Print and British Imperialism: The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1826-46

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) and British imperialism. Founded in 1826 the Society aimed to offer cheap and informative texts to those who had limited access to schooling, namely the British working-classes. The SDUK published on a wide range of topics, from hydraulics and optics, to lighter subjects such as ornithology and natural history, before their dissolution in 1846.

To date, there has been some research into the operations of the SDUK, but it remains a largely superficial glimpse into an otherwise complex and expansive Society. Moreover, current scholarship considers the British as imperially unaware in the early nineteenth century, a central contention of this study.

This thesis, divided into two parts, explores the Society’s best-selling publication, The Penny Magazine, before analysing the networks of eminent and distinguished gentlemen who comprised the committee lists of the Society, spanning a number of professions and geographical locations.

Secondly, this thesis delves deeper into the messages relayed by the SDUK in their works regarding the British Empire, exploring the representation of the colonised peoples across the Empire, scientific acquisition in the colonies, and the sourcing of Britain’s most important imperial import, tea. This thesis demonstrates that issues of empire and imperialism permeated daily life in Britain in a period earlier than previous scholarship proposes.
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Introduction

In 1863, Wilkie Collins described the reading public as a public, ‘to be counted by the millions’, but ‘unknown to the literary world… unknown, as customers, at the great libraries and the great publishing-houses.’¹ It was a public that sought cheap literature and penny periodicals: ‘a reading public of three millions which lies right out of the pale of literary civilization, is a phenomenon worth examining – a mystery which the sharpest man among us may not find it easy to solve’.² Throughout the early nineteenth century, with revolutions and wars in living memory, many tried to supply this unknown public, the British working classes, with literature suited to their needs.³

The Control of Literature

The French Revolution of 1789, saw an increase in radical texts supporting political upheaval, the most popular being Thomas Paine’s Rights of Man (1791), selling 50,000 copies in three months, an unprecedented amount for such a publication at this time.⁴

Political tension in reaction to the French Revolution mounted in Britain over the turn of the nineteenth century. The Wars with France (1793-1815) led to famine and economic hardship, and the rise of taxes, including newspaper stamp duty. Although first established in 1712 to help fund Britain’s efforts in the War of the Spanish Succession, stamp tax on newspapers was gradually raised over the course of a century, and reached its peak in 1815 at 4d. Political tension became even more fraught in 1819, when the cavalry charged on a crowd gathered to see radical speakers, such as Henry Hunt, discuss parliamentary reform. Fifteen people were killed and hundreds were injured, leading to the event being named the Peterloo Massacre, the horror of which was circulated in newspapers across the country, causing many of the proprietors to be charged with seditious libel. The government consequently passed the Six Acts of 1819, including one act that extended the reach of stamp duty to all ‘papers containing public news, or intelligence or occurrences, or any remarks or observations, address, or letter thereon, or upon any matter established in Church or State’.⁵

Simply, any writings over two sheets containing news could not be sold for less than 6d, a price that would exclude a working-class readership from the world of political publications. In addition to the Newspaper and Stamp Duties Act, several other taxes hindered access to reading, including taxes on candles and windows, to which Richard Altick comments:

² Ibid, 172.
³ For example, the American Revolutionary War of 1775-83, the French Revolution (1789), and the Napoleonic Wars 1799-1815, as well as the Jacobite Rising of 1745.
Not without reason did Dickens remark that the window tax… was an even more formidable obstacle to the people’s reading than the so-called “taxes on knowledge” – the duties on newspapers, advertisements, and paper.6

Despite legislation, political news was available through one channel: the unstamped press. The radicals behind the unstamped press appealed directly to an excluded labouring class with no political or economic power, awakening a class consciousness among Britain’s workers.7 Although works such as William Cobbett’s 2d unstamped Political Register were reaching audiences of 40,000-50,000 in 1816,8 the radical unstamped press was at its height in the 1830s with the rise of Chartism, a movement that called specifically for political reform. At this time the unstamped press was led by Richard Carlile and his newspaper The Gauntlet, with a readership of around 22,000, and by Henry Hetherington’s Poor Man’s Guardian, that reached approximately 16,000 readers.9 The masthead of the Poor Man’s Guardian proclaimed that it was ‘a weekly newspaper for the people. Established contrary to “law,” to try the power of “might” against “right.”’, with an imitation duty stamp reading ‘Knowledge is Power’.10

![Masthead of The Poor Man's Guardian](image)

Figure 1: Masthead of The Poor Man’s Guardian, 9 July 1831. Taken from British Library Newspapers, Gale Cengage.

The power of literature in moulding the masses was becoming apparent. With technological advances in steam-powered printing and improvements in reproduction techniques, literature was becoming evermore accessible. It was felt that literature could not only muster support for change and reform – perhaps even revolution – but literature was capable of instilling morals in the British public or offering them education in a drive of self-improvement.

Two sectors in particular attempted to combat the efforts of the radical press, and channel reading down safer paths. Firstly, religious groups attempted to counter radical ideas with ‘safe’ and ‘wholesome’

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7 Hollis, Pauper Press, 8.
8 See Altick, 392. Some estimate up to 70,000 as a more accurate figure.
9 Ibid, 393.
reading that promoted divine providence and morality. Secondly, a group infused with what Richard Altick calls ‘the utilitarian spirit’, had as their main objective the promotion and distribution of secular information and education. Offering something apart from the polemics of the radicals and the religious groups, the aptly named the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) was founded in 1826 by Henry Brougham.

**Henry Brougham**

Henry Brougham had arrived in London from his hometown of Edinburgh already renowned for his work on the *Edinburgh Review*, a journal he co-founded in 1802. Coupled with his publications deriding slavery, his progressive reputation brought him to the attention of the Whigs, who asked him to lead their press campaign for the 1807 election. Moreover on his arrival to London, Brougham befriended a circle of radicals including Lord Byron and Thomas Barnes (the editor of *The Times*), as well as those in the abolitionist Clapham Sect. His *Edinburgh Review* colleague Francis Horner also introduced him to his own London network, and Brougham began to attend dinners at Holland House, a literary, social and political centre, particularly for the Whigs. Having studied natural sciences and law at the University of Edinburgh, Brougham also entered the court of Lincoln’s Inn in 1803, furthering the reach of his networks into that of the London law circuit.

As his popularity with the Whigs grew, Brougham also became an MP, entering the House of Commons for a year in 1810 after being offered the rotten borough of Camelford, and returning in 1815 as MP to Winchelsea. Moreover, his defence in 1820 of Caroline of Brunswick during her divorce earned Brougham a national reputation. His speech in defence of Caroline in the House of Lords lasted two days, and while his:

> earlier parliamentary performances had made his name in the Commons and among mercantile communities, this one assured his fame throughout the nation. He received the freedom of numerous cities, and in many parts of the country public houses were renamed the Brougham's Head.

Brougham continued to establish himself as a leading radical in the House of Commons as he campaigned for educational and political reform, as well as the abolition of the slave trade. In 1830 Brougham was made Lord Chancellor and entered the House of Lords, where he fought for the Great Reform Act, passed in 1832.

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12 Caroline of Brunswick married George, Prince of Wales (later King George IV). He had already illegally married, but was nonetheless betrothed to Caroline in 1794. He restricted her access to her daughter, Princess Charlotte of Wales and failed to inform Caroline of her death in 1817. Caroline was also accused of numerous affairs and having an illegitimate child.
By 1830 Brougham had infiltrated political and literary communities through social gatherings, such as those of Holland House, and had won the respect of the public through his Parliamentary activities, representing the needs of many, including merchants and labourers. In addition, Brougham’s circles extended into many fields, including freemasonry, after his initiation in Stornoway in 1799, as well as academia, finance, and politics, of which all converged in the foundation of the new University of London, a cause spearheaded by Brougham from 1825.

While the new university would offer a secular alternative to the religious institutions of Oxford and Cambridge, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge offered those with limited schooling access to education, namely the labouring classes of Britain. The Society noted that several societies already existed for the dissemination of religious knowledge, thus their aims would be to offer general scientific knowledge suitable for all classes of the community, avoiding any ‘Controversial Divinity’ or ‘principles of revealed Religion’. The Society’s aims were summed up simply and concisely in their prospectus, stating that:

the object of the Society is strictly limited to what its title imports, namely, the imparting useful information to all classes of the community, particularly to such as are unable to avail themselves of experienced teachers, or may prefer learning themselves."  

The Society outlined six simple rules that governed their publications, stating that the subject of each treatise must be suitable branch of Natural Philosophy, comprehensive and understandable: ‘the object being thus to furnish the means of acquiring, step by step, the whole of any department of Science’. The format of their publications was also defined:

Each Treatise will consist of about thirty-two pages Octavo, printed so as to contain the quantity of above one hundred ordinary octavo pages, with neat Engravings on Wood and Tables. It will be sold for Sixpence; and one will appear on the 1st and 15th of each Month.

The Society also offered their publications to educational institutions at a cut cost:

Reading Societies, Mechanics’ Institutions and Education Committees in the Country, will be furnished with supplies at a liberal abatement in price.  

Not only would this make access to their publications easier, but would allow the Society direct access to their target readership: labourers seeking self-improvement through entertaining and useful instruction.

The notion of ‘useful’ can be seen as a piece of popular contemporary philosophical rhetoric, relating to one particular school of thought – utilitarianism. Arguably, the man at the centre of utilitarian thought was Jeremy Bentham. Despite his fame being rather limited to Europe, he was a man much respected by

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14 SDUK Prospectus (1829), 17.
15 Ibid, 18.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
public figures, particularly fellow liberal reformers like Henry Brougham.\textsuperscript{18} The cornerstone of Bentham’s thought was the principle of the ‘greatest happiness of the greatest number’\textsuperscript{19}. This, coupled with his notions of utility – by which ‘is meant that property in any object, whereby it tends to produce benefit, advantage, pleasure, good or happiness’\textsuperscript{20} – underpinned ideals of educational reform in the nineteenth century. Bentham was also an advocate of freedom of speech, abolition, as well as extending the franchise. Brougham became an acquaintance of Bentham at Holland House, and becoming part of his inner circle, despite differences in opinion on political reform.\textsuperscript{21}

Bolstered by Benthamite reformers, specifically SDUK founder-member James Mill, Bentham’s utilitarian philosophy was one of the strands that tied the members of the Society together. Mill’s essay \textit{Education} stated that ‘the end of education is to render the individual, as much as possible, an instrument of happiness, first to himself, and next to other beings.’\textsuperscript{22} Thus, in utilitarian thinking, education would provide happiness to individuals, and in turn, improve society. Indeed as J.N. Hayes states:

\begin{quote}
Liberal Whiggery had willingly accepted the utilitarian creed that every man was an atom, a free agent in a society that was nothing but the sum of those atoms. Together the atomistic society and the utility of knowledge spelled education, at least to a convinced believer in the progress of the age; for, if (1) society was an aggregate of individuals and (2) society was dependent on useful knowledge for its advance, it followed that the more people acquainted with useful knowledge, the faster the progress of Society.\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

For Whigs such as Henry Brougham, utility and education could be found in the dissemination of the natural sciences, through which Britain’s labourers could undergo self-improvement and heighten their moral consciousness, allowing them to understand the world around them and carry out their work more effectively.

\textbf{Publications}

In 1827, in keeping with their beliefs in the utility of the natural sciences, the SDUK published their first treatise, Brougham’s own \textit{Objects, Advantages and Pleasures of Science}, as part of a series entitled the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{18} It appears Bentham’s relationships with many public figures were turbulent, as Bentham became frustrated with what he considered half-hearted loyalty to political reform. See Ben Eggleston and Dale E. Miller, \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Utilitarianism} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
  \item \textsuperscript{19} Jeremy Bentham, \textit{An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1876), 5.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 2.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} See W. H. Burston, \textit{James Mill on Education} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 41
  \item \textsuperscript{23} J. N. Hays, ‘Science and Brougham’s Society’ \textit{Annals of Science}, 20, 3, 1964, 227-241, p227-228.
\end{itemize}
Library of Useful Knowledge. By 1833 *Objects* had sold over 40,000 copies\(^24\) yet the following treatises on mechanics, hydrostatics, and hydraulics failed to attract the attention of the masses who sought entertainment over education.\(^25\) In order to reach a wider audience the Society decided that the best course of action would be to publish literature on a broader and lighter range of subjects. Thus the following year, in 1828 the group started work on a new series entitled the Library of Entertaining Knowledge, covering subjects such as natural history, ornithology, accounts of foreign lands, botany, and biographies.

Aside from their Libraries, the Society also had a number of smaller ventures over the course of their operations.

From 1828 the Society published *The British Almanac* which included the dates of birth and death of eminent men, tables of the sun, moon and tides, as well as miscellaneous information on government legislation, education and commerce. In keeping with other Society publications and unlike typical almanacs, it was designed to act as a repository of reference, an item to be collected rather than disregarded at the end of the year. The repeal of almanac tax in 1834 led the SDUK to publish a number of variants as well as their standard British Almanac, usually sold for 1s. Aiming to be as inclusive and accessible as possible, these included a household almanac for 9d, a working-man’s almanac for 3d, and a sheet almanac for 1d.\(^26\) In order to further expand their readership, between 1835-1840 the Society published a number of educational titles as part of a short-lived series entitled *The Library for the Young*, which included *Historical Sketches of Spain and Portugal* (1835-36), *Historical Pictures: War of the Roses, 1450 to the Great Rebellion, 1642* (1836) and *Chivalry and Charity: Illustrated by the lives of Bertrand Du Guesclin and John Howard* (1840). Further titles in this Library encouraged the learning of arithmetic, and drawing skills.

Another small series of volumes, the *Working Man’s Companion* aimed to offer instruction to those in agricultural and rural areas, that is, according to Charles Knight, those with:

restricted means of procuring information on matters connected with the details of humble life\(^27\)

For example, *Cottage Evenings* (1831) encouraged wholesome activities and included information on the stars, plants and animals. In its first essay, on the ‘Value of Time’, *Cottage Evenings* encouraged reading as a past time:

Useful learning is very much like money saved: it brings more, and it grows into a large sum; and, some day or other, it is found to be worth twenty times as much as it was thought to be worth at first.\(^28\)


\(^{25}\) See Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 86.


Other volumes introduced the benefits of machinery in cheap and mass production, and recent improvements in industry to those who still feared the consequences of technological development on agricultural industry.

In keeping with attracting an agricultural audience the Society also began The Farmers’ Series from 1833. Much of this series was written by William Youatt, a veterinary surgeon who also lectured at the new London University. The series consisted largely of volumes on farming and the management of several breeds, including dogs, horses, sheep and cows. Youatt’s work on artificial selection in cattle breeding is noted as an influence on Darwin’s evolutionary theory, and Darwin’s heavily annotated copy of *Cattle: Their Breeds, Management and Diseases* (1837) is housed at the University of Cambridge.29

Charles Knight, the Society’s publisher also undertook a number of projects on behalf of the Society, including *The Penny Cyclopædia* in 1833. Knight aimed to rival the expensive encyclopaedias of the time, and offer something to the mass reading public who sought knowledge. First published on 2 January 1833, a new issue was released weekly. When advertising the *Penny Cyclopædia*, Knight commented on the length of the series, and the dedication required to collect it:

> Those who expend their Weekly Penny in this work must in some degree consider that they are laying it up in a Savings Bank of Knowledge.30

Although sales began at around 55,000 a week, they slowly declined in the late 1830s to 20,000. Despite this, and in an effort to complete the series, numbers were released four times a week, meaning that many subscribers struggled to cope with the weekly rising costs of the publication.31 Nonetheless, the *Penny Cyclopædia* came to an end in 1843 at twenty-seven complete volumes.

Yet the Society’s most successful publication was also its most accessible. In order to reach a larger readership, namely the working-classes, the SDUK began producing *The Penny Magazine* in 1832. The magazine, a miscellany, included a range of articles, abridgements of previous SDUK publications and original contributions, but its most striking feature was the high quality woodcuts that adorned its pages. At its peak, *The Penny Magazine* sold around 200,000 copies weekly in Britain, far outselling its contemporaries such as *The Saturday Magazine* and *Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal*.32

Amongst the wealth of subjects covered by the Library of Entertaining Knowledge and *The Penny Magazine* is a particular theme: the British Empire. In addition to articles explicitly dedicated to the Empire, features on, for example, natural history, botany, and everyday commodities, have the theme of empire consistently woven through them. This thesis examines the representation of the British Empire in these works, and their treatment of contemporary issues surrounding the Empire and imperialism. So

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30 ‘Works Published under the Superintendence of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, by C. Knight, Pall-Mall East’ (1832) University of Oxford, Bodleian Library, John Johnson Collection, Charles Knight.
31 Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 69.
32 Ibid, 393.
Despite assertions by Professor Bernard Porter that a knowledge of, or a regard for, the Empire was not taught in schools, thus explaining ‘its lack of impact at home’33 or Jan Morris’s similar statement that ‘all in all the British were not thinking in imperial terms’34, the contents of The Penny Magazine are evidence that in daily life the Empire was hard to escape. Indeed, the notion that the Empire pervaded everyday life in Britain by the 1820s is a central contention of this thesis.

**Pax Britannica: ‘Britain’s Imperial Century, 1815-1914’**

The long nineteenth century was a period of expansion for the British Empire, despite the loss of its American colonies. From 1815, victory in the wars with France and the expansion of British controlled territories consolidated Britain’s image as a great global power, and ‘protection of that status and her growing presence overseas involved an increasing range of imperial commitments in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific’.36 During the wars with France between 1793 and 1815, Britain gained several territories from her imperial rivals, and secured control over Java, Malaya, Senegal, and Sumatra, and consolidated its power in India, Ceylon, New South Wales and Cape Colony. Furthermore, Britain gained islands including St. Lucia and Trinidad in the West Indies, as well as Malta, Mauritius, and the Seychelles. ‘By 1815 – or, more strictly, 1818 – the main framework of the Britain’s empire had taken shape’.37 A period of relative peace and stability, 1815-1914 has been termed Pax Britannica.

Thus the nineteenth century was a period of growth and consolidation for Britain and her Empire. Africa provides an example of how Britain’s territory was to expand over the century: historian Andrew Porter calls the Empire in Africa ‘territorially immense but—with the exception of the Cape Colony and the Transvaal—economically insignificant’, a group of ‘tiny coastal footholds’ that hardly changed until 1865, when ‘colonial expansion inland brought [Britain] territory in every quarter of the continent’, almost 2.8 million square miles.38 This serves as a stark reminder that during 1826-46, the period of focus for this study, the Empire was but a small part of what it would become. This growth is also reflected in the export of materials, as Britain became ‘the workshop of the world’, producing approximately two-thirds of the globe’s coal, and more than half its iron and cotton cloth by 1851.39 Statistics provided by Ronald Hyam show that during the time period of this study the ‘declared value’ of cotton exports grew from ‘£38.9 million in 1825 to £60.1 million in 1845 and £190 million in 1869.’40

Public support for the Empire would be paramount in continuing its expansion throughout the century. Thus this study asks to what extent the publications of the SDUK acted as a conduit to promote and justify British imperialism. In order to answer this question, this thesis firstly aims to explore the

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35 Taken from Ronald Hyam, *Britain’s Imperial Century, 1815-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993).
40 Ibid, 22.
relationship between print culture and the Empire in this period, and then to establish how the British Empire and its subjects were represented in the publications of the SDUK.

**Print Culture and the British Empire**

The relationship between the press and empire is a growing field in book history, with recent studies exploring imperialism in print. Innes M. Keihren, Charles W. J. Withers and Bill Bell’s *Travels into Print* (2015), for example, discusses the motives behind exploration and travel writing which was often written under instructions issued by the British Admiralty, Colonial Office or the Royal Society with the purpose of promoting Britain’s imperial endeavours.\(^{41}\) Although limited to books published by John Murray and addressing the complex relationship between author, publisher and official bodies, Keighren, Withers and Bell’s work demonstrates that imperialism and imperialistic institutions infiltrated and influenced print culture.

Similar studies have established print culture as a tool for promoting ideologies. In *Science and Salvation* (2004) Aileen Fyfe explores the relationship between science and religion in print, focusing on the efforts of the Evangelical group, the Religious Tract Society, in negotiating the ‘threat’ of popular science; a response to publications by groups such as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. In establishing a view of nineteenth-century print culture, Fyfe’s later work, *Steam-Powered Knowledge* (2012), also acknowledges the role of advanced production techniques in creating cheap literature, discussing William and Robert Chambers’s decision to utilise steam-powering printing machines. The SDUK similarly utilised the latest technology to make its publications accessible. Although it outsourced work to the printer William Clowes, this ensured that their works remained as cheap as possible. This thesis, while building on these texts, aims to demonstrate the role the SDUK played in producing cheap literature during the early nineteenth century, a matter overlooked by Fyfe in favour of more successful publishing organisations.

Furthermore, in exploring the relationship between print culture and the Empire, this thesis intends to shed light on the men behind the Society’s networks and affiliations, and their role in creating not only authoritative texts, but in establishing the SDUK as an influential organisation. To date there have been a small number of histories of the Society which examine their operations as part of a larger context of nineteenth-century literacy, Richard Altick’s *The English Common Reader* (1957) and Rosemary Ashton’s *Victorian Bloomsbury* (2012) are perhaps two of the most renowned.\(^{42}\) However, the majority of the works available build upon the research of Monica Grobel, whose 1932 thesis 'The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge 1826-1846 and its Relation to Adult Education in the First Half of the XIXth Century' represents the SDUK as providing the masses with top-down education and indoctrination.

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There has only been one study of the SDUK as a business venture. Scott Bennett in Shattock and Wolff’s The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings (1982) provides an analysis of sales, production costs, and marketing strategies, all of which are important in understanding how the Society operated in Britain. Moreover, Bennett’s article ‘The Editorial Character and Readership of “The Penny Magazine”: An Analysis’ (1984) provides a breakdown of article genres in The Penny Magazine, and explores why it became so successful. For Bennett, The Penny Magazine ‘gave its readers a chance to participate in a broader, more varied, more complex, and certainly a busier world than had been open to the common reader a generation before’. Bennett’s description of The Penny Magazine as the first to provide the masses of Britain a glimpse into Britain’s expanding horizons through informative articles and high-quality illustrations is an aspect crucial to this undertaking.

In exploring the links between print culture and empire, this investigation will demonstrate how the SDUK operated, and will shed light on the network of eminent gentlemen that influenced the Society’s publishing practices, aspects thus far overlooked by historians.

Constructing the Empire in Print

In determining the extent to which the SDUK’s publications promoted and justified the British Empire, this study will address how it constructed British imperialism and the subjects of the Empire in the minds of the domestic reading public. Indeed, this study supports Said’s assertion that print was paramount in mustering support for imperialism:

The main battle in imperialism is over land, of course; but when it came to who owned the land, who had the right to settle and work on it, who kept it going, who won it back, and who now plans its future – these issues were reflected, contested, and even for a time decided in narrative.

Indeed, the way in which Empire is discussed in print is crucial in understanding how public support for imperialism was established. Studies of the popular press’s construction of the British Empire are sparse. Julie F. Codell’s edited collection Imperial Co-Histories (2003) builds on Shattock and Wolff’s assertion that the Victorian press was ‘the context within which people lived and worked and thought, and from which they derived their (in most cases quite new) sense of the outside world.’ Codell adds, ‘that as the nineteenth century progressed, readers also derived their sense of their own and others’ places and spaces from the press, which offered a major site for the production, and re-productions of national identities.’ My research will interrogate Codell’s statement that ‘representations of British ideals served to justify Empire at home and imperial control abroad, and the press was a major venue of such representations and

their political uses.’ For Codell ‘the representation of the Empire in the press called on readers to support or reject policies for places they would never see and for people they would never meet except in texts and images’. This study will examine this statement in relation to the first half of the nineteenth century rather than the latter, the usual subject of such explorations. Studying the texts produced by the SDUK in the early years of Pax Britannica will provide a new insight to the representation, rhetoric, and construction of empire in the minds of the masses.

While investigating the Society’s representation of empire, this thesis will also examine how the colonised peoples were described and imagined in print. To do this, this study draws on the work of Benedict Anderson, who writes of the construction of nations and the perception of community:

> it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.

For Anderson this communion can be forged in print. Books, newspapers and periodicals, objects ‘exactly reproduced on a large scale’ are consumed simultaneously, and it is that simultaneity that allows an idea or ideology to be spread. Publications such as *The Penny Magazine* brought ideas of empire to the British masses simultaneously and can be seen to promote an idea of community which ‘regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each’ is ‘always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship’. Such agency is in direct contrast to the work of Edward Said, whose construction is one of an inherent inferiority:

> Neither imperialism nor colonialism is a simple act of accumulation and acquisition. Both are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations that include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech domination.

This concept, ‘what the English initially called “improvement” or “betterment” and, later on, “moral and material progress”’ stems from French imperial ideology: *la mission civilisatrice* [the civilising mission], but came to be one utilised by all European powers in empire building. It was an ideology that encompassed moral, technological, cultural and scientific improvement, adding a ‘moral dimension to

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50 Ibid, 34.
51 Ibid, 7.
54 Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 130.
arguments for imperialist expansion that were otherwise limited to economic self-interest’. Its consistent presence in the publications of the SDUK requires attention.

