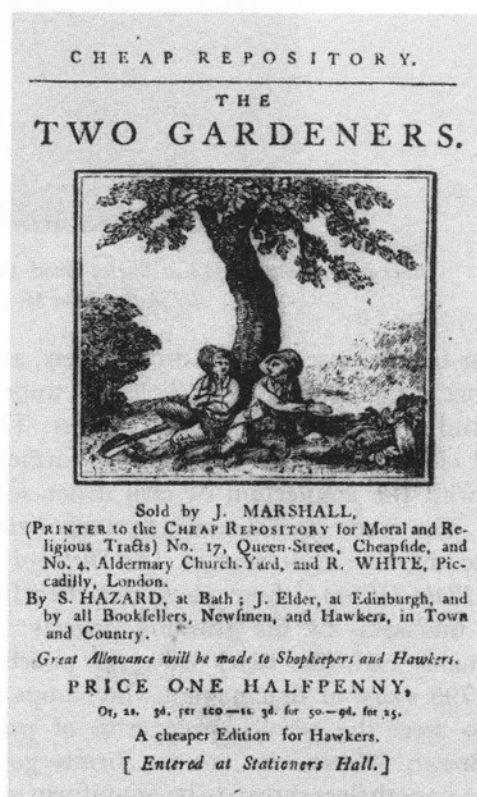
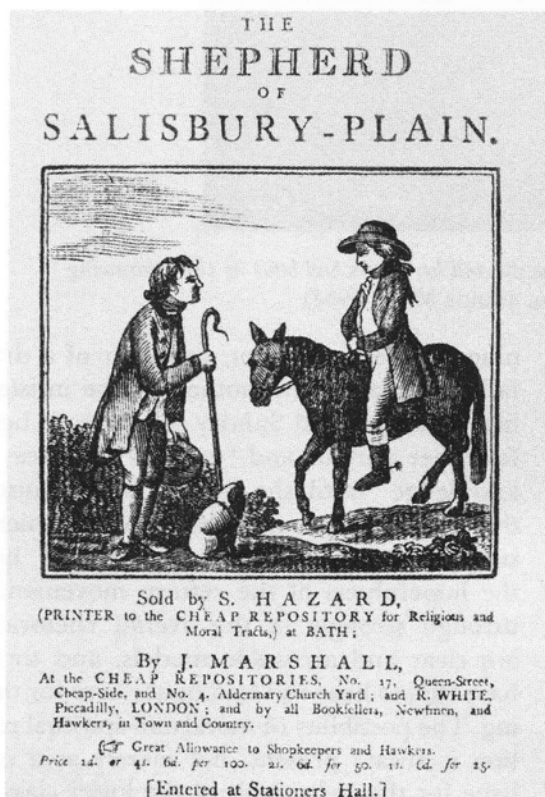
Obviously, it is not the responsibility of the poor to correct the morals of the rich.

The style and sentiments of *Village Politics* became the basis for the nearly fifty pamphlets—mostly prose tales, with a sprinkling of ballads—More published in the immensely popular Cheap Repository series of more than one hundred short works by More and her friends, from its inception in late 1794 to its close in 1797. With money raised by a massive subscription effort, the tracts were at first printed and distributed at cost by booksellers in London, Bath, Edinburgh, and Dublin; but More went further and got the work into the hands of the real distributors of literature to the poor, the peddlers and hawkers. A further step was to encourage people of quality to carry tracts with them on philanthropic errands and give them away to the poor. The net effect of such efforts was an amazing circulation of more than two million.

More’s tracts, most of them signed “Z,” deserve attention—as Myers notes in her 1986 essay—for the insights they can yield to scholars attuned to the interactions of the histories of literature, society, and gender. These simple tales may



Title pages for three of More's Cheap Repository Tracts, a series of educational pamphlets that eventually reached a circulation of more than two million





More in November 1813 at Barley Wood, the house she and her sisters had built in 1801 (drawing by Slater; from M. G. Jones, Hanna More, 1952)

be read as fictions inscribing in direct, lively, and skilled forms the intense postrevolution upper-class attitudes toward the working classes. The plots and characterizations reflect the reformers' concern with the connection of civil order with morality. The poor are obsessively categorized: good, like the title character of *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain* (1795), whose piety and cheerfulness are unshaken by his grinding poverty; or unredeemably bad, like Black Giles the poacher (in the 1796 story of that name), who stoops so low as to steal the whole apple crop of poor Widow Brown. Those who are not firmly good or bad are nonetheless shown to be in uniform motion one way or the other, such as Jack Brown, the idle apprentice in *The Two Shoemakers* (1795), a candidate for the workhouse from the begin-

ning; or Hester Wilmot, daughter of a drunkard father and a violent mother, whose insistence on her right to attend Sunday school leads her to reform her parents and "to grow in grace, and in knowledge" until she herself is headmistress of the school. Even in those stories which show static depravity or inevitable decline, however, the hopefulness of the reform movement comes through strongly in the overall rhetoric: these are clear and accessible models, and those who have ears to hear will lead better lives for the hearing. The possibility of moral and spiritual reformation is always present, not merely as a personal issue for the individuals of the lower class (whom More grants little collective and no legislative interest), but emphatically as a group responsibility for the rich. Such characters and situations, the

