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John Hamilton Reynolds, John Clare and *The London Magazine*

Simon Kövesi
Oxford Brookes University

"The Literary Police Office" is a spoof police report by "Edward Herbert," published in *The London Magazine,* February, 1823 (157-61). The report depicted the arrest of a parade of literary people, including John Clare. In this essay, I am concerned with Clare as a "Londoner," Reynolds' career in the early 1820s, Clare's relationship with Reynolds, and the sociable context for the "Literary Police Office." Reynolds played a central role both as host to *The London Magazine,* in extending and moderating the cockney politics, and as a formative influence on Clare's early career.

While "cockney Clare" is not an accurate label for the Northamptonshire peasant, there is yet something to it. It was bestowed in print in 1824 by the Eton-educated Charles Elton in a moderately awful *London* poem "The Idler's Epistle to John Clare" (Aug. 1824: 143-5). Worried about Clare's "church-yard cough," Elton urges him to let go the diminishing charms of London and the *London,* and to return to the safe inspiration of his native "rural air" (144, 143). The poem is sickly sweet, but the presentation of the social whirl of the *London* and the cockney label bestowed by Elton, confirm that Clare occupied a central position in the network of loosely liberal politics and sociable creative correspondences which formed the culture of the magazine from 1820 to the end of 1824. Jonathan Bate maintains that Elton's label means Clare "had become one of the literary lads about town" (Bate 259), but, while this interpretation has merit, there is more behind such a complex, charged term as "cockney" than its simply being an affirmation of Clare's rakish urban pursuits. Elton's poem was published in the last few months of John Taylor's editing and ownership of the *London.* The poem bemoans the departure of the leading lights of the magazine (Bauer 80-91; Chilcott 129-82; Sales 34-75 and O'Leary).

Roger Sales characterises the *London* as "Clare's university" (Sales 36). Clare learned a great deal from interaction with the luminaries and hacks who did some of the most agile and entertaining thinking of the early years of George IV's reign. But Clare was no passive student: from the first issue under John Scott, he gave a great deal to the explorative energies of the magazine—both through his extended stays in London (Bate 165-71, 239-46, 256-67 and 332-34) and through his correspondences in letter and verse form. At the time, and in recollection, members of the writing staff demonstrated how centrally they thought of Clare's position, to which Elton's poem stands as just one testament. With justification, Charles Lamb and others in the *London* circle called their coterie "The Wits": remarkably, Clare was the first to flatter the group with this name (Curling 157-65, 192).

The name "The Wits" indicates Clare's committed understanding of a politicised, satirical literary history. There are two distinct, yet related sources: firstly, John Suckling's satirical poem "A Session of the Poets" (1637), also known as "The Wits" (progenitor of all subsequent "parading poets" poems and prose skits, including "The Literary Police Office"); and secondly, the early 18th century grouping called "The Wits" which consisted, as Bertrand A. Goldgar puts it, of "Swift, Pope, Gay, Fielding, Thomson, and a host of lesser figures [who] exercised their talents to attack the person and the policies of the prime minister," Robert Walpole. This group was also known as the "Tory Wits" (4, 28). By contrast "The Wits" of the later *London* era collected themselves in reformist opposition to a Tory government; but, while they were liberally inclined, they were never as politically focused in their satire as their forebears. Nevertheless, the name granted by "cockney Clare" suggests there was a proud sense of sociably politicised purpose in what the group was about, together with an implied awareness of the power and importance of literary pursuits, even when—as in the "The Literary Police Office"—the writers were at their most comedic.

One of the questions Elton's poem asks of Clare is "hast thou nodded blithe and smiled / At Herbert's vein?" "Edward Herbert," the supposed author of "The Literary Police Office," was one of a host pseudonyms adopted by Reynolds. His role as prolific contributor and sub-editor was crucial to the survival of the *London,* especially during and after the fall out from John Scott's untimely death by duel in February, 1821 (Sales 30-34). Reynolds had been contributing essays, reviews of poetry and drama, and editing, on Scott's weekly reformist paper *The Champion* from 1815 to 1817 (Jones, *Life* 64-65). He was more than just a writer for Scott. As Patrick O'Leary writes, "Scott had at last found, in Reynolds, someone who could deputise for him without upsetting readers," and, in Scott's words, Reynolds took up a "respectable coadjutorship" (83). By the time Clare's publishing career was launched in January, 1820, Reynolds had also published three collections of verse: *Safie, an Eastern Tale* (1814), *The Eden of Imagination, a Poem* (1814), and *The Naiad, with Other Poems* (1816); the satire *Peter Bell* (1819); and the play script *One, Two, Three, Four, Five; by Advertisement: A Musical Entertainment* (1819), which had run for fifty nights in London the summer of 1819 (Jones, *Life* 177-79). In January, 1820, in the first issue of the new *London Magazine,* Reynolds' poem "Winter. Bath" appeared—as did Octavius Gilchrist's essay on the poetry and life of John Clare (Jan. 1820: 63, 7-11). Reynolds was a major participant in the founding of the *London,* and a witness at the birth of Clare's career.

Reynolds was at the heart of all things cockney. His position was established in February, 1821, the month that a tribal reviewing culture became deadly serious. It was the same month as both John Keats and John Scott died. Scott's death by duelling is the nadir of the war between cockney liberal politics and the critiques of *Blackwood's* high Toryism, while Keats's death was interpreted far and wide, if incorrectly, as similarly being a product of this journalistic war. But it was Reynolds who was to sustain cockney literary culture in a practical manner beyond their deaths. As the entrusted recipient of some of Keats's finest letters, and of John Scott's final letters before his fatal duel—and then, in his capacity as the active legal counsel who successfully secured the freedom of all parties present at the duel, which was, after all, an illegal meeting of antagonists (Jones, *Life* 217-25; O'Leary 155-71)—Reynolds was maintaining something quintessentially literary, southern and cockneyfied beyond the spring of 1821. Mourning and organising in the wake of close allies, Scott and Keats, Reynolds also played a crucial role in maintaining consistency in an important hub of liberal literary London. After March, 1821, under the new owners Taylor and Hessey, Reynolds became one of the *London*'s two "valuable coadjutors" with Thomas Hood (Taylor qtd. in Jones, *Life* 229).