So while many of Said’s concepts are crucial in considering the construction of the Empire and its people, this thesis will challenge aspects of his notions of ‘othering’ colonised subjects of the British Empire, namely their use in creating a contrasted, more positive image of the Western world. Moreover this thesis deals with an earlier period of British imperialism than that discussed in Said’s *Orientalism* (2003). This study also builds upon the work of David Cannadine’s publication *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (2001). Cannadine, unlike many other scholars notes that ‘the truth of the matter is that Britain was very much a part of the empire, just as the rest of the empire was very much part of Britain.’ The idea that the Britain and the Empire are synonymous is one frequently ignored by scholars, but will be interrogated throughout this research. As Cannadine suggests:

society on the periphery was the same as, or even on occasions superior to, society in the metropolis. Thus regarded, the British Empire was about the familiar and domestic, as well as the different and the exotic: indeed, it was in large part about the domestication of the exotic – the comprehending and the reordering of the foreign in parallel, analogous, equivalent, resemblant terms.

My research aims to take aspects of the debates surrounding imperialism, its rhetoric, and presentation to the British reading public in order to investigate how the SDUK created a vision of empire, using British ideals and the narrative of the civilising mission to justify the nation’s expanding horizons. This study hopes to shed light on overlooked texts and the group behind their publication, while contributing new debates on their impact upon the British reading public in the early, formative years of Pax Britannica.

**Researching the SDUK**

In 1848, two years after their dissolution, the SDUK deposited their papers in University College London’s Special Collections which are currently housed in the National Archives at Kew. The archive consists of office papers, several minute books, and a vast collection of correspondence. Some items, such as minute and letter books are incomplete, but much of the archive is ordered and well catalogued. However, some items and documents, namely correspondence and paperwork regarding illustrations, are lost or have been damaged over time. This is overwhelmingly applicable to the records of the main engravers to the SDUK, Stephen Sly & Co, and perhaps the reason for their invisibility in our history books. There is also no clear record of the Society’s international dealings and sales, and the archives of

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57 Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, xvii.
58 Ibid, xix.
international branches either have not survived, or are held in individual holdings across the globe. This research has assessed the relevant outgoing and incoming correspondence of SDUK committee members for each chapter, as well as the remaining office papers.

Yet the most important historical source for this research has been the Society’s published texts. The texts used in this study are those produced in the Society’s early years, particularly Edward Lankester’s *Vegetable Substances* series (1829-33), Knight’s *Menageries* (1829), and *The Penny Magazine* (1832-45). The Society’s texts are freely available online through Google’s ‘Google Books Library Project’ which scanned the out-of-copyright holdings from several libraries including the University of Oxford’s Bodleian Library, the original source of many of the SDUK’s digitised texts. Despite their availability and the insight they offer into early nineteenth century culture, the Society’s texts remain understudied.

Using Google Books as a resource has its dangers, as Patrick Leary stated, it can lead to ‘a cherry-picking approach in reading’ and can distort the context in which a text was written. However, in tune with the aims of the Society, it also allows access to nineteenth-century print where it might not otherwise be available, opening the ‘period’s life and literature’ to exploration. However, as many scholars agree, digital editions are not a substitute to primary research, but a supplement to it, and most of the texts referenced throughout this study are from my own personal collection.

**Structure and Organisation**

In examining the SDUK’s representation of the Empire, this study is divided into two parts. Part one will firstly interrogate the relationship between print culture and empire, exploring the SDUK’s committee members, its publishing practices, and its production techniques. Who were the men driving the operations of the Society? Where and how did they operate? How did the Society interact with imperialism? How did their texts reach such a wide spread readership?

The first chapter introduces the Society’s bestselling work, the foundation of their success and, with 200,000 readers at its peak, the key publication in spreading their ideologies. This chapter reveals how the Society and *The Penny Magazine*’s editor, Charles Knight, made it an affordable, recognisable and familiar commodity, attractive to the emerging mass readership of the 1830s. The main source for this undertaking is a supplement to *The Penny Magazine* produced by Knight, ‘The Commercial History of The Penny Magazine’, in which he explores the magazine’s production, from paper making, type-setting, and to the final stages of printing and binding. How does the supplement perceive the magazine’s success, and what messages did it aim to relay? In answering these questions, this chapter aims to establish the root of the magazine’s – and ultimately the Society’s – success.

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60 For example, archival material related to the SDUK in China is spread across several archives, including those in the United States of America (Harvard has copies of the group’s *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* and Yale has papers relating to Elijah Bridgman for example) and the United Kingdom (Cambridge holds the archives of Jardine Matheson and various papers are housed at UCL).

61 See http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks and http://www.google.co.uk/googlebooks/library/.


63 Ibid, 84.
The second chapter examines the foundations of the SDUK – the men who shaped its operations and agenda, perhaps the most overlooked aspect of the Society in its production of texts. This chapter reveals the extent of the Society’s carefully crafted network, with reaches into all sectors, from religion, education, politics and government. How did these networks benefit the SDUK and influence the texts they produced? What was the Society’s relationship with the Empire, and what influence did members of the SDUK have on policies across the colonies? As the founder and chairman of the Society, Henry Brougham is at the beginning and the centre of this expansive network, and it is on his connections this research is centred. The operations and motives behind the foundation of an SDUK in Canton, China in 1834 are the focus of Chapter Three. This case study will also examine the unusual collaboration of merchants and missionaries and the obstacles they faced in producing, and circulating, literature in an insular imperial China. In doing so, the chapter aims to shed some light on Britain’s interactions with its informal empire, that is, imperial relations outside of the colonies, and demonstrate the power invested in literature in moulding the reading public and influencing opinion.

Part two of this thesis analyses the texts of the SDUK, each chapter in turn detailing the treatment of a different imperial theme in the publications of the SDUK, aiming to understand how they contributed to their readers’ notions of the British Empire. These chapters consider the SDUK’s literature in light of the theories of Mary Louise Pratt (2008) and Edward Said (1993, 2003), exploring how imperialism was reflected, contested and constructed in print. The rhetoric used in the justification of imperial expansion that signalled Britain’s role as a global leader, and the narrative of the civilising mission will be analysed. Each of the three case studies focuses on an aspect of the Empire that infiltrated the lives of the masses, while considering Codell’s notion concerning the press as a tool to represent and justify the Empire to a domestic audience.

Chapter Four offers an analysis of natural history throughout The Penny Magazine, and the periodical’s role as an authoritative repository, organising and disseminating scientific information to the masses. This chapter investigates how the Society represented the acquisition of colonial specimens of animal and plant species, and how in turn these were used to heighten the status of imperial Britain as a scientifically advancing nation while the colonies were in need of modernisation and improvement, the rhetoric of the civilising mission. Moreover this research shows The Penny Magazine was used as a museum-like site of display: educating and preparing the masses in how to understand otherwise codified and specialist scientific knowledge. Understanding specimens acquired in the colonies is a prevalent theme throughout the publications of the Society, which place an importance in understanding the origin of all things colonial, including Britain’s favourite beverage, tea.

Chapter Five aims to add to a small body of literature on tea drinking, and the role of tea in establishing an English cultural identity, adding a consideration of imperialism and the civilising mission, and their effects in constructing this identity. This chapter considers how the SDUK used tea as a tool to promote imperial politics throughout The Penny Magazine as well as in Edwin Lankester’s Entertaining Knowledge volume Vegetable Substances: Food for the Use of Man (1832). In addition this case study analyses the rhetoric used in the Society’s articles to establish not only Britain’s status in the imperial hierarchy, but that of its people as active consumers of imperial produce.
With a number of SDUK members also being acquainted with the Clapham sect, an evangelical anti-slavery group, and other abolitionist circles, one would expect the rhetoric of the Society’s works on slavery to be purely supportive of emancipation and abolition, but the reality is not so straight-forward. Using West Indian plantation slavery as a case study, Chapter Six not only analyses the changes and transitions in rhetoric in articles concerning slavery, but examines the depiction of slavery in the popular press, comparing the SDUK’s portrayal to that of two contemporaries, *Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal* and *The Saturday Magazine* in order to contextualise its treatment. This chapter further investigates Britain’s role as a global leader, civilising the world through imperialism, and opens new debates on slavery in the periodical press, a neglected area of study.

The final chapter focuses on a supplement to *The Penny Magazine* entitled ‘Aborigines in British Colonies: South Africa’, published over two issues in 1838, which described and visualised the colonised native peoples, and laid out future plans for South Africa under British rule. The supplement offers further discussions of the Society’s use of rhetoric and hierarchies in ordering the colonised peoples of South Africa. This case study draws on anthropological theories of the construction of race, intertwined with Victorian ideas of progression and civilisation, in order to answer a number of questions. What constituted a civilised race for the Society, and how does this correlate with anthropological theory? What was Britain’s role in the colonisation of South Africa? How was this presented to the masses in print, and to what end?

This study explores the relationship between print culture and imperialism by examining the SDUK’s networks and publishing practices, before analysing the Society’s construction of the British Empire and its peoples in their texts. In doing so, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on the Empire in the popular and periodical press, contributing to new debates on the use of print in promoting and justifying British politics abroad. The SDUK, a previously overlooked group, offers a rich source of information on the representation of empire in the nineteenth century, and sheds light on the reach of print networks throughout the Empire.
Part One
Chapter One

The Production of Ideals: A Brief History of The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge

The Penny Magazine was the most successful publication of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, achieving the highest sales and circulation figures of all its outputs. The idea of creating a cheap and educational periodical that would be within the economic reach of the poorest workers stemmed directly from a conversation between Charles Knight, an avid member of the Society and one of its publishers, and his neighbour, Member of Parliament and fellow SDUK member, Matthew D. Hill, which turned to the ‘cheap and offensive publications’ available to the masses. The pair decided that a periodical to remedy the unstamped, radical publications was needed, especially in such a time of political excitement, when much of the available literature ‘in some degree came under the character of contraband newspapers and were nearly all dangerous in principle and coarse in language.’ Knight proceeded to present the idea to the Society, bringing nine examples of cheap and dangerous (‘morally, scandalous and obscene; religiously, not simply infidel, but scoffing and ribald, politically preaching anarchy’) literature that was readily available. The Penny Magazine aimed to drive these ‘vile publications absolutely out of existence’. However, it must also be noted that the proposed publication faced some amount of opposition from the older Whig members of the Society, who feared that such a cheap publication might affect the reputation and dignity of the Society. Nonetheless, with Knight as editor, the first issue of The Penny Magazine reached the shelves of vendors, just three weeks after the original proposal, on March 31 1832.

This chapter will examine the production of The Penny Magazine in order to ascertain how it reached such an unprecedentedly large readership, an important step in the SDUK’s ability to spread and promote their ideology, and in turn encourage the readership to purchase further Society publications. Much of the success of The Penny Magazine can be attributed to Knight, whose advocacy of technology, and tireless efforts in forging circulation networks ensured the magazine was available swiftly and cheaply across the country.

There is an abundance of scholarship on the editorial intentions of The Penny Magazine, but information on the magazine’s production, other than ‘The Commercial History’ written by Knight, is sparse. The most comprehensive text on the capabilities of the magazine comes from Scott Bennett’s 1984 article,

65 Ibid, 180.
66 Cheap Literature for the People: An Address by Lord Brougham Delivered to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 12 October 1858 (London: Partridge and Co., 1858), 10.
67 Ibid.
which examines the character and social impact of the magazine. He attributes *The Penny Magazine*’s success to four factors: the use of illustrations, the size of illustrations, the brevity of the articles, and the rich variety of subject matter included in the publication. Bennett writes that the use of illustrations defined the format of the magazine, and made the ever-expanding empire comprehensible to even those of the lowest orders.  

He also writes that *The Penny Magazine* offered something ‘beyond polemics’ to a mass readership, who sought to understand the world around them, rather than shape it.

Historians have analysed *The Penny Magazine* from a variety of perspectives, yet their focus has tended to be on the magazine’s failings rather than its achievements. Aileen Fyfe’s *Steam-Powered Knowledge* (2012) simply uses *The Penny Magazine* and the SDUK’s eventual collapse as a yardstick with which to measure the success of the Chambers brothers and their own 1.5d journal. Patricia Hollis’s *The Pauper Press* (1970) considers cheap literature from the point of view of the unstamped press and working-class radicals. Hollis rebuffs the efforts of the Society describing the magazine as ‘tory frippery, as patronizing as it was hypocritical’ and that the education the working classes sought ‘was not to be found in school, nor in school books, and certainly not in *The Penny Magazine*.’  

Regarding both *The Penny Magazine* and *Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal*, Patrick Brantlinger states, ‘the apparently inoffensive, nonpartisan writing…disguises how controversial they seemed at the time’, and thus *The Penny Magazine* remains simplified in its historical analysis and under researched.

Richard Altick’s canonical work *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (1957) explores *The Penny Magazine* in a rather more balanced style. Although the magazine may not have entirely fulfilled its role as a major didactic publication, Altick argues that workers still got a penny’s worth of enjoyment from the illustrations alone. Similarly, it also offered the public something other than the ‘rabble rousing politics and crude sensationalism’ so associated with cheap periodicals and allowed the upper classes to finally see that not all cheap literature had to be bad literature.

Information on production is drawn from a series of supplements to *The Penny Magazine* titled ‘The Commercial History of a Penny Magazine’. Printed over four issues in 1833, the series is invaluable, for it offers a first-hand view of the people and places responsible for creating the magazine, as well as an insight to the ideals and ethics promoted by Knight regarding British working life.

**Cheap Miscellanies**

The nineteenth century saw the growth of a mass market for printed works. Several factors widened this growing market and printed matter became familiar, and integrated into society. With the production of printed handbills and advertisements increasing in industry – itself subject to rapid growth in the

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71 See Altick, *The English Common Reader*. 
nineteenth century – illiteracy was, as stated by John Feather, ‘no longer merely a social stigma, but a fundamental economic disadvantage’. Similarly, as Feather discusses, a growth of print for business saw an interest in print for pleasure.

Moreover, the nineteenth century saw illiteracy fall from ‘around 40 per cent of males and 60 per cent of females’ in 1800, to around 4% in 1900. Furthermore, England’s growing population increased the pool of potential readers, as it soared from 8.9 million at the start of the century, to over 32.5 million by 1901. The addition of Scotland’s population saw this increase by a further 4.5 million people.

With an increasing number of potential readers, the 1820s and 1830s saw the publication of a number of cheap works aimed at the working classes. Although many religious groups, namely the Religious Tract Society and the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK) were long standing institutions, by the 1820s, the Liberal effort was just beginning. Indeed, the 1820s saw the establishment of the Mechanics’ Institutes (1823) which offered a technical education to working men, the founding of the new University of London, as well as Liberal ventures like the SDUK.

Magazine publication was one route considered suitable in channelling the attention of the working classes, but post the Six Acts of 1819, which aimed to prevent incidents like the Peterloo Massacre, publishing faced more obstacles. Two of the Six Acts in particular affected publishing, the first, the ‘Blasphemous and Seditious Libels Act’, restricted author commentary with a punishment of up to fourteen years transportation. Although it was not rigorously enforced, several radical publishers and authors faced prosecution. The act that overwhelmingly affected publishing was the ‘Newspaper and Stamp Duties Act’, which determined:

That all Pamphlets, or Papers commonly so called, and all other papers containing public news, or intelligence or occurrences, or any remarks or observations, address, or letter thereon, or upon any matter established in Church or State, printed in any part of the United Kingdom, to be dispersed and made public, which shall not exceed two sheets, or which shall be sold or exposed to sale for a less sum than six-pence, exclusive of the Duty to be charged thereon, shall be deemed and taken to be Newspapers within the meaning of the several Acts in force relating to Newspapers in Great-Britain and Ireland respectively, and be subject to the like Duties of Stamps.

Miscellanies and works of non-fiction, would not only be suitable reading material, but also, by their nature unlikely to include a commentary on Church or State, thus avoiding stamp duty, allowing them to be sold for a cheaper, more accessible price. Such a format had previously been reserved for more

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74 Altick, *English Common Reader*, 81.
75 The Religious Tract Society was founded in 1799, while the SPCK was founded in 1698.
expensive, literary works, such as *Blackwood’s Magazine* and the *London Magazine* (of which Charles Knight was a part-proprietor), but, with a price of over 2s, such miscellanies were inaccessible to Britain’s labouring classes. Yet, 1832 saw the beginning of several successful low-cost miscellanies, including the first, the Chambers brothers’ *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, the SPCK’s *The Saturday Magazine* and the SDUK’s *The Penny Magazine*. Aileen Fyfe relates the Great Reform Act to the trend of miscellany publishing:

> A renewed tide of cheap miscellanies sprang into existence during the political agitation leading up to the 1832 Reform Act, and once the act was passed… political tensions briefly relaxed and the charitable publishers felt able to launch magazines for the working classes without facing criticism for encouraging the masses to aim above their stations.\(^{77}\)

Similarly, with riots over reform in 1831, cheap miscellanies could have been received by the working classes as an act of suppression or a diversion from politics. But once the act was passed in the early months of 1832, as Fyfe states, magazines could be launched without too much criticism.

*Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, first published on 4\(^{th}\) February 1832 by Edinburgh-based William and Robert Chambers aimed to provide their readers with mental instruction free from the constraints of institutions and politics – namely the works of organisations such as the SDUK. The magazine, published every Saturday for 1.5d, contained three columns of text, thus allowing more content per issue. It also covered a range of subjects, from history and geography, as well as short pieces of fiction – the main textual difference between *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* and *The Penny Magazine*. *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal* sold incredibly well, reaching steady circulation figures of approximately 50,000 copies, only ceasing publication in 1956.\(^{78}\)

The SPCK’s *The Saturday Magazine* was first published in 7\(^{th}\) July 1832 and ran until 28\(^{th}\) December 1844, over 800 issues later. Its format was similar to *The Penny Magazine*, a two-columned miscellany, featuring a large woodcut on its cover with smaller illustrations throughout, despite being of arguably a lesser quality than those in *The Penny Magazine*. *The Saturday Magazine*, in keeping with the miscellany format, covered a range of subjects, but included teachings of piety, morality and religion entwined within the text.

*The Penny Magazine*, upon its release in 1832, just three weeks after the efforts of the Chambers brothers, offered its readers an identifiable format: a recognisable header, two columns of text and an illustrated front page and woodcuts throughout. *The Penny Magazine* was akin to periodicals such as John Limbird’s *The Mirror of Literature, Amusement and Instruction*, a two-columned miscellany started in 1822. Although its inclusion of illustrations set it apart from *Chambers’s Edinburgh Journal*, *The Penny Magazine* also had the sponsorship of the SDUK, which added a voice of authority to its secular, scientific content, offering its readers access to otherwise limited information. Similarly, the *Magazine’s*

\(^{77}\) Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 21.
\(^{78}\) See Altick, *English Common Reader* and Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge* for more information on the Chambers brothers.
omission of fiction also kept it in line with the SDUK’s aims of progressing scientific and general knowledge.

Moreover, improvements in technology meant that these magazines could be produced cheaply and efficiently, keeping costs down. William Clowes, a London-based printer, and Charles Knight’s working relationship pre-dates that of the SDUK, and both were interested in the progress of the printing press from a costly and laborious process, to a more efficient and affordable task. Indeed William Clowes installed his first steam-driven printing press in 1824, a steam-powered machine that Knight hoped ‘would accomplish for printing what it was accomplishing for navigation’.79 The machine installed by Cowes, that of Applegarth and Cowper, allowed the paper to be printed on both sides without the intervention of a pressman, and allowed rates of 700-1000 printed sheets per hour.80

Advances in stereotyping also contributed to the rapid and cheap reproduction of publications. Stereotyping involved making a mould of the set type and illustrations of a completed page, and producing a plate from that mould with hot metal. The new plate allowed publications to be reprinted without needing to reset the type and illustrations, and moreover, it could be sold internationally without facing the expensive import tariff placed upon books, disseminating the works of the SDUK without penalty.

Such developments allowed the Charles Knight to propose the idea of a cheap miscellany to the Society, a weekly publication that could be produced, and reproduced, rapidly and inexpensively, that was, most importantly, accessible to all.

**Beginnings**

The first issue’s lead editorial ‘Reading for All’, sees Knight introduce the reader to the new age of cheap literature, comparing it to the once-perceived ‘evils’ of the stagecoach:

> They may desire to retain a monopoly of literature for those who can buy expensive books; they may think a five-guinea quarto (like the horse for one or two journeys [sic]) a public benefit, and look upon a shilling duodecimo to be used by everyone “at pleasure when he hath occasion” (like the stage-coach,) as a public evil. What the stage-coach has become to the middle classes, we hope our Penny Magazine will be to all classes – a universal convenience and enjoyment.81

Knight’s use of ‘They’ to denote the upper classes aligns the interests of the Society with the lower classes, and he further states that the working-classes’ limited time and money should not deter them from self-improvement, even if they can only read for half-an-hour a day. Thus the Society aimed to prepare a ‘useful and entertaining weekly magazine’ for those who are ‘disinclined to open a book’ due to the

79 Knight, *Passages I*, 163.
81 ‘Reading for All’, *The Penny Magazine* (London: Charles Knight, 1832), 1.
narrow constraints of time. This magazine would provide the reader with ‘purer subjects of thought than
the violence of party discussion, or the stimulating details of crime and suffering’. Knight and the
Society are clear in stating that The Penny Magazine is not in competition with newspapers, and is not
expected to supersede or replace them, but simply to offer a different form of cheap reading, even to those
who cannot afford the Society’s previous publications. Knight states:

We consider it the duty of every man to make himself acquainted with the events that are
passing in the world, – with the progress of legislation, and the administration of the laws; for
every man is deeply interested in all the great questions of government. Every man, however,
may not be qualified to understand them; but the more he knows the less hasty and the less
violent will be his opinions.83

Although the SDUK never intended to provide popular politics, they also do not deter their readers from
keeping up with the news. Instead the SDUK promoted the ideal that without ‘sound knowledge’ of the
world, false judgments can be made and it is this ‘sound knowledge’ that Knight and the Society wish to
provide. Moreover, legislation prevented the Society from publishing popular politics in The Penny
Magazine, as, if a publication contained ‘any Public News, Intelligence or Occurrences, or any Remarks
or Observations thereon, or upon any matter in Church or State’, the Newspaper Stamp Duties Act of
1819 determined that it would be liable for stamp duty of 4d. Adding 4d to the price of The Penny
Magazine would have made it unavailable to its intended audience – the poorest workers, who could not
afford the Society’s other works.84 Therefore The Penny Magazine’s articles aimed to cover a vast array
of subjects, ranging from geography, art, history and the sciences with interludes of interesting facts,
reviews, poetry, and short moralistic stories. In this manner The Penny Magazine offered something
neutral, both in political and religious terms: a middle way through the permitted cheap literature of the
time.

In an article entitled ‘Excellence Not Limited By Station’, the first issue of The Penny Magazine
encourages the public to purchase the magazine for autodidactic purposes, as an ‘incomplete or partial
diffusion of knowledge’ will lead to a sense of hopelessness, broken spirits, and contempt of their humble
calling. Furthermore, the magazine reminds the reader of Britain’s greatness, promoting the nation’s
efforts in improving the lives of its people, instilling a patriotic national identity:

82 Ibid.
83 Ibid.
84 House of Commons Parliamentary Papers ’1819-20 (26) Sess. 1819-20. A Bill [as Amended by the
Committee] to Make Certain Publications Subject to the Duties of Stamps Upon Newspapers, and to
Restrain the Abuses Arising from the Publication of Blasphemous and Seditious Libels. 1819’
http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-
England, happily for us, is full of bright examples of the greatest men raised from the meanest situations; and the education which England is now beginning to bestow upon her children will multiply these examples.85

The first issue of *The Penny Magazine* ends on a similarly moralistic note, championing the Society and their achievements in providing cheap instructional works for a class that is believed, by others, to be undeserving of the powers of the press, those who believe that cheap literature equates to inadequate authorship. Nonetheless, the Society congratulate anyone who is not dissuaded by such opinion and those who avoid ‘noxious’ publications. Knight concludes by commenting on the duty of the Society to provide good literature to the people, emphasising the longevity and non-ephemeral nature of *The Penny Magazine*: ‘The success of our undertaking will be the measure of its utility.’86

**Authorship of *The Penny Magazine***

Although Knight’s role as publisher and editor of *The Penny Magazine* is well documented, the authors who provided the creative content of the magazine remain largely uncredited for their work, a typical occurrence in contemporary miscellanies. *The Penny Magazine* rarely named authors, and only occasionally is the existence of an author even indicated. For example, the first instalment of John Kitto’s *The Deaf Traveller* is introduced in the following words:

> We have much pleasure in placing before our readers the first of a series of papers, which we think will be found highly interesting, not only from their intrinsic merit, but from the peculiar circumstances of the writer. These circumstances he has detailed in the following introductory account of himself. We have only to add that the writer has been introduced to the notice of the Society by a valuable Member of one of its Local Committees, who is fully aware of his singular history.87

The individuality of the author is usurped by that of the Society in order to maintain a singular, overarching, consistent and familiar voice throughout the publication. Also, with Kitto, one can see that his approval by the Society, rather than his history or personality, is paramount. Moreover anonymous articles, seemingly written by the Society, contributed to the overall authority commanded by the magazine: one that remained unbiased and objective.