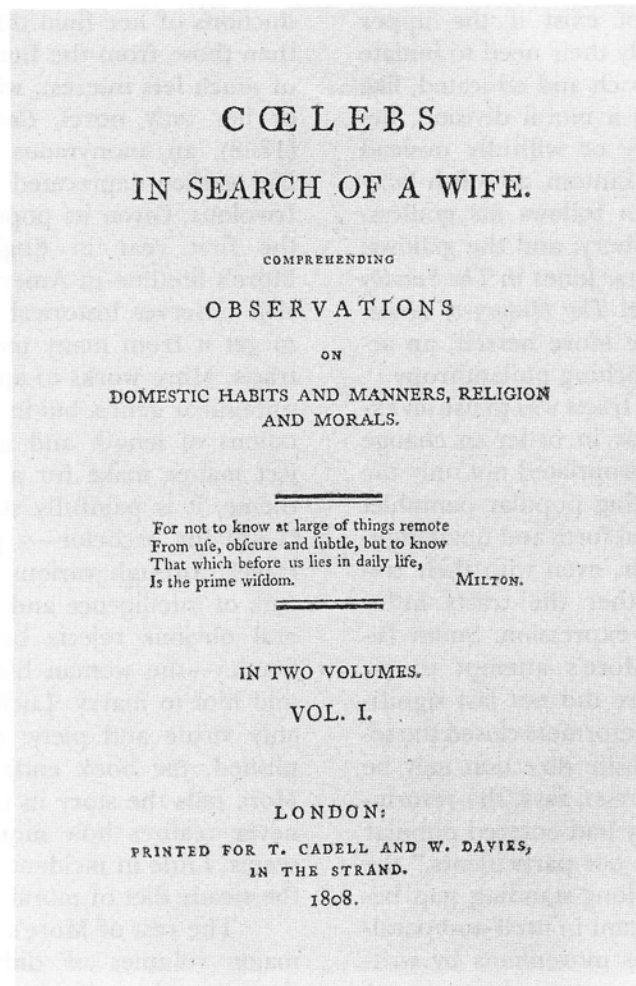
project implies, would not exist if the upper classes were to take seriously their need to initiate reform for the poor. The rich and educated, like the poor, are subjected to a moral division, between those who carelessly or willfully mislead their servants, such as Mr. Fantom, a foolish Jacobin, whose servant William follows his godlessness into drunkenness, robbery, and the gallows; and those who—such as Mrs. Jones in *The Sunday School* (1795) and its sequel *The History of Hester Wilmot* (1797)—pursue, like More herself, an active, responsible, and unflinching philanthropy.

More's agenda for the tracts was to use an existing literature of the poor in order to change the poor, and she thus appropriated not only the distribution system of existing popular pamphlet literature, but also its general form and unambiguous story lines. It is unclear, even with their tremendous circulation, whether the tracts influenced popular thought or expression. Susan Pedersen points out that More's attempt to pietize popular tract literature did not last significantly past 1797, when the reformers closed the series. Influence in the opposite direction may be more noticeable: if, as Pedersen says, the reformers of the Cheap Repository had entered popular culture only "as crusaders, not participants," the fact of their bridging the long-standing gap between the cultures is significant in itself and parallels other contemporaneous movements by writers of the upper class to assume a language of the lower classes—such as William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794) and the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) of William Wordsworth (who like More was in close touch with the rural poor of Somerset during the time of the Cheap Repository). Myers's recent feminist analysis of the Cheap Repository claims for these tracts a role "as significant channels of female reformist impulse and expressive power."

The turn of the century marked the close of the most active part of More's career: she closed the Cheap Repository in 1797, and, after the exhausting Blagdon controversy wound down in 1802, she took a less active role in the Cheddar schools. In that year she moved into Barley Wood, a pleasant house that she had built not far from her former cottage; in 1804 her sisters gave up residence in Bath and joined her there. At Barley Wood, where she lived until 1827 (she moved back to her birthplace, Stapleton, for the last years of her life), Hannah More received many visitors, kept up a vast correspondence, and maintained an active philanthropy. The literary pro-

ductions of her final thirty years fill more pages than those from the first part of her life, but are of much less interest, with the possible exception of her only novel, *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* (1808), an anonymous effort in a genre More had earlier deprecated as pernicious or at least frivolous. Given its popularity (twelve editions in the first year in England; thirty editions in More's lifetime in America), *Coelebs in Search of a Wife* deserves historical attention, but is unlikely to get it from many modern readers. As in the tracts, More works to appropriate and reform an unfamiliar genre; but in this case, novelistic expectations of length and upper-class domestic subject matter make for a dull book. In form and theme, it is painfully straightforward: "Coelebs" (Latin for bachelor—a pseudonym of the hero) travels through various genteel homes to find a wife of intelligence and piety; he encounters several obvious rejects before settling on Lucilla Stanley—the woman his late father had already told him to marry. Lucilla is the model of womanly virtue and piety; the search being accomplished, the book ends with their engagement. More tells the story in the voice of Coelebs, who never realizes how monotonous his patronizing seems. Little in incident or verbal texture relieves the steady diet of moral discrimination.