Any discussion of the cockney scene requires Leigh Hunt. Hunt articulated, fostered, and promoted a new generation of poets, Reynolds, Keats and Shelley, for whom Hunt was a "figurehead," as Nicholas Roe explains (227). But, by 1820, his position had changed, at least in relation to Reynolds. Though Hunt did contribute a couple of poems to Scott's *London* in the summer of 1820 under the pseudonym "Drue Digby" (his only known publications in this journal are "Euphrosyne and Melidore" and "Fiametta and Boccacio," May, 1820: 501-3 and June, 1820: 622-25), by this time he had become too awkward a figure of radical controversy for easy association with cautious literary liberals. That Hunt remained repugnant to conservatives would not have troubled Scott or Taylor. The reasons for his not being part of the *London* circle were possibly more mundane than his (and his brothers') radical politics. Previously Hunt had enjoyed good relations with Scott: both Scott and Reynolds visited Hunt in prison, both modelled their own earlier journals on Hunt's, and Scott effectively lost his life in defence of the cockney school. But Hunt then fell out with Taylor and Hessey over an advance they had paid him for a collection of poems which never materialised; there was no happy outcome even though (or because) Hunt asked Percy Shelley to talk to Taylor (Chilcott 58-62). Leonidas M. Jones establishes that Reynolds advised Keats to keep as publicly separate as possible from Hunt after early cockney association with the notorious figure of liberalism had politicised *Blackwood's* reception of Keats's poems (Jones, *Life* 196). Jeffrey Cox observes that the perceived "split" of Keats from Hunt was not clean: Keats lived in Hunt's house while ill in 1820 and was central to the new circle around Hunt and Shelley (Cox 84 *passim*; see also Roe 328-29). But by the summer of 1820, Reynolds kept his distance from Hunt, his former hero and mentor, at the same time that his relationship with Keats was cooling (Jones, *Life* 124, 196). In summary, in the pages of the *London*, and elsewhere, Reynolds re-formulated a lower middle-class, diluted version of what had been Hunt's cockney literary culture. Reynolds' literary project not so committed or so serious as Hunt's could claim to be. Gary Dyer takes this perspective on Reynolds' politics, taking him and Thomas Hood to task for domesticating Romantic-period satire in *Odes and Addresses to Great People* of 1825. Dyer contends that its seriousness and de-political middle-class moderation led to the final decline of polemical Romantic satire (Dyer 146). Dyer also implies that this mode of apolitical populist entertainment signals the close of Romanticism. I believe, however, that Reynolds' gentle and sociable playfulness did maintain a politicised edge.

Clare met and socialised with Reynolds, read almost all of Reynolds' major publications and consistently approved of his journalistic prose, his serious poetry, and his satirical work. Reynolds was the model of friendly, sociable, liberal decency, and, for Clare, occupied a socialising role, especially at Taylor's dinners for his writers. Thomas Hood celebrates that sociability in a fantasy procession marking Reynolds' 1822 marriage to Eliza Powell Drewe (Hood was to marry Reynolds' sister Jane in 1825). The groom is the source of sociable, convivial warmth, leading the mob of *London* writers, among whom is Clare, tagging along as Lamb's servant:

> *A Progress from London to Wedlock through Exeter*
>
> [. . .]
>
> THE HAPPY PAIR!
>
> BANNERS, MUTUAL BENEFIT, HAND-IN-HAND, AND UNION, WITH THE
>
> SWEET LITTLE CHERUB THAT SITS UP ALOFT
>
> DOMESTIC HABITS IN LIVERY, ATTENDED BY DOMESTIC COMFORT
>
> BANNER
>
> CARMEN NUPTIALE
>
> CUPID WITH THE RING
>
> EDITOR WITH HIS STAFF
>
> MESSRS. TAYLOR AND HESSEY, ALLAN CUNNINGHAM, RICHARD WOODHOUSE, THEODORE, W. HAZLITT, H. CARY, C. VINKBOOMS, JAMES WEATHERCOCK, THOS. DE QUINCEY, W. HILTON, C. LAMB AS DIDDLE DIDDLE DUMPKINS WITH ONE SHOE OFF AND ONE SHOE ON, AND HIS MAN, JOHN CLARE; J. RICE, W. PROCTOR, MR. RILEY-PARKER. THE LAMB FLAGS CARRIED BY MR. MONTGOMERY
>
> LION'S HEAD WITH HIS TWO PAGES (Shelley 325)

Reynolds married on August 31, 1822 (Jones, *Life* 243). Clare did not parade at Reynolds' wedding, but he was paired with Reynolds in the recollections of other *London* writers. In his biography of Charles Lamb, "Barry Cornwall" (listed as "W. Proctor" above) pairs them, recalling that at these parties, Clare's "delight at the wonders of London [. . .] was often stimulated into extravagance by the facetious fictions of Reynolds" (Cornwall 160). By his own account, Clare was devoted to Reynolds. The sketch Clare writes about Reynolds is

not only the warmest and longest of anyone he met in London; it is also the warmest and longest prose portrait Clare painted, of *anyone*, across his entire writing life:

> Reynolds was always the soul of these dinner parties he was the most good natured fellow I ever met with his face was the three in one of fun wit and punning personified he woud punch you with his puns very keenly without ever hurting your feelings for if you lookd in his face you coud not be offended and you might retort as you pleasd nothing coud put him out of humour either with himself or others if all his jokes and puns and witticisms were written down which were utterd at 2 or 3 of these dinner partys they woud make one of the best Joe Millers that have ever passd under that title he sits as a carless listner at table looking on with quick knaping sort of eye that turns towards you as quik as lightning when he has a pun joke or story to give you they are never made up or studied they are flashes of the moment and mostly happy he is a slim sort of make som thing as you may conscieve of an unpretending sort of fashionable fellow without the desire of being one he has a plump round face a nose somthing puggish and a forehead that betrays more of fun then poetry his teeth are always looking through a laugh that sits as easy on his unpuckerd lips as if he as borne laughing he is a man of genius and if his talents was properly applied he woud do something I verily believe that he might win the favours of fame with a pun but be as it will wether she is inclind to smile or frown upon him he is quite at home wi content the present is all with him he carrys none of the Author about him an hearty laugh which there is no resisting at his jokes and puns seems to be more reccompence then he expected and he seems startld into wonder by it and muses a moment as if he turnd the joke over agen in his mind to find the 'merry thought' which made the laughter they drop as it were spontaniously from his mouth and turn again upon him before he has had time to conside[r] wether they are good or bad he sits in a sort of supprise till another joke drops and makes him himself again
>
> [. . .] he has written a great deal in Magazines and periodicals of all names and distinctions and he is an author of no mean pretentions as to quantity tho he has never acknowledged any with his name he wrote the Poem called the Naiad in imitations of the old scotch ballad called the Mermaid of Galloway The Remains of Peter Corcoran The Garden of Florence and a mock Parody on Peter Bell all full of wit and real Poetry with a good share of affectation and somthing near akin to bombast
>
> He is one of the best fellows living and ought to be a Poet of the first order himself is his only hinderance at present Lord Byron was his first patron and corrected a poem and praised it which has not been published (Clare, *By Himself* 140-41).

Superlatives abound in this extended sketch, which details the approachable gentleness and warmth of Reynolds' knockabout "punching" puns. Clare knew well Reynolds' poetic work: Taylor and Hessey published Reynolds' *The Fancy: a Selection from the Poetical Remains of Peter Corcoran*, in 1820. "Peter Corcoran" is a failed law student who writes both serious lyrics and lighter poems about boxing and sport—a semi-autobiographical figure combining enthusiasm for "sparring and poesy," and a sensitivity to "the blow of a flower, and the blow of a fist" (84). When Clare talks of Reynolds' puns "punching," he himself was making a poetic and pugilistic allusion to the same book. Clare was struck by Reynolds' masking his real name in almost all his work—published anonymously or pseudonymously. In the 1820s, Clare was fascinated by, hungry for and nervous about fame, the circulation of his name, and his onward literary capital. While he was wrong about Byron's patronage, the closing note shows how impressed Clare was with any contact with the most successful poet of his age (Byron replied by letter to Reynolds, Feb. 1814. Jones, *Life* 49-50).

In an age when the identity of the writer was promotionally packaged with the celebration of free individuality, anonymous or pseudonymous writing was still common in both creative work and journalism. In the *London* alone Reynolds wrote his numerous pieces between 1820 and 1824 under such pseudonyms as Amen, EA, Edward Herbert, Edward Ward, Gent. One &c., Humphrey Nixon, M, One &c., Person of Sentiment, Senex, Strephon, Thyrsis, and U.B.D. (Riga and Prance 237-48). By contrast, Clare's thirty-five poems published in the *London* between January, 1820, and October. 1825, either state his authorship, go by "JC," or once the *nom de plume* "Percy Green." The marketing motives behind publishing Clare's poems in the magazine explain this distinction: Taylor and Hessey were promoting and puffing their own man. But that does not explain Reynolds' pseudonymous and anonymous publishing front, as he was a sometime in the same publishing house.

Though they met in person, no evidence remains that Clare and Reynolds corresponded. Nevertheless, Clare mentions Reynolds in significant ways: he correctly identifies Reynolds as being the author of *The Fancy* which Taylor sent him in 1820. Clare bemoans the lack of Reynolds' "autograph" (Storey, *Letters* 74). In three subsequent letters to Taylor, Clare stands Reynolds on a high pedestal of praise, as an example of what can be achieved in poetry: he likes much of what Reynolds has done, but wants him to do better. Among the many poets published by Taylor, Keats included, none stimulated as high a level of Clare's excited praise as Reynolds. At one point, Clare writes that Reynolds' lyrical poem "Stanzas, On revisiting Shrewsbury" (*The Fancy*, 100-3) "thrills me into an ague of sensebility every time I read it" (Storey, *Letters* 180-1).

There are early signs that the affectionate respect was mutual. Clare would not have known Reynolds' unfinished

and unpublished pre-publication notice of *The Village Minstrel*, for the *London Magazine* in August, 1821 ("Town Talk" Jones, *Letters* 71-2), in which Reynolds talks of the "more than ordinary delight" he felt at the prospect of a "forthcoming work" from "the powerful genius of the Author" and his "original and beautiful thoughts." Though Reynolds says he "had sight" of the new collection, there are no details from Clare's poetry in the remaining fragment—so he could have started preview before he even saw the new collection. Nicholas Mason demonstrates that puffing was a significant practice in the cockney school, and that Reynolds was a leading proponent in reviewing his comrades in the 1810s (19-20). In the end, *The Village Minstrel* was not reviewed in the *London*, because Taylor rejected Allan Cunningham's review. Instead the collection was covered by Taylor's own essay "A Visit to John Clare," published in November, 1821 (Storey, *Heritage* 157-65).