In order to produce the magazine so quickly Knight abridged several works in to short articles. Nonetheless, as abridgments of full texts, the Society was able to control the content, and therefore the tone of the text included in *The Penny Magazine*. Particularly in the early years of the magazine, articles were directly copied from works published by the Society, which ensured that the magazine could be quickly and cheaply produced with the highest calibre of knowledge.

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85 ‘Excellence Not Limited By Station’, *The Penny Magazine* (1832), 5. I would argue that England is used synecdochically to refer to the whole of the British Isles.

86 Ibid, 8 Also note use of ‘We’ meaning Knight and the Society.

87 ‘The Deaf Traveller – No. 1’, *The Penny Magazine* (1833), 309.
Illustrating The Penny Magazine

From the outset of The Penny Magazine Knight wanted to provide ‘real illustrations of the text, instead of fanciful devices’, as ‘true eye-knowledge’, that is, accurate images, were ‘sometimes more instructive than words.’

Thus illustrations accompanying difficult texts would help the reader understand the subject of the article without needing to compromise its content. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s he created a circle of artists and engravers capable of fulfilling his dreams of supplying quality art to the working classes. Although many of these artists were already linked through their apprenticeships, it was Knight who brought them together as one group of talented tradesmen. The most prominent members were pupils of Thomas Bewick, ‘the father of modern wood-engraving’, William Harvey and John Jackson. Due to their talent in the trade, and moreover their association with Thomas Bewick, Jackson and Harvey have retained their status in history as prominent wood engravers. Yet, there is another part of Knight’s circle of draughtsmen that remains almost invisible: Sly, Wilson and Evans.

Stephen Sly was born in 1806, in the Parish of Deptford in Kent, and is often listed as a pupil to Henry Vizetelly. The SDUK archive includes correspondence with the engraving firm Sly, Wilson and Evans as early as 1827, an earlier date than Sly’s most commonly stated floruit dates of 1836-1847. Moreover, a circular from 1828 included in the SDUK archive lists Sly, Wilson and Evans as the publishers and proprietors of The Verulam, a scientific and literary journal. Its prospectus states that its object was to ‘aid the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in every department of Science and Art’ to ‘all classes of the people’, a statement that Knight and the Society would no doubt have been pleased to read. Indeed, in the Edinburgh Review Henry Brougham cheerfully reviewed Sly’s publication, stating that ‘its publication may form an era in the history of knowledge; and, instead of sinking science to the level of newspaper discussion, may among other valuable consequences, have the effect of raising the standard of this species of publication.’

The Verulam promised its readers wood engravings in every issue, so that the journal would be ‘useful, ornamental, and attractive’, without compromising the content of the text.

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88 Knight Passages ii, 262.
89 This seems unlikely as Henry Vizetelly was born in 1820, just eight years before the start of Verulam, probably Sly’s first publication. He either tutored Sly later in his career, or more likely, this could actually refer to his father, James Henry Vizetelly. Furthermore in 1837 Sly sponsored the application of William Henry Wills to the Royal Literary Fund. Wills was also a pupil of J. H. Vizetelly, in the early 1820s, and therefore could have been a contemporary of Sly.
92 Verulam Prospectus, 4.
Its masthead, as shown in Figure 2, was grand, and accompanying illustrations were clear and accurate, although almost entirely unsigned. The journal professed the strictest neutrality in politics, offering any political news without observation. Thus, *The Verulam* could be considered a precursor to *The Penny Magazine*, demonstrating many of the values that the Society’s work would later promote: political neutrality, the dissemination of scientific knowledge to all classes and the highest quality of illustration to aid the reading of the text. However, its cost at 1s per issue, would have limited its readership and it faced competition from similar titles, such as the *Mechanics’ Magazine*, established in 1823 that sold for as little as 3d. It is probably for this reason that *The Verulam* was short-lived, becoming incorporated with the *Athenaeum* in May 1828.

Despite the recent loss of the company’s archives, one is still able to gain an understanding of the working relationship between the engraver and the SDUK. Rosemary Mitchell’s *Picturing the Past* (2000) reveals the content of one letter from Sly to SDUK Secretary, Thomas Coates:
If you have any more treatises, I should be glad if you would let me have them for perusal, after which I will see Mr. Baldwin [the author] and confer with him on the sizes and styles of the embellishments.93

A letter addressed to Sly in the SDUK archive dated December 1827, also asked him to chase ‘Mr Wallace’ for his treatise on waterpower before completing the accompanying illustrations.

Although this evidence relates to the Society’s larger volumes, it seems that in order to create authentic images both Knight and the engraver read the text first, and then liaised with the author to determine which passages required illustrating. If the author did not provide sketches or ideas, it was up to the engraver to research and create the author’s vision, using the sketches of others, or real life subjects.

The above letter demonstrates the close working relationship between the two men: Sly was trusted to supply designs not only of a high enough quality to fulfil Knight’s ideal of ‘true eye-knowledge’, but good enough to pass the scrutiny of the Society’s own publication committee who vetted each publication and issue of The Penny Magazine before it went on sale.

Production of The Penny Magazine

Issue 96 of The Penny Magazine was the first of four supplements entitled ‘The Commercial History of a Penny Magazine’. The series, over four supplements, explored the entire production process of The Penny Magazine, and its first instalment begins with paper making.

Rags from Britain, Italy and Germany are transported to Albury Paper Mill, where they are sorted and cleaned by workers, but the reader ‘cannot believe that the dingy bits of linen cloth, many of them originally the colour of a sack, and others so dirty as to appear as incapable of being purified as the blood-spotted hands of Macbeth’s wife, should become that beautiful fabric, a sheet of white paper.’94 The process continues by boiling the paper in lime in troughs, or ‘engines’; this technology replaced cleaning and pulping the rags by hand – a slow and expensive practice. Instead, the wheel-powered engines wash, tear and beat the rags at a greater speed and accuracy. (The material was ‘half rotten’ before it entered the cutting stage when processed by hand.95) After a time in the ‘washing engine’, with a constant stream of clean water replacing the dirty, the clean rags are pressed and bleached without ‘injuring’ the fabric. Championing and idealising the ever-growing fields of science and technology, Knight attributed the careful bleaching process to the ‘discoveries of modern chemistry’, but does comment on the ‘intolerable smell’ of the chemical mixture, as well as the overbearing noise of the machinery. The rags are nonetheless returned to the engine to be rewashed and beaten to a pulp, before being formed into the paper recognisable to the reader. Improvements in paper making are praised, and for Knight, the results of the process are comparable to a folk tale:

95 Ibid.
[The formed white paper] is, at first sight, as miraculous as any of the fancies of an Arabian tale. Aladdin’s wonderful lamp, by which a palace was built in a night, did not in truth produce more extraordinary effects than science has done with the paper-machine.96

The second instalment of a ‘Commercial History’ takes a different stance from the idealistic settings of the paper mill. Instead, a history of wood cuts and type-founding from the fifteenth century is presented to the reader in order to ‘clearly [point] out the successive steps in the perfection of the art of printing’.97

A sense of importance and idealism is relayed by Knight as he writes that the wood most suitable for the cuts that appear in The Penny Magazine comes from box trees of the highest quality imported from Odessa. He also connects the popularity of reading and the use of wood-cut illustrations, as well as adding a patriotic sentiment, adding that:

We ourselves supply metal casts to France, Germany and Russia, not only to assist those countries in producing works similar to the ‘Penny Magazine’ at a cheap rate, but because, however excellent France and Germany may be in other branches of engraving, they have at present scarcely any wood-cutters among them.98

He also adds that The Penny Magazine has set a precedent in the use of wood cut illustrations due to its high circulation figures:

…the great demand for the ‘Penny Magazine’ [has] completely changed the character of the art of wood-engraving; and have rendered it peculiarly and essentially that branch of engraving which is applicable to cheap publications.99

Despite being produced for cheap publications Knight states that the artist deserves to be paid ‘liberally’ for the ‘great labour of [their] performance’ which allows readers to view the fine specimens of art previously reserved for the wealthy.100 Furthermore, as both Bennett and Altick argue, the illustrations would become the central selling point of the magazine, and readers would have purchased it purely for its images.

The reader then begins their journey through the printing works of William Clowes, where the entire process, from type-founding to binding the finished book will be carried out. Clowes, like Knight, was an advocate of new technology and methods surrounding print production, and installed an Applegate and Cowper printing press in 1823. With this particular press ‘the double processes of inking and printing are effected by a beautiful system of machinery.’101 The advocacy of technology was a contentious issue in Britain due to rising unemployment and mechanisation, yet Knight emphasises the lengths of time spent compiling type and printing by hand, with few mechanical aids. A tale of two determined clergyman who,

96 Ibid, 382.
98 Ibid, 421.
99 Ibid, 420.
100 Ibid.
‘at a tortoise pace’ composed and dismantled type in two frames over twenty years in order to create twenty-six volumes is contrasted to modern publication methods where ‘a good compositor can pick up about 15,000 letters a day’ and production is swift and accurate thanks to a ‘perfect division of labour’ in the form of ‘cleanly, well-dressed, intelligent-looking, active artisans’.102 For Clowes’s hard-working staff, like the striving humble worker waiting to exhibit their ‘superior powers’, good work will lead to financial reward:

even the moral habits of different men [cause] remarkable variations [in compositing accuracy]. A proof shall be brought to the reader produced by the joint labour of two or three compositors of different degrees of merit. In a particular part of it he will find one letter substituted for another, although the sense is upon the whole given correctly: this is the work of the careless and slovenly compositor… He is the bad economist of his own time… Again in another part of the proof, although merely literal faults may be very few, there is a perpetual substitution of one word for another. This is the work of the ignorant or conceited compositor, who jumps at the meaning of his author, and thus contrives to produce the most ludicrous errors in his original proof, and insinuate some error or other in the most carefully correct book. Lastly the proof may present, and it very often does so, a most favourable specimen of what may be effected by carefulness and good sense. […] He will have corrected the generally loose punctuation of the author and produced a harmony in that most difficult department of literary labour, which is seldom attained except by long experience. […] the best work is generally put into his hands… that his earnings are often nearly double those of the ignorant and slovenly workman. 103

In this excerpt, Knight promotes diligence and obedience as desirable qualities in British labourers; the moral and careful worker creates ‘harmony’, and is in turn rewarded with a higher wage of that of the ‘ignorant and slovenly workman’. The rhetoric of morality and diligence (‘moral’, ‘carefulness’, ‘harmony’) is opposed to that of slovenliness (‘bad economist’, ‘careless’, ‘error’, ‘ignorant’). As later chapters will demonstrate, these adjectives are found throughout The Penny Magazine to denote positive and negative qualities. Indeed, to better oneself through hard work is a ubiquitous precept that recurs throughout editions of The Penny Magazine.

Knight’s descriptions of stereotyping104 promoted the didactic element of printing as it allowed works to be produced swiftly and, more importantly, at a lower cost making them ‘a most important auxiliary in the diffusion of knowledge by the printing press.’105 This diffusion of knowledge is not only limited to Britain, as Knight circulates the magazine internationally, promoting diplomatic and political relations:

103 Ibid, 468.
104 Stereotyping involves making a mould of the set type, so reproductions can be made rapidly, rather than having to reset the type each time.
105 Ibid, 471.
we can thus not only obtain the high moral advantage of giving a tone to the popular literature of other nations which shall be favourable to peace, and a right understanding of our common interests.  

Disseminating the works of the SDUK internationally through the sale of stereotype plates also has economic benefits as it avoided expensive American tariffs on imported books, leaving more profit to create books on other ‘intellectual subjects’ as well as improving Britain’s own Penny Magazine. Knight ascribes The Penny Magazine’s early success to its suitability for all classes, dealing with a wide range of universal subjects, not single ‘modes of thought’ that fall in and out of favour with the intended readership. Also, unlike other publications and due to the use of stereotyping, Clowes could rapidly produce enough copies for supply to meet demand, according to Knight, at a day’s notice.

**Distribution and Reception of The Penny Magazine**

Knight, through his own publishing experience as well as through the Society’s own contacts, had been able to establish a network of booksellers, news vendors and hawkers who were prepared to sell The Penny Magazine. Knight similarly mastered Britain’s transport system to ensure the magazine was delivered rapidly to booksellers in its weekly parts, utilising ‘the steam-boat upon the seas – the canal – the railway – the quick van – these as well as the stagecoach and mail’.  

Those in the provinces who could not obtain the magazine weekly were able to order the parts to be stitched into monthly volumes priced at 6d, which also included monthly supplements and notices of new publications. In the preface to the annual volume, Knight estimated that approximately 200,000 copies of The Penny Magazine were sold weekly in 1832. The accuracy of this figure is somewhat in question, as in a letter to Alexander Duff Gordon written in 1855, Knight wrote that circulation surpassed 200,000 in its third and fourth years of production, and its average circulation figures in its first years were 100,000 and 160,000. Furthermore articles were frequently reprinted in newspapers across the globe, increasing the reach and circulation figures of the magazine innumerably.

Despite its successful sales, The Penny Magazine faced a varied reception. The first numbers of the magazine were well received by newspapers across Britain. Indeed the Morning Post wrote:

> Of the literary wonders of the day this is, we think, the greatest: for its pages are not devoted to idle frivolity, but to sterling matter for mental improvement and interesting information. It is got up in unexceptionable style as regards paper, type &c., and it embellished with neat wood-cuts. It is a weekly publication and the work of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

A similar positive attitude can be seen across Britain. The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser, for example, received the magazine well, praising its worth:

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106 Ibid.
108 From a document found in the Bodleian Libraries’ John Johnson Collection; a notice or advert of *The Penny Magazine* published by Knight.
This is, as far as we are enabled to judge from the three first numbers which have already appeared, a very useful publication, and as its title imports, exceedingly cheap. The Society from whom it emanates have published a great variety of works, all of which are of high character and acknowledged worth.\footnote{111}{’Literature’ The Lancaster Gazette and General Advertiser, issue 1610, 21 April 1832.}

Others, such as The Bury and Norwich Post simply commented that ‘this excellent little work has in its first month attained a circulation of no less than 100,000 copies weekly.’\footnote{112}{’Miscellaneous’ The Bury and Norwich Post: Or, Suffolk and Norfolk Telegraph, Essex, Cambridge, & Ely Intelligencer (Bury Saint Edmunds, England), Issue 2602, 9 May 1832.}

However, anti-establishment papers such as Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle branded The Penny Magazine as ‘the fruitful source of all the misery, crime, degradation, and wretchedness, which has lately fallen to the lot of the lower classes.’\footnote{113}{’Education’ Bell’s Life in London and Sporting Chronicle, issue 610, 25 May 1834.}

Publications, such as The Examiner saw The Penny Magazine as a tool of pacification, a means to distract their readers from poverty and misery, maintaining the established social order of the upper classes:

what is the course of this society in their last, commenced series, The Penny Magazine? They still engage the attention of their readers on matters of curious speculation, instead of endeavouring to show them how they may escape from the destitution which threatens them. They would amuse with accounts of growth of tea and coffee, those persons who see themselves and their families in want of bread.\footnote{114}{’Birmingham Mechanics’ Institute’ The Examiner, issue 1280, 12 August 1832.}

Radical and anti-establishment publications argued that the labouring classes should instead seek political education and a sound knowledge of their rights in order to fight against the irrational and vicious oppressive publications and taxes supported by the Government.

Moreover radical writers and editors were more concerned about The Penny Magazine’s ability to be sold unstamped, while their own publications led to fines and even prosecutions.\footnote{115}{See for example the ‘Spirit of the Public Press’ Caledonian Mercury, issue 17341, 20 September 1832.}

The Poor Man’s Guardian felt (in regard to news vendors) that ‘all works not issued by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge are illegal.’\footnote{116}{’An Exposé of Henry Brougham’ Poor Man’s Guardian, issue 70, 13 October 1832.}

Furthermore radical publications (such as the Poor Man’s Guardian) were printed in the same format as The Penny Magazine, a two-columned weekly quarto, priced at a penny. Henry Hetherington stated that The Penny Magazine contained short articles on current affairs which the Stamp Office ignored, while his own publication was prosecuted by the ‘wise-acres of the law’, the upper class oppressors determined to deprive the workers of their rights.\footnote{117}{Ibid.}

Others, however, considered The Penny Magazine’s success to have much more dangerous consequences. An article featured in The Athenæum Journal of Literature, Science, and the Fine Arts questioned the Society’s true intentions in producing such a cheap periodical, arguing that using not only their own

\footnote{118}{Ibid.}
plentiful resources (particularly their names), as well as subscription fees, the Society were ‘establishing a huge monopoly’ intent on destroying all other cheap weekly publications. This issue was addressed by Knight in the preface to the first annual volume of *The Penny Magazine* in which he writes that Britain’s great monopolies of literature were granted ‘certain privileges’ by the government which intended to ‘diminish the circulation of books by keeping up the price.’ But ‘the object of those concerned in the ‘Penny Magazine’ is, contrary to the spirit of monopoly, to circulate as many copies as they can, as cheaply as they can.’ Knight believes that with no exclusive privileges, and surviving on its ‘commercial principles alone’, that is, with the public as its ‘only pecuniary supporters’ *The Penny Magazine* cannot be a monopoly.

The Society’s influence over the magazine is also questioned by *The Athenæum, Figaro in London*, as well as in the *New Monthly Magazine* which stated that:

> [Readers] think, poor devils, that the matter doled out to them weekly, through the medium of the “Penny Magazine”, has been really got up “Under the Superintendence of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge”. The Society know just as much about [The Penny Magazine] as the Mandarins of the Celestial Empire.  

Historians today still question how involved the SDUK were in the production of *The Penny Magazine*. For example, Patricia Anderson contends that as Knight had financial control over the magazine, that motives behind the publication should be attributed solely to him, and ‘other assessments of the magazine, have tended to overstate the relationship of the content to the SDUK’s utilitarian ideals and social purposes.” Knight addressed this issue himself, quoting from official papers of the Society in response to Henry Colburn, the proprietor of the *New Monthly Magazine*:

> The extended circulation of these two periodical works (*The Penny Magazine* and *Penny Cyclopædia*) has made the Committee especially anxious to secure their being efficiently superintended… Proof sheets of the articles inserted by the Editors are submitted to certain members of the Committee in rotation, who suggest additions or corrections in the articles, and sometimes recommend the omission of them. If differences of opinion arise between the Editors and individual members of the Committee, the decision is referred to a Sub-Committee. These arrangements afford an adequate check against the introduction of frivolous, incorrect, or improper matter.  

120 This is taken from a folio entitled ‘Criticism’ written by Knight to the Henry Colburn, the Proprietor of the *New Monthly Magazine*; Found in the Bodleian Libraries’ John Johnson Collection, dated 1 January 1834.  
122 ‘Criticism’, Charles Knight, John Johnson Collection, Bodleian Libraries, Taken from the ‘Report of the committee of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, June 1833’.  

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Therefore, according to Knight, every article would have had scrupulous checks to ensure they matched and fulfilled the Society’s editorial intentions. If any disagreements arose, further checks were carried out by the Society’s members. This letter aimed to clarify the Society’s level of involvement with the creative content of *The Penny Magazine*.\(^\text{123}\)

*The Penny Magazine* also faced a mixed reception from the middle class, including members of the Society itself, who felt that it may be unbefitting for the Society to produce such a cheap publication. Anglican educator Thomas Arnold also labelled the magazine’s style as ‘ramble-scramble’\(^\text{124}\) and Edward Bulwer Lytton similarly declared that the magazine offered a ‘trumpery education to the people’.\(^\text{125}\) Yet others such as the social reformer Francis Place wrote to Knight personally to request several copies of *The Penny Magazine* to distribute in workshops and factories.\(^\text{126}\) Despite opposition the magazine was a great success with unprecedented sales of up to 200,000 copies. For many, *The Penny Magazine* proved that even though

> the mass of readers are not philosophers, it does not follow that they have a greater appetite for falsehood than truth. To interest the ignorant it may be necessary to strip science of its technicalities, but not to hold it up to ridicule. It has been found that even children may be amused and instructed by works of a higher order than the nursery tales of the last generation, and the immense sale of the ‘Penny Magazine’ is a triumphant proof, not indeed that every body can understand the Principia of Newton, but that a journal may attain the greatest possible circulation, without pandering to either vice or folly.\(^\text{127}\)

**Global Reach**

Beyond its domestic circulation, *The Penny Magazine* also received an international audience. Most notably, Charles Knight sent the stereotype plates to America to avoid import tariffs raising the magazine’s price. Indeed, there were three editions of *The Penny Magazine* in America. And thanks to William Jackson, the SDUK’s agent in New York, *The Penny Magazine* was also being distributed by publishers in ‘Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC’ and further arrangements had been made ‘with thirty-eight other named stockists, from Massachusetts to Virginia and South Carolina, and westward to Ohio.’\(^\text{128}\)

In sessional papers from a select committee on postage, Knight stated that he sent circulars to advertise his works to ‘the three principal Indian settlements, to Jamaica and Barbados, and Van Diemen’s Land’. However, this select committee revealed that volumes weren’t always simply sold in book shops: When

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\(^{123}\) Indeed, the archive holds some edited articles and suggestions or complaints made by Society members in its correspondence.  
\(^{124}\) Knight, *Passages ii*, 182.  
\(^{126}\) Knight, *Passages ii*, 181.  
\(^{128}\) Fyfe, *Steam-Powered Knowledge*, 83.
asked ‘When a work is desired in any of those colonies, do they write to you to send it out?’ Knight replied:

No; with three or four of the colonies we have distinct accounts; in nearly all of them we have mercantile arrangements, by which goods are sent, not by bookselling houses, but by London mercantile houses; they purchase books as well as other goods on speculation.129

This snippet reveals a bit more about the SDUK’s mercantile networks and how their books travelled. In relation to this, books also travelled with the East India Company, the magazine being one of the most sought-after items for the East India Company’s libraries.130 Some East India Company employees were already subscribers, one such notable example being John Francis Davis, who became the superintendent of trade at Canton in 1834. Because of his influence not only were parts of The Penny Magazine translated into Chinese, but as discussed in Chapter Three, an SDUK in China was also formed. Moreover, correspondence from Davis shows that The Penny Magazine was popular among the merchant readers in both India and around China.

Knight also sent books out to the colonies in order to spread the ideologies of the SDUK. Author Thomas Horton James commented:

As to the library of books that was sent out to the Colony in 1835, for the use of the members of the ‘Literary and Philosophical Society of South Australia,’ the whole concern was put up by Mr Charles Knight, of Ludgate Street, and consists of various works published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.131

The venture was commercial with Knight invoicing the group ‘the small amount’ of £14 after a discount. Nonetheless, this example was one of many and there are also records showing that Knight and the Society sent publications to India via the Bombay Native Education Society and to the American Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, as well as sending a set of maps to Jan Tzatzoe, the chief of the African Caffre tribe, upon the suggestion of Thomas Hewitt Key, SDUK committee member and professor of Latin at the new London University.132

129 ‘First Report from the Select Committee on Postage Together with the Minutes of Evidence and Appendix’ In The Sessional Papers Printed by Order of The House of Lords Or Presented by the Royal Command in the Session 1837-38 arranged in Fifty-On Volumes, Volume XXIII, Reports from Select Committees of the House of Commons and Evidence, Communicated to the Lords (London, 1838), 235.
132 UCL, Papers of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, General Committee Book, Item 3. Marked 14 June 1837: ‘Upon the motion of Mr. Key, it was resolved that twelve copies of the map of South Africa be presented to [Jan Tzatzoe], the Caffre Chief’.
The SDUK also had agents in several colonies, including booksellers Messers Collett and Co. in India and James Nicoll, the editor of the Bombay Times. Publications were sold in Australia by their agent Henry Dowling in Launceston as well as at the ‘Book and Stationary Depot’ in Sydney and from booksellers in Adelaide from 1837. Newspaper advertisements also reveal that The Penny Magazine was also sold by auction and in a number of booksellers in New Zealand in the 1840s.

Despite its early success, Knight changed the format of the magazine in 1840 to make it less ‘ramble-scramble’ and more suitable ‘to a public which had been advancing in education’ that now required a ‘miscellany of a higher character than the first series.’ Unfortunately for Knight and the Society, this change was not enough to increase sales. As stamp duty had been reduced to 1d in 1836, a wider range of publications became cheaply available, including those that reported on political events – an aspect considered more attractive to the masses. It is interesting to note that stamp duty, which defined the magazine’s contents was also instrumental in the magazine’s decline. As stamp duty was repealed, the market was flooded with cheap periodicals that included the popular politics sought for by the working classes. Thus with dwindling circulation figures, the Society’s magazine ceased publication in 1845.

