



## Economic Texts as Apocrypha

### Introduction

Samuel Hollander asked me to explain how the classical economists came to be considered “reactionaries.” The otherwise appealing answer—that they *were* reactionaries because of Malthusian wage theory—has the difficulty of being demonstrably false. Hollander himself has demolished the lynchpin of such an interpretation—the fixity of the condition of the working class—in his decades in the making *Economics of Thomas Robert Malthus*. But if Hollander, and those of us who have come to similar conclusions, are correct, then how do we explain the nearly unanimous view to the contrary?<sup>1</sup>

One question can determine who bears the blame for the error. In what context did economics become the “dismal science”? The predictable answer—we became the dismal science precisely because of Malthus’s theory of the fixed condition of the working class—demonstrates what is so odd about seeing the classics as reactionary.<sup>2</sup> The correct answer is that we became the dismal science as the result of our classical predecessors’ role in the abolition of British racial slavery. As we have seen, this claim is not a conjecture; it is a matter of the historical record. We have read more than once of the long-forgotten context in which Thomas Carlyle first used the phrase “dismal science” in the December 1849 article in *Fraser’s*, “Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question.”

As Frank Knight is reported to have said on such occasions, it is not ignorance that gets us into so much trouble but knowing so much that simply isn’t true.<sup>3</sup>

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1. George Stigler asked precisely this question when I proposed my version of the “new” view of Malthus and Ricardo. It has taken me close to thirty years to find an answer worth even taking seriously. My stubbornness on this issue was largely influenced by a lesson I learned from Earl Hamilton.

2. For some dismal results of an electronic survey of the economics literature, see the appendix to this chapter. The reader will then appreciate why Earl Hamilton mattered so much to my education.

3. “I have personally heard Knight repeat many times the Josh Billings aphorism: ‘It ain’t what we don’t know that hurts us. It’s knowing so darned much that ain’t so’” (James M. Buchanan in Knight 1982, xi–xii).

Widespread error is easy to explain since the truth is very costly.<sup>4</sup> But how is it possible that so many careful scholars make the *same* error? It is completely improbable that such a large literature would have fallen into common error *if* there had been independent research behind the erroneous conclusion.

What might cause a violation of independence of research efforts? I shall argue that there are two violations. First, there is an omitted common factor in research. This will be the topic of the first section of the chapter. What has fallen out of our common knowledge is the fury aimed at economic models of a free society by nineteenth-century defenders of slave society. That Carlyle was *the* British theorist of an idealized slave system was absolutely clear to those who found themselves in need of a justification for the existing slave system in America. Consequently, when George Fitzhugh introduces *Cannibals All!* he defers to the great man across the waters:

At the very time when we were writing our pamphlet entitled "Slavery Justified," in which we took ground that Free Society had failed, Mr. Carlyle began to write his "*Latter Day Pamphlets*," whose very title is the assertion of the failure of Free Society. The proof derived from this coincidence becomes the stronger, when it is perceived that an ordinary man on this side [of] the Atlantic discovered and was exposing the same social phenomena that an extraordinary one had discovered and was exposing on the other. The very titles of our works are synonymous—for the "*Latter Day*" is the "Failure of Society." (1857, xx).

How surprising can it be that the American debates in the 1850s, with war impending, provide a vantage point from which oblique British defenses of slavery attain transparency?

There is a second violation of research independence. Literary scholars of various persuasions seem to be enamored of a view of literature, attributed to Carlyle's great disciple, John Ruskin, that literary art moralizes or, as Matthew Arnold put it: "In thus making sweetness and light [S&L] to be characters of perfection, culture is of like spirit with poetry."<sup>5</sup> What does the scholar, for whom this identification of culture and poetry makes sense, do in the presence of great art akin to *Birth of a Nation*? The trick seems to be that S&L does not always come in fixed proportions; one can obtain more S out of the texts by shedding less L in some corners.

The first section of this chapter deals with what seems to be hard to see.

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4. This is so if for no other reason than that we must combat our inclination to believe that which is most pleasing to us (Feigenbaum and Levy 1996).

5. On Ruskin, see Belsey 1980, 8; and Arnold 1993, 67. Arnold criticizes Carlyle's "aristocracy" for insufficient L (90). Denise Albanese gave me these references.

The second deals with that which is easy enough but which all too many scholars seem to prefer not to see.

### What Has Not Been Seen

We study the past to make sense of the present.<sup>6</sup> Included in the present is some notion of that which distinguishes then from now. This notion, which we call “progress,” is not in the past; rather, it is a theoretical claim with which we organize events imposed upon the past in service of the present. Importantly, the notion of progress tells scholars which texts are vital to read and which texts are not.

It is in the context of the independence of research efforts that I propose we think about the canon in economics. Let us call “canonical” the texts one is expected to know to be in the discipline. “Progress” gives us a reason to consider some texts more important than others. Of course, there is a good economic reason to have a limited canon at some moment in time—the day only has twenty-four hours and one can only read so many words per minute. The debates on the canon have paid insufficient attention to another economic way of making disciplinary demands consistent with one’s life. This is to mark off some texts as irrelevant, texts that need be read by no one. Just as the deepest economic theory tells us that every market is connected to every other market, the most persuasive philosophy of language tells us that every text is connected to every other. But these are councils of perfection for a better world.<sup>7</sup> In our world, in which time is scarce, it is helpful, perhaps even necessary, to suppose that there is a boundary across which these connections are remote enough to neglect.<sup>8</sup> Without a convention that there are texts that everyone can ignore—whatever it is they mean, this does not bear upon the important texts—the number of texts can swamp the time available for reading them.

6. Lawrence Levine (1993, 5) writes that historical research “involves not changing interpretations of well-agreed-upon standard events but changing notions of which events—and which people—should constitute the focus of the historian’s study.” Levine (1996, 96–97) continues the argument.

7. “[W]e impoverish our understanding of the past if we chop it up into little bits labelled ‘constitutional history,’ ‘economic history,’ ‘literary history,’ ‘political history’ and so on” (Hill 1993, 436).

8. The philosophical correlative to an economic general equilibrium point of view is W. V. Quine’s (1961) doctrine that “The meaning of words is defined in the whole of the language.” The correlative to a partial equilibrium point of view is found in Hilary Putnam’s “linguistic division of labor.” Not everyone in a language community is knowledgeable about what the various words we all use actually mean. As Putnam notes, “in giving up my right to be the authority on the denotation of my own words, I give up, often, the ability to give any satisfactory description of my own denotations. I can refer to elms as well as the next man; but I probably couldn’t tell an elm from a beech if my life depended upon it” (1975, 2:274–75).

We need a name for the books that, as a disciplinary convention, are excluded. Since *canon* is used to name what all need to know, let us use *apocrypha* to name what none are expected to know. *Apocrypha* is Greek for “hidden”; that seems right.

With such notation in hand, let us return to the problem of systematic common error. Suppose that the meaning of a canonical text depends upon a text in the apocrypha.<sup>9</sup> Since knowledge of the apocrypha is at best second-hand, there is no reason to believe that scholarly conclusions will be independent. Without independence, there is no reason to believe that the discipline will correct even gross common errors.

### Broad Utilitarianism

As an overview to my reading of the larger debate, the missing piece in the equation—the information that neither modern economists nor others have—is the utilitarian basis of the antislavery coalition that united Christian evangelicals and Utilitarian political economists.<sup>10</sup> As there is a mathematical issue involved at the center of the matter, economists ought not expect much guidance from innumerate textual specialists.<sup>11</sup> I propose to distinguish a “narrow” (capitalized) Utilitarianism, as formulated in the position of Jeremy Bentham

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9. This problem occurs even in a biblical context in which canonical books contain citations to the noncanonical (Charlesworth 1983).

10. When John Stuart Mill responded to Carlyle’s “Negro Question” he began by making clear who was the majority partner in the coalition (1850, 26): “But I must first set my anti-philanthropic opponent right on a matter of fact. He entirely misunderstands the great national revolt of the conscience of this country against slavery and the slave-trade, if he supposes it to have been an affair of sentiment. It depended no more on humane feelings than any cause which so irresistibly appealed to them must necessarily do. Its first victories were gained while the lash yet ruled uncontested in the barrack-yard and the rod in schools, and while men were still hanged by dozens for stealing to the value of forty shillings. It triumphed because it was the cause of justice; and, in the estimation of the great majority of its supporters, of religion. Its originators and leaders were persons of a stern sense of moral obligation, who, in the spirit of the religion of their time, seldom spoke much of benevolence and philanthropy, but often of duty, crime, and sin.” His tribute is all the more striking coming from perhaps the greatest opponent Christianity faced in the nineteenth century. James Hunt (1866c)—the driving force behind midcentury British racial anthropology—testifies to this coalition.

11. Indeed, even the modern student of the evangelicals and economists does not see the coalition in utilitarian terms. “They supported slave emancipation because slavery was obviously incompatible with free will individualism, but were notoriously much less concerned about wage [*sic*] slavery, and the other social evils of their own land” (Hilton 1988, 98). Some classics are hopeless. For example, Leslie Stephen finds it incomprehensible that slavery could be defended: “The conflict with morality, again, was so plain as to need no demonstration. It seems to be a questionable logic which assumes the merit of a reformer to be proportional to the flagrancy of the evil assailed” (1900, 1:113). Questionable it is, but one might have thought that an authority on the history of Utilitarianism would recognize the principle of attacking the worse evils first.

and his associates, and a “broad” utilitarianism, which encompasses multiple interpretations of the Greatest Happiness Principle.<sup>12</sup>

Multiple interpretations of the defining slogan of utilitarianism—Francis Hutcheson’s “the greatest happiness for the greatest number”—exist. A Platonist knows this as a logical matter. The slogan is mathematically inconsistent: all sentences follow from it.<sup>13</sup> To make coherent policy on the basis of the

12. The adjective *broad* I hope resonates with the celebrated description of the Church of England as “not High, or Low, but Broad.” Credit is claimed for this coinage by Arthur Stanley (1870, 8) in his 1850 *Edinburgh Review* article on the “Gorham Controversy.” This controversy generated—by *Dictionary of National Biography* (DNB) count—over fifty pamphlets, all forgotten even before the DNB was printed. Forgotten or not, Gorham shows the hand of the broad utilitarian coalition playing real power politics. The flavor of the coalition was caught in the *Christian Remembrancer*, which noted (1850, 13–14): “and we see hoary liberals, who have all their life been sneering at kings, and scoffing at Churches, gravely rise up in their place in Parliament, to interrogate the Prime Minister, whether he has done his duty in upholding the endangered prerogative of her gracious Majesty, as the ‘Supreme Head of the Church.’”

At issue was whether an Anglo-Catholic bishop [Henry Phillpotts] could deny an office to an otherwise qualified candidate [George Gorham] because of Gorham’s evangelical views on the sacraments. Phillpotts blamed the Privy Council’s decision—evangelical views must be tolerated—on John Bird Sumner, who held office as archbishop of Canterbury (Phillpotts 1850). Richard Whately weighed in as archbishop of Dublin with a subtle explanation of why one would expect variation in interpretation of hard texts (1850). Sumner and Whately have been studied by Boyd Hilton (1988), Anthony Waterman (1991), and Donald Winch (1996). Only Hilton’s research extends through the 1850s, but he does not study the Gorham decision.

The rowdy world of seventeenth-century evangelicalism (see Hill 1993) was alive and well in the Gorham controversy, as we learn from William Bennett: “I wish to inform you, my Lord, that on Sunday the 10th of November, while I was performing the duties of Divine service in the church of S. Barnabas, a tumultuous crowd assembled in the streets round about the church, and that a band of persons who had congregated together no doubt for this purpose within the very church walls, was guilty of violent outrage against all decency, in uttering hisses, and exclaiming, ‘No mummery! No popery!’ and other similar cries, alarming the decent worshippers” (1850, 1–2). William Tyndale, whose views on sacraments were cited in the controversy (Maskell 1850), dramatically characterizes evangelical views and suggests why Anglo-Catholics would find them unhappy: “Testament here, is an appointment made between God and man, and God’s promises. And a sacrament is a sign representing such an appointment and promises: as the rainbow representeth the promise made to Noe, that God will no more drown the world. And circumcision representeth the promises of God to Abraham . . . as baptism which is come in the room thereof, now signifieth” (Tyndale 1992, 82–83). Tyndale’s view of sacraments—Judaism is in Tyndale’s representation a sacramental religion—helps predict on which side of the debate anti-Semitism will be found.

13. “The principle of greatest happiness may have gained its popularity, but it lost its meaning, by the addition ‘of the greatest number.’” (Edgeworth 1881, 118). Here is a way to see the technical issue without appeal to the calculus of variations. Utilitarianism proposes to move from facts of individual happiness to claims about social happiness. Consider the same three individuals in two possible states of the world. Each state of the world is described in terms of the ordered triple of the individuals’ happiness. Consider the case of  $A = \{1, 2, 9\}$  and  $B = \{2, 3, 4\}$ . Which has the “greater happiness of the greater number”? A has the higher *mean* happiness [ $4 > 3$ ]—and since the population is fixed the higher *total* happiness—but B has the higher *median* happiness [ $3 > 2$ ]. Hutcheson’s slogan encourages one to believe, wrongly, that a utilitarian will never have to choose between a higher mean *and* median of happiness.

imperative, one must select one of an infinity of models, of which infinity Bentham's maximizing total happiness approach is just one.<sup>14</sup> And, as a matter of fact, pre-Benthamite utilitarianism seems to have made judgments on the basis of the happiness of the median individual.<sup>15</sup>

Broad utilitarianism is of necessity a universalist philosophy. One's moral obligations do not stop at an inconsequential border imposed by race, nationality, or belief. It is entirely in this spirit that we can find the evangelicals, for whom Adam and Eve were part of the real past, asking on behalf of the slaves: "Am I not a man and a brother?"<sup>16</sup> As any form of utilitarianism must do, it judges overall well-being on the basis of individual well-being. The decisive step to make the evangelical-Utilitarian coalition function is the twofold agreement that (1) the well-being of those at the bottom of the distribution of happiness merit our immediate attention and (2) the greatest happiness principle of Utilitarianism is *formally* equivalent to the Golden Rule of Christianity. By focusing exclusively on the condition of slavery, the intracoalition disagreement as to the nature of happiness was obviated. Utilitarians, then and now, are divided as to whether happiness is anything other than what we, in fact,

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14. Francis Hutcheson emphasizes the *number* of those benefiting: "In comparing the *moral Qualities* of Actions, in order to regulate our *Election* among various Actions propos'd, or to find which of them has the greatest *moral Excellency*, we are led by *our moral Sense of Virtue* to judge thus; that in *equal Degrees* of Happiness, expected to proceed from the Action, the *Virtue* is in proportion to the *Number* of Persons to whom the Happiness shall extend; (and here the *Dignity*, or *moral Importance* of Person, may compensate Numbers) and in equal *Numbers*, the *Virtue* is as the *Quantity* of the Happiness, or natural Good; or that the *Virtue* is in a *compound Ratio* of the *Quantity* of Good, and *Number* of Enjoyers. In the same manner, the *moral Evil*, or *Vice*, is as the *Degree* of Misery, and *Number* of Sufferers; so that, *that Action* is *best* which procures the *greatest Happiness* for the *greatest Number*" (1726, 177).