Reynolds' next reference to Clare appears in a poem which also delivers a "session of the poets" (and other "press" figures) and is complex. The book-length satire, *The Press, or Literary Chit-Chat: A Satire* of 1822 was described by *The Literary Chronicle* as "gentlemanly if not pungent" and "tolerably impartial; quite so indeed as to the rank of parties, for he aims at all ranks and degrees of men, from Byron to Benbow." (Anon., *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review*, Dec. 21, 1822: 810). Reynolds' playful inclusivity—mixing high and low in the publishing world, poet and pornographer—is politically intentional. For the most part written in chatty Popean couplets, with prodigious *Dunciad*-like and sometimes acerbic notes, the poem is an un-dramatic dialogue between Hocus (*pace* John Arbuthnot's *History of John Bull*, 1712), Pocus and Jocus. *The Press* starts with an extended back-and-forth consideration of the commercial success, and the "falling-off from happier times" (7), of Walter Scott. *The Press* snipes at Barry Cornwall's success, is depressed by puffing and the state of the stage, praises Maturin, is relieved that Caroline Lamb is not as insane as *Glenarvon* indicated, bemoans Godwin's writing novels beneath his talent, praises at length a Byron who "hath the world in his grasp" (15) yet criticises him for writing too much; the assumed absence of Francis Jeffrey from the magazine scene by 1822 (which was not true) is filled by Hazlitt. Here is Reynolds' version of the post-Hunt cockney world: Jocus claims that Hazlitt is "Lord of the happy limits of Cockaign" (19), and Pocus retorts:

> You would not have him take the throne of Leigh,
> That would be worse, my friend, than treachery—
> JOCUS
> Ah! I forgot the true legitimate
> King of the cockneys' literary state;
> Yet as a viceroy Hazlitt still may reign
> Whilst the chief monarch dares the raging main. (19)

Reynolds pokes fun at "Harold and Rimini"—Byron and Hunt – who were, in 1822, working on *The Liberal*, and a footnote shows Reynolds was aware of Percy Shelley's having been "prematurely cut off" (48 n.24). In his note, and oddly for him, Reynolds adopts a Jeffrey-like tone of moral severity and renames Hunt's new periodical venture "'the Licentious' [. . .] a production as impious and disgraceful in its principles, as it is contemptible in a literary point of view" (48, n.24). Then to the Lakers: Wordsworth receives unqualified praise, but the poem bemoans the "mawkish trash" (25) of Laureate Southey, and the "arrant nonsense" (26) of Coleridge's *Christabel*. The dialogue next proceeds through Charles Lloyd, Charles Lamb, John Wilson, playwright George Croly, Thomas Moore and Thomas Campbell. This parade of male writers—all of them still living and only faintly condemned—serves but as a prelude to the main event, which concludes part I. Here William Gifford leads a confused army of magazines (allied, yet sniping against one another), consisting of his *Quarterly*, the *Edinburgh Review*, the *New Monthly Magazine*, and *Blackwood's*. Battling against all of these giants, seemingly on its own, is the *London:*

> Against the hosts of Gifford first came on
> A tribe of cockneys, led, I thought, by one
> Who had a *flonkie verd* and, *such* a lamp!
> It beat each coruscation of each swamp,
> Each gas-light, whether bat's-wing or argand,
> Or e'en the lamp that made Aladdin grand!
> One or two strangers from the country fought
> With this bright band from Farringdon Without,
> But seem'd half conscious of a sense of guilt
> At leaguing thus beneath the azure kilt.
> One from the border-land of war and song
> Seem'd by his tone and aspect to belong;
> His friend appear'd of England's milder clime,
> Uncouth his aspect, but well-made his rhime.
> Often the trainbands pointed to this pair,
> And said by these we hope some fame to share. (38)

Reynolds is responding directly to another attack on Hazlitt and all things cockney, which had appeared in *Blackwood's* (August, 1822). The "flonkie verd" (green servant) and the "lamp" links directly to the outrage felt by the anonymous reviewer of Hazlitt's *Table Talk; or, Original Essays* in *Blackwood's*. In this review Eyre Evans Crowe delivers another assault in the long line of what Emily Lorraine de Montluzin has called "the most destructive campaigns in literary history," describing *Blackwood's* notorious attacks on the cockneys, initiated by John Gibson Lockhart in 1817 (Montluzin 107). In "On Coffee-House Politicians," talking of the complex "creature of sympathy" that is Charles Lamb, Hazlitt describes "one evening at Barry Cornwall's. A young literary bookseller who was present went away delighted with the elegance of the repast, and spoke in raptures of a servant in green livery and a patent-lamp" (Wu VI, 181). Evans Crowe is outraged:

> The last sentence of the above extract, in which the scene is transferred to Barry Cornwall's, is divine! What a fine

> fellow was that "young literary bookseller!" What wonder that he should have been a little awe-struck by the lad in green livery and the patent lamp!! We have a true ambition to be classical. Will our friend oblige us by telling us in his next volume, whether the author of Mirandola eats his "delicious rabbit smothered in onions, eggs, and a good rasher, or excellent veal cutlets," by the light of an argand or a sinumbra ? About such people it is impossible to be too particular. One likes to know that Virgil wore patched shoes—that Horace had no gilt cornices at the Sabine farm—that Samuel Johnson wore snuff-brown—that Voltaire had gay embroidered bedgowns—that Oliver Goldsmith was vain of a cherry-coloured coat, and that Barry Cornwall has a patent lamp, and a *flunky* in green livery. These are your true glimpses of the penetralia of immortality. It is thus that we become, as it were, personally acquainted with the great men, who, to use a fine phrase of Keats's,
>
> "Stand in the forehead of the age to come;"
>
> each of them, no question, with his "tea-boy in green livery" behind his back. ("Hazlitt's Table Talk", *Blackwood's*, Aug. 1822: 166)

It is tempting to think that the bookseller might have been talking of John Clare dressed in the green suit Taylor had made for him, and which stood in stark contrast to the sable black the Londoners wore. But unless this is a tightly controlled "in joke," it is unlikely because Hazlitt and others would have mentioned someone as well-known as Clare. Moreover, Clare was not close to Cornwall, and not a servant, even if he was occasionally mistaken for one while in London. Nevertheless, Reynolds is being deliberately provocative in placing these contentious facets of a Hazlitt aside at the front of the ranks of the *London*. Allan Cunningham is the poet "from the border-land of war and song" (Dumfriesshire, on the southern border of Scotland), and John Clare his fellow "uncouth" (unlettered? labouring-class?) "friend" from England: both are looked to as the cockney scene's best prospects for fame and glory. Surprisingly, there is no hint of irony here. In the footnote to the "tribe of cockneys," Reynolds mixes humour (the *London* is a "most unequal work," containing "the vilest trash" for which Barry Cornwall is partly blamed) with faintly qualified praise which singles out only two of the contributors: "Allan Cunninghame [*sic*] and John Clare, also, I am informed, contribute to its pages. Of the one it may be said he is a real poet—of the other, a neat stitcher together of rhimes, and certainly, considering circumstances, a surprising man" (54 n.42).