Conclusion

Launched in 1832, The Penny Magazine arguably became the first mass-produced weekly that was truly affordable to the masses. In order to make production cheap and swift Knight utilised the height of printing technology, namely stereotyping and Clowes’ steam printing machine, and drew much of his content from works already published by the Society. Furthermore Knight’s inclusion of woodcuts set the magazine apart from its contemporaries, and aided the comprehension of otherwise difficult articles, which in turn did not need to be simplified, and were unlikely to be considered patronising by its audience. Taking full advantage of Britain’s burgeoning transport network, Knight was able to circulate the magazine to booksellers in the farthest corners of the British Isles, as well as across the colonies. Excerpts from The Penny Magazine were republished in several newspapers nationally, as well as internationally, where it was also sold through agents and booksellers.

Throughout ‘A Commercial History of The Penny Magazine’ Knight promoted the Society’s efforts in producing such a high quality informative magazine as an act representative of the nation, who offered educational, informative reading as a method to improve one’s lot. Britain is presented as the root of education across the globe, exporting cheap literature where it is otherwise unavailable. Knight and the

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138 Knight, Passages ii, 322 (Knight refers to the magazine between 1832-1841 as the ‘first series’.)
139 Knight however continued to print the magazine for a number of months as Knight’s Penny Magazine.
Society raised Britain above other nations, promoting its utilisation of new science, its care for its people through providing education and literature, and in turn, the potential of its labourers to better themselves.

What made Knight’s magazine so successful was its swift and cheap production, but also, as Scott Bennett argues, its distinctive style – the use of text and illustrations – that offered the readers a defined format. Simply, readers were inclined to purchase the magazine as it became identifiable and familiar.

The brief easing of political tension in Britain after the passing of the Great Reform Act and the improvements in printing paved the way for cheap miscellanies, but as *The Saturday Magazine* and *The Penny Magazine*, demonstrate, cheap miscellanies were a product of their time, and few achieved the longevity of the Chambers brothers. Indeed, the repeal of Stamp Duty allowed the market to be flooded with cheap publications that provided the working-classes with the politics and news they sought after. The once popular miscellanies were to be replaced with newspapers rather than the ‘safe reading’ of the 1830s.

While the Society’s works became identifiable in the marketplace, the foundation of their success was established at their formation: the distinguished men who comprised the SDUK’s committee. With men from all fields and professions, the next chapter explores the influential figures who helped to establish the SDUK as an authoritative organisation.
Chapter Two

Carefully Crafted Networks: Brougham’s People

In 1826 the general committee of The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge offered a list of prominent and eminent men from across the country, from men of science, bankers and merchants, to Members of Parliament, including cabinet ministers. Within a few years the Society’s networks stretched across the globe. These networks informed the SDUK’s publications, particularly offering inside information on the colonies, all bolstered by the formation of corresponding committees and foreign Society branches. This chapter uncovers the networks of the SDUK, which had at its centre Henry Brougham, ‘one of the most talked about, written about, and caricatured people of his age’ and the common thread that joined much of the otherwise disparate members together. Furthermore, using case studies of individual committee members, this chapter aims to establish the expanse of the SDUK’s contacts and assess their influence on its publishing operations, as well as their influence over colonial policy.

Whereas existing literature has revealed the SDUK’s metropolitan connections, this chapter will begin to unravel the Society’s reach into the colonial periphery in a discussion of their sister societies or corresponding committees. Following a detailed examination of the metropolitan networks, it will then focus on the corresponding committee and associated groups in India and America which have thus far received little scholarly attention.

Susan Strange’s notions of power, outlined in States and Markets (1988), provide a useful theoretical basis for an examination of these networks. Strange’s seminal text on international relations and political economy still offers a unique model for understanding the connections between knowledge, politics, and power: a vital, yet largely unexplored, concept. For Strange there are two types of power: structural and relational. Relational power is a negotiatory or coercive power, or simply, ‘the power of A to get to B to do something they would not otherwise do.’ Structural power on the other hand comes from four sources: ‘control over security; control over production; control over credit; and control over knowledge, beliefs and ideas.’ It is the final source that is most applicable in the context of the SDUK, and like the Society and its publications, ‘the power derived from the knowledge structure is one that has been most overlooked and underrated. It is not less important… but it is much less well understood.’

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143 Ibid, 115.
The gentlemanly networks behind the running of the nineteenth-century world remain under-researched. Zoe Laidlaw’s *Colonial Connections, 1815-45* (2005) is the first to begin to fill this lacuna. Laidlaw’s work maps out personal networks in British and colonial governance, demonstrating their prominence in the transfer of colonial information to the metropole, and their role in securing positions in the civil service. Laidlaw’s work aims to provide a ‘comprehensive articulation’ of the concept of imperial networks, their metropolitan and colonial spheres, and the more often than not personal connections, that bridged them together.144 For Laidlaw, the focus on the mechanics of governance, the actions of individuals, rather than the ideological basis of government is central, separating her study from previous histories. This thesis firmly builds on and extends her framework, exploring the possible impact of personal networks on the print culture of the SDUK.

Connections between SDUK members and Colonial Office officials are unwittingly revealed in John W. Cell’s *British Colonial Administration in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Policy Making Process* (1970). Cell provides a glimpse into the imperial-decision making of the Colonial Office, revealing connections between SDUK members and Colonial Office officials. Cell states that ‘it is the obvious fact that without Sir James Stephen, Herman Merivale and Sir Frederic Rogers the Colonial Office could not have functioned as it did.’145 Sir James Stephen contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*, entered Lincoln’s Inn in 1811, and was a leading anti-slavery campaigner and moved in many of the same professional and social circles as Brougham, and many other SDUK members. Similarly Herman Merivale’s father, John Herman Merivale was a committee member and author for the SDUK. In building on this body of research, this chapter identifies influential figures within the SDUK and examines the connections that linked the Society with parallel circles and networks.

Networks, which were crucial to the operations of the SDUK extended beyond London, and were judged on their usefulness. A report on local committees held in the archives records subscriptions and editorial contributions are noted, but labelled those who failed to perform as ‘useless’. Moreover, in order to be eligible to contribute a treatise or volume for the SDUK, the author had to be known by a general committee member, allowing the Society to maintain a level of eminence, prestige, and a like mind-set. Thomas L. Jarman states that this caused some to criticise the SDUK, arguing that ‘the people will be more than ever tempted to look to names instead of things – to men instead of measures.’ This relates to Strange’s statement that ‘power in the knowledge structure is more easily maintained if authority can limit access to it – and, as a corollary to that, if it can exercise a jealous defence of its monopoly position against any threat of competition.’ By restricting who could contribute to the SDUK, the Society ensured it maintained high levels of prestige and power.

Strange also states that power in the knowledge structure ‘comes less from coercive power and more from consent’. In attracting eminent members to the cause of the Society, and with the SDUK consenting to share their knowledge with the British Labouring classes, the SDUK became more powerful in the knowledge structure.

Lawyers

The first group of eminent men to be explored is that of the lawyers of Lincoln’s Inn, the London court of which Brougham became a member in 1803. This granted him permission to use its library and dine in its hall, a location where he would have crossed paths, and socialised with, those who would also join the SDUK committee. Indeed, a feeling of community and socialising was important to those in charge of Lincoln’s Inn, and they ‘encouraged the Fellows to lead a communal life: to live within the walls, and to dine and sup together’, along with members of all of the Inns of Court, those of Inner Temple and Middle Temple, for example. Dining within the walls of Lincoln’s Inn was opened to many others in the field of law, from county court judges to Masters of the Supreme Court, Magistrates and Coroners, allowing its lawyers to network with possible future colleagues. An opportunity Sir William Ball calls ‘a fortunate occurrence...fortunate for them because they can thus keep in touch with their old friends of the profession; fortunate for the man engaged in active practice, because he has an opportunity of becoming acquainted with someone before whom he may have to appear the day after to-morrow’.

Other general SDUK committee members also admitted to Lincoln’s Inn include Thomas Denman, who was appointed to Caroline of Brunswick’s defence alongside Brougham. Denman was a popular figure amongst the British public throughout the 1820s after his ‘Hanoverian jibes’ in court, drawing a ‘sarcastic

146 UCL, SDUK Papers, Office Papers, item 59, ‘Report on Local Committees, 13 June 1832’.
148 Strange, States and Markets, 120
149 Ibid, 118
151 Ibid, 155. Visitors were also permitted to dine at Lincoln’s Inn.
parallel between Caroline and the innocent Octavia, the wife of Nero, whose servants were tortured in an attempt to prove her adultery with a slave", enraging George IV, as well as the future king, William IV.\textsuperscript{152} Seen to be supporting the needs of the public and fighting for justice in representing Caroline of Brunswick as well as abolition, his association with the SDUK would no doubt have been a positive one for promoting their cause.

Several other Society members were also connected to Lincoln’s Inn. For example, Matthew Davenport Hill entered Lincoln’s Inn in 1814. The eldest child of a schoolmaster, Hill was a teacher and, like Brougham, also interested in public education. He later severed links with his family’s schools, and channelled this passion for education in helping Brougham with the foundation of the SDUK.\textsuperscript{153} Hill’s siblings, Edwin and Rowland also became committee members at the Society’s formation, bringing their own networks to the table. Rowland, like Matthew, worked for his father’s school before following his own campaign for postal reforms in the 1830s, aided by Robert Wallace, who would chair the committee assessing his new postal scheme. Hill’s pamphlet, \textit{Post Office Reform its Importance and Practicability} impressed the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Thomas Spring-Rice, also part of the SDUK’s committee, and forged the path for the penny postage stamp. From 1833 Hill also worked as secretary to the South Australian Colonization Commission.\textsuperscript{154}

A further notable example is that of Nicholas Vigors, who entered Lincoln’s Inn as a student in 1806, but pursued his interest in zoology over a career in law. As a Fellow of the Royal Society (from 1826), and a driving force for the new Zoological Society, Vigors’ networks spanned the field, and closely aligned him with influential figures such as Thomas Stamford Raffles. As secretary to the new Zoological Society, he had access to new zoological information from across the Empire which could be passed to the SDUK. Thus zoological information in the Society’s publications would stem from the utmost authority in the country. One noteworthy crossover in Vigors’ network is his connection to Lord Auckland, another SDUK committee member, with whom he worked closely to promote the Zoological Society. Auckland himself entered Lincoln’s Inn in 1809, and Brougham married his niece in 1819. Auckland held many prominent positions throughout the operations of the SDUK, including entering the House of Lords in 1818, leading the Board of Trade from 1830-34, becoming First Lord of the Admiralty in 1834-35, and Governor General of India from 1836-42. Although Auckland’s later position as the President of the Board of Trade would have extended his influential networks and aided information passed to the SDUK,\textsuperscript{155} it seems that his connections with Brougham were an essential factor in his promotions:

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[154] The Committee aimed to raise funds in order to make the colonisation of South Australia a self-supporting venture.
\item[155] Knight’s autobiography also reveals the Auckland offered him ‘a new office, which it was proposed to create at the Board of Trade, for digesting and arranging Parliamentary and other official documents for the information of members of the Government, and possibly for publication.’ Knight
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
Who is Lord Auckland? asks every publication; – who is Lord Auckland? echoes every member of the community; and the only reply is – Lord Auckland is one of Lord Brougham’s people; moreover, he is one of the McCulloch people of the London University, and belongs to the Liberals of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge; but beyond this, nothing is known of Lord Auckland! Here, then, is an individual who is totally unknown to the country – who is an utter stranger as a public man – who never opens his lips in the Legislature – whose talents and creed are involved in mystery – and who has never put forward the slightest legitimate claim, to entitle him to the meanest office – placed in almost the most important office in the Ministry; – that of President of the Board of Trade.156

Thus Brougham’s popularity could influence the appointment of others into positions of power, a micro example of Strange’s structural power, demonstrating ‘the power to decide how things shall be done’, and the power to shape frameworks, in this case, the British cabinet.157 Furthermore, Brougham’s popularity in the 1820s appears to have helped the sales of the SDUK’s treatises, as correspondence from the Mechanics’ Magazine demonstrates. Even though this correspondent criticises the praising of a treatise because of its connection to Brougham and the SDUK, the writer nonetheless admires Brougham as a supporter for the working man:

My assailant seems to be one of a numerous class of persons who always thinks in extremes, and never know any medium in their likes and dislikes. Mr. Brougham is his idol, and the “Knowledge Diffusion Society” is the best of all possible Institutions, because Mr. Brougham happens to be the founder of it! Idols ought to have nothing but adulation offered up to them; and, therefore, it is “calumny” and “faction,” to address Mr. B. in the language of honest sincerity!! I too, Sir, am an admirer of Mr. Brougham; and feel, in common with the majority of his countrymen, grateful for many services he has rendered to the great causes of education, liberty and humanity.158

If such opinion was truly felt among the public, Brougham’s reputation played a major role in encouraging sales of SDUK publications, attracting other prominent men to the cause of the Society.

Cultural Education and Scientific Societies

The SDUK committee also included a number of men connected with museum and galleries. George Agar Ellis, until his death in 1833, was a trustee of both the British Museum and the National Gallery. Through Ellis, the Society was able to gain insights, and disseminate information on the items within the British Museum through several Entertaining Knowledge volumes, as well as numerous articles in The

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157 Strange, States and Markets, 25.
Penny Magazine. Similarly, *The Penny Magazine* was able to provide its readership with a floorplan of the National Gallery (Figure 5) alongside its opening days and times. Such articles would encourage the British working classes to visit museums and galleries, and aid them in aspects of museum behaviour and decorum that might otherwise be unknown and off-putting. Furthermore a vast number of committee members were also members or fellows of scientific societies. Over twenty committee members by 1829 were Fellows of the Royal Society, including its secretary, Dr. Peter Mark Roget; a similar number were members of the Zoological Society. 159

As Laidlaw points out in her thesis, the networks of scientific societies were ‘often carefully crafted’.160 Their impact should not be underestimated, as ‘they too affected colonial governance: through patronage; the transmission of information; and their impact on perceptions of empire and colonies.’161 These aspects, as discussed in later chapters, were prominent throughout the SDUK’s publishing operations; its network was also carefully crafted and determined much of the information transmitted in its publications. Such carefully crafted networks can also be seen in the Society’s inclusion of academics in its member lists.

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159 The List of Members for 1829 reveals that many SDUK committee members were also members of the Zoological Society: Auckland was vice-president and G. Agar Ellis and Vigors were on its council. Other members include: William Bing Baring, Capt. Beaufort, Charles Bell, T. F. Buxton, William Coulson, I. Goldsmid, Henry Hallam, Matthew Hill, Henry Bellenden Kerr, James Loch, John Lubbock, John Marshall, James Morrison, P. M. Roget, C. E. Rumbold, John Smith M.P, William Tooke, Henry Warburton, Henry Waymouth.


161 Ibid.
Figure 5: ‘Plan of the National Gallery’, *The Penny Magazine* (London: Charles Knight, 1836) 469
Academics and the New London University

As university education was restricted to members of the Church of England, Brougham’s role in the new secular London University placed him at the centre of discussions over religious tolerance and access to education. In 1825 a letter from Thomas Campbell, a Scottish poet, was printed in *The Times* calling for Brougham to found a university suitable for ‘all between the mechanics and the enormously rich’, an institution that provided more than lectures, but examined, exercised, and rewarded its students with honours.\(^{162}\) Isaac Lyon Goldsmid, a Jewish financier, introduced Campbell to Brougham, and would go on to purchase, with two others, the land on which the new London University would be built.\(^{163}\) In a meeting held in the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Brougham met with a number of ‘public characters’ to discuss the new university, including:

Lord John Russell, Mr Abercromby, Mr. John Smith, Mr. Hume, Mr. Hobhouse, Mr. John Williams, and some other Members of Parliament. Mr. Gurney and several gentlemen of the bar were also present, together with a number of clergymen of the established church, as well as Dissenting ministers.\(^{164}\)

The meeting was also attended by Dr. George Birkbeck, several men of science and a number of merchants. The meeting was not a public one, and therefore gives a direct insight to the members of Brougham’s inner circle, particularly emphasised by the attendance of ‘several gentlemen of the bar’.\(^{165}\) Furthermore many of the names listed would, over its course, appear on general committee lists of the SDUK, the principals of which matched the proposal of the new university: to provide education to the excluded. A political sketch (Figure 6) by Robert Cruickshank caricatures Brougham’s fundraising efforts for the London University, the building he is carrying. The characters around his waist include Isaac Goldsmid, a financier, who would later become a SDUK general committee member; as well as the Lord Chancellor, identifiable by his purse and mace.\(^{166}\) That Brougham is standing in the quad of Lincoln’s Inn reinforces his influence there. Moreover, Brougham’s speech, ‘Who I buy? Very cheap, very fine’ suggests that Brougham’s wealth and influence enabled him to persuade people to take up his cause.\(^{167}\)

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\(^{163}\) See http://www.ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/articles/individuals/goldsmid_isaac.htm for more on Goldsmid.


\(^{165}\) Ibid.

\(^{166}\) Constance Harris, *The Way Jews Lived: Five Hundred Years of Printed Words and Images* (London: McFarland, 2009), 188.

As Rebecca Kinraide notes, the meetings of the metropolitan networks of the SDUK and its members were encouraged to socialise:

The meetings combined the aspects of a gentlemanly club as well as a business. First there was a dinner, paid for by each member and guest, during which business discussion was discouraged. Members were allowed to bring their own servants to wait on them if they wished. After dinner, the members would discuss the reports of the officers and the sub-committees and vote on any measures needing committee approval, which was almost everything.168

Socialising, happening over dinner, appears to be prioritised over conducting of official business which took place later in the evening.

Strange notes that ‘knowledge is power… and whoever can control the channels by which it is communicated to those given access to it, will exercise a very special kind of structural power.’169 Both Brougham and the Society he constructed demonstrate several aspects of this structural power, particularly regarding the influence over the knowledge and beliefs of the working classes to whom their

169 Ibid, 30.
work was aimed. Brougham was able to shape the structures of government in, for example, helping Lord Auckland’s promotion to power. Furthermore, his networks encompassed all types of knowledge thanks to his affiliation with the new London University, as well as individuals such as Nicholas Vigors. Similarly with connections to merchants through William Crawford of the East India Company and Crawford, Colvin and Company, and with bankers and financiers such as Goldsmid and John Lubbock also featuring on the committee list, the SDUK no doubt held a certain amount of influence over the means of production – the promotion of imperial trade as well as economic credit: two vital aspects of structural power.

**Into the Empire – Connections Abroad**

Although the SDUK’s metropolitan networks were crucial to the foundation and running of the Society, its reach into the British Empire also provided access to first-hand information concerning the colonies, bolstering its authority in its publications on such subjects. Furthermore the metropolitan connections of Brougham and his fellow SDUK members would also prove useful in maintaining relations across the Empire, as a small number of established British SDUK members received prominent positions in the colonies.

The importance of patronage in the acquisition of employment in the Colonial Office is debated by historians, and many do not explore its influence, indeed, Snelling and Baron describe the careers of three officials, simply stating that they: ‘by various means, were pushed over the obstacle of seniority promotions and found their way rapidly to positions of influence’. However, the acquisition of positions through patronage was a common practice and although not a fair strategy, did ensure that men of a ‘correct’ social standing were employed:

> The manner of their appointment, however it may be objected to, has secured also a general quality of gentleman-like feeling. Parliamentary patronage has some evils, – but it at all events contributes towards placing in the Service men who can only be described by that vague word ‘gentleman’– that is, if one would attempt a definition, persons having some social station, and thus giving collateral guarantee for good conduct.

Furthermore, patronage created a symbiotic relationship. Providing parliamentary patronage to those wishing to secure positions in the colonies or Colonial Office, it cemented connections abroad, and forged passages of communication for first-hand colonial information.

Some colonial officials also simply maintained correspondence with friends in prominent positions, as Laidlaw states, ‘Richard Bourke, during his African and Australian administrations, for example, kept up

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a regular correspondence with his Irish neighbour and political ally Thomas Spring Rice.’\textsuperscript{172} Bourke, aligned to contemporary humanitarian causes, was also in frequent contact with Thomas Fowell Buxton, and other evangelicals.\textsuperscript{173} Bourke, and his son, Dick, who acted as his personal secretary in the metropole, maintained an ‘array of personal, semi-official and official forms of correspondence which Bourke used, combined with the Whig’s sympathy for many of Bourke’s plans, all helped the governor to secure significant support from the Colonial Office.’\textsuperscript{174}

Further personal networks allowed the SDUK to spread its reach across the globe, and several committee members in positions relating to international trade or emigration widened their networks to the colonies. Thomas Fowell Buxton is a prime example, and Laidlaw unravels Buxton’s connections to the Cape and his communication with John Philip, who provided information from his own networks to Buxton. Philip, himself a missionary, had not only missionary contacts, but also knew Andries Stickenström, the Eastern Cape’s Commissioner General. In addition, Philip’s son-in-law, John Fairburn, was the editor of the \textit{South African Commercial Advertiser}, and extended Philip’s networks further.

Moreover Laidlaw further disentangles Buxton’s labyrinthine connections:

Having married Hannah Gurney in 1807, Buxton’s brothers-in-law included the wealthy Quaker brothers Sam and Joseph John Gurney, and also Samuel Hoare; while one of his sisters-in-law was Elizabeth Fry. Dr Stephen Lushington (the eminent anti-slavery lawyer); Thomas Denman (a future chief justice); Lord Suffield; and Thomas Spring Rice (later Baron Monteagle) were others among Buxton’s influential supporters. As the ‘heir to the Clapham Sect leadership’, Buxton had important evangelical contacts including Zachary Macaulay, James Stephen senior, Charles Grant senior, Daniel Wilson (Bishop of Calcutta) and Wilberforce. Buxton’s contact through this network with James Stephen junior and Charles Grant junior (who became Lord Glenelg in 1835) also gave him personal connections inside the 1830s’ Colonial Office.\textsuperscript{175}

Buxton’s network, as with Brougham’s, features several fellow Members of Parliament, but is also cemented by his work in abolition, a cause that attracted support to both men. Buxton, like Brougham had an extensive network that would have been able to provide information to the SDUK for publication, particularly in relation to Cape Colony.

\textsuperscript{172} Laidlaw, \textit{Colonial Connections}, 66. Spring Rice held several positions including, MP for Limerick in 1820, Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department in 1827 (under Canning and Goderich), Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (albeit briefly), and Chancellor of the Exchequer.


\textsuperscript{174} Ibid, 133.

\textsuperscript{175} Laidlaw, \textit{Colonial Connections}, 28. Many of those listed in Buxton’s network are also SDUK members.
India

During its publishing operations, the SDUK held several corresponding committees across Britain, but was also able to secure the foundation of two international local committees. These committees had the potential to either extend the SDUK’s networks, or cement their influence abroad via already established contacts. The committee in Calcutta was formed around 1833, and joined together men with common causes: humanitarian values and promoters of education. An entry in the SDUK committee minute book for 1830 notes that:

Sir William Bentinck, Sir Charles Grey and Sir Edward Ryan requested to form a Corresponding Committee of the Society at Calcutta and to associate themselves with such Gentlemen as they think most likely to promote its objects.\textsuperscript{176}

However, it was not until 1833 that the Calcutta committee appeared in \textit{The Penny Magazine}.\textsuperscript{177} The member list of the Calcutta committee varied, and over the course of the Society’s operations also included James Young, who was later joined in 1836 by B. H. Malkin\textsuperscript{178} and C. H. Cameron,\textsuperscript{179} who in 1837 would replace Ryan and Bentinck in representing the SDUK in Calcutta.\textsuperscript{180}

Although it is unclear how the Calcutta committee represented the Society in India, Bentinck and Ryan were also associated to the Calcutta School-Book Society, Bentinck as patron, and Ryan as president from 1832.\textsuperscript{181} As part of the School-Book Society, they were granted permission to reprint books published by the SDUK, and Brougham’s preliminary work, the first of the useful knowledge treatises, was translated into Bengali in 1830.\textsuperscript{182}

Bentinck, the son of Prime Minister William Bentinck 3\textsuperscript{rd} Duke of Portland\textsuperscript{183}, held several prominent positions throughout his life, including Governor of Madras in 1803 and Member of Parliament for

\textsuperscript{176} UCL, SDUK papers, Committee Book 2, p39, 8 July 1830. From a letter written from Ryan to B. H. Malkin. Monica Grobel’s thesis, however, argues that Malkin orchestrated the formation of the Calcutta group. See Grobel, \textit{Adult Education}, 800.

\textsuperscript{177} The local committee lists generally did not appear in the Society’s Libraries, which was reserved, probably due to the limited space on the page, reserved for the general committee.

\textsuperscript{178} Malkin was a puisne judge and friend of Ryan.


\textsuperscript{180} Malkin is listed for 2 years, before the committee is reduced to just Young and Cameron, who remained listed on the committee until the Society’s close. Malkin was also a member of the general committee of the London based group at its foundation.