Darwall 1995 is in my opinion the single most important work treating utilitarianism in broad terms. The accounts of Stephen (1900) and Halévy (1955), for all their erudition and sympathy, take utilitarianism in the narrow sense of Bentham and his school, relegating Francis Hutcheson, Adam Smith qua moral philosopher, and William Paley to the role of predecessors *avant la lettre*. The decisive test for the analytical seriousness of a study of utilitarianism is whether it recognizes the incoherence of the "greatest happiness of the greatest number." The fact that neither Stephen nor Halévy seem even to know of Edgeworth's work hints at a failure to understand why there must be more than one kind of utilitarianism.

15. I read Smith as supposing a utilitarianism based on medians (see chapter 10). William Paley's utilitarian calculus is based on a *count* of those who benefit and those who lose from policy: "It may be useful to rob a miser, and give the money to the poor; as the money no doubt would produce more happiness, by being laid out in food and cloathing for half a dozen distressed families, than by continuing locked up in the miser's chest" (1785, 62). But, as Paley adds in his defense of general rules: "a disposition of affairs which would presently fill the world with misery and confusion; and ere long put an end to human society, if not to the human species." (64). Hollander (1997, 830–31) points out how Malthus's welfare arguments depend upon the well-being of the *majority* of society.

16. "Wedgwood, the celebrated potter, had made another effective contribution to the cause. He designed a cameo showing, on a white background, a Negro kneeling in supplication while he utters the plea to become so famous, 'Am I not a man and a brother?'" (Howse 1952, 40–41).

choose. In the nineteenth century, a heatedly debated topic concerned the relationship between freely chosen sexuality and happiness.<sup>17</sup> When one focuses on the happiness of slaves—those for whom the range of all choice is radically attenuated—debates over choice vanish and utilitarians unite.<sup>18</sup>

The belief in the formal identity of the Golden Rule of Christianity and the Greatest Happiness Principle of Utilitarianism seems to have passed without notice among twentieth-century commentators.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the texts are exactly where one would expect to find them: in the great debate between T. B. Macaulay and the Utilitarians over James Mill's *Government*.<sup>20</sup> Macaulay found nothing to dispute in the Utilitarian formula because it was also a Christian formula:

The “greatest happiness principle” of Mr. Bentham is included in the Christian morality; and, to our thinking, it is there exhibited in an infinitely more sound and philosophical form, than in the Utilitarian speculations. . . . “Do as you would be done by: Love your neighbour as your-

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17. Levy (1999b) identifies four major positions taken by Christians and Utilitarians in the Malthusian controversy, three of which were publicly defended in the nineteenth century. Only in the twentieth century would we see publication of the fourth position, sexually liberated Utilitarianism. Stephen (1900, 1:326) knows that the manuscript of *Not Paul, but Jesus* has Bentham's defense of the decriminalization of homosexuality, but he is not going to tell the reader anything about that. I conjecture that the vote reconciling Anglican Christianity to neo-Malthusianism at the 1930 Lambeth Conference was a consequence of the utilitarian coalition. I have two independent reasons to think so. First, there is a simple public choice calculation: Anglo-Catholics separated themselves from the Church of England after Gorham and so changed the distribution of votes on the issue. Second, no one of any evangelical sympathies could doubt J. S. Mill's moral seriousness; hence, his neo-Malthusian views earned reflection and consideration.

18. Thus, I disagree with Marcus Cunliffe, who reads the larger debate as one in which the participants viewed chattel slavery and “white slavery” as composed of the same fundamentals: “Moreover, if slavery in general were evil, and if chattel slavery were arguably the most ominous form, then the abolitionists had a good case for attacking the problem on this particular front. . . . Reform must begin *somewhere*. . . . their crusade would have been altered out of all recognition if they had endeavored to direct a dual assault, on both chattel slavery and wage [*sic*] slavery” (1979, 26–27). Working for money wages instead of approbation is a choice in both Smith's and Mill's models of utilitarianism.

19. The accounts by Halévy (1955) and Stephen (1900) would not suggest that such a formal identity exists. Indeed, although Stephen (3:300) notes Mill's identification of the Golden Rule with the Greatest Happiness Principle, he ignores this agreement in the Macaulay–Mill exchange, (2:85–98). Moreover, he neglects Bentham's own Utilitarianization of Christ when he dismisses *Not Paul, but Jesus* as irrelevant to his concerns (1:323–24).

20. The papers in the debate are most conveniently available in Lively and Rees (1978; hereafter L&R), from which source I cite. The debate is rather more central to various open public choice problems than standard accounts suggest (see, e.g., Schumpeter 1954, 432). Scholars have long speculated about the reasons why Macaulay declined to republish his attack on Mill. Stephen, for example (1900, 2:85), suggests “gratitude for Mill's generosity in regard to the Indian appointment.” Perhaps the importance of the solidarity of the antislavery coalition dominated the importance of old intracoalition debates? In any event, Macaulay's arguments are not forgotten in Mill 1861.

self,” these are the precepts of Jesus Christ. Understood in an enlarged sense, these precepts are, in fact, a direction to every man to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number. (quoted in Lively and Rees 1978, 175).<sup>21</sup>

Macaulay’s Utilitarian opponent affected surprise that this needed to be mentioned:

Nobody ever thought of denying, that the author of Christianity was the first of Utilitarians. . . . Mr. Bentham has demonstrated that for individuals, societies, nations, to “do as they would be done by,” is sound earthly policy. The bigots keep a close lock on their Elysium; but whenever the time comes for the *second* Utilitarian to present himself at the gate, it is presumable the *first* will not wait for their leave, to greet him with “Well done.” (191)<sup>22</sup>

John Stuart Mill, offering his most considered statement of Utilitarianism, found the true spirit of this philosophy in the teachings of Christ.<sup>23</sup> This establishes the coalition agreement on the formal issue.

What evidence is there of agreement that slavery was the worst case? The leader of the “Clapham sect,” William Wilberforce, put forward a series of considerations as to why we should regard West Indian slavery as the worst state possible for a human. While there may have been other reasons for thinking this,<sup>24</sup> he offered three strong ones. The first two appeal to all universalists;

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21. Paley (1785) gave definite form to the Christian version of utilitarianism. William Wilberforce (1823, 18) refers to Paley as a “most sagacious observer of human nature.”

22. The critical Bentham text is *Not Paul, but Jesus*, in which the non-Utilitarian aspects of Christianity are blamed on Saint Paul’s teaching: “Not so Jesus: no harm did he see in eating and drinking, unless with the pleasure it produced greater pain. With this reserve, no harm . . . did he see in any thing that gives pleasure” (1823, 394). The role of this text in the intracoalition debate is discussed in Levy 1999b.

23. “I must again repeat, what the assailants of utilitarianism seldom have the justice to acknowledge, that the happiness which forms the utilitarian standard of what is right in conduct, is not the agent’s own happiness, but that of all concerned. As between his own happiness and that of others, utilitarianism requires him to be as strictly impartial as a disinterested and benevolent spectator. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of utility. To do as you would be done by, and to love your neighbour as yourself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality” (Mill 1861, 401).

24. Evangelicals such as Wilberforce are under obligation to oppose any system restricting access to the Word of God. The proslavery writers were sensitive to the charges that the slaves were kept from the Bible and thus their salvation itself was jeopardized. John Fletcher (1852, 23) confronts an argument from Francis Wayland that slavery “renders the eternal happiness of the one party subservient to the temporal happiness of the other.” Edward Pringle (1852a, 20; 1852b, 482) cites “the taunt that we should not boast of the education of the slave as long as the reading of the Bible is shut out from him by our laws.” He responds: “The slave’s inability to read has given

the third appeals to all Christians. Here are the claims he put forward. One ought not treat a person as a horse:

Not being supposed capable of being governed like other human beings, by the hope of reward, or the fear of punishment, they are subjected to the immediate impulse or present terror of the whip, and are driven at their work like brute animals. Lower than this it is scarcely possible for man to be depressed by man. (1823, 12)

One ought not to treat a woman as a sexual object without will:

No one who reflects on the subject can be at a loss to anticipate one odious use which is too commonly made of this despotism, in extorting, from the fears of the young females who are subject to it, compliances with the licentious desires of the drivers, which they might otherwise have refused from attachment to another, if not from moral feelings and restraints. It is idle and insulting to talk of improving the condition of these poor beings, as rational and moral agents, while they are treated in a manner which precludes self-government, and annihilates all human motives but such as we impose on a maniac, or on a hardened and incorrigible convict. (13)

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rise to a more kindly feeling, and to a closer connection between the races, than if each slave could read his own Bible. It has induced oral teaching; and the effect of this upon both races no man at the North can conceive." The always illuminating "Nicholas Brimblecomb" (1853, 80) emphasizes how orality restricts the *slave's* ability to select which biblical texts on slavery to read as well as to learn other lessons.

Evangelicals, for whom the Bible was the Word of God, would be vastly unhappy with a secondhand encounter with the Word. If orality suffices, then what exactly is wrong with having a priest explain the Latin Bible? Wilberforce (1982, 3) compares two systems of belief: real Christianity versus one in which "The Bible lies on a shelf unopened." William Tyndale, in his *Letter to Fryth*, explains translation as an act for which *his* salvation was at risk: "I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God's Word against my conscience." I modernized the spelling and quote the epigram of Tyndale's nineteenth-century biographer (Demaus 1871, iv). Tyndale's moral seriousness was of great consequence. Gerald Hammond (1983, 44ff.) establishes just how Tyndale's translation attains the stupendous feat of preserving *both* semantics and syntax of the Hebrew original by bending English itself, as when he introduced the syntactical form "X-of-X" as an English superlative, for example, the "Song of Songs."

The antislavery movement's link to Reformation controversy is suggested by Nassau Senior when he poses the puzzle: "If we did not know that 'Uncle Tom' has been prohibited by the Pope, we should have supposed that there was no form of Christian faith in which it would not find grateful admirers" (1864, 434). He suggests an answer: "It is possible, too, that the Papal authorities were alarmed by hearing of one of the effects produced by the work in Paris—a general demand, among the ouvriers, for bibles. . . . All the stalls were full of them; and the purchasers, to most of whom the book was unknown, asked anxiously whether what they were buying was the 'real bible,'—'Uncle Tom's bible?'" (435).

One ought not to make marriage impossible for men and women:

I have dwelt the longer, and insisted the more strongly on the universal want of the marriage institution among the slaves, because, among the multiplied abuses of the West Indian system, it appears to me to be one of the most influential in its immoral and degrading effects. . . . Alas! the injustice with which these poor creatures are treated accompanies them throughout the whole of their progress; and even the cordial drops which a gracious Providence has elsewhere poured into the cup of poverty and labour, are to them vitiated and embittered. (16)

When challenged with an argument that we shall meet below, Wilberforce selects the sexual slavery argument as the most powerful. Here is the proslavery challenge:

Indeed, the West Indians, in the warmth of argument, have gone still farther, and have even distinctly told us, again and again,—and I am shocked to say that some of their partizans in this country have re-echoed the assertion,—that these poor degraded beings, the Negro slaves, are as well or even better off than our British peasantry. (33–34)

Here is Wilberforce's response:

Let me therefore ask, is there, in the whole of the three kingdoms, a parent or a husband so sordid and insensible that any sum, which the richest West-Indian proprietor could offer him, would be deemed a compensation for his suffering his wife or his daughter to be subjected to the brutal outrage of the cart-whip—to the savage lust of the driver—to the indecent, and degrading, a merciless punishment of a West-Indian whipping? (35)

The Utilitarians were in agreement that slaves are at the bottom of the distribution of happiness. This is made abundantly clear in the debate over Mill's *Government*. Mill's worst-case model of government specified it as if it were a slave driver. Mill asked how English gentlemen behave when given slaves in the West Indies:

The world affords some decisive experiments upon human nature, in exact conformity with these conclusions. An English Gentleman may be taken as a favourable specimen of civilization, of knowledge, of humanity, of all the qualities, in short, that make human nature estimable. . . . In the West Indies, before that vigilant attention of the English nation, which now, for thirty years, has imposed so great a check upon the masters of slaves, there was not a perfect absence of all check upon the dreadful propensities of

power. But yet it is true, that these propensities led English Gentlemen, not only to deprive their slaves of property, and to make property of their fellow-creatures, but to treat them with a degree of cruelty, the very description of which froze the blood of those of their countrymen, who were placed in less unfavourable circumstances. (quoted in Lively and Rees 1978, 67)

[I]f one man has power over others placed in his hands, he will make use of it for an evil purpose; for the purpose of rendering those other men the abject instruments of his will. If we, then, suppose, that one man has the power of choosing the Representatives of the people, it follows, that he will choose men, who will use their power as Representatives for the promotion of this his sinister interest. (78)

Macaulay's response takes up several themes, none of which deny slavery its position as the worst case. Rather neatly, he seems to have encountered a paradox of the worse case. If one is thinking of government with the potential to emancipate slaves, what sense does it make to model the government in worst-case slave-driving terms?<sup>25</sup> Consequently, Macaulay defends models of government under which the self-interest of the governors needs to be filled in empirically before conclusions can be drawn.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, he asks why Mill's democratic conclusions follow from the axioms of the model.<sup>27</sup> Won't the majority have a sinister interest in exploiting the minority?<sup>28</sup>

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25. Worst-case theorizing has a long and distinguished history. "Political writers have established it as a maxim, that, in contriving any system of government, and fixing the several checks and controuls of the constitution, every man ought to be supposed a *knave*, and to have no other end, in all his actions, than private interest" (Hume 1987, 42). The modern revival of this Humean point of view comes in Buchanan and Brennan 1980. The analogue in mathematical statistics is that developed in the various robust schools of thought (see, e.g., Mosteller and Tukey 1977 and Huber 1981). The worst-case paradox *seems* to be avoided when one describes the decision abstractly, for example, by minimizing the maximum loss, and not concretely, for example, by supposing that the government "is" a slave driver. One must be cautious here because I am not aware of any attention that has been paid to the possibility of this paradox in the theoretical literature.