And so ends Part I. Next Reynolds focuses on the "chit-chat" side of the press. He begins by gently undermining public, published, celebrated figures, all of whom were in gossipy circulation in 1822, in one form or another: epicure William Kitchener; surgeon Sir William Lawrence; John Wilson (again, but as philosopher); Gretna Green regular and philhellene Lord Erskine; Napoleon's physician on St. Helena and, by 1822, his outspoken defender, Barry Edward O'Meara; social outcast and gothic novelist William Beckford who was forced to sell his grand folly Fonthill Abbey in 1822—and on it goes. Dead poets are off the menu. Since the satire is the contemporary scene, the range inclusively broad, the style and critical position moderate (even if mock-anger dominates on occasion), it lacks the ethical punch of better-known Romantic satires.

As if conscious so few women have been mentioned thus far, Jocus ends this book-length satire with a 446-line mostly octosyllabic couplet "procession" of contemporary female (bluestocking) writers, including Maria Edgeworth, Helen Maria Williams, Lady Morgan, Countess of Blessington, Hannah More, Felicia Hemans, Ann Radcliffe, Amelia Opie and Joanna Baillie. Entitled "Bas-Bleusia," this part does not form a sting in the satirical tail because it is as friendly and even-handed as anything that has gone before. But the parade of contemporaries does at least deliver a parallel "Amazonian" (72) female canon of contemporaries in more than just a footnote. Overall the poem is a gossipy, sociable, informed whirl through contemporary print culture—with the *London*, Clare, and Cunningham at its liberal heart. While these poets are central, the work itself is a consideration of contemporary published celebrities, rather than a satire of exclusively literary practice. The next work Reynolds produced of this sort is in prose, but akin to a "session of the poets": it enshrines Clare in an equally central, though less fortunate, position.

Between August, 1821 and February, 1824, Reynolds framed a series of eight essays in the *London* as epistles from "Edward Herbert" to "Russell Powell, *Esq.*" He wrote a final, plaintive "Herbert" essay in Charles Dilkes' *Athenaeum* in 1830, and possibly a poem as "Herbert" in Dickens's *Bentley's Miscellany* in 1839 ("Letters of Edward Herbert. New Series, No. 1," *Athenaeum*, 7 Jan. 1830: 5-6; "Sonnet - Written on 21st October, 1839, the Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar," *Bentley's Miscellany*, July. 1839: 542). Leonidas M. Jones claims that Reynolds was "best known for the Edward Herbert series" (Jones, *Life* 230; discussion and citation of all of the *London*'s Herbert letters, 230-5). George Cruikshank's work towards an illustrated "Herbert" collection in 1824 indicates how well-received the essays were, but only two of the illustrations survive, and the collection was never printed (Jones, *Life* 28, cites Marsh, *Poetry and Prose*; see also Cohn, 271). While Jones speculates as to the genesis of "Powell" to whom "Herbert" writes the letters, he and other scholars have ignored the "Edward Herberts" of British history. Herbert was the name of a well-travelled, autobiographer and philosopher: the English aristocrat, adventurer and diplomat, Edward Herbert (1582?–1648). Herbert maintained theologically liberal views, and was known for friendships with literary *luminati* such as John Donne, Ben Jonson, John Selden, and Thomas Carew. He was a sociable, liberal, well-read and popular man: everything Reynolds could claim to be. Herbert provided an inoffensive name to adopt for the moderately liberal intentions and anticipated audience of

the *London*. Herbert's attempted common-sense rationalisation of God, meant he came to be labelled "the father of deism"—and while inaccurate, the deism the name carries with it should inform an assessment of the rationale for Reynolds' choice of *nom de plume* for these epistolary essays. If he maintained any political or theological commitments at this stage of his career, in public at least, Reynolds buried them.

The "Herbert" essays range across Fancy-related topics from the first which appreciates the spectacle of the coronation of George IV (explicitly avoiding an assessment of contentious issues, such as the highly controversial exclusion of Caroline—see Gardner, 159-217), through topics such as the backstage of a theatre, a hospital, a stage-coach, a cock-fight arena, an historic gothic ruin and the trial of the notorious murderer John Thurtell. All are presented with a relaxed, intimate verisimilitude, as letters to a family friend, and have a lightness yet a sincerity in the first-person reportage. They are tender and emotionally articulate, and while the themes can seem flighty and fashionable, "Herbert" himself is no fickle dandy. Instead he presents himself as a moderate man of serious moral sentiment who takes delight in clear and detailed accounts of his surroundings and how they affect his feelings. All have that central *Elian* quality of gentle playfulness, and demonstrate a similar literariness in their wide-ranging quotations. Only the penultimate number is directly comic and satiric in intention: "The Literary Police Office," February, 1823 (which appeared in three publications in 1823: two in London, and one in Philadelphia: *London Magazine*, Feb. 1823: 157-161; *The Athenæum; or, Spirit of the English Magazine*, 13 (1823): 151-2; and *Portfolio*, 15 (1823): 505).