\textsuperscript{181} Edward Ryan, also of Lincoln’s Inn, 1817, was asked to set up a corresponding committee. See UCL, SDUK Papers: General Committee Minutes, 8 July 1830 and 8 May 1833.

\textsuperscript{182} ‘Bengali Language’, \textit{The Penny Cyclopaedia}, Vol.4, (London: Charles Knight, 1835), 237

\textsuperscript{183} William Bentinck 3\textsuperscript{rd} Duke of Portland (14/4/1738-30/10/1809) was Prime Minister of Great Britain twice: in 1783, and 1807-1809.
Nottinghamshire over several periods.\textsuperscript{184} Despite his family’s affiliation with Toryism, Bentinck became integrated into Whig circles, taking part in ‘several initiatives side by side with leading Whigs. He presided over two public dinners... Among those who organised the dinners were Brougham and Lambton – not just Whigs but Radical Whigs’.\textsuperscript{185} Then in 1824, Bentinck was elected to Brooks’s, a private Whig club, which also included Brougham, and Wilberforce, and numerous MPs.

Bentinck, also aligned with humanitarian causes, became integrated with leading evangelicals through family connections: his sister-in-law, Lady Olivia Sparrow was friends with both William Wilberforce and Hannah More, which also enabled Bentinck to become acquainted with abolitionists, namely with Joseph John Gurney, brother-in-law to Buxton. John Rosselli describes their relationship in somewhat symbiotic terms, noting that Gurney described Bentinck as ‘a man of excellent sense and great integrity of purpose’, while Bentinck ‘at a public dinner moved resolutions calling on Parliament to abolish West Indian Slavery’.\textsuperscript{186} Becoming integrated in humanitarian and evangelical movements also tied Bentinck to Charles Grant, deputy, then chairman to the Court of Directors, ‘and the dominant figure in the East India Company’.\textsuperscript{187}

The second prominent figure in the formation of the Calcutta committee is Sir Edward Ryan. Although Ryan did not have the same social standing as Bentinck in Britain, he was well respected in Calcutta, working as a puisne judge,\textsuperscript{188} having completed his MA at Lincoln’s Inn where he was subsequently called to the bar. Having such a respected personality as part of their extended network represented their work in a positive light and would encourage the translation and circulation their publications in India. And it seems Ryan was felt to be the best candidate to represent the SDUK’s aims, as Benjamin Heath Malkin wrote to Brougham, Ryan:

is one of the few Europeans who interest themselves about the natives, and takes an active part, I may say is very generally at the head of all institutions for their education and improvement, and mixes in consequence a good deal with many of the most respectable and best educated men among them... No where is personal conduct more closely scanned than in Calcutta...\textsuperscript{189}

Grobel also states that it was through Ryan’s

interest that the Bombay Native Education Society continued to be supplied with the Society’s treatises, although its first connexion with the London organisation was through its secretary Capt. George Jervis, who subscribed in its name £40 to the funds, This gift was acknowledged

\textsuperscript{184} Bentinck also had a military career, reaching major-general in 1805. MP in 1796-1803, 1812-1814 and 1816-1826.


\textsuperscript{186} Ibid, 62.

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid. Rosselli also writes that ‘Bentinck in the post-war years, especially around 1819-22 – the last declining period of Grant’s ascendancy – came to enjoy the trust of a majority of the Court of Directors.’ p63. This kind of trust would no doubt be invaluable as part of the SDUK’s network.

\textsuperscript{188} Defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as: ‘(In the UK and some other countries) denoting a judge of a superior court inferior in rank to chief justices.’

\textsuperscript{189} UCL, Brougham Papers: Correspondence, Benjamin Heath Malkin to Henry Brougham, 7 February 1833.
by the presentation of four complete sets of the Society’s publications and the later transmission of books without charge. 190

Through Ryan, the Society was able to circulate their publications in India, enabling them to promote their views of British Imperialism and Empire to those in British occupied areas. Moreover, the Society’s publications were attractive as a tool for learning for the Bombay Native Education Society as they provided information on Western science ‘without interfering with the religious sentiments of any person’. 191 Just as they provided ‘safe’ reading in Britain, without religious sentiment, this safe reading could be imported abroad without accusations of proselytisation.

James Young also appears on the committee list for Calcutta from its formation in 1833. Young was a Benthamite and a merchant: a former head of Alexander and Company. It seems that Young was used as an intermediary between Bentham and Bentinck, and was tasked to ‘explain the details of Benthamite principles to the new Governor General.’ 192 Young seemingly played a similar role in the SDUK, introducing Brougham to ‘Prince’ Dwarkanath, whom he described as ‘my own very particular and old friend, at the head of everything liberal in India’. 193 Dwarkanath, a sugar and indigo estate owner, and businessman, was considered the most prominent citizen of Calcutta. As a firm believer of the beneficial relationship between India and Britain, he financially backed Calcutta’s ‘two leading English-language daily newspapers and supported the city’s English-language theatre.’ 194 Dwarkanath also held social gatherings at his estate to which those from the Indian and British elite were regular attendees.

While in Britain Dwarkanath forged strong ties with Brougham, and discussed education in India, and the SDUK presented him with a gift on his departure, presumably their publications. In return, Dwarkanath promised to promote education in India, and return to England in order to take part in the SDUK’s operations on his next visit. 195

Although the Calcutta committee does not appear to have been active in producing, or distributing literature across India, the group was nonetheless a beneficial addition to the London SDUK, who could maintain correspondence and promote common interests, namely the dissemination of British literature and education abroad. Indeed it was this relationship that secured a number of translations of their literature. The importance of colonial officials is certainly not underestimated by historians, particularly John Cell who argues that:

190 Grobel, Adult Education, 801.
191 Letter from G. Jervis, Secretary to the Bombay Native Education Society, to the Government of Bombay, 4 October 1823. Cited in Ravinder Kumar Western India in the Nineteenth Century (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), 54.
193 Blair B. Kling, Partner in Empire: Dwarkanath Tagore and the Age of Enterprise in Eastern India (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 171.
195 Kling, Partner in Empire, 171.
The governors and their staffs were essential to the formation and execution of a successful colonial policy… Without effective government at the local level the Colonial Office itself might improve or decline, might process its papers quickly or slowly: but the imperial administrative network would simply fail to function.196

Cell’s explanation of the workings of the ‘imperial administrative network’ suggests that maintaining a close relationship with officials in India would be beneficial in establishing government colonial policy, and might also help those in the metropole influence policy abroad. Moreover, Bentinck was from a prominent family and landed gentry, and his status as younger brother to a Duke, made connections with him attractive. As Rosselli states: ‘Bentinck, in other words, was a catch.’197 An early example can be seen in Thomas Fowell Buxton’s plea to Bentinck to forbid the traditional practice of Suttee, the ritual suicide of widows in India, as he wrote:

The short interview which I had with you lately has been to me a matter of sincere gratification. I now feel that I can leave in your hand the question, whether the British Government ought, or ought not, to tolerate the annual sacrifice of several hundred females; and I have the satisfaction of knowing that you will do every thing which ought to be done.198

Bentinck outlawed the tradition soon after his appointment as Governor-General. Much to the delight of Buxton and other reformers such as Jeremy Bentham, their influence abroad, through connections with Bentinck was having an impact on policy.199 This is also a prime example of Strange’s structural power, not only controlling the beliefs of others (and to some extent, security), but the influence of power concerning the outcome of ‘particular contests’, this contest being the eradication of a foreign tradition.

Thus the SDUK was able to forge networks in India, beginning with Bentinck, Ryan, and Young. Even after their departure from Calcutta, the SDUK would have been able to maintain links, as Bentinck was succeeded by Lord Auckland as Governor-General, and Young retained his position on the SDUK Calcutta committee.

America and Boston SDUKs

The SDUK’s ideologies also successfully crossed the Atlantic, and the Boston Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was established in 1829. The aim of the Boston group was to ‘promote and direct

197 Rosselli, Making of a Liberal, 84.
popular education by lectures and other means." The group was headed by Daniel Webster, with John Pickering and Nathan Hale as vice-presidents. While Webster and Pickering were politicians, Hale was a newspaper publisher and journalist. All were members of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, as was the corresponding secretary, Jacob Bigelow. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences was founded in 1780 by John Adams a diplomat to Europe and later President of the United States between 1797-1801, in order to:

Promote and encourage the knowledge of the antiquities of America, and of the natural history of the country, and to determine the uses to which the various natural productions of the country may be applied; to promote and encourage medical discoveries, mathematical disquisitions, philosophical inquiries and experiments; astronomical, meteorological, and geographical observations, and improvements in agriculture, arts, manufactures, and commerce; and in fine, to cultivate every art and science which may tend to advance the interest, honor, dignity, and happiness of a free, independent, and virtuous people.

This encouragement of learning is closely aligned with the aims of the Boston SDUK, who intended to ‘promote and direct popular education by lectures and other means’, particularly to men over the age of seventeen ‘to the age when young men enter on the more active and responsible duties of their several stations’ as ‘sufficient opportunity does not appear to be afford for mental and moral education.’

From 1829, lectures organised by the group were given weekly, running from approximately November to April. The first series of lectures was so successful that the venue, the Boston Athenaeum lecture theatre, allowed the group to repeat lectures the following day to meet demand. However, after two series of lectures, this growth in attendance caused the group to change the location of their lectures to a Masonic Temple, from where their lectures were delivered until they ceased operations in 1847 after their fifteenth series. The group also went on to publish their own American Library of Useful Knowledge, including lectures and essays, very much in keeping with those of the London-based Society. A review stated that their library would consist ‘in part, of original productions, and in part of a reprint of the most meritorious of those which appear in England.’ Their first volume included Webster’s An Essay on the

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201 Other prominent members include Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) essayist and poet, Edmund Everett (1794-1865) governor and pastor, and Charles Sumner (1811-1874), an antislavery republican.
204 Ibid, 176.
Importance to Practical Men, of Scientific Knowledge, and on the Encouragements to its Pursuits, which very much resembles the title of Brougham’s preliminary treatise, also reprinted in the same volume. It is likely that the group’s network of men aided the group in attracting popular speakers that encouraged attendance at their lectures, as well as sales of their publications.

Perhaps in accordance with the Boston group’s success, in October 1836, the American Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (ASDUK) was established in order to supply an ever increasing national ‘demand for useful knowledge from all classes of the people far exceeding the supply.’208 There is a small crossover with the Boston group, and Daniel Webster appears on their list of vice-presidents.209 The starkest difference between the new American Society was the inclusion of Christian sentiment in their works. Religion was considered to be

> the only preservative of all our blessings, individual and national. Its great truths and sanctions are the only foundation of sound morality, the only defence of public and private virtue, the only safeguard of the social and moral welfare of individuals and communities. Its principles can alone inspire that purity, charity, and order, which are essential to freedom, and without which our free institutions must come to an end.210

The ASDUK’s publications were to be used to guide the newly arriving immigrants, estimated at 10,000 per month, in their duties and obligations as American citizens.211 The Society intended to instil a good moral character, and national virtues in their readers, beginning with the youth of the nation.

The ASDUK was largely made up of politicians and clergymen, and was established with Stephen Van Rensselaer, a congressman, as President, Gorham D. Abbott, minister and educator as Secretary, and Anthony P. Halsey, cashier at New York Bank, as Treasurer. The committee was extensive with twenty-three members on the executive committee, thirty-nine on the board of directors and thirty-three vice-presidents, covering a large number of states across the country.

The ASDUK proposed an American Library for School and Families which, with over fifty volumes at its outset, included a vast range of subjects from history, biography, natural history, political and moral sciences, to more practical volumes on agriculture, commerce and manufacturing. All were ‘characterized by such a spirit of Christian morality as shall fit it to refine and elevate the moral character of our nation.’212 The volumes were designed to be bought, shipped, and stored in a specially designed bookcase, but before commencing this feat, the ASDUK needed to raise $15,000 to secure funds to manufacture the required stereotype plates.213 Unlike the smaller, local Boston SDUK, the ASDUK corresponded with, and possibly met members of the London SDUK. Alonzo Potter, an ASDUK

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209 Ibid, 1. There are thirty-three vice-presidents in total.
210 Ibid, 4.
211 Ibid, 6.
212 American Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge Library Prospectus, 11 (Vere Harmsworth Library, Bodleian Libraries, 300.88 r. 49 (12)).
213 Ibid, 12. A pamphlet in the same prospectus reveals the commencement of production in the following year.
committee member wrote to Thomas Coates, the Society’s secretary, with a list of the works of which the American Society would like to obtain. The list, annotated in red with costings, presumably by Coates, totals more than £23, and was to be sent via a bookseller in High Holborn, who was already compiling a collection of books for Potter. Potter offered to send the London group the American Library ‘upon his return in September’.²¹⁴

However, two years later, Potter writes again, to inform the SDUK that the American Society did not succeed in its plans to create its own library, and has dissolved. The books received from the SDUK were placed in the hands of the ‘Superintendent of Public Instruction of this state’.²¹⁵

In analysing the international groups of the SDUK, the networks are the foundation that leads to success. The lectures of the Boston group by eminent men attracted a large audience and would no doubt have had an impact on the sales of their publications. The ASDUK, with a less influential network, and even with the aid of the London group were not able to achieve the same success as their Boston counterparts. The Calcutta group, however, as part of the British Empire would have been able to draw more power from their association with the London based SDUK, whose influence would have more political power.

Conclusion

The metropolitan networks of the SDUK, composed of eminent gentlemen, lawyers, men of culture and science, as well as politicians, made the Society an influential group. These networks would have been able to provide first-hand knowledge from their own specialisms that bolstered the authoritative nature of the Society’s publications, attracting readers and subscribers, wanting to be part of a venture associated to so many public figures. Moreover it seems that the creation of networks was a conscious action by the Society, who compiled at least one list rating the usefulness of their domestic local committees. Similarly, authors were only eligible to write for the Society if they were known to at least one member to the general committee.

In the foundation of the Society, it seems that Brougham was a central figure. An overwhelming number of general committee members were part of Brougham’s many circles, whether as fellow lawyers, politicians, or promoters of popular education. Brougham (as well as the Society) can be seen as a demonstration of Susan Strange’s structural power, determining the knowledge received by the working classes, and shaping governmental positions of power. The Society’s own networks were extended by the prominent men attracted to the cause of the SDUK, particularly apparent in the network of Thomas Fowell Buxton which connected abolitionists, evangelicals, and the Cape Colony to the SDUK.

International branches of the SDUK also enabled the Society’s publications to be disseminated abroad. The Calcutta local committee connected the SDUK with governance in India through General Governor William Bentinck (succeeded by Lord Auckland, also acquainted with the Society, and related to

Brougham via marriage), Edward Ryan and James Young, all influential figures in Calcutta society, but only a small extension of the powerful metropolitan network. Although they seemingly did not produce their own literature, they secured the translation of many SDUK treatises. The Society’s counterparts in America similarly promoted their ideals of education across the Atlantic. The Boston group was able to disseminate some of the Society’s treatises, and held several series of lectures encouraging the scientific and moral education of young men. The group was immensely popular, and ran for almost a decade. Although this did not seem to be as successful on a national scale with the American Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, the Society’s reprints from plates sent from London were well received, and *The Penny Magazine* was sold across the country.

The SDUK corresponds with Strange’s theories of the structures of networks, particularly in relation to control over knowledge, beliefs and ideas, through the publication or translation of their works, or the establishment of corresponding societies. But with SDUK members in positions of power, the group’s network also encompasses aspects of relational power, as they were able, in some circumstances, to influence policy and political decision-making. The Society’s networks extended across the globe, and had a more extensive reach into corners of governance and society than previously examined by historians. These networks helped in gathering information from the colonies, and in turn heightened the authority behind their publications.

While the Society’s connections in Britain and the colonies helped to bolster their popularity and authority, the following chapter explores the formation of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China, namely their aims and obstacles in operating without the support of an influential network like its London counterpart.
Chapter Three

A War of Words: The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China

‘There will thus be a wide door open for the dissemination of truth’

‘Proceedings Relative to the Formation of a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China’ Chinese Repository 1835, 10

Whereas the SDUK in London, and to some extent in India, relied on powerful networks to disseminate literature and influence policy, without such a network and with no influence in Chinese politics, the Society’s sister group in China would face several challenges in achieving their objectives. This chapter intends to explore the formulation of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China (SDUKC) by a group of merchants and missionaries in Canton, 1834. It will analyse the debates surrounding the motives of the Society’s foundation, and to what extent it was successful in achieving its objectives. This chapter will also reflect upon the question of whether colonialism is a prerequisite to successful cultural imperialism, without which another culture cannot be overruled or infiltrated. Furthermore this chapter will continue to assess the SDUKC’s methods to secure control over the knowledge structure by producing and disseminating literature to the Chinese populace.

Aspects of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China have been explored by scholars. Perhaps the most comprehensive study is that of Songchuan Chen (2012), who considers the concept of ‘information warfare’ as an attempt to ‘open’ China, separate to previous diplomatic methods and the future military war of 1839.216 Chen has also collated information from the Society’s proceedings to create a table of publications. Michael Lazich’s article, ‘Placing China in Its “Proper Rank among the Nations”: The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China and the First Systematic Account of the United States in Chinese’ (2011) analyses missionary Elijah Bridgman’s treatise designed to represent America as an ideal nation, that could inspire the Chinese to challenge their traditional politics.217 Although both works provide excellent overviews, neither deal with aspects of cultural imperialism by the Society, nor do they fully survey the membership of the group, focussing, like many others, solely on the missionaries. Information concerning the state of trade, global and diplomatic relations has been extensively covered by Robert Bickers and Michael Greenberg. Bickers’ recent work The Scramble for China: Foreign Devils in the Qing Empire, 1832-1914 (2012) places the merchants and missionaries, ‘the actors’, on the ‘stage’ of China, analysing their actions in minute detail, including the

consequences of trying to break the barriers into China. Greenberg provides a comprehensive guide to the state of trade with China from its beginnings, including the imbalance of trade and the constant struggles to maintain an economic relationship with China, and the burgeoning Country trade as a method to level the economic field.219

Primary sources are vital in exploring the formation and workings of the SDUKC. Proceedings of annual meetings were published annually both independently and in The Chinese Repository, a missionary-led journal, whose editor, Elijah Bridgman was a prominent SDUKC member. Also publishing translations of imperial decrees, and correspondence from Canton residents, this journal acts as a gateway into the lives of the merchants and missionaries based in the factories at Canton.

The papers of the London Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge include a small amount of correspondence with the members of their sister Society in Canton, although some is now lost. What little remains, however, shows that the SDUK in London supported its sister Society in Canton, and demonstrates that in fact the Society’s foundation lies not simply with the missionaries as stated previously, but more likely with J. F. Davis, who represented the Society in Canton as early as 1831.221 Surviving copies of the literature produced by the group are scarce, and what is available is untranslated. Therefore, for analyses on works printed in Chinese, I rely largely on Lazich and Chen. In addition the archives of Jardine Matheson & Co, the merchants at the head of the Society, have been transcribed and compiled into a volume by Alain Le Pichon, China Trade and Empire: Jardine, Matheson & Co. and the Origins of British Rule in Hong Kong, 1827-1843 (2006). Although the SDUKC is not the focus of his work, Le Pichon’s monograph gives some insight into the merchants’ ways of thinking about printing in China. Many of the publications written in English are, however, largely available in print and online, including those run by Society members, such as The Chinese Repository, and The Canton Register.

Histories of the press, journalists, and journalism in China largely focus on the missionaries attempts to proselytise China through print. Essays by Fred Drake and Jessie G. Lutz included in Christianity in China (1985) provide a somewhat biographical journey into how Karl Gützlaff and E. C. Bridgman (respectively) worked to alter the perception of the West, including a short analysis on publications associated with the Society.222 Paul French, however, provides a broader overview of the history of journalists in China from the Opium Wars to the modern day, encompassing ‘the twin European

220 There is evidence of communication between the two Societies, as The Chinese Repository and The Penny Magazine quote from each other throughout the 1830s, but unfortunately the correspondence from this period is however largely lost. The informal nature of the correspondence does remain indicates that the groups and their members were familiar with one another. The Penny Magazine states that the SDUK in London are sending their stereotype plates to China, see ‘A Chinese Poem’, The Penny Magazine (1834), 358.
221 He is listed as the sole member of the local committee at Canton in the Quarterly Journal of Education (London: Charles Knight, 1831).
imperatives in China… to trade and proselytise [in order] to advance their various national agendas, empires and treasuries. This meant that the very earliest newspapers and journals to be produced reflected a tripartite of interests: God, Mammon and flag.’ 223 I will build upon these previous studies in order to create and obtain a broader picture of print culture in China, and how that affected, (predominately limited), what the SDUKC were able to do.

Problems in China

In the late eighteenth century the East India Company found that their imported materials could not compete with the British domestic textile market and so turned its attention to the import of China tea – the only commodity at the time that was so widely consumed but had not home market to support it. Yet as the British taste for Chinese produce increased, China ‘developed no reciprocal appetite’.224 A letter from the Emperor Chien Lung [Qianlong] states:

Strange and costly objects do not interest me. As your Ambassador can see for himself we possess all things.225

And as historian Michael Greenberg writes, this statement of indifference towards European goods is not written in arrogance, but simply demonstrates China’s self-sufficiency, and the factor that would continually hamper Britain’s merchants: the one-sided balance of China trade.226 Products from British India were able to partially bridge the gap in trade through the export to China of raw cotton, dyes, and more importantly, opium. China nonetheless had a ‘closed door’ policy towards foreign trade, and merchants had to adapt to the Canton style of trade. Foreigners were restricted to trade only in Canton. They were allocated a ‘factory’: ‘long, narrow two-storey buildings… business rooms took the lower floors, with kitchens and servants quartered at the rear, while upstairs were rooms for the traders, with a dining room facing the square and the river opening onto a verandah’.227 The few surrounding streets were lined with small shops and eateries adapted to European tastes. Merchants were forbidden from entering the city of Canton, and from residing in their factory outside of the trading season. These restrictions prevented the merchants from gaining control of production, one of Strange’s four structures required for power. The Chinese similarly hampered the merchants’ efforts in securing the knowledge structure from its very root – the ability to learn the Chinese language, it was a capital offence for them to be taught the vernacular by a native speaker.228 Therefore:

All communication in either direction was addressed to and channelled through a group of Chinese traders (who alone could trade with the foreigners) known as the cohong, or hong merchants. The cohong was held responsible for the actions of the foreigners, the insecurities of

223 Paul French, Through the Looking Glass: China’s Foreign Journalists from Opium Wars to Mao (Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 15.
224 Greenberg, British Trade, 4.
225 Cited in Greenberg, British Trade, 4.
226 Ibid, 5.
227 Bickers, Scramble, 33.
228 Ibid, 31.
whose position were balanced by the profits of their business. The British could not speak for themselves.\textsuperscript{229}

The only way for the British to communicate both their true character and to ‘make their precarious position on the fringe of the Chinese empire understood by their superiors in India and England, their government in London, and even the people of Canton’ was through print.\textsuperscript{230} James Matheson began the process by founding \textit{Canton Register},\textsuperscript{231} the first English language newspaper in Canton, (beginning in 1827) whose articles were ‘picked up and reprinted verbatim in the imperial press.’\textsuperscript{232} The \textit{Canton Register} allowed merchants to emphasise their unique knowledge of China, creating an air of authority behind their publication: ‘much error has been propagated in the world, by the superficial information sent forth by those who can only look on the surface of society’.\textsuperscript{233}

It is unclear whether Matheson intended the \textit{Canton Register} to remain exclusively for British eyes. Robert Bickers writes that as the Chinese were not learning English, they were unable to learn of British feelings and actions (for example voyages up the Chinese coast) from such openly available sources as newspapers, indicating that there would be little chance of the \textit{Register} landing in the laps of the Chinese authorities.