26. "When we see the actions of a man, we know with certainty what he thinks his interest to be. But it is impossible to reason with certainty from what *we* take to be his interest to his actions. One man goes without a dinner, that he may add a shilling to a hundred thousand pounds: another runs in debt to give balls and masquerades. One man cuts his father's throat to get possession of his old clothes: another hazards his own life to save that of an enemy. One man volunteers on a forlorn hope: another is drummed out of a regiment for cowardice. Each of these men has, no doubt, acted from self-interest. But we gain nothing by knowing this, except the pleasure, if it be one, of multiplying useless words. In fact, this principle is just as recondate, and just as important, as the great truth, that whatever is, is" (Macaulay in L&R 1978, 125).

27. And Macaulay asks why Mill excludes women since the same reasoning that argues for universal manhood suffrage argues for universal suffrage (ibid. 116).

28. This exchange might be central to Jeremy Bentham's attack on what seems to be utilitarianism based on medians (see chapter 10). Macaulay's demonstration of the importance of time preference to Utilitarian claims—a point that one can find in Mill (L&R 1978, 75)—may have had something to do with Bentham's *Auto-Icon* (Levy 1992). Andrew Farrant found the point in Mill for me.

It may perhaps be said that, in the long run, it is for the interest of the people that property should be secure, and that therefore they will respect it. We answer thus:—It cannot be pretended that it is not for the immediate interest of the people to plunder the rich. Therefore, even if it were quite certain that, in the long run, the people would, as a body, lose by doing so, it would not necessarily follow that the fear of remote ill consequences would overcome the desire of immediate acquisitions. Every individual might flatter himself that the punishment would not fall on him. Mr. Mill himself tells us, in his *Essay on Jurisprudence*, that no quantity of evil which is remote and uncertain will suffice to prevent crime. (quoted in Lively and Rees 1978, 119)

Surely, Macaulay argues, approbation is desired and this might offset the desire for wealth at what we would say the margin: “the love of approbation, and other kindred feelings, always tend to produce good government” (127).

In response, the Utilitarians averted again to racial slavery as a model of despotic government and while conceding the formal “unrealism” of the account defended the value of worst-case models in familiar Humean fashion:

It is true that there are partial exceptions to the rule, that all men use power as badly as they dare. There may have been such things as amiable negro-drivers and sentimental masters of press-gangs. . . . But it would be as wise to recommend wolves for nurses at the Foundling, on the credit of Romulus and Remus, as to substitute the exception for the general fact, and advise mankind to take to trusting to arbitrary power on the credit of these specimens. (quoted in Lively and Rees 1978, 135)

On the strength of this debate, Macaulay came to such prominence as to become a member of Parliament, where he spoke vigorously for the emancipation of the slaves in the British West Indies. His parliamentary role in the emancipation of West Indian slaves in 1833 is wonderfully told in George Trevelyan’s *Life*. The government proposed giving 20 million pounds to the slave owners and voiced a commitment to a twelve-year transition between slavery and freedom, an “apprenticeship.” The money was easy; consenting to even temporary slavery was not.<sup>29</sup> Macaulay found himself, as Trevelyan tells, caught between the hard duty to principles that argued for immediate liberation and the politically possible.<sup>30</sup> He spoke in qualified support for the gov-

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29. A useful test for any edition of a Carlyle text designed for students is whether the editor glosses Carlyle’s customary grumping at the “wasted” 20 million pounds.

30. His principles were announced in the great essay on Milton: “There is only one cure for the evils that newly acquired freedom produces; and that cure is freedom. When a prisoner first leaves his cell he cannot bear the light of day; he is unable to discriminate colours, or recognize faces. But the remedy is, not to remand him into his dungeon, but to accustom him to the rays

ernment after handing in his resignation. First, he argues for the importance of competition:

In free countries the master has a choice of labourers, and the labourer has a choice of masters; but in slavery it is always necessary to give despotic power to the master. This bill leaves it to the magistrate to keep peace between master and slave. Every time that the slave takes twenty minutes to do that which the master thinks he should do in fifteen, recourse must be had to the magistrate. Society would day and night be in a constant state of litigation, and all differences and difficulties must be solved by judicial interference. (quoted in Trevelyan 1978, 1:284–85)

Holding firm to his position in the debate with Mill, Macaulay trusts the government more than he trusts slave owners:

He did not share in Mr. Buxton's apprehension of gross cruelty as a result of the apprenticeship. "The magistrate would be accountable to the Colonial Office, and the Colonial Office to the House of Commons, in which every lash which was inflicted under magisterial authority would be told and counted. My apprehension is that the result of continuing for twelve years this dead slavery,—this state of society destitute of any vital principle,—will be that the whole negro population will sink into weak and drawling inefficacy, and will be much less fit for liberty at the end of the period than at the commencement. My hope is that the system will die a natural death; that the experience of a few months will so establish its utter inefficiency as to induce the planters to abandon it, and to substitute for it a state of freedom. I have voted," he said, "for the Second Reading, and I shall vote for the Third Reading; but, while the bill is in Committee, I shall join with other honourable gentlemen in doing all that is possible to amend it." (285)<sup>31</sup>

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of the sun. The blaze of truth and liberty may at first dazzle and bewilder nations which have become half blind in the house of bondage. But let them gaze on, and they will soon be able to bear it. . . .

"Many politicians of our time are in the habit of laying it down as a self-evident proposition, that no people ought to be free until they are fit to use their freedom. The maxim is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learnt to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait for ever" (Macaulay 1961, 1:179–80). Macaulay uses the analogy of people adjusting to inexpensive alcohol to make the case (178–79). The reader who does not know the tacit reference to the *Wealth of Nations* (Smith 1976a, 492) will not catch the division of labor within the coalition.

31. A view of Buxton from *Fraser's* is found in May 1831.

In a day, the government weakened and proposed a seven-year transition to freedom. The abolitionists, perhaps fearing to give up a great attainable good, accepted.

### “Progressive” Fraser’s

If economists do not know the racial texts as a matter of disciplinary convention, what about textual specialists? Physicists report that there is a wraithlike particle, the neutrino, which could pass through a block of lead a light year thick without collision. Imagine how much more difficult it would be to find a neutrino if the atom that it finally encountered claimed upon inquiry that it was actually visiting the Balkans at the time! The Utilitarian-evangelical agreement of the identity of the Greatest Happiness Principle and the Golden Rule has not only sailed neutrinolike through a century of humanistic texts, but one “fact” that everyone knows, Charles Dickens’s testimony in *Hard Times* of the opposition of Utilitarian and Christian beliefs, is a falsification of the historical record.<sup>32</sup> As a consequence, perhaps, the debate over whether policy ought to be focused on black or “white slaves” has not been seen as a debate over just who is at the bottom of the distribution of happiness. Nor has it been appreciated how the issue of slavery obviated debate over choice and happiness.

What is important for humanists is not what is important for economists. “Progress” in the humanistic disciplines involves the triumph of science over traditional Christianity. A defining episode in the warfare of science with theology in Christendom—to recall the title of A. D. White’s classic study—is the question of whether Adam and Eve were real people from whom all the human inhabitants of the world descend. In service to this vision of progress, historians have singled out for special attention a group of Christians who reconciled their beliefs with the emerging scientific consensus that Adam and Eve were not real.<sup>33</sup> In addition to Carlyle himself, these include S. T. Coleridge, Charles Kingsley, and James Froude.<sup>34</sup>

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32. “[A]fter eight weeks of induction into the elements of Political Economy, she had only yesterday been set right by a prattler three feet high, for returning to the question ‘What is the first principle of this science?’ the absurd answer, ‘To do unto others as I would that they should do unto me’” (Dickens 1972, 95).

33. Thus, Willey (1956, 144–47) defines “liberal” Christians in terms of their denial of “uncritical bibliolatry” and their acceptance of Darwin’s theory.

34. “A liberal effort to free the mind from these ‘Hebrew old clothes’ seemed to many thinkers the major need of the age. Only then could religious truth be reembodyed in a believable form. ‘It was clearly the part of every noble heart,’ said Carlyle, thinking of himself and his work, ‘to expend all its lightnings and energies burning-up without delay, and sweeping into their native Chaos’ these ‘incredible uncredited traditions’” (Houghton 1957, 49).

Emphasis on the universal in evangelical Christianity is replaced with emphasis on the local in progressive Christianity; claims of truth are replaced with claims of belief.<sup>35</sup> At the limit, we find progressive religious thinkers asserting that, the quantum of familiarity being equal, Pan is as good as Christ.<sup>36</sup> The Victorian periodical that perhaps most closely identified itself with such progressive Christianity was *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*. It is worthy of reflection that, with the possible exception of Coleridge, this list of religious thinkers is the same list that recent scholars have compiled of Britain's most important "literary" racists.<sup>37</sup> Humanistic scholars have no theoretical explanation for the progressives' racial brutality.<sup>38</sup> In localized reli-

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35. "Carlyle is remembered, and his influence was felt, as an upholder of the spiritual view of the world in an age of increasing materialism and unbelief. Yet he is the most remarkable example of a phenomenon which I take to be typical of the nineteenth century, that of the religious temperament severed from 'religion'" (Willey 1949, 105). "The strength of Carlyle lay in the passionate sincerity with which he believed in his own 'God'" (117).

36. Here is an extract from Froude's *Nemesis of Faith*: "Whatever after evidence we may find, if we are so happy as to find any, to strengthen our religious convictions, it is down in childhood their roots are struck, and it is on old association that they feed. Evidence can be nothing but a stay to prevent the grown tree from falling; it can never make it grow or assist its powers of life. The old family prayers, which taught us to reverence prayer, however little we understood its meaning; the far dearer private prayers at our own bedside; the dear friends for whom we prayed; the still calm Sunday, with its best clothes and tiresome services, which we little thought were going so deep into our heart, when we thought them so long and tedious" (1849, 28).

"Pan, almighty Pan! Had the water-nymphs forsaken their grottoes where the fountains were flowing as of old? Were the shadows of the deep woods less holy? Did the enchanted nightingale speak less surely the tale of her sorrow? As it was in the days of their fathers so it was in theirs—their fathers had gone down to the dust in the old ways, and so would they go down and join them. . . . Who shall say that those poor peasants were not acting in the spirit we most venerate, most adore"(32).

37. The texts are discussed in chapter 5, where I propose "quackery" as the unifying principle of "literary" and "scientific" racists. J. J. Thomas caught the spirit of quackery: "Here we are reminded of the dogma laid down by a certain class of ethnologists, to the effect that intellectuality, when displayed by a person of mixed European and African blood, must always be assigned to the European side of the parentage" (1889, 134–35). "Racism" is not simply a retrospective judgment from the comfortable vantage point of the passing of our ghastly twentieth century. Nineteenth-century attacks on racial aspects of Carlyle, Froude, and Kingsley, respectively, are found in Mill 1850, Thomas 1889, and Robertson 1897. Cunliffe (1979, 13) describes Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets* as "radically conservative" and as far as I can see never mentions his opinions on race. This is odd because he sees John Campbell's *Negro-Mania* for exactly what it is (22), "a vehemently anti-black compendium." Carlyle's "Negro Question" is reprinted in *Negro-Mania*. Kingsley's *Alton Locke*—which Cunliffe (14) describes as one of a list of novels with "socially conscious titles"—will later be considered in detail.

38. Willey's analysis of Carlyle does not comment on the racism (Willey 1949, 128–29). According to Houghton (1957, 213): "Sadistic brutality of this kind is pathological, and no doubt the desire to 'smash 'em good' in Carlyle and Froude as well as Kingsley had personal origins. But nationalism and racism, sanctioned by Old Testament Puritanism and social Darwinism, created an atmosphere in which the normal control of the beast in man could be seriously weakened." One stares at such claims. Does Houghton mean to blame the antislavery evangelicals for Carlyle's

gion, the equivalence of the Greatest Happiness Principle and the Golden Rule breaks down. The only “Others” who matter are those near at hand; those who look like us and believe like us.

To see how humanistic scholars have come to grips with the racially charged texts on this issue, consider the judgment of scholars on the status of *Fraser's*, the locus for the dismal science label. It appears that there is one, and only one, book-length scholarly treatment of this magazine in its early days, Miriam Thrall's 1934 “meticulous” *Rebellious Fraser's*.<sup>39</sup> Thrall tells us in great detail (129–45) how, under the leadership of William Maginn, *Fraser's* stood against the economists and for humanity. Here is her judgment, which links Maginn's “anti-antislavery” with Carlyle's attack on economists:

In condemning the cupidity, heartlessness, and hypocrisy of those political economists who were smirched by the child slavery of the factories, Maginn was as unsparing as Carlyle was later in his *Nigger Question*. An instance of the kind of slur to which they were subjected. . . .