Like *The Press*, "The Literary Police Office" is no *roman á clef*, and names individuals. "Herbert" protests that "the sketch is one from the very life." The framing device of the police office, and its magistrates, is a pastiche of police reports in periodicals such as Hunt's *Examiner*, constructed from a locatable and populated contemporary reality, and given stylistic legitimacy by Reynolds' knowledge as a qualified solicitor. "Herbert" obtains "a seat at the very foot of Sir Richard Birnie, and under the immediate nose [. . .] of Mr. Minshull himself." By 1823, Birnie was the renowned Chief Magistrate at Bow Street, having led the police officers in the arrest of the Cato Street conspirators in February, 1820, and having read the Riot Act to a violent crowd gathered to protest the diverted route of Queen Caroline's funeral *cortège* in August, 1821 (*DNB* and Baddington 206-9). George Rowland Minshull was also a senior magistrate based at Bow Street in the 1820s and 1830s (for references to Birnie and Minshull: *Annual Register*, 71-2, 207-8; Wight 52, 193-4; Egan, I 459). As the *London Magazine* reported, Minshull had similarly read the Riot Act in the face of crowds gathered to celebrate the withdrawal of the November, 1820, Bill which sought to force the divorce of "Queen" Caroline and the Prince Regent ("Politics and Public Events," *London Magazine*, Dec. 1820: 692-97). Hunt's *Examiner* covered the same "illuminations" of the evening streets of London, in an article entitled "Rejoicings on the Death of 'The Bill,'" and decried the use of military force, in the shape of the Life Guards, against throngs in "peaceful triumph"(Gardner, 157-82). Birnie and Minshull were therefore principal, celebrated figures in the London legal system in the 1820s: the face of the state at a time of widespread anxiety and agitation. In "The Literary Police Office," "Herbert" reports that "the magistrates, Sir Richard Birnie, and Mr. Minshull, were employed the whole of the day in hearing charges preferred against literary offenders." The recent contexts in which these magistrates operated lends "The Literary Police Office" a *frisson* of politicised agitation which the arrests themselves rather seem to lack—though the charges deliver stinging satire of both literary and, in Clare's case, personal dimensions.

Critics worry still about Clare's position in relation to the Romantic canon. Reynolds has no such concerns in the Bow Street police office: in total thirty-five writers are mentioned. Reynolds begins with Wordsworth, who he remains unable to let alone four years after humiliating him with *Peter Bell*. This first entry in the police books records that Wordsworth was arrested for stealing from Mrs Foy; he is said to have "several duplicates of little childish poems and toys about him, which he said he obtained from his grandmother"—and further he wants to "beat the magistrates' brains out with a log of the Excursion." Other highlights include Coleridge, "brought up for idling about the suburbs of town, without being able to give a satisfactory account of himself"; Bowles is arrested for poetic theft and the murder of Pope; Gilchrist reports being shot while "playing at Bowles" (Gilchrist being a central player in the Byron/Pope/Bowles controversy—and promoter of Clare in the first issue of the *London*); Moore has cheated the public out of money "under the pretence of selling a book"; Rogers and the Smith brothers are arrested for forgery. Reynolds evidently remains in awe of Byron who he deems worthy of the longest entry: the Lord is brought up by Jeffrey and Gifford for "violent assault upon literary gentlemen," having had a rough night with a muse who accosted him. Southey intervenes and wants him put in handcuffs, but Byron violently resists arrest. The legacy of his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) fires the purpose of Byron's prosecutors— and this poem, like Pope's *Dunciad* and Leigh Hunt's *Feast of the Poets* (1814)—is part progenitor of Reynolds' own task at hand.

While Byron features as a major player, Hunt, former figurehead of a new generation of poets which included Reynolds, is relegated. In *Feast of the Poets*, written while in prison and published in 1814, Hunt condemns previous English poems which have used the "session of the poets" structure: "The pieces it has already produced in our language, are the Session of the Poets, by Sir John Suckling; another Session, by an anonymous author, in the first volume of State Poems; the Trial for the Bays, by Lord Rochester; and the Election of a Poet Laureat [*sic.*], by Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham. They are for the most part vulgar and poor, with that strange affectation of slovenliness, which the lower spe-

cies of satire, in those times, appears to have mistaken for a vigorous negligence or gallant undress" (xii). In 1816, Reynolds' "The Pilgrimage of Living Poets to the Stream of Castaly" (*Weekly Entertainer* May 6, 1816: 369-74) in another parade of poets, Hunt receives his own perfectly complimentary paragraph: "Next came Hunt, with a rich fanciful goblet in his hand, finely enamelled with Italian landscapes; he held the cup to his breast as he approached, and his eyes sparkled with frank delight. After catching a wave, in which a sunbeam seemed freshly melted, he intimated that he should water heart's ease and many flowers with it. The sky appeared of a deep blue as he was retiring" (372). But then in 1820, in the Byronic *ottava rima* stanzas of "The Fields of Tothill" (Reynolds, *Fancy*) another of Reynold's satirical tours through the contemporary poetry, Hunt does not appear at all. Three years later, in 1823, in the "Police Office," Hunt is barely on the literary map, not even worth arresting, and meriting only one barbed line, squeezed by parentheses: Byron's bail money "he had lent to Mr. Leigh Hunt, to assist him in his philosophical pursuits." Reynolds puts Hunt on his way to becoming the scrounging Skimpole of Dickens' *Bleak House.*

Next up on the Police books is Crabbe, who is charged with stealing from the poor. Mysterious Sir Walter Scott is said to be a "Northern Cobbett" and is charged with a "*novel* fraud" (Reynolds' emphasis). Southey is well known to the officers, having been up on charges for literary offences before—and is condemned for "living on the lives of others" (writing biographies). Of all these male writers, only Clare's personal life is exaggerated into an offence:

> JOHN CLARE (a comely country-looking man, in a smock frock, and face to match) appeared to resist an order of filiation, made on the affidavit of one of the Muses with whom he kept company, and who appeared to have been too liberal of her favours to him. The oath being persisted in, his innocence stood him in no stead; and he was ordered to set apart half-a-crown, out of sixpence a-day, to support the child. He pleaded poverty; but the magistrates explained to him that a poor soldier had been known to have managed such an allowance, and therefore they resisted his plea. Clare is said to have a wife, and ten little children all under the age of four years, which makes his case more reprehensible.