According to historian Paul French:

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The single most important function of the papers was that they published prices on opium and goods for all to read. Such information had previously been the sole knowledge of the Honourable Company and was a crucial part of their trading advantages.\textsuperscript{234} Yet the \textit{Canton Register} is seen by Hilleman as a method to justify breaking ‘Chinese law [regarding trading] by depicting the Chinese as an immoral and cruel people.’\textsuperscript{235} Nonetheless it seemed that print was the only way for the voices of the British to be heard. Merchants wanted ‘to explain who the British really were and what they really wanted. ‘To do this they took copies of a small pamphlet, a translation into Chinese by a missionary, Robert Morrison, of \textit{A Brief Account of the English Character} penned by Charles Marjoribanks, formerly in charge of East India Company Operations in Canton.’\textsuperscript{236} The pamphlet claimed that the British had no desire for territory and wanted only to trade, and had done so in China for two centuries to mutual benefit. But it complained that the authorities in Canton were corrupt, capricious and cruel, and through their actions impeded amicable commerce and contradicted the ‘imperial
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\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{229} Ibid, 22.
\bibitem{230} Ibid, 24.
\bibitem{231} Matheson however tried to disassociate himself with the founding of the paper, described in letter 9 in Alain Le Pichon \textit{China Trade and Empire: Jardine, Matheson & Co. the Origins of British Rule in Hong Kong, 1827-1843} (Oxford: Published for the British Academy by Oxford University Press, 2006).
\bibitem{232} Bickers, \textit{Scramble}, 24.
\bibitem{233} The \textit{Canton Register}, 15 March 1828 (Canton: John Slade,1828) and Ulrike Hillemann \textit{Asian Empire and British Knowledge: China and the Networks of British Imperial Expansion} (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 83.
\bibitem{234} Paul French, \textit{Looking Glass}, 21.
\bibitem{235} Hillemann, \textit{Asian Empire}, 83.
\bibitem{236} Bickers, \textit{Scramble}, 19-20.
\end{thebibliography}
benevolence of mind’ – the emperor’s wishes – which had allowed the British to come to China.\textsuperscript{237} This pamphlet did not succeed in altering the Chinese perception of Britain, instead it was considered to contain many falsehoods, and was incomprehensible to the common reader.\textsuperscript{238} With the East India Company’s monopoly abolished in 1833, a new institutional presence was needed to represent British interests and encourage the Chinese to lessen the restrictions on trade. This was found in the form a chief superintendent of trade: Lord Napier. With more military experience than that in trade, Napier journeyed to Canton towards the end of the tea-trading season, ignoring the decree that foreigners must retreat from Canton outside of season. Napier believed that as a representative of the British government, he should not be treated as a trader. He ordered letters to be delivered directly to the Chinese court, and retaliated when they were rejected. In September 1834 Napier sent frigates to Whampoa, west of Canton with orders to fire on the Bogue forts defending the entrance to Canton. The Chinese ‘blocked the frigates’ exit from the Bogue with a dozen stone barges, a cable drawn across the river, and hundreds of fire rafts loaded with gunpowder, all guarded by a fleet of Chinese warships.’ The frigates were stuck in Canton.\textsuperscript{239} The Chinese agreed to let Napier, who had contracted a fever, retreat to Macau, but only under Chinese armed guard. He was placed under house arrest, but later died of his illness. Although some wanted a military retaliation to September’s events, Napier was simply replaced. His successor John Francis Davis, a Chinese scholar and East India Company chair tried to undo some of Napier’s aggressive policies, but by this time Chinese authorities were clamping down on many foreign activities, including printing and distributing publications, maintaining their control over the knowledge disseminated to the masses. Nonetheless, it seems that under Davis, print was the method chosen to try to ‘open’ up China. It appears that books could be disseminated more easily than the British voices could be heard. This is evident throughout the \textit{Chinese Repository} as the positive uses of literature are weighed against the unreceptive character of the Chinese people:

> The antipathy against foreigners, the contempt in which they are held by governments, and the vain boasting of mental superiority, have proved so many barriers against the introduction of European sciences… [but]… the reading class is very large, the desire of reading new books is never satiated, and their minds though greatly bigoted, are not entirely blind to those things which may be useful even when they have a foreign origin.\textsuperscript{240}

The article continues to outline the state of useful reading in China, which despite including excellent works of Chinese history and geography, concludes that natural philosophy, physics and geology are lacking. Similarly, geography and descriptions concerning the occidental world were considered inaccurate and ‘ridiculous’, something that once corrected, may open China to Western trade.\textsuperscript{241}

\textsuperscript{237} Ibid, 28.
\textsuperscript{238} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{239} For more information see W. T. Hanes and F. Sanello, \textit{The Opium Wars: The Addiction of One Empire and the Corruption of Another} (Illinois, Sourcebooks, 2002), 31.
\textsuperscript{240} ‘Literary Notices’, \textit{Chinese Repository} (1833) 508-9. This section was written by Walter Henry Medhurst.
\textsuperscript{241} Ibid.
John Francis Davis had joined the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in London, appearing on local committee lists in the 1831 as a representative for the SDUK in Canton. In 1833 he received a pamphlet promoting the Society, which he immediately sent to *The Chinese Repository*, a work he believed was ‘deservedly encouraged here, and of considerable circulation at our Indian Presidencies.’

To *The Chinese Repository*, he wrote:

Sir, having been requested, by the committee of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, to give circulation to the enclosed ‘Remarks’ in answer to various attacks recently made upon the Society, chiefly by those members of the trade, who consider themselves aggrieved by the cheapness of its publications, I beg the favour of your inserting in your journal, (whose objects are of a cognate character with those of the Society,) such portions of the remarks as appear calculated to promote the end in view, and are likely to prove interesting to your readers.

It is evident that Davis believed in the power of literature. Indeed, what remains of Davis’s SDUK correspondence suggests that the Society was able to influence British readers overseas, writing that: ‘the influence of our Society’s example is pretty extensive. *The Penny Magazine* is in great vogue here, and as one of the missionaries Mr Gutzlaff is printing a periodical in Chinese I make no doubt of translated portions of the Magazine working their way through the Empire.’

It is no coincidence that the SDUKC was to form just months after the departure of Napier, and the appointment of Davis, who was evidently instrumental in encouraging the formation of a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in Canton, so much so that, once formed, the Society made him an honorary member.

**The Formation of the SDUKC**

In a public meeting held in November 1834, Charles Gutzlaff, the missionary mentioned in the correspondence of J. F. Davis proposed the formation of a Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China, seconded by James Matheson, a Scottish Merchant. Its committee, formed at the meeting, held a mixture of merchants and missionaries – and are clear in their objectives:

Recent events have greatly contributed towards raising in us the hope, that our intercourse with China will henceforth not only be mercantile but intellectual.

The Society felt that it would need to break down the information barrier created by the Chinese, who had ‘drawn a strong line of demarcation between themselves and all foreigners.’ Knowledge did not leave China, just as ‘unworthy’ European knowledge did not enter. Consisting of merchants and missionaries, their vested interests were clear. Between them, the Society hoped on one hand to convert and

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242 UCL, SDUK Papers, J. F. Davis letter to Thomas Coates, 4 December 1833, item 22.
244 UCL, Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge Papers: J. F. Davis letter to Thomas Coates, 4 December 1833, item 22.
246 Ibid, 5.
Christianise the Chinese people, while on the other, opening diplomatic doors to gain access to commodities and produce exclusive to China. The group however already had reservations about the ease in which this could be executed, but nonetheless praised the receptiveness of the Chinese people, stating that ‘of all the Asiatics we regard them as the most prepared for the reception of useful knowledge.’

The Chinese, unlike the ‘inferior’ and ‘more bigoted’ Hindoos, were considered capable of understanding and appreciating Western science and arts. The portrayal of the Chinese in a positive light, capable of accommodating Western knowledge, differs from the previous representations of the Chinese as bigoted, and ignorant, demonstrating Murray A. Rubinstein’s assertion that the missionaries praised the Chinese, then damned them in order to emphasise the need to civilise and moralise the nation. Indeed the group continued to describe the intellectual state of China as ‘stationary’ due to ‘apathy, the national pride and the ignorance of the Chinese.’ This however could be rectified by the Society:

> It should be our chief endeavour, or, our steady aim, to supply their lack of knowledge; and by a friendly interchange of thought, produce a union of sentiment, the firmest basis of international intercourse.

Yet the Society was however under no illusion as to the difficulties they faced, but the language chosen for the preamble is telling and provocative:

> The end of our course is far distant; the barriers high; the ways rough; and the passes difficult; our advances, therefore, may be slow. Yet prepared for all contingencies, and aware that it is not the work of a day, we hail with delight the commencement of the undertaking, and are glad to engage in a warfare, where we are sure the victors and the vanquished will meet only to exult and rejoice together.

Using the metaphor of warfare to outline their aims, it is not surprising that the Chinese would be hostile towards foreign print.

After several calls for a book society (Christian or otherwise) and spurred on by the success of the London-based society, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China was formed in Canton 1834, aligning the interests of two disparate parties. Missionaries and merchants would have to set differences aside in order to open China to both trade and religion. To achieve either, China needed to become aware of European sciences and arts, the representation of the West needed to be altered into a

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247 Ibid, 6.
248 Ibid, 9.
250 Proceedings Relative to the Formation of a Society, 6.
251 Ibid.
252 Ibid, 7.
more positive image, and only then could the antipathy towards foreigners be forgotten: ‘and with the opening of China to western ideas would come a demand for all sorts of British goods.’

**Language**

The language barrier had long presented problems to both the missionaries and the merchants well before the formation of the SDUKC:

> It was a general feature of the Canton trade that virtually no foreign merchant could speak, let alone write, Chinese, and no Chinese hong knew English, except occasionally Pidgin English. The handful of scholars who, like Robert Morrison studied Chinese seriously tended to be missionaries.

A letter calling for a book society in China printed in volume one of the *Chinese Repository* stated:

> We should be very glad to see a Book Society for China – a society for the promotion of useful secular knowledge, as well as a society for the promotion of Christian knowledge. We believe they would not hinder but aid each other. The greatest difficulty consists in getting a competent supply of good writers and translators.

Any effort to officially remedy this was hampered by the Chinese as ‘foreigners were banned from learning Chinese, buying Chinese books, and using Chinese printing facilities.’ Not only could the merchants not learn Chinese, but they were forbidden to print on the mainland. Similarly, after Napier’s aggressive arrival in Canton, Chinese booksellers were also reluctant to (and later forbidden from) selling the foreigners’ books. The language barrier between the Chinese and the Society was something approached during the first public meeting, and an issue that lingered with the Society throughout its duration. The Chinese Secretary to the Society, Charles Gutzlaff, requested that ‘those members who are conversant with the Chinese language should endeavour to furnish works for publication.’ Indeed, it became the second regulation of the Society:

> The object of the society is, by all means in its power, to prepare and publish, in a cheap form, plain and easy treatises in the Chinese Language, on such branches of useful knowledge as are suited to the existing state and condition of the Chinese empire.

The regulations of the Society made allowances for those who were able to provide original or translated works, as corresponding or honorary members were exempt from the annual subscription of $10 in an attempt to encourage participation.

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257 *Proceedings Relative to the Formation of a Society*, 10.

258 Ibid, 11.
Disparate Groups and Common Ground

Despite being disparate groups, the opening of Chinese borders to information would be mutually beneficial to the merchants and missionaries, but was impossible without the help of the other. Although the missionaries had the benefits of the knowledge of the Chinese language, a public decree by the “Chief Magistrate of Nanhae”… ordered the seizure and destruction of all the “evil and obscene books of the foreign barbarians,” threatening that any Chinese printers found assisting the missionaries would be “immediately seized and punished with severity.” Conversely, the merchants, lacking language skills, could offer the financial backing to the missionaries, and had done so before the formation of the Society. In fact, it appears, as Jessie G. Lutz argues, that ‘the line between secular and religious was not sharply defined in the minds of mid-nineteenth century Protestant missionaries’ who were able to work closely with those smuggling opium. The missionaries and merchants had, in actuality, worked together before the formation of the Society. William Jardine, had called upon the language and medical skills of Gutzlaff in 1832 when he sought an interpreter and ‘surgeon’ on the opium ships sent on secret missions up the China coast. He ‘struck a deal with Gutzlaff: the missionary would be free to spread the gospel and distribute his tracts among the Chinese people so long as he did not object to opium being sold from the ships.’ Moreover, as an extra incentive, Jardine offered to fund Gutzlaff’s Chinese useful knowledge periodical (The Eastern Western Monthly Magazine) for six months. It seems that the missionaries were able to reconcile the dealings with opium with the distribution of religious books. Gutzlaff’s Journal of Three Voyages along the Coast of China in 1831, 1832 and 1833: With Notices of Siam, Corea, and the Loo Choo Islands (1834) for example, only describes his medical duties and the eager reception of books he distributed, and omits any personal dealings with opium, ‘for the sale of which he was employed.’ This provides another example of Rubinstein’s theory of the missionaries praising and damning the Chinese, as Gutzlaff attempts to ‘enlighten the heathens while pandering to their vices.”

Publications – ‘Print was the new agent of action, and propaganda was the aim.’

With few foreign Canton residents being able to write proficiently in Chinese, the production of written work was largely, if not wholly, dependent on the missionaries. As imperial decrees hampered their efforts in printing, the Society was unable to produce many publications, and the few that were completed were mostly distributed rather than sold. Although the group intended to create works of useful knowledge, rather than religious works, Christianity, although not ‘always obtrusive in their essays… is rarely absent, [and to] label their writings secular is, to some extent, misleading.’ However, it was not the content of the work that hindered their popularity. Without a market for such works, it would inevitably have been difficult to reach a large audience, despite China’s high levels of literacy.

259 Lazich, Placing China, 530.
261 Le Pichon, Jardine Matheson, 144, footnote 6.
262 Greenberg, British Trade, 140.
263 Ibid.
264 Bickers, Scramble, 27.
265 Lutz, Opening China, 181.
Although Gutzlaff’s *Eastern Western Magazine* predates the formation of the SDUK in China, he placed the publication under the auspices of the Society, securing its printing in Singapore with the Society’s agent, almost immediately. Gutzlaff, and Elijah Bridgman (editor of the *Chinese Repository*), the Society’s two ‘major propagandists’ were the magazine’s main contributors. As Jessie G. Lutz writes, ‘the purposes of the Society and the magazine... were the same.’

The magazine filled a gap for the Society for its first few years, as no publications were available in Chinese, despite three being in ‘preparation’ – a general history of the world, a universal geography, and a map of the world. After the magazine’s first imprint had been so well received it required a second edition, and Gutzlaff began print runs of one thousand copies. However, production in China was soon interrupted:

> While the committee have viewed with pleasure the disposition which has in some instances been exhibited by the people of this country, and which, were it not for the unnecessary fears and restraints imposed by those who are in authority... [The Society has] contemplated, therefore, as soon as the works are ready for publication, the practicability of having them printed in some place beyond the jurisdiction of the Chinese.

The Society finally overcame imperial obstacles to foreigners printing in Canton – such as the arrest of wood-block cutters and mission printers – by moving all printing to Singapore into the hands of John Moor, as revealed in the second report of proceedings. Moor however only reprinted old issues which were only circulated for the ‘Chinese in Indian Archipelago, Batavia, Singapore, Malacca, Penang &c.’ Nevertheless, at least according to the *Chinese Repository*, the Chinese read Gutzlaff’s magazine eagerly, ‘having a favourable opinion of it’, so much so that ‘we may venture to say that no natives of good sense and unprejudiced minds are against it.’ This is perhaps due to Gutzlaff’s style of writing as he strove to write in a Chinese context, using the Chinese calendar to date historical events, and equating events in China with parallel events in the West. Fred W. Drake similarly puts the success of Gutzlaff’s work down to his use of idioms, making the West more familiar by drawing comparisons with China:

> Recognition of the Chinese respect for history resulted in an effort, using several pages of each issue for a year, to equate the antiquity of the West with the ancient Chinese experience.

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269 Ibid, 357.
When a copy of the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine* reached the imperial court, *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register*, positively wrote that:

> There can be little doubt but the emperor was greatly surprised at the appearance of the *Chinese Magazine*. This singular fact, that a book written by an European in the Chinese language, printed from Chinese blocks by a native, and published by the author, and brought to the notice of great officers of state even of H. I. M. himself, stands alone in the history of literature and of China.\(^{274}\)

The Emperor, however, described the concept of a magazine produced between foreigners and natives as ‘detestable’, whilst recognising that it was clearly Chinese-printed: ‘They are got up, as to appearance, fashion, paper, and title-page, exactly the same as the story books, song-books, &c. that are sold in the streets.’\(^{275}\) Producing books in this style, something familiar to the Chinese, would have been part of Gutzlaff’s strategy to encourage readership.

Jessie G. Lutz discusses the dualism of the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine*, and the different sides presented to Chinese readers of the magazine, and the Western audience (or Society members) of *The Chinese Repository*. Gutzlaff, states Lutz, paraphrased the popular philosopher Confucius, describing the magazine’s aims of bringing East and West together, sharing knowledge in harmony.\(^{276}\) *The Chinese Repository* and the proceedings of the SDUKC reminded the Westerners of their superiority:

> Unhappily, the greater part of our fellow-creatures are too deeply sunk in ignorance to feel their mental wants; nor are they in such a state as to enable them to relieve their wretchedness were it perceived.\(^{277}\)

The magazine was also used to house parts of other Society publications, reprinting sections of both *Universal Geography* (1838) and *Universal History* (of which 300 copies were ordered in 1838). Drake argues that ‘probably some of the most important articles [in the magazine] were those that treated contemporary geography’,\(^{278}\) some of which most likely came from the Society’s *Universal Geography*. Drake also states that the magazine was sold in ‘two bookstores in Canton that had branch operations in other cities of China’, until its production was moved to Singapore, where it is unlikely to have been circulated through mainland China.\(^{279}\)

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\(^{275}\) Ibid.
\(^{277}\) ‘The Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China’ *Chinese Repository* (1834), 508.
\(^{278}\) Drake, *Protestant Geography*, 99.
\(^{279}\) Ibid, 100.
Elijah Bridgman’s *History of the United States* (1838) aimed to outline the twenty-six states of America in detail, from their discovery, through to the revolution and overthrowing of the British crown, and the establishment of an independent America. Bridgman ‘explained how science and experimentation had allowed Western states to understand the principles of nature and thereby improve their own condition’ and emphasised concepts and models he hoped the Chinese would be inspired by. He comments on the justice system of China, comparing the harsh, unjust sentences given to criminals, including torture and beheadings, where those in America face one of three outcomes: hanging, imprisonment, or a fine. It therefore acted as an ideological vehicle that attempted to challenge and undermine the traditional, antiquated Chinese system. It made use of references that would be familiar and comprehensible, using terms directly from the popular Confucian moral philosophy to engage with Chinese readers. Christian references also permeated Bridgman’s publication, recognising the Christian God as the Creator, and warning of his wrath at unjust actions. Efforts towards cultural imperialism can also be seen through chapters regarding arts and education, noting gender equality in education, and the freedom of the press from government control. America and the West are superior nations that China should inspire to emulate.

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280 Ibid, 103.
Universal History

The third publication of the SDUKC was its *Universal History*, also completed in 1838. 300 copies were ordered, parts of which Gutzlaff published in the *Eastern Western Monthly Magazine*. As well as promoting the SDUKC’s work to his readers, this was Gutzlaff’s effort to provide the Chinese people with a ‘coherent view of the Western historical experience’.282 Set out in a similar manner to the *History of the United States*, it covered Creation through to modern-day Europe, using sources such as the ‘Bible and works on ancient Greek and Roman history.’283 Lutz writes that compared to his other works, Gutzlaff’s *Universal History* is full of battle metaphors,284 and relates to the Chinese by writing a ‘top-down’ history.285

Furthermore in 1838, Bridgman’s *Chrestomathy in the Canton Dialect* was sent to press, which was ‘designed to serve the double purpose of facilitating to the European the acquirement of the means of personal intercourse with the Chinese, and of diffusing among the latter a knowledge for the English language,’ and was viewed as ‘the best elementary book that has yet been published.’286

Although the Society provided the names of books produced and numbers ordered, it is difficult to measure the success of these works in terms of readership as it is presently unclear who read them and where they were distributed. Overall without a Chinese marketplace for foreign books, their success was inevitably going to be limited.

Debate Over Motives

Strange states that the knowledge structure ‘determines what knowledge is discovered, how it is stored, and who communicates it by what means to whom and on what terms’287 and it is evident that the SDUK in China attempted to offer knowledge as an alternative to military action in opening China’s borders to trade. Chen, revising the ‘alternative to war’ line, argues that the Society actually offered a third method of communication with China aside from diplomatic attempts, and military action in the form of ‘intellectual artillery’.

This term was also used by Drake in earlier works to describe the symbiotic relationship between the merchants and missionaries who founded the Society. Drake however elaborates on the war metaphor, further describing the Society as:

> a propaganda agency to make Western knowledge available to the Chinese. With their Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge…, [Bridgman] and his friends hoped to open China by

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283 Ibid.
285 Ibid, 81.
286 ‘Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China’ *Chinese Repository* (1838), 403.
287 Strange, *States and Markets*, 117
peaceful means to trade, Western civilization, and consequently to Protestant Christianity…they wished to use ‘intellectual artillery’.288

Some regard the efforts of the merchants and missionaries as separate from military and diplomatic actions, which stem directly from the metropole. The merchants and missionaries are however strictly in the periphery.289

Furthermore, Chen states that the formation of the Society was a consequence of ‘new air’ after the monopoly of East India Company ended, and private traders and diffusion of useful knowledge go hand in hand.290 Surveying the committee members supports Chen’s statement, as it is overwhelmingly dominated by merchants: either Jardine or Matheson acted as president for three of the Society’s five years, and ‘together they guaranteed that Jardine Matheson & Company had a person in the Society’s executive posts every year’, including filling the extra English secretary post in the fifth year with their own clerk, Robert Thom.291 In numbers the missionaries remained in the minority. Despite this, Rubinstein underplays the role of merchants, concentrating solely on missionaries, describing the SDUK in China with: ‘its missionary founders and merchant supporters’.292 Rubinstein merges the ideologies of the two groups he sees as disparate: ‘[the missionaries] wanted China to overturn its tradition and become a modern, industrial, Christian nation state.’293

Drake conversely combines the interests and aims of the merchants and missionaries, further emphasising their symbiotic relationship, using Gutzlaff’s Eastern Western Monthly Magazine as a comprehensive representation of the motives of the SDUK in China:

The authors aimed at four goals: to promote Chinese awareness of Western accomplishments; to invite Chinese participation in international trade and affairs; to offer information from the West to fill gaps in Chinese knowledge; and, in order to lend appeal to magazine, to provide materials of irresistible interest.294

Drake offers a comprehensive overview unlike many others supporting the concept that there was no single reason behind the formation of the Society, but many interlinked goals could be more easily achieved if the two groups worked together. Hilleman extends some of the aims of the Society, stating that they wished to differentiate between the Chinese court and the common people, portraying the population of China as friendly and eager to trade, but the authorities as evil and corrupt. Her focus is the aims of the merchants – equating them with the aims of the Society:

The hopes of those behind [the SDUK in China] were directed towards the ‘common people’ who did not have the arrogance of the ‘learned Chinese’… ‘[they attempted] to win over the

288 Drake, Protestant Geography, 94.
289 Chen, Information War, 1709.
290 Ibid, 1709.
291 Ibid, 1727.
292 Rubinstein, Democratic Gospel, 258.
293 Ibid.
294 Drake, Protestant Geography, 96.
Chinese by raising their esteem of the British nation… [and] civilising the Chinese thus became part of the attempt to open China to British trade, particularly the opium import. 295

Despite the merchants being at the centre of the SDUKC for Hilleman, she places Charles Gutzlaff at the centre of their information network. The Pomeranian-born Gutzlaff assimilated whilst in China, taking on a Chinese name and appearance, conversing in Chinese and translating works. He held true and accurate information about the Chinese, which allowed him to be at the centre of all information networks. Hilleman states that his knowledge only stretched as far as the China coast, and his knowledge, and therefore the information network of the Society, did not encompass the politics of the Qing court in Beijing. 296

**Respecting Culture**

In order to integrate their works into the existing Chinese market for books, the Society surveyed the available literature in China by analysing the contents of the Imperial Library at Peking to decide what exactly the Chinese valued in literature:

> Adopting the Chinese arrangement, the grand departments of literature are four; namely, classical writings, comprising chiefly morals and education; history, including geography; professional writings; and belle lettres. 297

Believing that the Chinese were lacking scientific literature it became their ‘imperative duty to exert [their] utmost energies to supply their lack of knowledge’. 298 However, by the next annual meeting, their attention turned to what the Chinese wanted: almanacs. The Society found that Chinese almanacs were similar to ‘the older almanacs of the West, – we mean, in the astrological ascription to each day of auspicious or baneful influences over the actions of men.’ To which the ‘government of China… gives the full weight of its authority to the idle belief, that the planets, of which in its astronomical works it acknowledges the earth to be a companion, can exert so powerful and mysterious an influence over the world, as to affect the success of the undertakings and actions of every individual.’ 299 The committee find the beliefs of the Chinese ‘absurd’, and felt that a ‘purified’ almanac, an imitation of the London Society’s, should be gradually introduced in China so that the Chinese can abandon their own year-books in favour of the Society’s. Despite being popular and in high demand in China, the Society failed to wholly grasp the concept of the astrological-based almanac, dismissing it as something archaic, something of the times of the unenlightened West, although believing at the same time that an almanac might be easier to circulate in China. The fact that the British did not take Chinese culture seriously is regarded by historian Robert Bickers as a major cause of failure in the establishment of lasting connections:

> the foreigners took China seriously, and yet they didn’t. Gutzlaff took Daoguang [the Emperor] seriously, and yet he didn’t; Medhurst took Chinese culture seriously, it was the key to his

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296 Ibid, 99.
298 Ibid, 338.
success, and yet in temple or in shrine he could not help but interrupt and denounce the futility of it, the grand emptiness of all this learning and belief.300

Rather than adapt their publications and assimilate their literature into the already established culture, the SDUK in China tried to civilise the population. Forgetting the original aims of the group to alter the image of the West, they instead tried to alter the Eastern people. These proceedings also reveal that the Society was still unable to distribute publications in Canton, and had only managed to distribute works in Malacca and on the outskirts of China. Moreover, these texts were given away rather than sold, as getting the Chinese to read their literature overtook the need for sales. These ‘gifts’ however were hoped to have inspired others to purchase further works by the Society.301 Despite their best efforts, the Society never fully realised their goals to provide literature to the Chinese that would civilise them, and in turn open their borders to Western ideas. Although physical obstacles, particularly imperial decrees cracking down on, or entirely forbidding the printing and production of literature, hampered their efforts, they also failed to breach China’s literary borders due to their lack of colonial power – similar ventures where Britain held colonial power, such as Africa and India, proved much more successful. Without the backing of colonial rule the Society were unable to disseminate any of their works widely. Indeed, Amil Cabral argues that ‘the ideal for foreign domination, whether imperialist or not’, is ‘to succeed in imposing itself without damage to the culture of the dominated people – that is, to harmonize economic and political domination of these people with their cultural personality.’302 According to this analysis, the ‘dominated people’ will strive to protect and preserve their culture, and the imposition of foreign print is therefore simply not a viable method of domination. It may also be fitting to apply Cabral’s theories surrounding national liberation to the Society, as on one hand, that is what they believed they would achieve through literature: to civilise the Chinese and free them from ignorance. Cabral argues that national liberation, even in opposition to foreign domination, must preserve the culture of the indigenous to be successful. Perhaps if the Society had invested in something that would integrate into Chinese popular literature, such as a hybrid almanac, they might have been more successful. Thus this evidence suggests that it was their failure to understand and respect the cultural traditions of the Chinese that most hampered the SDUKC’s efforts in creating a market for their books.