Maginn did not wish it thought that he favored the institution of slavery because he opposed emancipation propaganda. The question in the abstract, he said he was not concerned with. His sole contention was that the economists and their supporters by the policies of free trade and anti-slavery were striking at the prosperity of the colonies, weakening the ties which bound them to England, and in consequence operating to the detriment to the empire. (145)

Thrall seems to propose that the “child slavery” of the factories is of greater concern than that of real slavery. The impartial *Wellesley Index* says this about why *Fraser's* became important:

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racist brutality? Even that makes more sense than blaming post-1859 texts (didn't social Darwinism have to wait for Darwin?) for arguments in the late 1840s and early 1850s. Williams (1958) mentions neither racial issues nor slavery. Hall (1992) thinks different conceptions of masculinity motivate the debate between Carlyle and Mill. Stephen has a characteristically dense version of this argument: “His feelings, however, were I take it, as tender as a woman's. They were wanting, not in keenness, but in the massiveness which implies more masculine fibre. And this, indeed, is what seems to indicate the truth. Mill could never admit any fundamental difference between the sexes. That is, I believe, a great but natural misconception for one who was in character as much feminine as masculine. He had some of the amiable weaknesses which we at present—perhaps on account of the debased state of society—regard as especially feminine. The most eminent women, hitherto at least, are remarkable rather for docility than originality” (1990, 3:72–73). The parallel “masculinization” of Harriet Martineau is documented later.

39. “Sixty years after it was written, Thrall's book remains the only full-length study of the magazine. Her scholarship was so meticulous, and many of her sources now so irrecoverable, that anyone who writes anything at all about *Fraser's* must be deeply indebted to her work” (Leary 1994, 123).

Whatever else “a magazine” may be, wrote the editor in 1879, “it is primarily an organ of literary expression.” That, indeed, was the basic reason for *Fraser’s* initial success in the 1830s and its establishment as a major periodical. In the second place, from start to finish, it was an outstanding organ, if not of open revolt, as Thrall would have it (*Rebellious Fraser’s*), at least of progressive thought. (Houghton 1972, 303)<sup>40</sup>

In the first volume of *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*, which was published in 1830, there is a response by this humane, progressive Maginn to Macaulay, who had written in part as an economic historian in the *Edinburgh Review* challenging the poet laureate Robert Southey’s reflections on society. Macaulay was young when he reviewed Southey, so Maginn introduced him to *Fraser’s* readers as part of the great Christian antislavery crusade, the voice of Wilberforce:

Our judgment on him for the article which we have just mentioned is not too severe, as the following extract will shew; and, reader, remember, whilst you are enjoying its beauties of diction, and giving the author all credit for the mild spirit of Christianity which it breathes, that that author is the same youth whose existence Mr. William Wilberforce would have involved in the economy of all-gracious Providence, and who is not only the son and heir to the shining virtues of Zachary Macauley [*sic*], the friend of humanity and of the *nigger* portion of the creation, but has himself spouted at anti-slavery meetings in favour of all black populations, until he received the *accolade paternelle* of the old and enthusiastic Mr. Wilberforce, on account of the fervour and zeal with which he pleaded the cause of universal charity,—and good will and affection towards the *niggers* in particular, *not* of Sierra Leone, but of our West Indian islands. (Maginn 1830, 584)<sup>41</sup>

40. Houghton (1972, 305–8) considers in detail Maginn’s wickedly unkind attack on the economist Francis Place, then the founder of neo-Malthusianism and later the author of the People’s Charter. Maginn’s untrue attack on Harriet Martineau for neo-Malthusianism is considered in chapter 6. Patricia Marks (1986, 29) is puzzled that the attack is in personal not intellectual terms. Rather systematic personal attacks on Martineau will be documented later in a context that is easy to explain. When facts or law could be quoted against her, the argument was completely polite by the standards of the time. James Austin (1839, 45) calls her “this intrusive stranger,” gives his evidence, and then proceeds to his next point.

41. Please note that these are not my italics; they are there in the original. Macaulay’s speech is quoted in Trevelyan (1978, 1:103–5); *Fraser’s* attack is not discussed at all. Contemporary judgments of the antislavery movement often characterize it as Wilberforce & Co. Here is testimony from the industrious proslavery American publisher responsible for considerable reproduction of British racial anthropology (van Evrie 1868, 27): “And if the Father of Lies, Lucifer himself, had plotted a plan or scheme for concealing a great truth, and embarrassing a great cause, he could have accomplished nothing more effective than the movement that Wilberforce inaugurated for the

The contrast drawn between “humanity and of the *nigger* part of creation” by someone who is paid to use the English language suggests that, for Maginn, humanity was exclusively white.<sup>42</sup> The fact that *Fraser’s* “from start to finish” is judged “progressive” by the standard reference work in Victorian periodical literature—the very one that I gratefully employ to assign attributions to the *Fraser’s* articles—hints, one might say, that there is something very interesting about the authoritative understanding of Victorian literature. But, before we leap to any such substantive conclusions on the basis of one article—actually a few sentences from one article—we should read further.

What seems to be missing in the standard readings of *Fraser’s* role in the great debate over emancipation is its persistent denial that slaves occupy the bottom level in the distribution of happiness. For example, *Fraser’s* in the February 1831 issue explained that opposition to slavery was based in an ignorance of the science of philology:

The West Indians, at the very outset, labour under a serious disadvantage. In no country is liberty so highly extolled, and so little understood, as in Great Britain. And consequently the word *slave*, is associated in the mind of the great mass of the people with every thing that is debasing and cruel. If, however, we examine the origin of the term, much of this cause of offence, this stumbling-block to the uninformed, will vanish. “From the *Scravi*,” observes Sir Walter Raleigh, “came the word, *slave* . . . which is in their language ‘glorious.’” (114)

After providing tables comparing the penalties of slaves and soldiers for various offenses and concluding that the slaves were punished less harshly, *Fraser’s* offers evidence from the slaves’ cash balances to demonstrate that at least some were richer than some free laborers.

Then, in the March 1831 issue, *Fraser’s* put forward a real argument that there is reason to believe that slaves do not occupy the bottom of the scale of happiness. Slaves will be well-treated by profit-maximizing masters for the same reasons that profit-maximizing farmers treat their horses well:

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professed benefit of the negro and other subordinate races of mankind, which, masked under the form of religious duty, and appealing to the conscience, the love of proselytism, the enthusiasm, and even the bigotries of the religious world, has, for more than half a century, held in thrall the conscience as well as the reason of Christendom.”

42. It also suggests that Carlyle’s contribution to the language is rather less original than recently urged. Hall (1992, 275) thinks Carlyle’s use of the emphasized word in 1853 to be worthy of note: “It was the Mutiny which brought the term ‘niggers’ into common parlance. This was the term that Carlyle had seen fit to use publically in 1853.” In *Alton Locke*, the word is used only by characters without pretensions to education (Kingsley 1850a, 190, 246). The “author,” speaking in his own behalf, does not descend to this vulgarity. For example, he uses negro or black man at p. 343 and elsewhere.

It is manifest, by the comparison of their sleekness to that of our English horses, they must be in no bad condition. I have often thought it might occur to anti-slavery writers and speakers, that if there were no higher motive to restrain the planters from whipping their slaves to death, they might be induced to refrain by the consideration that the slaves were their property. What horse-dealer whips his horse to death? (205)<sup>43</sup>

Did *Fraser's* really believe this or was it simply a convenient argument? Perhaps we can see the answer to this question by considering an episode that might serve both to illustrate what was meant by good treatment of slaves and to demonstrate just how *Fraser's* earned its reputation for wit:<sup>44</sup>

After this, he goes on to describe a West Indian execution, as it was set down by Dwarris:

“On conviction, sentence of death must be passed without an appeal. The execution takes place without delay; and, there being no assigned place for the execution, the wretched convict is fastened to the nearest tree, unless, which frequently happens, the owner of the soil is at hand to prevent it. In such cases, the miserable culprit is dragged from tree to tree—from estate to estate; and in one case of then recent occurrence, the constable was at last forced to throw the exhausted sufferer off the town-bridge, securing the rope by a lamp-post.”

This speaks to the necessity of an established gallows instead of trusting to the casual hospitality of the planter. A West Indian proprietor may occasionally be a man of such taste as to object to ornamenting his plantation with hanging negroes. I submit, that no tree owners, even in this country, would like to have the culprits of the neighborhood exhibited as pendants on their estates. George Robins, or one of his tribe (I fear the story is in Joe Miller<sup>45</sup>), was so ingenious as to describe, in an advertisement of an estate

43. One can find this argument in Stearns 1853, 46. J. G. Lockhart, in the *Quarterly Review*, made the perfectly correct observation that this sort of argument assumes that the *owner* of the slaves is directly responsible for punishment: “Absenteeism all the world over is the greatest of evils that can befall a labouring population; and it is impossible not to admit that if the West India proprietors had generally visited their estates in person, and endeared themselves, as Lewis did, to their dependents, it would have been a hard matter indeed for all the fanatics, backed by all the liberals, and all the East India sugar-dealers, to consummate their ruin” (1833, 397).

44. Testimony to *Fraser's* wit is well-nigh universal (see, e.g., Houghton 1972, 304). “At Maginn’s death *Punch* claimed him as its own by donning for the first time in its as yet brief course the black border, which has ever since been famous as its symbol of mourning for the passing of those who have had the wit to make the world laugh at folly” (Thrall 1934, 10).

45. The *Dictionary of National Biography* (1997) informs us: “Joe Miller’s name has long been a synonym for a jest or witty anecdote of ancient flavour.”

to be sold, some half dozen gibbets in prospect, as “an agreeable view of hanging woods;” but the story does not say that the purchaser was much delighted with such an ornament to his new estate when he discovered what it really was. (*Fraser's*, March 1831, 206–7)

The line of argument that Wilberforce encountered, and that we read in *Fraser's* in the context of British West Indian slavery, will be recycled for use in an American context.

### The Sexual Use of Slaves: Arrows “Poisoned by Truth”

*Fraser's* appeal to profit-maximizing considerations to argue that slaves will be well treated might seem an argument to which the stereotypical “free market economist” of the time might assent. This is of course fatuous. Adam Smith thought it obvious that slave owners abuse their slaves precisely because they are not profit maximizing. They get a thrill out of dominating, a thrill for which they are willing to pay:

The pride of man makes him love to domineer, and nothing mortifies him so much as to be obliged to condescend to persuade his inferiors. Wherever the law allows it, and the nature of the work can afford it, therefore, he will generally prefer the service of slaves to that of freemen. (1976a, 388)

Perhaps the attitude of later economists is best summarized by Richard Whately in a letter to Nassau Senior proposing cannibalism to humanize slavery:

Only t' other day I heard a man repeat the argument of the “Times” that self-interest is a sufficient security; as in the case of cattle, where, by-the-bye, it is so little a security that we have a law against cruelty to them. But even the most humane master of cattle treats them in a manner which one could not approve towards men, *e.g.* selling most of the calves that a cow bears; and knocking on the head a horse that is past work. I suggested that it would be an advantage to slaves if the masters could acquire a taste for human flesh. When a negro grows too old to be worth keeping for work, instead of being killed by inches by starvation and over-work, he would be put up to fatten like an ox. (1868, 313)<sup>46</sup>

Harriet Martineau during her 1830s visit to America found, as Wilberforce had before, the compelling piece of evidence with which to distinguish

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46. This argument—purged of the pungent suggestion of cannibalism—appears in Hill, Whately, and Hinds 1852, 245.

the treatment of slaves and horses.<sup>47</sup> Horse owners do not use them sexually. As a Malthusian, Martineau attends to the tradeoff between sex and material income. Unlike Smith and Malthus, who confined themselves to contexts in which the Christian convention of one man–one family is generally enforced, she finds in America an instance in which a man can have more of both sex and material income by acquiring additional families, only one of which will be white:

Every man who resides on his plantation may have his harem, and has every inducement of custom, and of pecuniary gain,\* [\*The law declares that the children of slaves are to follow the fortunes of the mother. Hence the practice of planters selling and bequeathing their own children.] to tempt him to the common practice. (Martineau 1837, 2: 222)

Then she proposes a test for moral motivation:

Those who, notwithstanding, keep their homes undefiled may be considered as of incorruptible purity. (223)

Martineau is here responding to the claim that the morality of slavery can be judged by the relative infrequency of prostitution in southern cities. So it can, Martineau argues, but not in the way the slavery apologists thought. Why, she asked, would a man rent a woman for an hour when he can buy her and keep the children to sell?<sup>48</sup> Thus, the relative infrequency of prostitution in slave cities can provide evidence that slaves were used sexually in sufficient numbers to affect the market demand for irregular sex.<sup>49</sup>

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47. If modern economists have heard of Harriet Martineau, it is as the preeminent popularizer of classical economics (Blaug 1958, 129–38). Blaug suggests that she should be judged as a journalist rather than an economist because she bears some responsibility for our discipline becoming the “dismal science” (138–39). By this, Blaug does not mean the possibility that her willingness to discuss interracial sex in public made economics “dismal.” If there is a Malthusian link, the references to interracial sexuality in Carlyle’s “Negro Question” suggest this would be it. There is a recent account of Martineau that takes the charming line that since she is too radical to be a real economist she must be something else, the first woman sociologist! (Hoecker-Drysdale 1992).

48. The lease–purchase analysis is easy to find. Here it is expounded by someone writing as *Amor Patriæ*: “A highly civilized, intelligent and refined society, cannot exist without servants of some kind—and the difference between purchase and hiring, is just about the difference between buying and hiring a horse; the former is generally the best used” (1858, 14–15). Karl Marx was quoted above attacking Carlyle for just such an argument (1887, 255–56).