Clare, the peasant lover, is a parodic, pauperised Byronic bumpkin, though in Reynolds' hands there is a clear distinction. Clare is to be humiliated by the consequences of his uncontrolled desire, while the "ferocious habits" of Reynolds' Byron are allowed to be an element of the Lord's brave, libertarian resistance to state control and Tory castigation—ridiculous, petty and violent though he is made to seem in the end. The result of Clare's lust is circumscribed to the unwanted, burdensome commodification of family responsibility. Lust does not liberate the poor; it imprisons.

While the audience might not have guessed, Reynolds knew he was hitting upon a sore point. Jonathan Bate's biography details the timing of Clare's presentation in that first issue of the *London*, January, 1820, the publication of *Poems Descriptive* on January 15, and the Clare's first trip to London in March, when he met Reynolds and other literary figures. As Clare encountered fame and a metropolitan literary sociability for the first time in his life, he was living with the knowledge that he was about to be a father, again for the first time. He had conceived a child with Martha (or Patty) Turner in November, 1819, just as his first book was with the printers (Bate 143-176). When Reynolds met Clare, perhaps Clare himself or even a nudging gossip around Taylor's table, told him about the Clare's perfectly ordinary expectations, which were to be delivered upon in June, 1820. Bate accumulates convincing evidence that Clare was not sure that he wanted to marry Martha Turner, and that around the same time he was spending extended time with rich patrons, the literary middle classes and, inevitably, self-appointed moral guardians—both in his own region and in London. Clare came under moral pressure to do the "right" thing, and marry Patty (Bate 171).

For Reynolds, Clare always seems to have been the poet who was literally, rather than literarily, "too liberal" in his indulgence in lust. By February, 1823, when "The Literary Police Office" was published, Clare had just two children with Patty, not ten as Reynolds says.

The first recorded response to Reynolds' spoof police report was written before publication, by a nervous James Hessey to his senior partner John Taylor:

> My dear John
>
> It is now past Midnight & I have the Signal for Bed, but I will not let the Parcel be sent off without a few lines & it is not very likely that I shall be able to write in the morning. I have taken many Opinions (and among the rest those of some of the Persons named) respecting the putting in of Names in full in Reynolds' Police Report and the Ayes seem to have it so they will e'en stand so –Reynolds himself is decidedly in favor of it, & so is Proctor & Cunningham (Rollins II, 431).

Surrounded by proofs of the *London* in the early hours of January 22, 1823, Hessey was a worried man. Libel, slander, reputation, politicised wars between magazines and the duelling death of a previous owner of this same magazine—all must have been on his mind. But Hessey boldly took his collaborators' advice, and strength from their confidence, and published.

Because Reynolds was a playwright and critic of the London stage, an approving response to "The Literary Police Office" appeared in *The Mirror of the Stage* in the same month it was published. Ironising the liberality of its politics being masked by firm policing, this notice sees the spoof as a "very

strange and in some respects a very *illiberal* article" (original emphases). *The Mirror* paraphrases only what is said about theatre people in Reynolds' piece: Tom Dibdin (actor and playwright), Sarah Siddons (actress) and George Colman (playwright and theatre manager). But *The Mirror* lists theatrical names that "The Literary Police Office" should have included in its "session of poets," including Joseph Glossop (theatre manager and founder of the Coburg Theatre which became the Old Vic), William Thomas Moncrieff (theatre manager) and Reynolds himself, who should have been "taken up for vending milk and water for spirit." (Anon., "Literary Police," *The Mirror of the Stage* 2:14 (Feb. 1823): 22).

The next response was the kind that had worried Hessey. William Maginn revived the war between the Scottish magazine and what he termed the "Profligacy of the London Press," in an anonymous article in August, 1824 (*Blackwood's* 179-183; Strout 122). Maginn's position against London print culture is bluntly politicised: "everything mean or degraded has a tendency to Whiggery, and may be safely classed under that great generic term for everything filthy" (179). Although Maginn claims to be disgusted with the ways in which the London press generally "abused" Southey, Coleridge, Scott and the like, he specifies John Taylor as a source of recent ire, for having penned a cutting review of Walter Scott's *Peveril of the Peak.* If Maginn is bold in naming Taylor, he is downright provocative in providing Taylor and Hessey's business address (181). As Naming individuals in a disputatious reviewing culture was still a rare and dangerous strategy. Maginn could have been inspired vengefully by the openness of "The Literary Police Office" itself. But he was mistaken as to the author of the *Peveril of the Peak* review: while Taylor was responsible as proprietor, Hazlitt was the author (*London* Feb. 1823: 205-10). Maginn is clear what "Taylor" risks in attacking Scott personally:

> let us for a moment conceive of the possibility of Sir Walter Scott's having not merely a secret moving hand in certain obnoxious Scottish publications, but suppose him actually to have written the papers on the Cockney School of Poetry [. . .] in short, all the articles of this Magazine which crushed our enemies to the earth [. . .] then let us look at the different conduct of Whig and Tory, under the same circumstances. Had he done this, and more than this, he never would have been in any proportion so unsparing and so unfeeling a libeller of the Whigs, as Lord Byron or Mr Thomas Moore have been of the Tories. We put it out of the question, that all our Tory attacks on the Whigs were TRUE, while all their Whig attacks on us have been false (181-2)

And so it goes on, in similarly divisive fashion. There is a reference here to Keats and Scott, both sent "to the earth" (at least apocryphally, in Keats's case) by *Blackwood's.* This is brave stuff indeed. In the heat of battle, Maginn calls up the full ranks of the opposing armies, going way beyond the confines of *Blackwood's* and the *London.* But still, the *London* is central here; Maginn ends his attack on "Cockney creatures" with mention of yet another slur of Scott in the *London,* and castigates the satire of "The Literary Police Office": "In a stupid attempt at wit in the same number, a poor devil, who signs himself Edward Herbert, calls Sir Walter Scott '*alias* the GREAT UNKNOWN, *alias* BILL BEACON, *alias* CUNNING WALTER' [. . .] Poor Driveller!" (183). Maginn detects Reynolds' political edge, showing how partisan he appeared in 1823. True, living writers of all (or no) political hues are denounced in the "Police Office"—Clare included—but the barbs are out when discussing high Tories. Reynolds was a moderate, but with or without Hunt, he was still a politicised cockney, by association and by design, working in a subtle way against Tory power, and Tory writers.