The Opium War

In the same month that the proceedings of the fourth annual meeting of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China were published, more decrees were to disturb foreign printing. James Matheson wrote in a letter: ‘I suppose war with China is the next step.’303 Matheson was referring to the opium bond that all Europeans were required to sign. Imperial Commissioner Lin Tse-Hsu had, in March 1839, ordered the surrender of all opium, and declared that foreign firms would be held responsible for any opium found on ships consigned to them. Feeling that the

300 Bickers, Scramble, 75
301 ‘Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China’, Chinese Repository (1838), 404
303 Greenberg, British Trade, 205.
Europeans did not react to his demands quickly enough, Lin suspended all trade and confined the Westerners to their factories, from where Matheson wrote his prophetic letter. Suspension of trade also came to the attention of the British government and Crown. Matheson continued in his letters: ‘To have surrendered to Lin would have meant trading in China on China’s terms’; something which the merchants and the Society in particular had been struggling against for many years, and further indications that the aims of the merchants included superiority over, not equality with, China. Eventually in June 1839 many merchants were expelled from Canton, and two months later, British frigates fired upon the Chinese. The first Opium War had begun.

The war did not however entirely bring the Society to an end – it was at this time that their publications finally had an impact in mainland China. The war had sparked a Chinese interest in maritime nations, and the SDUKC publications allowed Chinese scholars to gather information on the Westerners – just as the Society had intended in the previous years. Commissioner Lin on his arrival in Canton ordered the translation of many English works, including the *Canton Register*, and asked Society member Reverend Peter Parker to carry out several more translations, including a letter to Queen Victoria. Lin’s appointed scholar, Wei Yuan, completed his treatise on maritime nations, and expanded it several times over the coming years. According to Chen, ‘research shows that items related to the Society occupied a large portion of the 1852 edition; this included 57 entries from Gutzlaff’s… *Universal Geography,… Eastern Western Monthly Magazine,… General Account of Trade,…* and 24 from Bridgman’s… *A History of the United States.*’ Roswell S. Britton argues further that Lin’s use of foreign materials was to emphasise to the Chinese authorities that despite the number of restrictions, the Westerners nevertheless continued to publish works in Canton. Britton puts the impact of ‘alien journalism’ even further into the future:

> It had virtually no effect at the time. Lin and Wei Yuan were much ahead of their fellow officials, not to mention their countrymen in general. It was a generation before the next similar effort, and two generations before there was any considerable acceptance of [his thesis on maritime nations], that the Chinese should learn something of the world and should use the foreigners’ inventions and contrivances to repel the foreigners.

### Conclusion

Throughout this chapter the motives behind the formulation of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China have been explored, and the extent to which the group were successful in their attempts to provide literature to the Chinese have been assessed. The SDUKC, despite being comprised of missionaries as well as merchants centred around the opium trade, a contradiction that, for the missionaries, had to be ignored, as they funded their own ventures through translation work on merchant voyages. Furthermore the language skills of the missionaries were instrumental in forming such a Society,
as few other Canton residents could speak or write in the vernacular. Therefore it is important to see the work of the missionaries, particularly Elijah Bridgman and Charles Gutzlaff, as a part of the output of the Society. Not only were they prescribed to create works for the Society in its first meeting, but they represented a vital part of what the Society stood for. Simply, the missionaries and merchants found common ground in promoting the ‘High Victorian ideal of ruling the world whilst redeeming it’ and that was enough.310

The Society was largely unsuccessful in reaching a Chinese audience, and was thus hindered from gaining control of the knowledge structure, for a number of reasons. The first, and probably the largest, was the constant imperial decrees from the Chinese authorities that prohibited printing, and suppressed on illicit literature, as well as those that suspended trade, moving the merchants to Macau. Britain was powerless to do anything other than concede, and this power struggle was also prominent in the formulation of the SDUKC, as the British sought to consolidate (if not demonstrate) their imperial power: nothing less than superiority over the Chinese would suffice, and penetrating their borders was the first step to economic or mercantile conquest. Achieving this through literature – cultural imperialism – was always going to be a difficult task. Unlike other territories where the British controlled one or more of Strange’s four structures of power, they held no power in China, and therefore lacked a network through with which they could introduce or enforce British literature or education. Moreover the language barrier and the restrictions on entering mainland China hampered their efforts, but it can also be seen that without the backing of colonial rule, it was hard to push the culture of the West on to China. Some ‘worked on the assumption that Britain’s might and power had to be accepted naturally by all people in the world’ which distorted what actions really needed to be taken to make trade with China more amicable. 311

Correlating with the theories of Cabral on Africa, it seems that had the Society embraced Chinese culture throughout their texts, rather than introducing entirely Western ideas, their chances at success would have increased. A hybrid would not have been considered so dangerous to the Chinese authorities, and would have not been so alien to the traditional Chinese people. To be successful, the liberators must ‘embody the mass character, the popular character of the culture’312, something the SDUKC failed to do. Mary Louise Pratt discusses transculturation – the use of the coloniser’s tools in the interpretations of the colonised, as well as ‘“contact zones”, that is, social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – such as colonialism and slavery’.313 However, the Chinese were able to avoid transculturation by having a confined contact zone through the cohong. By rejecting, (not purchasing or circulating) the publications they received, the Chinese were able to preserve their culture and avoid transculturation. Instead the Society was able to remain a prominent organisation due to its membership. With the backing of both the missionary and merchant presses (in particular The Chinese Repository, the Canton Register and The Canton Press), and with the trade networks of the merchants all promoting the Society’s work, they were able to maintain

310 French, Looking Glass, 21.
311 Hillemann, Asian Empire, 99.
312 Cabral, National Liberation, 56.
313 Pratt, Imperial Eyes, 7.
subscription and donation levels despite the apparent lack of physical publications. In addition, these networks were also able to create an image of China to the West of a nation in need of Western influence.

In failing to respect the cohong and the factory system, which were enforced by Chinese imperial decree, the foreigners in Canton would have caused offence and promoted a sense of British superiority. In this context, it was not surprising that China was unwilling to open its borders, as noted by Chen:

> The Society, however, could not afford to have a high opinion of the Chinese, for the very existence of the Society was, to a great extent, built upon a necessarily negative representation of China.  

It can be seen that the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in China represented a power struggle for Britain’s merchants, who wanted to open trade with China in order to extend Britain’s imperial and economic power. As well as imperial decrees hampering their efforts, the Society also failed to embrace Chinese culture seriously, which in turn distanced their potential readers and caused concern for the Chinese authorities. Although the Society ceased operations during the Opium War, it was then that their publications were used to teach the Chinese about the West, as China wanted to learn about maritime nations in the interest of future national security.

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Part one of this thesis examined the foundations of the Society: their most successful publication, *The Penny Magazine*, and the eminent men that comprised their network, which together served to establish the SDUK’s influence in nineteenth century print culture. In creating an appealing, familiar and identifiable text in *The Penny Magazine*, the SDUK was able to attract a wide audience that was further extended by Knight’s efforts in circulating the magazine in the periphery and the colonies. Furthermore, due to its contacts in India, the SDUK was able to introduce translated works into Britain’s growing empire. Thus, despite the lack of scholarship thereon, evidence suggests that the Society’s sphere of influence was truly global.

Yet, the overarching power of the Society in Britain can be seen to stem from the diverse inclusiveness of its network, including those from a range of religions, trades and fields, which was also representative of their intended audience: the British reading public. Where Strange argues that some power in the knowledge structure is derived from including some people and excluding others from knowledge, the evidence of the SDUK challenges her assertions. The extent of the SDUK’s influence was derived from the range of texts it produced, from its more expensive Library volumes, to texts for children and those in the provinces, and the penny almanacs, *Cyclopaedia* and *Magazine*. Publications were affordable and accessible, regardless of the location, occupation, or social standing of the reader.

Moreover, throughout her analysis of power structures, Susan Strange also asks one question: ‘*cui bono*’? Who benefits from this power? For the SDUK, there were several benefits of disseminating scientific knowledge. In steering the masses away from the seditious works of the unstamped press, the Society was able to maintain the political status quo, for many were involved in the political establishment as MPs or officials. Through the promotion of knowledge, the SDUK was also aiming to achieve the Liberal objective of promoting and improving education for the working classes.

Also, as part two of this thesis examines, through the wide circulation of its texts, in particular *The Penny Magazine*, and the Library of Entertaining Knowledge, the Society hoped to foster a compliant and dutiful British reading public, supportive of the imperial politics promoted throughout its pages. Part two examines how the Empire and British imperial politics were represented and justified to the SDUK’s readership, beginning with the men behind the Society’s biggest selling point: the high quality of illustrations that embellished their publications.
Part Two
Chapter Four

Natural History and the Representation of the British Empire in The Penny Magazine

Throughout the early nineteenth century, popular interest in science was rife. Scientific subjects such as botany, natural history and zoology were no longer limited to the gentlemanly elite. Instead popular lectures, periodicals, and museums offered the middle classes an insight not only into, for example, British natural history, but also into the scientific landscape of the new and expanding empire for those who could not afford to experience it first-hand. However museums that might display these discoveries were not open and accessible to much of the lower working classes who could not necessarily afford the travel and entry costs, let alone the time out of their long working week. Similarly many museums and galleries required an invitation or recommendation before admitting visitors. Instead direct and affordable access to scientific knowledge could easily be found in periodicals such as John Loudon’s Gardener’s Magazine (1826) and Natural History Magazine (1828), as well as the SDUK’s Penny Magazine. The Penny Magazine included a range of articles on varying imperial sciences, many focusing particularly on botany and aspects of natural history. This chapter will explore the representation of the British Empire through works of natural history, and in turn imperial Britain’s portrayal as a global leader in the acquisition of new, useful and exciting scientific discoveries.

Popular works encouraged those who could not afford to travel into Britain’s empire to view the world vicariously instead. The SDUK, as well as offering a colonial focus in their publications, provided much information on domestic natural history, praising local, as well as imperial study. Moreover as Mary Ellen Bellanca writes: ‘it is difficult not to read a nationalist import in the spate of book titles such as British Zoology, English Botany, and A Botanical Arrangement of British Plants that appeared in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.’ 315 Thus, this chapter will also explore how Britain was reflected to the readership in such titles as The Penny Magazine through specimens of her own natural history – specimens that they could, in fact, experience first-hand.

Historian of science John Topham states that ‘the importance of the SDUK in the invention of “popular science” is difficult to overestimate’ 316 and their range of publications regarding British natural history supports such an observation. The Society included members and authors from a range of scientific and academic institutions, which although often anonymous, could still infer a tone of authority in their publications and ensured accurate information from those within the gentlemanly sphere of natural

sciences. The Society’s committee list had several prominent authors in natural history. For example, James Rennie, appointed as the first professor of natural history and zoology at King’s College London in 1830, wrote several volumes for the Society on the architecture and habits of insects and birds. Similarly, William Youatt, appointed veterinary surgeon to the Zoological Society of London wrote the Farmer’s Series, including volumes on the horse, dog, cattle and sheep. The superintendent to the Zoological Society’s museum, William Martin, also wrote several articles for The Penny Magazine, as well as contributing to the volumes on menageries. Aileen Fyfe, in Science and Salvation (2004), observes that these volumes were intended to function as guidebooks to the Zoological Society’s Gardens, and the SDUK were granted ‘permission to have the volumes sold by the “cakewoman at the Elephants’ Stand.” It should be noted however that the Gardens did not open to the public until 1847, so until then these volumes would only have fulfilled their role as a guidebook to members of the Zoological Society, or the limited number allowed to enter as guests. For this reason, as well as the price of individual volumes, usually sold at 2s and therefore not readily accessible to much of the working class, this chapter will primarily focus on articles from The Penny Magazine which, with its lower price, would have been able to permeate deeper into society.

In addition, it is interesting to note that volumes from the Library of Entertaining or Useful Knowledge had no titles exclusively dedicated to Britain, or the Empire. Instead, information on animals and plants from across the Empire was simply integrated with that of specimens from Britain, suggesting that despite spanning the entire globe, Britain and her empire were synonymous. Indeed, it appears that it is only The Penny Magazine that segregates colonial and British natural history, a topic to be discussed in this chapter.

Although work has been carried out concerning the representation of the sciences in nineteenth-century periodicals, much focuses on specific audiences, such as women or artisans, or is otherwise based in the later reign of Victoria. Topham has worked extensively on the publishing of popular science, and his work provides vital insights into the dissemination of information to the masses. Topham’s work features in volumes of collected essays, such as Science in the Nineteenth Century Periodical (2004), which discusses aspects of popular science available in the periodical market; as well as Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth Century Sites and Experiences (2007) edited by Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman. This collection of essays offers a firm basis of just how science was experienced by the masses, essential to such a study as this. This chapter will build upon these works, contributing imperial aspects, and the use of science in print as an ideological vehicle that creates a national, patriotic identity with the acquisition of new curious and exciting colonial discoveries. The organisation and display of knowledge is also to be considered throughout this chapter, drawing on the work of scholars such as Martin Daunton et al, who explore the ‘mechanisms of diffusion’ and the ‘relationship between esoteric

and popular knowledge’, asking not only who generated and structured knowledge, but also how it was received.

**Structuring Knowledge**

The structuring of knowledge in the nineteenth century is similarly explored through Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes* (2008). Pratt refers to this structuring as ‘Europe’s planetary consciousness’, which is ‘marked by an orientation toward interior exploration and the construction of a global-scale meaning through descriptive apparatuses of natural history.’ For Pratt, this consciousness ‘is a basic element constructing modern Eurocentrism, that hegemonic reflex that troubles westerners even as it continues to be second nature to them.’ This links directly to the utilisation of scientific discoveries as a means to justify Britain’s imperial politics. John MacKenzie’s views on the colonial museum can also be applied to the displaying of natural history specimens, which although demonstrated British power, also reminded the viewer of the undesirable consequences of colonial expansion. This chapter argues, on a similar line to MacKenzie, that the dissemination of imperial science, even as periodical articles or museum displays, heightened the theme of the raiding of nature. [They] often symbolised the dispossession of land and culture by whites through the rapid acquisition of specimens and artefacts. Such colonial acquisitiveness occurred on a global scale, representing a worldwide movement brokered by imperial power. The museum’s intellectual framework, its collecting habits, and so many of its methods were closely bound up with the nature and practices of imperialism.

Displacing nature meant that objects needed to be classified, ordered and labelled, and only then could Britain’s imperial prowess be displayed. Varying studies place differing (although connected) meanings on the European need to systemise nature. For Pratt, it represents a European discourse on non-European worlds, as well as a metropolitan, urbanising, influence on British provinces – displacing local agricultural jobs to urban factories, and local (or indigenous) knowledge. Jim Endersby argues for a simpler explanation, stating that the British universally accepted the Linnaean classification system as ‘its simple names and even simpler methods made it easy to learn and use’ which helped to popularise natural sciences.

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320 Pratt *Imperial Eyes*, 15.
321 Ibid.
323 Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 34-5.
324 J. Endersby, ‘Classifying Sciences’ in Martin Daunton, *Organisation of Knowledge*, 67. Botanists around the 1830s, particularly SDUK member John Lindley, however, argued in favour for the use of the ‘natural system’ for botany.
The organisation of knowledge can also be seen to determine its authority. As Martin Daunton writes:

Knowledge is a complicated term. What about organisation? It involves a combination of the social and institutional foundations of knowledge, the processes of obtaining cultural authority in order to speak as a knowledgeable person.325

The museum is often described by historians as the central institution in the dissemination of popular science, indeed Victoria Carroll, curator at Keats House, writes that ‘the most common way in which people engaged with science in the nineteenth century was through viewing exhibitions.’326 Much of the working classes however would have found exhibitions inaccessible on many levels, as MacKenzie elaborates:

It has sometimes been suggested that collections of materials can only be appreciated if the viewer has the necessary and ‘appropriate socially coded ways of seeing’, but this has to be rendered class – and expertise – specific.327

One solution was popularising the knowledge surrounding these materials, and cheap information would allow the working classes access to the ‘code’ behind understanding, for example, specimens of natural history. Many though feared that popularising knowledge may damage its authority – authority that was inferred by its location in a museum. The impact of physical location on knowledge has been discussed by Adi Ophir and Steven Shapin, who ask:

What if knowledge in general has an irremediably local dimension? What if it possesses its shape, meaning, reference, and domain of application by virtue of the physical, social, and cultural circumstances in which it is made, and in which it is used?328

If the location in which knowledge is displayed helped to form its meaning, then how does this affect knowledge derived from periodicals? How does print as a place of display affect the meaning of natural history?

Throughout the nineteenth century, literature was saturated by science and it permeated the periodical market in particular. Gowan Dawson (et al) state that ‘general periodicals probably played a far greater role than books in shaping the public understanding of new scientific discoveries’.329 Therefore the periodical market could be utilised by groups such as the SDUK, who sought to offer instructive and entertaining literature to the working classes; it provided them with a conduit through which they could mould the working classes intellectually as well as ideologically. Selling 200,000 copies weekly at its

325 Daunton, Organisation of Knowledge, 10.
peak, *The Penny Magazine* reached a vast audience, and therefore would have been able to reach a mass market more effectively than volumes in either of the Society’s Libraries. By these means, the Society disseminated specialist scientific knowledge to a non-specialist but nonetheless ‘culturally powerful’ audience.\footnote{Ibid, 22. Dawson uses the term ‘culturally powerful’ to describe the masses.}

**Colonial Natural History in *The Penny Magazine***

The very first issue of *The Penny Magazine* introduced the reader to the Zoological Gardens in Regent’s Park, which is ‘maintained by the annual subscriptions of the Fellows of the Zoological Society and the payment (a shilling) by each person who is recommended by the ticket of a proprietor.’\footnote{‘The Zoological Gardens’, *The Penny Magazine* (1832), 4.} Outlining the financial and class requirements to be able to view such ventures so early in the magazine reminds the reader of the varying spheres of society – it is rare that the working classes of Britain will get to experience the wildlife of imperial Britain first hand. Instead, *The Penny Magazine* allowed the reader an insight into the natural history of the world, information otherwise kept for the privileged. The magazine however reserved articles on the Zoological Society for ‘any new curiosity which is purchased by the Society, or presented to it.’\footnote{Ibid.} Writing on curiosities and new acquisitions not only provided interesting and useful knowledge to the working classes, but also demonstrated the onward march of the British Empire in imperial science.

The first article also entwined zoological acquisitions with history and adventure, outlining Lewis and Clark’s encounter with a grizzly bear in America:

> Six hunters went to attack him: four fired, and each wounded him. The two who had reserved their fire, hit him when he sprang forward. Before they could again load, the fearful animal was upon them. They fled to a river: four were about again to fire, concealed behind a tree, and again hit him. He turned upon them, and they were obliged to throw themselves into the water, from a bank twenty feet high. He also took to the water in chase of his hunters.\footnote{Ibid.} The bear was eventually shot, showing the triumph of Western civilisation over nature. This article similarly implies that to capture this species in order for the Zoological Society to display it, would have taken immense effort. As Sofia Åkerberg states in her doctoral thesis:

> Acclimatisation of plants and animals was the science that placed the exotic ‘Other’ in Britain... In this sense, the Zoological Gardens become a symbolic emblem of the British Empire rather than an obvious testament to what this empire could mean to the everyday lives of Londoners.\footnote{Sofia Åkerberg, *Knowledge and Pleasure at Regent’s Park: The Gardens of the Zoological Society of London During the Nineteenth Century*, Thesis, (Umeå Universitet, 2001), 91.}

Thus the acquisition of species can be seen as the onward march of empire, making new scientific discoveries and acquisitions, and returning them to the metropolis. There they can be classified, ordered and displayed as a mark of the expansion of Britain.
The classification of animals is outlined for readers who might not be acquainted with such scientific knowledge. Although the article’s title is the ‘Mineral Kingdom’, the reader is told that the subjects of the geologist ‘are by no means confined to questions concerning mineral substances, but [they] embrace a wider field, involving many considerations intimately connected with the history of several tribes of animals and plants.’ The ‘four great branches’ of animals are discussed: Mammalia, ‘Molluscous’ Animals, Articulated Animals, and Radiated Animals, as well as their individual classes, and examples of corresponding animals. Similarly the reader is reminded ‘that certain species are peculiar to particular regions of the earth, being adapted by their nature to the different temperature and other peculiarities that exist in different countries.’

The Zoological Society also experimented with techniques in domestication and acclimatisation for the animals considered to be useful. Stock was reared at the Zoological Society’s farm, and plans to interbreed, for example the ‘common ass’ and a zebra, should provide Britain with a ‘more hardy and powerful beast of draught’. This cross-breeding offers Britain’s poor ‘a creature that would subsist on the scantiest fare, and yet in strength and speed be able to enter into content with the expensive and delicate horse.’ Improving the utility of animals for the benefit of Britain is continued with a description of a ‘Brahmin Bull’, a possible replacement to the common ox. Although the Zoological Society consider it to be ‘noble’, ‘gentle and beautiful’, ‘in India this animal is useless, wandering about at his will… and caressed by the natives with religious veneration.’ This colonial comparison not only denigrates the native who does not take advantage of the bull’s work capability, but also raises the animal’s status to that superior of man – contrary to the British ideals of ordering and ranking nature. The Penny Magazine clearly states how animals should rank in comparison to man:

The power possessed by man in being able to render the inferior animals subservient to his use… is better left to science than chance.

It is implied that the science of zoology is better suited to Britain, where animals are scientifically studied, classified, and put to their best use, or improved through experiments in cross-breeding for the benefit of the nation. This view is supported by Michael A. Osborne who writes that acclimatisation schemes ‘tended to devalue indigenous methods of agriculture, and probably degraded colonial environments’, and their connections with scientific experiments argued positively for the ‘continuation of colonial projects, and offered a reason to retain colonial possessions.’

Reports on scientific experiments carried out by the Zoological Society also promote Britain as a modernising country, making advances in sciences where others have failed. One such example was

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337 Ibid.
338 ‘Domestication of Animals’, The Penny Magazine (1832), 44.
339 Ibid.
340 Oxen were not only bred for beef, but also used for farm work such as ploughing.
341 ‘Domestication of Animals’, The Penny Magazine (1832), 44.
342 Ibid.
reported in February 1836 with the arrival of a ‘healthy young chimpanzee at the gardens of the Zoological Society of London… the rarity of which in our country adds greatly to the interest.’ 344 This feat of acquiring the specimen is something extraordinary, and promotes Britain positively.

The chimpanzee is firstly compared to the orang-utan in terms of stature and intelligence, before being ranked against mankind. The article writes that ‘a person ignorant of the natural history of the chimpanzee would consider this specimen in the light of an infant’, describing it as ‘alive to everything around it’, and can cause even the ‘gravest spectator’ to smile. 345 This curious creature also presents a trait that was considered unique to ‘our race’: laughter.

We have however more than once observed with surprise, that when at play with its attendants, and tickled smartly, its countenance exhibited what most would call a decided laugh. 346

The chimpanzee’s place, although superior to most other animals, is confirmed: ‘If however it be not conceded to be laughter, then it will be the nearest approach to laughter which any animal below man can exhibit.’ 347

The Zoological Society continues to carry out physiological experiments with the chimpanzee in an attempt to determine whether a fear of snakes is inherent. When presented with a snake the chimpanzee recoils in fear, and will not retrieve a reward, an apple, from atop of the snake’s basket, confirming the hypothesis. But yet, when faced with a nursing dog, the chimpanzee is not perturbed by her barking, continuing to examine the pups ‘replacing them with the utmost gentleness’. 348 From this experiment the Zoological Society was able to ascertain that snakes are in fact ‘dreaded instinctively’ 349 – a new scientific contribution made by British zoologists. Experiments similarly aided the process of classification, observing and measuring the capabilities of species before labelling and ordering them.