49. “It is a common boast in the south that there is less vice in their cities than in those of the north” (Martineau 1837, 2:325). She then goes on to develop the argument that owning a sexual object as a slave is a good substitute for renting one in a brothel. The argument to which Martineau refers can be found in the anonymous 1844 *Slavery* together with an added homosexual twist (1844, 27): “[W]ho, on entering any large Northern city, is not made painfully aware of the low state of moral feelings, in noting the innumerable evidences of prostitution that meet his eye on

Let me pause to dwell on the simple implication of Martineau's point, which differs in subtle ways from Wilberforce's related claim.<sup>50</sup> Martineau's argument that American slavery is a system of sexual exploitation establishes that the relative well-being of free and slave labor will differ between men and women. Thus, when in the great debates over American slavery the well-being of *male* "white slaves" and *male* black slaves is compared, a claim is being made. The reader who knows neither Wilberforce nor Martineau may not see the evasion for what it is.

But Carlyle did know Martineau and her works extremely well. Indeed, "Negro Question" gives evidence of close acquaintance with Martineau's *Society in America*, in which these arguments are pressed. Thus, we do not have to read too far to discover what Carlyle means when he links economics, evangelicals, and interracial sexuality. The issue is common to Wilberforce and Martineau.

It was another woman who brought new weapons into the war of words over American slavery. As witness to their novelty, we may read from the long version of Senior's *Edinburgh* review of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*:

Mrs. Stowe came like a heavenly auxiliary, like the divine Twins at the battle of the Lake Regillus, or St. Jago in the van of Cortez, using weapons such as they had never thought of, wielded with a skill which they did not possess. She showered on the supporters of the Fugitive Slave Law and of the extension of slavery, invective, ridicule, contempt, and defiance, with arrows winged by genius, and barbed and pointed, and poisoned by truth. (Senior 1864, 437).<sup>51</sup>

Senior stressed what was uniquely horrible about American slavery. It was

the breeding and exporting system,—the system under which the principal use made of men and women is to produce and bring up children, to be

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every side? What visitor of New York city, has failed to notice with what unblushing effrontery prostitutes of both sexes make Broadway their place of assignation?" Wendy Motooka asks whether the Martineau procedure for estimating the hidden economy of interracial sex might not be applicable here, too? Responding to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stearns (1853, 82–83) discusses prostitution and concubinage as substitutes.

50. As a Christian, Wilberforce is bound by the *Book of Common Prayer's* injunction to marry early to avoid fornication. As a Malthusian, Martineau would allow people to choose *when* to marry to find happiness as they perceive it. Christian Malthusians had a very narrow line to walk between competing conceptions of happiness.

51. The long version of the review is available as the very rare *American Slavery* (Senior 1862), which is in turn reprinted in Senior 1864. Thomas Gosset (1985, 240–43) emphasizes the importance of this review. Leslie Fiedler (1979, 37) cannot see why there was so much fuss about *Uncle Tom*, but then he shows no interest in the actual debates over slavery and sexuality.

torn from them as soon as they attain the age of sale, and never to be seen or heard of again. (409)<sup>52</sup>

Stowe's attack is on the institution of slavery, regardless of the moral qualities of the slave owners, so she populates her story with slave owners of different moral qualities.<sup>53</sup> This is important for the polemic because in her account the rational slave will prefer freedom to slavery under even the kindest and most upright master. One never knows what the future will bring: who might next master be?<sup>54</sup> And we the reader are to judge the morality of a slave owner how? Following Martineau, the test for moral stature seems to be whether one will use a slave sexually or sell her for such a purpose.<sup>55</sup> Interracial concubinage serves many purposes in the plot. It provides a moment of irony as it explains how it comes to be that an escaping slave *darkens* himself.<sup>56</sup> More importantly, the inclusion of characters with parents of different races establishes on the crudest biological level possible that we are of one species.<sup>57</sup>

To appreciate how Stowe uses concubinage as a weapon in the argument against slavery, we ought to compare her discussion with Wilberforce's, quoted earlier, or with what the escaped slave and abolitionist William Craft would

52. Senior's demographic analysis argues that child selling is important. His role in this debate is unremarked in economic scholarship even by Marion Bowley (1937).

53. "Mrs. Stowe has taught us generous sympathy for these [honorable slave owners], while she has revealed to us the uncontrollable necessities of a *system* which is an incubus on the moral energies of the western world, and deliverance from which is become a matter of death. Her book leaves the conviction that the evil lies in the *essence* of the system and not in its *accidents*" (Hill, Whately, and Hinds 1852, 236).

54. See Stowe 1982, 30, and then, in case the reader missed it the first time, page 512.

55. Stowe (*ibid.*, 14–15) begins *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with a respectable owner, reflecting upon his wife's reaction, refusing to sell a woman for sexual usage even though it is clear that he "might make your future on that ar gal in Orleans, any day. I've seen over a thousand, in my day, paid down for gals not a bit handsomer." Simon Legree, the embodiment of all evil, has a old concubine, Cassy, and has recently acquired the fifteen-year-old Emmeline as her replacement. Obviously, I disagree with Josephine Donovan (1991, 40), who writes: "Most wrongdoing and evil behavior in the novel are shown to have monetary motives. In this Stowe links slavery with capitalism, and her critique of the profit motive therefore remains relevant today." But surely it is Mrs. Shelby who puts the iron in Mr. Shelby's spine about selling Eliza for sexual use, and she is certainly the more competent capitalist. Donovan testifies how sturdy is the faith of any progressive who opposes markets. Emancipation would put the former slaves in what institution?

56. "[George's] mother was one of those unfortunates of her race, marked out by personal beauty to be the slave of the passions of her possessor, and the mother of children who may never know a father" (Stowe 1982, 133). "It may be remembered that slavery in America is not at all confined to persons of any particular complexion; there are a very large number of slaves as white as any one" (Craft 1860, 2). It is possibly relevant that in *Hard Times* Tom Grandgrind darkens himself to escape (Dickens 1972, 298–99).

57. Gossett emphasizes Senior's claim that many Britons had never seen a black person, (Gossett 1985, 242). Carlyle detested that part of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* that he read (247). Carlyle's argument that blacks and whites are a species apart is considered in chapter 6.

write in 1860.<sup>58</sup> When these men write about sexual slavery, they use spectator language to ask how a *man* would feel about having his wife, sisters, or daughters used sexually.<sup>59</sup> They do not pretend to enter into a *woman's* situation. But Stowe enters into the heart of this darkness.<sup>60</sup> She has Simon Legree's past (and perhaps current) concubine, Cassy, talk to her presumptive successor, Emmeline, about how to deaden the inevitable sense of violation:

"He wanted to make me drink some of his hateful brandy," said Emmeline; "and I hate it so—"

"You'd better drink," said Cassy. "I hated it, too; and now I can't live without it. One must have something;—things don't look so dreadful, when you take that." (Stowe 1982, 438)<sup>61</sup>

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58. "For instance, it is a common practice in the slave States for ladies, when angry with their maids, to send them to the calybuce sugar-house, or to some other place established for the purpose of punishing slaves, and have them severely flogged; and I am sorry it is a fact, that the villains to whom those defenceless creatures are sent, not only flog them as they are ordered, but frequently compel them to submit to the greatest indignity. Oh! If there is any one thing under the wide canopy of heaven, horrible enough to stir a man's soul, and to make his very blood boil, it is the thought of his dear wife, his unprotected sister, or his young and virtuous daughters, struggling to save themselves from falling a prey to such demons!" (Craft 1860, 8). Craft's mixed-race status, which kept him from falsifying the racists' claim that "all blacks were stupid"—he was too smart to be black—did not exempt him from black slavery (see Young 1995 and chapter 5). The spectator move is found elsewhere (*Suppressed Book* 1864, 128).

59. Wendy Motooka (1998, 213) argues from Adam Smith's texts that spectating is gendered. I only saw the connection here as a result of a conversation with Gordon Wood. The general principle in Smith's account is that we imagine new situations in which our current consciousness is placed (see chapter 10). Thus, without reflection we get many things wrong in our judgments, as Smith explains. For example, we think that the problem with being dead is the cold and the gnawing vermin.

60. Senior explained the importance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as partly resulting from the fact that there are no unmarried lovers with whom the reader is invited to sympathize (1864, 441–42). He notes that it was a novel that the evangelicals were permitted to read: "Even in this country in some classes, particularly among the Dissenters, novel reading is forbidden, and here, as in America, 'Uncle Tom' is excepted from the general prohibition" (436). Most of the unmarried sexuality, lacking consent, is deeply sinful on broad utilitarian grounds.

61. Tom's murder at Legree's hands results from his assistance in Cassy and Emmeline's escape (Stowe 1982, 479). In a famous essay, Fiedler (1979, 35–36) reads unproblematical rape into the story. But Stowe insists that bought concubinage as a long-term relationship can have strange effects on the owner-rapist: "The influence of Cassy over [Legree] was of a strange and singular kind. He was her owner, her tyrant and tormentor. . . . the most brutal man cannot live in constant association with a strong female influence, and not be greatly controlled by it. When he first bought her, she was, as she had said, a woman delicately bred; and then he crushed her, without scruple, beneath the foot of his brutality. But, as time, and debasing influences and despair, hardened womanhood within her, and waked the fires of fiercer passions, she had become in a measure his mistress, and he alternately tyrannized over and dreaded her" (1982, 466).

As I read the historical record, just as one economist, Smith, provided Macaulay with the analysis of how one adjusts to new possibilities of intoxication for Macaulay's metaphor of intoxication and freedom, it was another who provided Stowe with the poisonous truth.<sup>62</sup> Merely because Martineau's texts are hidden from us, we ought not conclude that Stowe's contemporaries were equally uninformed. It is, I take it, no coincidence that in 1852 and 1853, in the midst of the debate over *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, three massive American attacks on Martineau's claims regarding slavery and sexual exploitation, published at various times and places, were collected with an unrelated essay into a volume called *The Pro-Slavery Argument*.<sup>63</sup> From the words of these attacks, we can document the origin of this fatal mix of poison and truth.

The first line of argument from William Harper tacitly assumes that the sex is uncoerced. On the basis of this clever postulate, he gives a cogent cost-benefit explanation for why Martineau's account is true:

In such communities, the unmarried woman who becomes a mother, is an outcast from society—and though sentimentalists lament the hardship of the case, it is justly and necessarily so. She is cut off from the hope of useful and profitable employment, and driven by necessity to further vice. Her misery, and the hopelessness of retrieving, render her desperate, until she sinks into every depth of depravity, and is prepared for every crime that can contaminate and infest society. She has given birth to a human being, who, if it be so unfortunate as to survive its miserable infancy, is commonly educated to a like course of vice, depravity, and crime.

62. Hedrick (1994, 264) documents that the teenage Harriet Beecher had been compared to Harriet Martineau even when the latter was on her famous American tour.

63. Two of the three authors are mentioned in the *Suppressed Book*: Hammond (1853, 26) and Harper (1853, 34). The 1852 collection claims to have been published in Charleston, the 1853 in Philadelphia. Spot comparison of the two suggests that the same type was used for both editions. Indeed, the page number 132 is transposed in both editions to 231 and page number 120 is set in broken type in both editions, although that of the 1853 version seems less damaged. The margins of the Philadelphia edition are more generous, which suggests that it was a more expensive edition. It seems odd that a more expensive edition would be printed with the same type after a less expensive edition.

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* had the property of reviving classics. Leander Ker (1840, 1842) attained a decade-delayed third edition with the addition of a discussion of *Uncle Tom* (Ker 1853). Ker provides a treasure chest of the commonplace defense of slavery, which might be useful to read in conjunction with Carlyle, for example, on the 20 million pounds needed to ransom the West Indian slaves (34–35): “[F]rom her oppressed, starving and over-wrought population at home, to emancipate her slaves in the West Indies, which slaves labored less, and were better fed, clothed and lodged, than half the operatives of England.” We find Carlylean moral localism in the new material (vi)—“There *was* a time, when philanthropy, like charity, began at home”—and on why despots so like *Uncle Tom* (iv): “[T]hey can get a club by which they will be able to dash out the brains of the young Western Lion of Liberty. . . . [They] prefer *white* slaves to *black*.” On Ker, see the *Suppressed Book* 1864, 75–76.

Compare with this the female slave under similar circumstances. She is not a less useful member of society than before. If shame be attached to her conduct, it is such shame as would be elsewhere felt for a venial impropriety. She has not impaired her means of support, nor materially impaired her character, or lowered her station in society; she has done no great injury to herself, or any other human being. Her offspring is not a burden but an acquisition to her owner; his support is provided for, and he is brought up to usefulness; if the fruit of intercourse with a freeman, his condition is, perhaps, raised somewhat above that of his mother. Under these circumstances, with imperfect knowledge, tempted by the strongest of human passions—unrestrained by the motives which operate to restrain, but are so often found insufficient to restrain the conduct of females elsewhere, can it be matter of surprise that she should so often yield to the temptation? (Harper 1853, 42–43)

Harper attempts to make the case that it is better to have a black concubine than engage a white prostitute (43–45), which is, of course, Martineau's point, although she would say "more profitable" not "better." Harper is not content to respond to—or ratify—Martineau's model. He draws on Coleridge to attack the motives of utilitarians concerned with distant people:

Are we not justified then in regarding as criminals, the fanatical agitators whose efforts are intended to bring about the evils I have described? It is sometimes said that their zeal is generous and disinterested, and that their motives may be praised, though their conduct be condemned. But I have little faith in the good motives of those who pursue bad ends. It is not for us to scrutinize the hearts of men, and we can only judge of them by the tendency of their actions. There is much truth in what was said by Coleridge. "I have never known a trader in philanthropy who was not wrong in heart somehow or other. Individuals so distinguished, are usually unhappy in their family relations—men not benevolent or beneficent to individuals, but almost hostile to them, yet lavishing money and labor and time on the race—the abstract notion." The prurient love of notoriety actuates some. (93)<sup>64</sup>

John Henry Hammond levels the charge of sexual hysteria against Martineau:

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64. The reference in *Table Talk* is to Coleridge (1990, 14:416). Perhaps it is not a surprise that Harper (1853, 92) cites Coleridge's racist reading of *Othello*: "[A]s Coleridge has said, we are to conceive of him not as a negro, but as a high bred Moorish chief." *Fraser's* in September 1849 proposed to amend the established text of *Anthony and Cleopatra* to rid it of the blackness of Cleopatra.