Revealing his allegiance to the cockney scene, Clare took his sexualised exposure in Reynolds' spoof in good spirit and with robust humour. A recently-transcribed draft letter contains Clare's muted response to "Herbert" following a typically self-immolating, anxious devaluation of his own work:

> I have sent you now the whole of my rubbish which I have scribbld latly they are not sent as good ones but for you to think as you please of & to act with as they deserve I fancy them fit for nothing but the fire & if you think the same I shall not feel dissapointed—I am this day clear of the world & care for nobody & be d—d if I dont continue & keep so for my own satisfaction as well as others – I surmise Mr Herbe[r]t to be an Overseer of a Parish & if by Craneology or other exploring systems he has found out some poor Brats in his Workhouse to be near a kin to me I hope such fancys will be the means of using them well—give him my respects (Robinson and Heyes 94-5)

Reynolds provided the confidence for Clare to scratch his own "itch of parody" (Storey, *Letters* 221-2) as he terms it when working himself up to mock Wordsworth earlier in 1821 (Clare, *Poems* II 7). He emboldened Clare, obviously in his only attempt at a "session of the poets"-style poem, "The Bards & their Doxeys" (Clare, *Poems* II 91-96).

The Oxford Clarendon editors provide a broad window of 1823-9 during which this poem might have been written. They note that this poem "could not have been written before 1823" (Clare *Poems* II, 363) due to the reference to Walter Scott's novel *Saint Ronan's Well,* published on December 27, 1823 (Scott 380). However, in terms of publications and poets mentioned, nothing marks out the period of writing as being later than 1824. I propose that "The Bards & their Doxeys" was finished early in 1824, in the wake of Reynolds' sexualised playfulness with Clare in "The Literary Police Office," while the Scott novel was still current, but before November, 1824, the last issue of the *London* under Taylor (Bauer 80-91). Like Reynolds' "Police Office," "The Bards & their Doxeys" is a bombastic and misogynist piece of sociable

satire which works its way through a wide variety of poets. Like Reynolds' satire, Clare's works through a *living* contemporary scene (exceptions being: Amos Cottle, most famous by the 1820s for being a victim of Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* who died in 1800, and whose name provides the last two words of Clare's poem; and "Peter Pindar," the pseudonym influential satirist John Wolcot, who died in 1819, and who Clare brings into a discussion of the living George Cruikshank rather than as a writing subject in his own right). The focus on living figures means that Clare's poem is much like Reynolds' prose spoof. If the logic of proper inclusion is that writers have to be alive, then Clare's poem must have been written before news of Byron's death in April, 1824, had reached England—especially as Clare was a witness to Byron's funeral *cortège* in July, 1824, and no mention is made of the funeral or Greece here. Byron's "rich doxey [. . .] sought France & fell by the famed gullotine" writes Clare, pointing to the risky Byronic paradox of aristocratic status and political Francophilia, but not to his actual death.

Among Clare's twenty poetic subjects, Reynolds comes close to top billing, following the grandest satirical target, Wordsworth, and Southey, every liberal poet's whipping-boy of the 1820s. Like Reynolds' "Police Office," "The Bards & their Doxeys" is framed as an epistle. The Oxford editors note that the addressee is Harry Stoe Van Dyk, who was to become the copy-editor of Clare's *Shepherd's Calendar* (1827), and who was yet another contributor to the *London* from 1823 onwards. Though never published in Clare's lifetime, "The Bards & their Doxeys" is a *London* poem through and through.

"The Bards & their Doxeys" structurally reflects Reynolds' arrest of Clare for sexual profligacy, and for refusing an "order of filiation": in a framing act of comedic revenge Clare marries the poets of his contemporary pantheon to a "doxey," the meaning of which in Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary* is simple: "A whore; a loose wench." Clare denigrates the muses of each of these writers, suggesting they are having disgraceful affairs and producing unwanted offspring aplenty, the same accusation Reynolds levelled at Clare. The poem forms an admission that no matter how saintly they appear in their published verse, Clare and his male contemporaries are condemned to an earthy, masculine lust for poetic inspiration, and success. By way of closure, here are the opening twenty-eight lines of "The Bards & their Doxeys":

> Dear Harry excuse me this whimsical letter
> Tis in ryhme friend efeth but that makes it no better
> & for loss of book gossip Ive made up a story
> Of Bards & their doxies & lay it before ye
> Tis hearty good will & not envy that pend it
> A trifle to laugh at & not for offence meant
> Each bard woos his muse & each muse sends a doxey
> To indulge him in ryhme on the wages of proxey
> For if the nine muses themselves fell to cooing
> With every young poet that longs to be wooing
> Theyd soon grow as common as facts may asure ye
> As the doxeys residing in fleet street & Drury
> & each one at least of these grecian bred lasses
> Would have ten bards a day leaving cards at parrnassus
> So thus every bard gets a miss for his hobby
> So your lady Harry plays tricks in the lobby
> While the dame of St Wordsworth would fall in a fit
> If ye popt neath her nose aught indescent for wit
> While Southys old nurse of a doxys so tame
> & so fond of shoving her nose into fame
> That shed een nurse monkey to prove her self loyal
> & sing him an ode if his title was royal
> Theres Reynolds his doxy a lady of fun
> Who fishes for laughter & catches a pun
> & often plays frolic with Corcorans loves
> Who are fond of black eyes & the punching with gloves
> & tho not over done with the charms of the graces
> Like them would as leave show their all as their faces
> (Clare, *Poems* II 91-92)

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