The rest of More's late work comprises four major volumes of didactic prose on familiar themes, with an increasingly Evangelical tone. In 1805 she wrote *Hints towards forming the Character of a Young Princess*, an educational curriculum for the young daughter of the dissolute Prince of Wales. This widely circulated volume was rapidly followed by others: *Coelebs, Practical Piety* (1811), *Christian Morals* (1813), and *An Essay on the Character and Practical Writings of Saint Paul* (1815). The historical criticism of scripture implied in the project of this last volume was perhaps too distant from her skills to prove popular, but the others, encouragements to the Christian life directed toward the religiously inclined readers of the upper classes, were eagerly bought up in edition after edition. To a modern reader they seem disorganized, abstract, and monotonous, but there seems to have been something in their steady language and consistent faith in "the religion of the heart" that met a need in the England of the Napoleonic Wars. In her last years her associations were largely with clerical and Evangelical friends, with few purely literary connections; she largely ignored the Romantic movement, except for Wordsworth, whose poetry she discovered in 1814 and



Title page for More's only novel (Special Collections, Thomas Cooper Library, University of South Carolina)

whose subsequent visit to Barley Wood delighted her.

Still writing (against the orders of her doctors, she would hide inkpot, pen, and paper under her bedclothes) until near her end, More died in 1833 at the age of eighty-eight, leaving a substantial literary achievement from a life of fascinating scope. Her legacy, in its pietistic and conservative texture, is a daunting one to modern readers, but rich in insights into the history of women, reform, evangelical religion, and the relation of popular and high culture.

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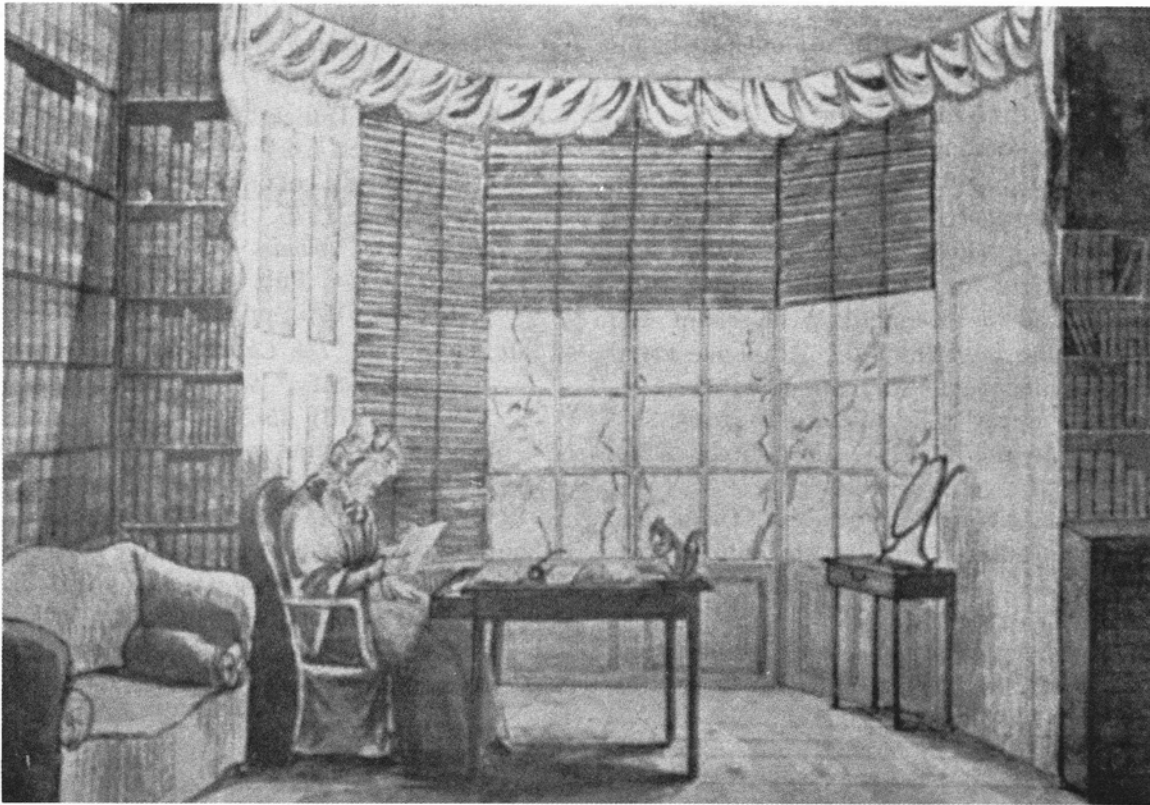
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