But your grand charge is, that licentiousness in intercourse between the sexes, is a prominent trial of our social system, and that it necessarily arises from Slavery. This is a favorite theme with the abolitionists, male and female. Folios have been written on it. It is a common observation, that there is no subject on which ladies of eminent virtue so much delight to dwell, and on which in especial learned old maids, like Miss Martineau, linger with such an insatiable relish. They expose it in the slave States with the most minute observance and endless iteration. Miss Martineau, with peculiar gusto, relates a series of scandalous stories, which would have made Boccaccio jealous of her pen, but which are so ridiculously false as to leave no doubt, that some wicked wag, knowing she would write a book, has furnished her materials—a game too often played on tourists in this country. The constant recurrence of the female abolitionists to this topic, and their bitterness in regard to it, cannot fail to suggest to even the most charitable mind, that “Such rage without betrays the fires within.” (1853, 117)

To quiet concerns about the truth of Martineau’s model, Hammond asks what it is edifying to believe:

But I do not intend to admit that this charge is just or true. Without meaning to profess uncommon modesty, I will say that I wish the topic could be avoided. I am of opinion, and I doubt not every right-minded man will concur, that the public exposure and discussion of this vice, even to rebuke, invariably does more harm than good; and that if it cannot be checked by instilling pure and virtuous sentiments, it is far worse than useless to attempt to do it, by exhibiting its deformities. (118)

But he does respond to the sharp implication of the model. It is true. And as such it provides evidence of the love of slave owners for their slaves; hence, slaves really aren’t thought of as cattle. They are so lucky:

One of your heavy charges against us has been, that we regard and treat these people as brutes; you now charge us with habitually taking them to our bosoms. I will not comment on the inconsistency of these accusations. I will not deny that some intercourse of the sort does take place. (119)

What is “ridiculous” is *avowedly* buying a slave for sexual use from a woman.

What Miss Martineau relates of a young man’s purchasing a colored concubine from a lady, and avowing his designs, is too absurd even for contradiction. No person would dare to allude to such a subject, in such a manner, to any decent female in this country. (120)

With arguments like this, one can certainly appreciate why attacking Martineau's motivation was an attractive use of one's time.

But possibly the high point of personal attack comes from a Dr. W. Gilmore Simms Esq. of South Carolina, who opens his essay by attacking Martineau's motives on the basis that, although she is deaf, she makes light of her difficulty, pointing to the beneficial silence in which to think. In this, Simms finds her denial of the providential order.<sup>65</sup> Simms charges her with intellectual dishonesty, forcing the evidence to fit her preconceptions. How so? Carlyle's opinion of slavery is different than hers, and if Carlyle says so who is she to disagree?

Had it not been for this name of odium, and that Slavery had been assimilated with those features of government policy which it was her cue to obliterate, we shou'd have seen her, as we have in latter days seen Carlyle, boldly looking through all the mists and mystifications of the subject, and probing it with an independent analysis, with which neither prescription, nor prejudices, nor selfish policy, could be permitted to interfere. Her self-relying nature would have sufficed for this, had she not determined against Slavery, before acquiring any just knowledge of that condition which has received this name. (Simms 1853, 198)

The example in which this dishonesty shows is as follows:

Alleged rapes, by negroes upon white girls, are frequently stated by Northern journalists. We refer to Mr. Tappan for such particulars as resulted from the examination of the Commissioners of the Magdalen Asylum into the morals of New-York; and we regret that Miss Martineau had not looked more closely into the negro quarters, and into the various police trials of negro offenders in the different cities of the free States. Had she done this, she would have spared us the entire chapter on the morals of Slavery. (210–11)

The reason why it would have been good if Martineau had not included this chapter on the morals of slavery is explained a little later. Her charges are true:

There is one painful chapter in these two volumes, under the head of "Morals of Slavery." It is painful, because it is full of truth. It is devoted to the abuses, among slaveholders, of the institution of slavery; and it gives a

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65. "What person beside herself would undertake to argue for the advantages of being deaf? To prove that the ears are but surplusage, is certainly to suggest to the deity a process of improvement, by which the curtailment of a sense will help the endowments of a philosopher" (Simms 1853, 188–89).

collection of statements which are, no doubt, in too many cases, founded upon fact, of the illicit and foul conduct of some among us, who make their slaves the victims and instruments, alike, of the most licentious passions. Regarding our slaves as a dependent and inferior people, we are their natural and only guardians; and to treat them brutally, whether by wanton physical injuries, by a neglect, or perversion of their morals, is not more impolitic than it is dishonorable. We do not quarrel with Miss Martineau for this chapter. The truth—though it is not all truth—is quite enough to sustain her and it; and we trust that its utterance may have that beneficial effect upon the relations of master and slave in our country, which the truth is, at all times, most likely to have every where. (228–29)

So, when arguments fail, attack the person:

Still, we are not satisfied with the spirit with which Miss M. records the grossness which fills this chapter. She has exhibited a zest in searching into the secrets of our prison-house, in the slave States, which she does not seem to have shown in any other quarter. (229)

Simms's testifies to Martineau's power. The power comes from her command of language and her willingness to apply economics to such matters as sex:

Miss Martineau is a monstrous proser. She has a terrible power of words, and is tyrannical as she is powerful, in the use of them. We have no doubt she is herself free from stain or reproach; but her tongue is wretchedly incontinent. . . . She scruples at no game, fears no opponent, and, whether the meat be washed or unwashed, hawk or heron, it is all the same to her. She discusses the rights of man, and—heaven save the mark!—the rights of women too, with her chambermaid, when she cannot corner a senator. Smart exceedingly, well practised in the minor economies of society, and having at her tongue's end all the standards of value in the grain, cotton, beef and butter markets, she does not scruple to apply them to the mysterious involutions of the mind and society. (246)<sup>66</sup>

66. Simms's masculinization of Martineau is rather more interesting than the later Stephen-Hall feminization of Mill, if only because it helps Simms see the robust utilitarianism that underlies the economics Martineau wields as a weapon of terror: "With her, as with most European philosophers of her order, they are assumptions only—specious or imposing—which have been taken on trust; according, perhaps, with the particular temperament of the individual. To a woman of the bold, free, masculine nature of Miss Martineau, impatient of the restraints of her sex, and compelled to seek her distinction in fields which women are rarely permitted to penetrate, democracy is one of the most attractive of social philosophies, as conservatism must be necessarily the most offensive. With her, the doctrine of the majorities is the voice of God." (1853, 247). F. C. Adams (1853, 38–41) responds to Simm's attack on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

## What One Prefers Not to See

If the “antiprogressive” economists defended competition, what alternative did their opponents point to as superior? The answer is easy: slavery. Of course, it was a slavery supposed to be lacking certain “abuses.” We now consider a series of three episodes in which the issue of competition or slavery is raised. The criterion by which I selected these episodes is simply that each of them has been extensively discussed by literary scholars. In this way, we can see how the judgment of “progressive” is applied. What, I would like to ask, does it take for opponents of markets to lose their progressive credentials?

I have stressed above the difficulty that many have had in seeing the coalition of economists and evangelicals in terms of their shared utilitarianism. A coalition that includes J. S. Mill and biblical literalists is not, as a matter of fact, the easiest group to explain. But there is another aspect of the hidden nature of the debate in which the texts are crude and their meaning becomes all too clear. There is a story that literary historians like to tell about how great art moralizes. The conclusion drawn is that great Victorian literary artists were led to question market relationships. This is doubtless a very comfortable story since, among other things, it suggests that art provides a vantage point that is above markets.

Consider the edition of Carlyle’s *Past and Present* that was produced in 1965 by that formidable scholar, Richard Altick. Altick spends his introduction belaboring the horrors of unrestricted markets while noting that Carlyle’s own solution looks like “Prussian authoritarianism.”<sup>67</sup> In this text, Carlyle uses the phrase “Jew Harpies.”<sup>68</sup> One presumes that the use of such an adjective is part and parcel of the historical dehumanization of Jews. Reflect, then, upon the note that Altick places after “Jew Harpies,” which says this: “Rapacious monsters, half women, half birds.” That is all he says.<sup>69</sup> He sees the Harpies, but that is all he will see. Turn *Prussian* into *Nazi* and the truth value of “art moralizes” attains transparency.

The first of the three episodes I shall consider is Poet Laureate Southey’s

67. “[T]hese made the lot of the industrialized masses brutal beyond anything ever before experienced in England, and unmatched anywhere in the western world. . . . The intellectual rationalization of the get-rich-quick, dog-eat-dog, and devil-take-the-hindmost spirit that dominated British economic life in the age of *Past and Present* was supplied by Benthamite utilitarianism” (Altick in Carlyle 1965, x). “[T]he cure, for its part, strikes one as being a substitution, for the justly maligned Morison’s pill, of something uncomfortably like Prussian authoritarianism. But if Carlyle’s remedy fails to satisfy us, the acuteness with which he recognized the symptoms of a diseased society compels our imagination” (xvii).

68. Carlyle (1965, 91): “Jew Harpies”; (96): “happy Jews.” Carlyle (95) is ecumenical: “ravening flights of Jew and Christian creditors, pouncing on him like obscene harpies.”

69. Altick in Carlyle 1965, 91. Altick’s gloss on page 95 gives a reference to the *Aeneid*. One might have expected Apollonius, but then he misses the 20 million pounds.

reflections on slavery and competition and Macaulay's attack. (This attack provoked *Fraser's* illuminating outburst, which was quoted earlier.) The second is Carlyle's idealization of slavery in *Past and Present* in which the cash nexus is replaced with religious belief carrying moral obligation. The obvious question arises of what to do with those who do not share the particulars of the required belief and thus escape moral obligation. Jews are the particular menace. This Carlylean theme continues in Charles Kingsley's "novel" *Alton Locke*, in which the fault of a competitive order is laid on the Jews as outsiders to the religious-moral order. *Alton Locke* is also the focus of the third episode because it contains an enormously influential description of the condition of the "white slaves" of England vis-à-vis the black slaves of America. Its influence may have extended to the making of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>70</sup>

### *Southey and Macaulay*

Southey's *Sir Thomas More* (1829) seems to have been calculated to maximally offend evangelical sensibilities.<sup>71</sup> Defending More against the "libel" of "good old John Fox" (88), Southey implicitly sides with More in his persecution and with the judicial murder of William Tyndale, the first translator of the Hebrew scriptures into English.<sup>72</sup> "More" describes the benefits of feudalism for the workers secure in their "station." They had attained the state of happy cattle:

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70. In *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe's character St. Clare, who sometimes sounds a great deal like Carlyle in "Negro Question" (Stowe 1982, 261), makes the following assertion: "Well, I've travelled in England some, and I've looked over a good many documents as to the state of their lower classes; and I really think there is no denying Alfred, when he says that his slaves are better off than a large class of the population of England." (270). Morley and Dickens's review singled out St. Clare for special praise (1852). Needless to say, the comparison drew comment (see Arthur Helps 1852a, 6; 1852b, 238). "[T]here is, I am sorry to say, an exaggeration in the statements which are made in the course of the volume, and are not contradicted, respecting the condition of the English laborer" (Gossett 1985, 243–45). Stowe's response to Helps was twofold: (1) this is how the slave owners in fact defended themselves and (2) this is what she learned from "the works of Charles Dickens and Charles Kingsley" and others (Hedrick 1994, 243). Stowe talked to an economist about this "evidence": "When Stowe broached the subject with Richard Whately, the English archbishop of Dublin, he assured her that her literary evidence was suspect, especially her use of Charles Kingsley: 'He, & a Profr Maurice, & some others, are what are called Christian Socialists; giving such a representation of Christianity as would have justified the Roman Emperors in putting it down by force, as leading straight to anarchy'" (Hedrick 1994, 243). Hill, Whately, and Hinds (1852, 254–56) confront St. Clare's argument.

71. Macaulay did not take the bait, treating More as saint and statesman.

72. Explicitly, Southey claims that such things as persecution are morally random: "Had it been my fortune to have associated with Bilney, or Tindal and Frith, I might have partaken their zeal and their fate. On the other hand, had I been acquainted with you and Cuthbert Tonstal, it is not less likely that I should have received the stamp of your opinions" (1829, 245–46). On More, Bilney, and Tyndale, see Foxe 1829, 117–19. See also David Daniell (1994, 1): "William Tyndale gave us our English Bible. The sages assembled by King James to prepare the Authorised Version of 1611, so often praised for unlikely corporate inspiration, took over Tyndale's work. Nine-tenths of the Authorized Version's New Testament is Tyndale's. The same is true of the first half of the

The practical difference between the condition of the feudal slave, and of the labouring husbandman, who succeeded to the business of his station, was mainly this, that the former had neither the feeling nor the insecurity of independence. He served one master as long as he lived; and being at all times sure of the same sufficient subsistence, if he belonged to the estate like the cattle, and was accounted with them as part of the live stock, he resembled them also in the exemption which he enjoyed from all cares concerning his own maintenance and that of his family. (68–69)

After comparing this fixed status to the “vicissitudes” of the modern age, More points to the virtue of their masters that provides room for hope:

They had nothing to lose, and they had liberty to hope for; frequently as the reward of their own faithful services, and not seldom from the piety or kindness of their lords. This was a steady hope depending so little upon contingency, that it excited no disquietude or restlessness. They were therefore in general satisfied with the lot to which they were born, as the Greenlander is with his climate, the Bedouin with his deserts, and the Hottentot and the Calmuck with their filthy and odious customs. (69–70)

Southey’s spokesman argues with More: “I am sure it is not your intention to represent slavery otherwise than as an evil, under any modification.” More responds:

That which is a great evil in itself, becomes relatively a good, when it prevents or removes a greater evil. . . . But it led immediately to nefarious abuses; and the earliest records which tell us of its existence, show us also that men were kidnapped for sale. (70–71)

In spite of the stern words about the “abuses” of slavery, as one can easily imagine, the vision of the kindly slave owner seemed to resonate in certain districts of America.<sup>73</sup>

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Old Testament, which is as far as he was able to get before he was executed outside Brussels in 1536.” Daniell (262ff.) demonstrates that the dispute between Tyndale and More is alive and well.

Kingsley testifies to the importance of the Hebrew scriptures for nineteenth-century evangelicals: “As for the Bible, I knew nothing of it really, beyond the Old Testament” (1850a, 12). Hill expresses his surprise that his study of the biblical basis of seventeenth-century radicalism ended up almost exclusively focusing on the Hebrew Bible (1993, 440). On Foxe’s importance: “All East India vessels carried the Bible as reading matter, together with Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* and Hakluyt’s *Voyages*” (18).

73. Thus, one of the responses to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* passed along the following intelligence: “What says Southy [*sic*], the English poet, of the great mass of the English poor? He says that ‘they are deprived, in childhood, of all instruction, and enjoyment. They grow up without decency—without comfort—without hope—without morals, and without shame’” (Woodward 1853, 25).

Before we consider Macaulay's response, let us reflect upon a secondary literature, which considers nineteenth-century economics to be dismal because of an alleged "fixed condition" claim. Here we have one of the more energetic critics of nineteenth-century economics *defending* a system in which the status of the worker is as fixed as the average weather of his neighborhood.<sup>74</sup>

We have quoted Macaulay's statement of the importance for the worker of a choice of masters, so let us consider how in 1830 Macaulay tackles the question raised by Southey of whether the condition of the working class has improved over the last three centuries. For Smith, the state of the well-being of the working class, the majority of the population, is critical to his evaluation of the well-being of society. Macaulay (1961, 216) notes that Southey does not "even pretend to maintain that the people in the sixteenth century were better lodged or clothed than at present."<sup>75</sup> Southey claims that the workers were better fed in the sixteenth century, so Macaulay (216) cites evidence from household expenditure records to dispute this. Then he does something quite remarkable; he proposes a novel method of measuring well-being:<sup>76</sup>

The term of human life is decidedly longer in England than in any former age, respecting which we possess any information on which we can rely. All the rants in the world about picturesque cottages and temples of Mammon will not shake this argument. No test of the physical well-being of society can be named so decisive as that which is furnished by the bills of mortality. That the lives of the people of this country have been gradually lengthening during the course of several generations, is as certain as any fact in statistics; and that the lives of men should become longer and longer, while their bodily condition during life is becoming worse and worse, is utterly incredible. (217)

Houghton's judgment is that Macaulay's response to Southey is a "tissue of evasions," in particular that "he never comes to grips with the central charge that the poor are being exploited by the rich" (1957, 415). Kenneth Curry (1975, 87–88) thinks that the portrayal of More "contributes to the charm of the book" and that Southey is clearly the "progressive" in the debate, as he attacks competition. Neither explains what is the matter with using life expectancy as a welfare norm and why the conclusions aren't as Macaulay

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74. Winch (1996, 290–91) has a discussion of Southey's *More* that does not mention the idealization of slavery.

75. "It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, cloath, and lodge the whole body of the people, should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, cloathed, and lodged" (Smith 1976a, 96).

76. The Smithian roots of the idea of using life expectancy as a measure of well-being is discussed in chapter 10. It has been revived by A. K. Sen (1993).

argues. What is remarkable is that neither scholar appears to notice that an inability to switch masters—to regard one’s station with the same fatality as one regards the weather—is a more plausible ground for exploitation than a competitive system in which the worker has a choice of masters. Possibly the reading that *Fraser’s* offered at the time was more to the point. Macaulay’s defense of competition represents a dire threat to the system of slavery in the British West Indies, and his attack on Southey’s defense of feudal slavery, slavery without “abuses,” is just a skirmish in the space of historical memory in the long struggle of a competitive system against a variety of slave systems.

*“Just” Slavery and the Jewish Menace*

Carlyle’s *Past and Present* has long enjoyed unimpeachable “progressive” credentials because it was so enthusiastically greeted by Frederick Engels.<sup>77</sup> In *Past and Present*, Carlyle introduced his notion of “economic chivalry” in which the permanence of one’s social state is anchored by an unquestioned moral imperative. Here he reflects on the need for despotism:

A question arises here: Whether, in some ulterior, perhaps, some not far-distant stage of this “Chivalry of Labour,” your Master-Worker may not find it possible, and needful, to grant his Workers permanent *interest* in his enterprise and theirs? So that it become, in practical result, what in essential fact and justice it ever is, a joint enterprise; all men, from the Chief Master down to the lowest Overseer and Operative, economically as well as loyally concerned for it?—Which question I do not answer. The answer, near or else far, is perhaps, Yes;—and yet one knows the difficulties. Despotism is essential in most enterprises; I am told, they do not tolerate “freedom of debate” on board a Seventy-Four! Republican senate and *plebiscita* would not answer well in Cotton-Mills. (1965, 278)

To reconcile slavery and freedom? Easy! the voice of the master is the voice of God.<sup>78</sup>

77. When one views the world through traditional Marxist preconceptions, one tends not to see much racial conflict. Engels’s opinion signifies one thing for a world split on class among white people; perhaps it implies something else when we introduce racial considerations. Léon Poliakov (1974, 244–46) discusses Engels and Marx’s racism, emphasizing Engels’s claim that “Blacks were congenitally incapable of understanding mathematics.” The problem for friends of Carlyle is explained this way. “Yet the Carlyle who kindled the enthusiasm of Emerson and Engels and Whitman . . . is not another creature from the Carlyle who brought tears of hope to the eyes of Hitler” (Rosenberg 1985, 117).

78. Carlyle lives as a “progressive” in textbook accounts because of his impact on religious thinking. It is remarkable, though, how many “Hebrew old clothes” Carlyle presupposes. God in Carlyle’s account does not want to use His slaves sexually—or in any other way for that matter.

And yet observe there too: Freedom, not nomad's or ape's Freedom, but man's Freedom; this is indispensable. We must have it, and will have it! To reconcile Despotism with Freedom:—well, is that such a mystery? Do you not already know the way? It is to make your Despotism *just*. Rigorous as Destiny; but just too, as Destiny and its Laws. The Laws of God: all men obey these, and have no “Freedom” at all but in obeying them. (278)

There was obviously a contemporary demand for the doctrine that “real freedom” is slavery to one's betters, as we see from a participant in the debate over *Uncle Tom's Cabin* who found this, and similar doctrines, edifying.<sup>79</sup>

A consequence of the doctrine of “just” slavery is that one's moral obligation is relative to one's status within the hierarchy. One has the obligation of obedience toward those up the hierarchy and the obligation of charity to those down the hierarchy. The slogan of this view of the moral world is that “charity begins at home.” It also ends there. Those outside the hierarchy, people in a distant land or with different beliefs, have no claim on us. We have read the passage in *Past and Present*, complete with reference to the ill-spent 20 million pounds, in which the universalism of the antislave coalition is contrasted with Carlyle's moral localism.

Carlyle's doctrine of moral localism is represented in Kingsley's “novel” *Alton Locke*. Here Kingsley has the voice of Carlyle localize moral obligation:

“What do ye ken about the Pacific? Which is maist to your business? That bare-backed hizzies that play the harlot o' the other side o' the world, or these—these thousands o' barebacked hizzies that play the harlot o' your ain side—made out o' your ain flesh and blude? You a poet! True poetry, like true charity, my laddie, begins at hame.” (1850a, 85)

“Alton Locke” learns this lesson for his examination:

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This presupposes the God of Abraham and not Pan and the old Homeric crew of raping optimizers. Charles Gore made the point with perfect clarity: “There was an old dilemma invented I think at the time of the Reformation: ‘either Jesus was God or He was not a good man’; and the modern critic often laughs at it as ridiculous. I do not think I can laugh at it as ridiculous. What is, after all, the worst kind of spiritual crime? Is it not spiritual arrogance? What makes men hate with a profound hatred the wrong sort of sacerdotalism? It is that it exercises tyranny over human souls. Every man has the right to be himself; he ought not to be dominated or mastered by any other except God” (1922, 18–19). For an account of the Homeric divinity as optimizers who differ from mortals only in their constraints, see Levy 1992, 108–34.

79. “[I]f there is any inalienable right of another class, it is that so ably set forth by Carlyle,—the right of every man to be compelled to do what he is fit for, if he won't do it voluntarily; and this brings us back to Quashy” (Stearns 1853, 21).

“I’ve fearful misgivings about it, just because Irishmen are at the head of it.”

“Of course they are—they have the deepest wrongs; and that makes them most earnest in the cause of right. The sympathy of suffering, as they say themselves, has bound them to the English working-man against the same oppressors.”

“Then let them fight those oppressors at home, and we’ll do the same: that’s the true way to show sympathy. Charity begins at home. They are always crying ‘Ireland for the Irish;’ why can’t they leave England for the English?” (292)

While the utilitarian coalition supported emancipation regardless of the religion of the slaves, the moral localism of Carlyle and Kingsley, by locating obligation in a hierarchy embodied in religious belief, finds differences in religion to be a threat. Thus, in *Past and Present*’s medieval fantasy Carlyle’s Abbot Samson expels the Jews.<sup>80</sup> As Carlyle says: “Time, Jews, and the task of Governing, will make a man’s beard very gray!” (1965, 104). If anything, the theses that Jews threaten the moral economic order is pursued more vigorously in *Alton Locke* than it is in *Past and Present*.<sup>81</sup>

In *Alton Locke*, when the old employer dies, the new owner changes his policy to emulate that of the Jews, who pursue wealth at the expense of all moral obligation in excess of market-based obligation. Jewish economic practice embodies economic doctrine perfectly:<sup>82</sup>

His father had made money very slowly of late; while dozens, who had begun business long after him, had now retired to luxurious ease and suburban villas. Why should he remain in the minority? Why should he not get rich as fast as he could? Why should he stick to the old, slow-going, honorable trade? . . . Why should he pay his men two shillings where the government paid them one? Were there not cheap houses even at the

80. “In less than four years, says Jocelin, the Convent Debts were all liquidated: the harpy Jews not only settled with, but banished, bag and baggage, out of the *Bannaleuca* (Liberties, *Banlieue*) of St. Edmundsbury,—so has the King’s Majesty been persuaded to permit. Farewell to *you*, at any rate: let us, in no extremity, apply again to you! Armed men march them over the borders, dismiss them under stern penalties,—sentence of excommunication on all that shall again harbour them here: there were many dry eyes at their departure” (Carlyle 1965, 96).

81. Styron Harris (1981, 16) describes two letters to the *Times* in 1862 protesting Kingsley’s views on Jews.

82. “[H]is wages, thanks to your competitive system, were beaten down deliberately and conscientiously (for was it not according to political economy, and the laws thereof?) to the minimum on which he could or would work” (Kingsley 1850a, 245).

West-end, which had saved several thousands a year merely by reducing their workmen's wages? And if the workmen chose to take lower wages, he was not bound actually to make them a present of more than they asked for! They would go to the cheapest market for any thing they wanted, and so must he. . . .

Such, I suppose, were some of the arguments which led to an official announcement, one Saturday night, that our young employer intended to enlarge his establishment, for the purpose of commencing business in the "show trade;" and that, emulous of Messrs. Aaron, Levi, and the rest of that class. (Kingsley 1850a, 96–97)

The chapter "The Sweater's Den" contains Alton's misadventures among the Jewish "sweaters."

As I had expected, a fetid, choking den, with just room enough in it for the seven or eight sallow, starved beings, who, coatless, shoeless, and ragged, sat stitching, each on his truckle-bed. . . . "Oh! blessed saints, take me out o' this!—take me out, for the love of Jesus!—take me out o' this hell, or I'll go mad intirely! Och! will nobody have pity on poor sowls in purgatory—here in prison like negur slaves?" (190)

The Jews threatened Christian workers both in this world and the next:

"Och! Mother of Heaven!" he went on, wildly, "when will I get out to the fresh air? For five months I haven't seen the blessed light of sun, nor spoken to the praste, not ate a bit o' mate, barring bread-and-butter. Shure it's all the blessed sabbaths and saints' days I've been a-working like a haythen Jew, and niver seen the insides o' the chapel to confess my sins, and me poor sowl's lost intirely." (191)

And, in what has to be one of the great surprises in literature, we learn that Jews don't fight fairly:

At last, as Downes's life seemed in danger, he wavered; the Jew-boy seized the moment, jumped up, upsetting the constable, dashed like an eel between Crossthwaite and Mackaye, gave me a back-handed blow in passing, which I felt for a week after, and vanished through the street-door, which he locked after him. (193)

The role of Jew as menace to the moral economy is worthy of remark if only because a generation of well-informed critics have passed over it in

silence.<sup>83</sup> The question naturally should occur: how could *this* be in *Alton Locke* if no one else has read it? Indeed, I would agree that if no one caught the Jewish references they might as well not be there. But then let us reflect upon how a contemporary reader, W. E. Aytoun, reviewing *Alton Locke* for *Blackwood's*, parses the relationship between Jews and the competitive order. First, one must make a distinction between honor and competition:

This is intended, or at all events given, as an accurate picture of a respectable London tailoring establishment, where the men receive decent wages. Such a house is called an “honourable” one, in contradistinction to others, now infinitely the more numerous, which are springing up in every direction under the fostering care of competition. (1850, 598)

Second, the competitive establishments employ “sweaters” so that they need not deal with workers on a face-to-face basis:

These sweaters are commonly Jews, to which persuasion also the majority of the dishonourable proprietors belong. Few people who emerge from the Euston Square Station are left in ignorance as to the fact, it being the insolent custom of a gang of hook-nosed and blubber-lipped Israelites to shower their fetid tracts, indicating the localities of the principal dealers of their tribe, into every cab as it issues from the gate. These are, in plain terms, advertisement of a more odious cannibalism than exists in the Sandwich Islands. (598–89)

The moral course of action naturally suggests itself:

Very often have we wished that the miscreant who so assailed us were within reach of our black-thorn cudgel, that we might have knocked all ideas of fried fish out of his head for at least a fortnight to come! In these days of projected Jewish emancipation, the sentiment may be deemed an

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83. “In part, *Alton Locke* is in the orthodox sense an ‘exposure’: an informed, angry and sustained account of sweated labour in the ‘Cheap and Nasty’ clothing trade. Much of it can still be read in these terms, with attention and sympathy. It is fair to note, however, that in respect of this theme the Preface is more effective than the novel” (Williams 1958, 100). There is no preface in the first edition. Houghton (1957) has an extensive discussion of *Alton Locke* without mentioning the role of Jews as “sweaters.” David Lodge continues in the tradition, even as he emphasizes that Kingsley late in life took a “right-wing line” on the American Civil War and Eyre (1967, xviii). Elizabeth Cripps’s notes in her edition of *Alton Locke* (Kingsley 1983, 409) helpfully explain that *guanaco* is a “reddish-brown wool from the South American llama,” but she doesn’t explain why Jews might be “sweaters.” This is obvious to the reader? John Hawley (1986) also reads the Jews out of the story.

atrocious one, but we cannot retract it. Shylock was and is the true type of his class; only that the modern London Jew is six times more personally offensive, mean, sordid, and rapacious than the merchant of the Rialto. And why should we stifle our indignation? Dare any one deny the truth of what we have said? It is notorious to the whole world that these human leeches acquire their wealth, not by honest labour and industry, but by bill-broking, sweating, discounting, and other nefarious arts. (599)

The Jewish link to economics is trivial:

Talk of Jewish legislation indeed! We have had too much of it already in our time, from the days of Ricardo, the instigator of Sir Robert Peel's earliest practices upon the currency, down to those of Nathan Rothschild, the first Baron of Jewry, for whose personal character and upright dealings the reader is referred to Mr Francis' Chronicles of the Stock Exchange. (599)

Aytoun provides a possible British context for H. S. Chamberlain's pregnant rantings:

Read the following account by a working tailor of their doings, and then settle the matter with your conscience, whether it is consistent with the character of a Christian gentleman to have dealings with such inhuman vampires. (599)<sup>84</sup>

#### *"White Slaves" and Black Ones*

Charles Kingsley's name does not appear on the title page of the first edition of *Alton Locke*. This is how it reads: *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet. An Autobiography*. Of course, there is an "Ed.," who makes various footnote appearances, hardly surprising as the book ends as Alton lays dying, far too weak to bundle the manuscript off to the printer. Readers of later editions who know that it is a novel, might know something that the readers in the 1850s might not. "Alton Locke" laments his status as a "white slave" (Kingsley 1850a, 179). The working men Alton Locke encounters view themselves as "nigger slaves" or "negur slaves." What does this mean to the reader?<sup>85</sup> A reader who knows

84. The reader ought not to think that *vampire* refers to the suave, elegant, highly erotic creatures of late Victorian fiction or modern movies, with whom one might well spend an enchanting evening. Paul Barber (1988) describes the loathsome folkloric monster as a belief evolved to rationalize the nasty facts of bodily decomposition.

85. This problem, an example of reader-response criticism (Stanley Fish 1967), seems not to have been noted by literary commentators. The reviews in *Fraser's* (November 1850) and *Blackwood's*, (Aytoun 1850) warn readers that it isn't really what it purports to be. The extract reprinted in *Harper's* has this preface (1850b, 803): "It was an error to call this work the autobiography of an

*Alton Locke* to be a novel might conclude that the *author* views the condition of English workers and black slaves as comparable. A reader who does not know *Alton Locke* to be a novel might conclude that the *English workers* themselves were ready to migrate to America to sell themselves in the New Orleans slave market.

The identification of white slaves with black slaves—which we saw in Thrall’s commentary on the economists—seems to be a contestation for the role of the minimum of the happiness distribution. This is important to Kingsley, as a Christian, in a way that it isn’t important to Carlyle. While for Carlyle blacks and Irish are not morally human, so they can be exterminated if they object to their remaking, Kingsley contends with the coalition on its own grounds by putting forward the British working man as a contender for the position at the minimum of the distribution of happiness.<sup>86</sup>

The great crisis in slavery, in the form of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, was published as an invitation to readers to imagine the fate of mothers seeing their children sold to strangers. In the debate that followed, we find readers who cite *Alton Locke* as offering creditable testimony that the white slaves viewed themselves and the black slaves as being in comparable positions. If modern scholars are correct in thinking that Stowe’s view of British laboring conditions comes at least in part from Kingsley, perhaps even from *Alton Locke* itself, then *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* authorizes this very response. Here is one attack:

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individual. It is a picturing—faithful, minute, and eloquent—of the hardships, the suffering, and the miseries endured by a large mass of our fellow men. It is an earnest and honest exposure of the hollowness that infests English society.” The reviewer in the *American Southern Quarterly* considers it an “auto-biography” that testifies truthfully (1851, 120–21): “There is a vivid reality about his descriptions which too well vouches for their truth, and touches us home—we of these Southern United States—by the great contrast which such a state of society presents, with the far happier, and every way more elevated, position of *our* labouring classes. Aye—negro and slave though these be—the white slave of England—great, proud, glorious England—has sunk far lower than they, in the weltering abyss of misery and hopeless wretchedness.” Westward the course of rationalization? However, the extensive reprinting of extracts from *Alton Locke* by John Cobden (1859, 193) contains this information: “In Charles Kingsley’s popular novel, ‘Alton Locke,’ we find a vivid and truthful picture of the London tailor’s workshop, and the slavery of the workmen.” Cunliffe (1979, 43) cites a 1853 edition of Cobden 1859 that I have not seen.

86. Even though Kingsley asserts in *Alton Locke*, and everywhere else the question comes up, the doctrine of racial hierarchy, his social theorizing is constrained by Christian doctrine. “Abstract rights? They are sure to end, in practice, only in the tyranny of their father—opinion. In favored England here, the notion of abstract right among the many are not so incorrect, thanks to three centuries of Protestant civilization; but only because the right notions suit the many at this moment. But in America, even now, the same ideas of abstract right do not interfere with the tyranny of the white man over the black. Why should they? The white man is handsomer, stronger, cunninger, worthier than the black. The black is more like an ape than the white man—he is—the fact is there; and no notions of an abstract right will put that down: nothing but another fact—a mightier, more universal fact—Jesus of Nazareth died for the negro as well as for the white” (Kingsley 1850a, 343–44). Kingsley wrote to Stowe, agreeing with her doctrine of racial differences (Gossett 1985, 246).

In bringing forward the condition of the English labouring class, then, I do it from no vile motive of recrimination. I do it, because the subject is introduced into the work I am commenting on, and because my *argument* requires it. (Stearns 1853, 81)

Stearns takes note of Helps's *Letter*. He brings up the question of women working in gangs:

"White slaves," in the words of the London Times, . . . "of a sex and age least qualified to struggle with the hardships of their lot—young women, for the most part, between sixteen and thirty years of age, *worked in gangs* in ill-ventilated rooms . . ." sewing "from morning till night, *and night till morning* ." (87)

Then "Alton Locke" is offered as testimony:

And these things are done in "*merry* England!" Ay, and not these alone. The milliners and dressmakers are not the only ones who thrive on the miseries of their fellows; the keepers of "furnishing" shops are in the same category,—witness the "song of the shirt;" and so are the "fashionable tailors," as many an Alton Locke could testify. (89)

A second attack occurs in a pamphlet reprinted in *Fraser's*,<sup>87</sup> which mixes statistics and fiction promiscuously:

This power that slavery gives to one man over another is met with everywhere in society. Caleb Williams! Alton Locke! Mary Barton! Parliamentary Blue Books! Mining Districts! Manufacturing Districts! Combinations of Workers! Combinations of Masters!—to which shall we point especially? In all is the lesson of one man's power over another. (Pringle 1852a, 20; 1852b, 481)

If all work is slavery and we are interested in those who are the worst off, then what difference is there between "white slavery" and black slavery?<sup>88</sup>

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87. The attack was bracketed by an earlier most favorable review (Helps 1852b) and an favorable discussion of the Beecher family ("Some Account" 1852). Pringle's attack was prefaced by editor John Parker's announced policy of publishing both sides. Parker calls attention to the exchange over the "Negro question." Modern authorities on *Fraser's* pass Parker's policy over in silence. Both the Helps and Pringle articles are reprinted from pamphlets. Ashton (1977) only catches the Helps reprint.

88. Economists ought to have learned from the Soviet era to be cautious of claims that the standard of living in an area people flee *from* is higher than the standard of living in an area people flee *to*. Some particularly embarrassing "data" are considered in Levy 1993. Hill, Whately, and Hinds (1852, 248–49) employ the revealed escaping argument to confront the "happy" slave assertions.

Moral localism would not in fact contradict universalism since the “white slaves” of Britain would merit our concern as much as do the black slaves of America. But there is a trap in this line of argument: all those who lament their status as “white slaves” in *Alton Locke* are male.

And we see the trap sprung in the response to the critics of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* taking withering variations on the sexual slavery theme of Wilberforce and Martineau. Writing with an ink capable of etching steel, “Nicholas Brimblecomb” retold the story from a “proslavery” point of view:<sup>89</sup>

He sought to secure Harry’s young and beautiful mother, as judging her suitable to accommodate and please one of those numerous southern gentlemen who not only have field and house servants, but also certain house servants of a peculiar character. (Brimblecomb 1853, 13–14)

Slavery gave him power to compel such slaves to be his concubines as he saw fit; he acted accordingly, and when he was weary of one, he would buy another for his particular purpose. . . .

Whosoever would see slavery—see it in its genuine nature, operations, and character—must not look at such an awkward case as that of St. Clare; but he must look at Legree. (115)

F. C. Adams explicitly challenges Pringle’s doctrine that slavery moralizes:

In all our intercourse with Southerners, we never heard one claim moral caste for the institution of slavery; but not unfrequently have we heard them denounce instances of outrage upon chastity, sustained in the rights of the master, and beyond the remedy of laws made to govern the outraged. With our knowledge of social life in Charleston, we feel no hesitation in saying, that Mr. P——’s erudition in behalf of the divine precepts of slavery will prove as novel to Southern readers, as it will be forcible to those of more Northern sensibility. (1853, 15–16)

The conflict between universality and “progressive,” localizing moralizing is clearly explained:

But the reader must remember that the quality, depth, and attributes of Christianity, according to the rule of progress, are at the present day measured by a scale of locality. That which is made the medium of an accommodating morality in Charleston, would be rejected as unwholesome by the sterner judgment of the New Englander. (16)

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89. Ashton (1977, 10) regards this as “possibly satire.” It is possible that I am an economist.

Literary scholars who restrict their attention to British publications, and who take seriously neither economists like Martineau nor evangelicals like Wilberforce, evidently do not see what is so odd about comparing “white slaves” to black slaves on the basis of male well-being.<sup>90</sup> Slavery was not the same burden for men and women.<sup>91</sup> This was the contention of the broad utilitarian coalition, and to silently suppress this issue is to take a position in the debate.

## Conclusion

The real past is complicated. British economists not only studied the world, but they helped to change it. Indeed, they helped to change it so radically that without considerable effort we cannot see what is so radical about their views. The “reactionary” status of the classical economists, it seems to me, comes from the lazy habit of making a judgment from the comfortable vantage point of the status quo.

The mathematician-philosopher A. N. Whitehead said that a science that hesitates to forget its past is lost. I think this is precisely wrong—it is by remembering our past that we shall deserve to be saved. The past has always been contested ground. “Who controls the past controls the future.” George Orwell told us that.

The mutability of the past is the central tenet of Ingsoc. Past events, it is argued, have no objective existence, but survive only in written records and in human memories. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon. (1961, 176)

If we do not remember our past, others with no love for the sort of market or political organizations that economists study will be all too willing to provide a “past” for us. It ill becomes economists, of all people, to have our understanding of our place in the world depend on the kindness of strangers.

## *Appendix: Some Dismal Results*

Thanks to the generosity of the Mellon family, economists and others have the capability to do on-line searches of the content by character strings of major

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90. As far as I can see this is even the case for Cunliffe (1979), who carefully attends to the interrelations between the American and British discussions. His references to Martineau are decorative and to Wilberforce nonexistent.

91. This issue has not vanished, as the debate over the Thomas Jefferson–Sally Hemings affair testifies (Foster et al. 1998).

journals for the entire period of their run in the data base JSTOR.<sup>92</sup> The ten economics journals so accessible at the time of the study were as follows: *American Economic Review*, *Econometrica*, *Journal of Economic History*, *Journal of Industrial Economics*, *Journal of Money, Credit, and Banking*, *The Journal of Political Economy*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *Journal of Applied Econometrics*, and *Journal of Economic Perspectives*.

A search of the articles in these journals uncovered sixty-nine uses of the term *dismal science*. Searching for *dismal science*  $\wedge$  (*Malthus*  $\vee$  *Malthusian*  $\vee$  *wage*) found forty-seven. Searching for *dismal science*  $\wedge$  (*nigger*  $\vee$  *negro*) found exactly two germane articles.<sup>93</sup> These are Hamilton 1952 and Persky 1990.

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92. The Web address is <[www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org)>. The search was conducted in September 1998 and was replicated with a wider list of journals on September 1, 2000.

93. A third "article" was actually a series of independently authored comments. One author used *dismal science* and another used *Negro*. JSTOR can search the whole of journals, including such things as the table of contents, lists of publications received, and the like. Needless to say, searches in such heterogeneous material turn up many such illusory hits.