Such articles offered the reader an insight into what could be described as a laboratory, that is to say, the site in which scientific activities take place, usually a private sphere that would be reserved for the gentlemanly scientific elite. Thus, The Penny Magazine’s reporting on such experiments created a repository for zoological information; it functioned as a museum for those who could not easily visit the metropolis, by displaying illustrations of exotic animals, and providing the accompanying description.

In 1836, The Penny Magazine commented on the recent advances in zoological sciences, noting that ‘the arrival of living individuals in the two Zoological Gardens of London, detracts, of course, from the interest with which preserved specimens are regarded. Indeed, the rapid improvements now making in zoological science will gradually diminish the value of collections of dead animals.’ 350 The utility of dead specimens is however defended in an article on a stuffed musk-ox, displayed by the staircase of the

345 Ibid, 58.
346 Ibid.
347 Ibid.
348 Ibid.
349 Ibid.
British Museum. Although the author agrees that ‘stuffed skins’ might not be as interesting as the live animal, it is also stated that:

at the same time, a stuffed skin affords a much better notion of the animated creature than the best drawing; and, in some cases, the living specimen cannot be procured, or kept alive, in this country.\(^\text{351}\)

Although unsuccessful acclimatisation is not discussed in The Penny Magazine, the untimely deaths of many species are lamented.

Continuing up the British Museum’s staircase, the observer is faced with a male and female giraffe presented to the museum by the explorer William Burchell. It seems that a number of giraffes were presented in 1827, one to George IV that died the same year, and one to the Jardin des Plantes that still survived in Paris. This confession of British failure is an interesting inclusion given the fierce competition in the sciences between Britain and France who were considered to be the leaders of such ‘intellectual pursuits’\(^\text{352}\). In this way, the creation of zoological gardens stemmed from the desire to ‘assert London’s global pre-eminence’\(^\text{353}\).

It was not until 1836 that The Penny Magazine reported the arrival of new, living, giraffes to the Zoological Gardens. The process of the acquisition of the set, four in total, is transcribed from a letter from M. Thibaut to the Zoological Society’s secretary. As well as describing his journey, Thibaut writes that, unable to take the largest of the wild group alive, his Arab guides kill, and then eat her – something typical of the Arabs who hunt the giraffe for both food and the hide. Although perhaps shocking to the reader, Thibaut finds the meat to be ‘excellent eating’\(^\text{354}\). As with the acquisition of the chimpanzee, whose mother was also shot to secure its capture, the reader is simply to accept this sacrifice as a means to advancing scientific knowledge. This relates to MacKenzie’s notion of ‘the raiding of nature’. By this analysis, the acquisition of the animal, and the transportation of it to the metropole might symbolise and demonstrate Britain’s imperial power. For colonial collecting habits were in his terms synonymous with ‘the practices of imperialism’\(^\text{355}\).

The shock of acquisition methods is somewhat rectified as the reader learns that the giraffes are in fact ‘extremely fond of society, and is very sensible’\(^\text{356}\). Thibaut states that he has ‘observed one of them shed tears when it no longer saw its companions, or the persons who were in the habit of attending to it.’\(^\text{357}\) The giraffes do not suffer, and the reader is assured that when they arrive at the Gardens with their ‘Nubian keepers, dressed in their Abyssinian costume’ they are ‘in excellent health and condition, with their

\(^{351}\) ‘The British Museum – No. 4’ The Penny Magazine (1832), 124.
\(^{353}\) Ibid, 157.
\(^{354}\) ‘The Giraffes at the Zoological Gardens’, The Penny Magazine (1836), 234.
\(^{355}\) MacKenzie, Museums and Empire, 4.
\(^{356}\) ‘The Giraffes at the Zoological Gardens’, The Penny Magazine (1836), 234.
\(^{357}\) Ibid, 235.
spotted coats smooth and glossy." 358 For The Penny Magazine the arrival of the giraffes ‘in Europe forms an era in the annals of natural history’. 359 Not only has the Zoological Society outdone the French by acquiring four specimens, but they have reached the gardens alive and well, and will thus be able to become an object of scientific study.

Moreover, according to an article on the condor, ‘one of the great advantages of menageries is that of being able with our own eyes to distinguish truth from fiction’. 360 Many readers were unlikely to visit Regent’s Park or the British Museum, and thus, The Penny Magazine provides zoological articles as an authority, offering the reader ‘truth’ over ‘fiction’ on the natural history of the British Empire.

358 Ibid.
359 Ibid, 234.
Figure 8: ‘The Giraffes at the Zoological Gardens’, *The Penny Magazine* (London: Charles Knight, 1836), p.233
Imperial Botany: A Display of Utility

Natural history in *The Penny Magazine* offered the reader an insight into the zoological curiosities across the British Empire, and presented their use in advancing understanding of animal physiology, enforcing Britain’s role as a leader in such intellectual pursuits. But as Åkerberg states: ‘as a science, useful in the work of the empire, botany was more firmly established.’\(^{361}\) This was largely due to the work of naturalist Joseph Banks, who gathered specimens on James Cook’s expeditions, and established himself at Kew Gardens soon after. It was Banks who helped Kew to make the transition from a place of collecting and displaying, to a site of economic and scientific botany. Similarly Banks’ role in the ‘translocation in 1793 of breadfruit seedlings from their native Tahiti to the West Indies, in order to feed plantation slaves better’ demonstrated the capabilities of botany in influencing and improving the imperial economy.\(^{362}\)

Several botanical articles in *The Penny Magazine* draw attention to the use of colonial plants in commerce and industry. Perhaps the most prominent example of this is Britain’s sourcing and utilisation of hemp. *The Penny Magazine* provides little in the way of botanical information, but outlines the importance of hemp in maintaining the Empire, stating:

> The extent and consequence of our maritime power have long rendered improvements in making cordage an object of national importance… it is calculated that the sails and cordage of a first-rate man-of-war require 180,000lbs of rough hemp for their construction.\(^{363}\)

Hemp is not cultivated in Britain, and thus her stock relies solely on imports, largely from Polish provinces belonging to Russia. However trade with Russia is brought into question, most likely due to the November Risings of 1831 and the extension of Russian power:

> Much anxiety was evinced some years since in this country that we should obtain supplies of hemp from our own dependencies, and its cultivation was very much encouraged in Canada…[and] several samples of hemp of Canadian growth were sent home. These were placed under the examination of the best judges, by whom they were considered defective, rather from the faulty mode of preparation than from any inferiority in the material itself.\(^{364}\)

Hemp, used for cordage and sails on ships, is a vital reason for Britain to find her own sources for the valuable material, especially if war with their prime importer was imminent. This notion is supported by historian David Mackay who names hemp ‘the Achilles heel of England’s naval supremacy’.\(^{365}\) Colonial uses, however, are belittled in the face of Britain’s utilisation, as the ‘Hottentots’ smoke their supplies of hemp with tobacco: ‘a purpose very different from that to which it is applied by the industrious European.’\(^{366}\)

\(^{361}\) Åkerberg, *Regent’s Park*, 72.

\(^{362}\) http://www.kew.org/heritage/timeline/1773to1820_banks.html [Last Accessed 12 May 2016].

\(^{363}\) ‘Hemp’, *The Penny Magazine* (1833), 320.

\(^{364}\) Ibid.


\(^{366}\) ‘Hemp’, *The Penny Magazine* (1833), 320.
Articles on botany were also used to emphasise Britain’s civilised way of life. An extract from Edwin Lankester’s *Vegetable Substances – Timber Trees: Fruits* (1829) demonstrated the slovenly habits of the Indian, and his lack of diligence or industrial drive. These qualities are instead provided by Britain, the coloniser:

The facility with which the banana can be cultivated has doubtless contributed to arrest the progress of improvement in tropical regions… Necessity awakens industry, and industry calls forth the intellectual powers of the human race. When these are developed, man does not sit in a cabin, gathering the fruits of his little patch of bananas, asking no greater luxuries, and proposing no higher ends of life than to eat and to sleep… The idleness of the poor Indian keeps him, where he has been for ages, little elevated above the inferior animal; – the industry of the European, under his colder skies, and with a less fertile soil, has surrounded him with all the blessings of society – its comforts, its affections, its virtues, and its intellectual riches. 367

This rhetoric used throughout the article emphasises the markers of civilisation: ‘industry’, ‘intellectual powers’, ‘virtue’, against those associated with the colonised subjects, who are conversely ‘inferior’, and therefore unintellectual and unvirtuous. Such sentiment is akin to the Chinese populace, who beg used tea from the Europeans as it is superior to that which they are able to acquire, as discussed in Chapter Three. Britain is portrayed as a provider, offering improvements where other nations have failed.

These examples show botany, with its connection to economics and industry is organised and treated differently to other sciences, particularly zoology. Zoological specimens after acquisition are returned to Britain, the metropolis, to be studied, classified and exhibited as a demonstration of scientific progress. Conversely, botanical subjects, cultivated in the colonies are used to demonstrate Britain’s industriousness and mastering of nature.

**Access and Exclusion to Sites of Display**

*The Penny Magazine* somewhat laments the exclusion of the working classes into sites such as zoological gardens, arguing in 1840 that such rational entertainment will have a positive effect on the public, and not cause a riotous situation as feared by the aristocracy. The marriage of the queen was celebrated in Manchester by

all public institutions of the town being thrown open gratuitously to the public. More than seventy thousand persons visited the Zoological Gardens; and yet we learn from a speech of Mr. S. Greg at the annual meeting of the Macclesfield Useful Knowledge Society, that no wanton mischief was done, nor property destroyed. 368

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367 ‘The Banana, or Plantain’, *The Penny Magazine* (1832), 253
Instead the only casualty was the sodden grass of the gardens due to the high number of visitors. Furthermore, the next morning there was a decreased number in ‘cases of drunkenness brought before the bench of magistrates.’

The best the magazine could offer is a visitor’s report of such institutions, walking the reader’s imagination through locations such as Kew Gardens and the Zoological Gardens of Regent’s Park. An article introducing the British Museum to artisans and tradesmen, ‘who can sometimes afford a holiday’, begins with a quote from the *Quarterly Review*:

> The characteristic of the English populace, – perhaps we ought to say people, for it extends to the middle classes, – is their propensity to mischief. The people of most other countries may safely be admitted into parks, gardens, public buildings, and galleries of pictures and statues; but in England it is necessary to exclude them, as much as possible, from all such places.

Although the author agrees in part, he also agrees that the only remedy is to give the people a taste for intellectual entertainment. Learning to enjoy the ‘unexpensive pleasures’ available in London will lead the people to ‘feel an honest pride in the possession, by the Nation, of many of the most valuable treasures of Art and Science’, diminishing any thoughts of destruction or mischief. This suggests that pride in the British Empire, and the articles in her possession, would thus lead to a harmonious and patriotic public.

Although there is no entry fee for the British Museum, the artisan visitor of the article nonetheless feels too inferior to enter. Knight instructs the reader, who at this point might forego his opportunity to access the museum:

> Knock boldly at the gate; the porter will open it. You are in a large square court-yard… A flight of steps leads up to the principal entrance. Go on. Do not fear any surly looks or impertinent glances from any person in attendance. You are upon safe ground here. You are come to see your own property. You have as much right to see it, and you are as welcome therefore to see it, as the highest in the land… Go boldly forward, then.

The passage continues to guide the reader through the Great Hall, and outlines the rules of such an establishment: ‘touch nothing’; ‘do not talk loud’; and finally: ‘be not obtrusive’. Instead knowledge can be acquired from further numbers of *The Penny Magazine*, who will outline what is most noteworthy. Simply familiarising the reader with the museum, its layout and policies, and emphasising the reader’s right to visit served to encourage a taste for intellectual pursuits which were evidently needed to improve the nation, and to ‘civilise’ the public.

An article on Kew Gardens provides a similar introduction to a public institution, and similarly includes a passage reminding the working classes of their right to enter. Previously, those in charge of Kew ‘acted as

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369 Ibid.
372 Ibid.
373 Ibid.
if such gardens were supplied by the public purse for the private gratification of a few selfish courtiers, and not for either the crown or the country.374 In this case however, the visitor, ‘after ringing a bell, and waiting a considerable time to obtain the permission to enter… is taken in charge by an attendant, who walks with him over every foot of the ground, and expects a gratuity for his trouble.’375 It notes that many specimens are badly labelled, but Kew does include an excellent kitchen-garden and several hot houses. The article continues to walk the reader through the winding paths that divide the gardens, and describe the function of individual buildings. The hothouses for example ‘are left unfastened, and no obstructions whatever are placed in the way of visitors who know how to respect the objects which they are permitted to visit.’376 Something that the magazine will help the reader to achieve: a greater understanding of Kew, with which they will be on a par with visitors of a higher class. Similarly, guiding the reader step-by-step through the gardens, warns them of prohibited areas, such as the palace gardens and smaller closed gardens. The magazine does not aim to provide specific botanical information, but instead intends ‘to indicate what may be termed its topography and general arrangement’ seen as ‘almost every specimen has a label or ticket attached on which the name is written.’377 The reader is told that as a place of science, no popular English name is given and plants are labelled with their Latin title. This can be considered as a reminder rather than a warning intended to deter visitors who may find the lack of English titles intimidating.

Inderpal Grewal in her work *Home and Harem* (1996) states that guidebooks ‘inscribed class difference and presented the power and superiority of the aristocracy’.378 It can be seen, however, that the aim of *The Penny Magazine* was in fact to encourage the working classes to visit scientific sites by making the organisation and layout of the site familiar, breaking down class barriers that may have otherwise deterred the public from visiting.379 After all, ‘what reasonable man would abandon himself to low gratifications – to drinking or gambling – when he may, whenever he pleases, and as often as he pleases, at no cost but that of his time, enjoy the sight of some of the most curious and valuable things in the world.’380

**Exploring Britain**

Natural history was not a subject that was entirely limited to the colonies, or even the metropolis, *The Penny Magazine* also included articles on British natural history. These however did not necessarily derive an authoritative tone from a scientific institution, nor a scholarly author. Instead such articles were written in the style of a journal, or naturalist’s notebook, promoting observation rather than experiment or utility. But for some, this was problematic, as Martin Daunton notes:

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375 Ibid.
376 ‘The Domestic Pigeon’, *The Penny Magazine* (1841), 266.
377 Ibid, 267.
379 Volumes in the Library of Entertaining Knowledge were aimed at all visitors, although provide information for classical scholars. Thus these volumes may indeed be unsuitable for the working-class reader.
Tacit knowledge – things we know through observation and experience… is usually held in low esteem, lacking the formal authentication that provides status and authority. 381

Although challenging for those men of science who wanted to restrict scientific knowledge to the laboratory, or moreover to the elite, the exploration of one’s own homeland might have served to produce a sense of patriotism, or nationalism among the working classes. The exploration of one’s homeland also relates to Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of ‘interior exploration’, and ‘planetary consciousness’ that is, for her, a Eurocentric understanding of Britain’s ‘relations to the rest of the globe’. 382 The evidence of this chapter suggests that in exploring their own surroundings through The Penny Magazine, the working classes not only learned about Britain’s role in creating the Empire, but also a sense of their own privilege in being part of such a great imperial power.

The way in which domestic natural history was presented to the reader in The Penny Magazine largely took one of two forms as Barbara Gates has argued in regard to Emily Shore, an avid reader who submitted articles on British birds:

Shore writes two different kinds of accounts. The “Account of a Young Cuckoo” (1837) is an animal chronicle, a form that depicted an animal from its birth or acquisition until its death. Here Shore observes and muses over her pet cuckoo in an attempt to permit others to witness at second hand just what had fascinated her at first. By way of contrast, the piece on “The Golden-Crested Wren” informs the British bird watcher of just where to find the wren and how to observe a wild bird’s behaviour. 383

Bellanca in her work on the daybooks of naturalists introduces a third style of article: a ‘diarylike form’ that gives the reader a step-by-step account of, for example, the life cycle of the frog. 384 The author includes the dates of collection of frogspawn and marks stages of growth with further dates, mapping the time scale of their transformation into a frog in exact detail. In this way, ‘the dates place the growth process in a stream of time and certify that each stage was reliably documented by an expert, if anonymous, witness.’ 385

Not only does supplying the dates add detail, but it asserts an authority over the information, giving it a tone of definitive scientific knowledge. This knowledge can be experienced and proved first hand by the reader, who can collect frogspawn and monitor the frog’s growth themselves. Articles on Britain’s native wildlife also acted as a method of inclusion for provincial readers. Those in the metropolis are more likely to be able to visit menageries and gardens, and did not face the restrictions of those in Britain’s villages. Thus observing Britain’s animals, such as the dormouse, or identifying bird’s nests, is one way in which those in the provinces can experience the natural wonders of the nation.

381 Daunton, Organisation of Knowledge, 8.
382 Pratt, Imperial Eyes, 15.
384 See Bellanca, Daybooks, 95 and ‘Spring’, The Penny Magazine (1835), 79.
385 Bellanca, Daybooks, 95.
Just as with colonial species, The Penny Magazine offered articles on domestic botany, particularly trees. An article on the willow tree in 1842, informs the reader that there are numerous species of willow, but notes that they can be classified into three divisions dependent on whether the ‘margins and surfaces of the leaves [are] either serrated and smooth; entire and smooth; or lastly, with a shaggy, woolly, or silky surface.’ Although this is somewhat vague, it is enough basic information for the inexperienced amateur naturalist. The author understands that to those who have not been previously exposed to the wonders of natural history may find such information trivial: ‘some of the points we have here been regarding, which appear to be interesting only to the botanist, are in reality of practical importance.’ Willow trees offer differing qualities according to their gender: ‘toughness and delicacy’ are traits of the male, and the female can provide the materials required for basket making. The reader is similarly referred to the Penny Cyclopædia for more detailed scientific information, but enough is outlined to allow for some basic identification of the willow and its flowers. Its economical uses in fact claim an article in its entirety in the same year, stating its importance in hat and basket making, its use as a substitute for coal, as well as its use as a remedy for fevers. Overall for botanical articles, it seems that a plant’s description is coupled with its utility. Indeed, several trees are given an article on their ‘useful applications’ or ‘economical uses’, for example, the lime tree, the pine and fir, beech, birch, walnut, and the ash all feature in such articles in 1843 alone. Furthermore, similar to its zoological counterparts, the article on the willow tree is somewhat of an exception: it, unlike many others, is accompanied by an illustration, making its identification marginally easier. Other tree articles provide a basic overview of either the bark or the timber, making identification for the new naturalist impossible from the article alone.

Illustrations as display

In addition to providing textual information, The Penny Magazine offered detailed woodcuts, depicting the object of the article. Illustrations complemented and clarified the text it accompanied, and many have suggested that the magazine was purchased for its illustrations alone.

Patricia Anderson argues that the medium in which an illustration is transmitted can alter the image’s meaning or relay a particular message. Although animals had been acquired by the Zoological Society, their pictorial representation depicts them in their natural habitat, rather than their London enclosure. The giraffe, which claims an entire cover page in June 1836 (Figure 8), is pictured ‘in the Zoological Gardens, with one of the Keepers.’ Yet the woodcut is more recognisable as an African landscape, showing luscious trees in a large open area, with keepers in traditional African clothing. Similarly, accompanying an article ‘Domestication of Animals’, a small woodcut of a zebra shows palm trees in the background, and is placed near an image of Indian natives, dressed in loin cloths and turbans, worshipping the

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387 Ibid.
388 Ibid.
389 Ibid.
390 See for example, Patricia Anderson, The Printed Image and Bennett ‘The Editorial Character’.
391 Anderson The Printed Image, 57-8.
Brahmin Bull. Arguably, in emphasising the colonial aspects of British zoology, the wonders of imperialism were displayed to the magazine’s working-class audience.

Figure 9: ‘The Domestication of Animals’, *The Penny Magazine* (London: Charles Knight, 1832), p.44

Illustrations of the tail and wing structure of birds also have practical use in aiding the amateur in identifying native species. Such accessible information should encourage the reader to take an interest in ornithology, a safe and wholesome hobby. The article also includes information on some colonial and Chinese birds, which shows the reaches of British scientific knowledge.

Conclusion

There has been much discussion on the relationship between print and popular science, and its uses as an ideological vehicle. Topham for example writes that ‘*The Penny Magazine*... has been seen as part of a campaign to discipline potentially revolutionary working-class readers, using highly objectified scientific material in an attempt to quell their interpretative dissidence.’ Indeed through its discussion of natural

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393 ‘Domestication of Animals’, *The Penny Magazine* (1832), 44.
history, the working classes could gain a glimpse into the expanding horizons of imperial Britain, which should trigger a sense of patriotism and nationalism for a country that provides for its people, and maintains its position as a world leader in science and discovery.

Although the museum is often considered to be the central site of science, education and discovery, the SDUK was able to assert its authority over the natural sciences in many ways. Not only did the Society have knowledgeable authors through its global network of members, but the style of writing in individual articles assured the reader of the validity of the information. If knowledge does have a local dimension, as Odir and Shapin argue, and if meaning is indeed formed through ‘physical, social, and cultural circumstances’, then this chapter suggests that The Penny Magazine used natural history as a method to invoke national pride, and as a way of promoting Britain’s imperial politics. Moreover if, as Martin Daunton suggests, the reader needs the ‘necessary and “appropriate socially coded ways of seeing”’ to understand and appreciate information, the SDUK offered an educational and ideological view of natural history, that was indeed ‘rendered’ to be appropriate for their class.396

Natural history was a subject that was accessible enough to the working classes to make it an appropriate method which with to educate the reader about Britain. The curiosities of nature were fascinating to the reader, and did not need to be dramatized to heighten their appeal. As Susan Sheets-Pyenson states:

Gradually, especially as they gathered objects from new continents, Europeans recognized that nature itself offered enough diversity to delight the observer without recourse to monstrosities or fakes.397

Natural history, particularly colonial specimens, did not need to be made into the fantastic; observations on their habits and appearance were considered to be sufficient to hold the interest of Britain’s readers. Similarly, as Mary Bellanca writes, ‘magazine writers repeatedly exhorted readers to look carefully, to use their eyes, to see for themselves.’398 The Penny Magazine validates this line of thought, offering observations on British wildlife, enabling the reader to identify the world around them.

It can be seen, however, that articles played differing roles. Colonial zoology, perhaps a subject more easily approachable and understandable, particularly with accompanying woodcuts that aided the reader in imagining the new acquisition, had a focus on scientific experiment. With the success of France’s Jardin des Plantes, zoological articles promoted Britain as not only a rival to the French with whom they had been at war with for many years, but a leader in such an intellectual pursuit. Yet similar articles on colonial botany emphasised Britain’s ability to utilise such object for commercial and economic gain, and belittled the habits of colonial peoples, an aspect further explored in their representation of trade in the following chapter. A similar pattern is visible in articles on domestic botany: the identification of plants is overshadowed by information concerning their uses in industry. Mary Louise Pratt writes that ‘natural

397 Susan Sheets Pyenson, *Cathedrals of Science: The Development of Colonial Natural History Museums During the Late Nineteenth Century* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 4.
398 Bellanca, *Daybooks*, 94.
history called upon human intervention (intellectually, mainly) to compose an order, and this order, imposed by Britain either through zoological experiment or the utilisation of plants, heightened the nation’s imperial and scientific power.

Articles on British wildlife, offering observations and details on their habits often in a journal-like format, encouraged the reader to explore the world around them. It is considered that this would not only encourage the reader to gain a sense of pride from Britain’s zoological feats, but amusing instruction may also steer readers away from the public house, one of the causes of political unrest in Britain. Metropolitan readers, who may not be able to reach the countryside, were also encouraged to visit sites such as the British Museum. Outlining the rules and regulations, as well as the layout of gardens (such as Kew) familiarised the reader with what had previously been exclusive institutions. The author reminds the reader that they are entitled to visit such sites and should not be intimidated by its reputation. Thus it is suggested that information on natural history was used to promote Britain’s imperial politics. It informed the readers of the scientific acquisition and utilisation that made Britain not only a leader in intellectual pursuits, but as a global power that its working population should be proud to be a part of, a sentiment echoed in the following chapter on the acquisition of Britain’s favourite beverage, tea.

Chapter Five

Consuming Knowledge: Tea and the Empire

By 1835 tea exports from China had risen to more than 30 million pounds, and tea drinking in Britain was seen as a patriotic act, supporting British trade, unlike wine or coffee, the beverages of imperial rivals. Britain’s consumption of tea per capita increased from 1.36lbs in the 1830s to 1.61lbs in the 1840s. Sidney Mintz states, ‘tea’s success was phenomenally rapid’, largely owing to the addition of sugar which made the beverage sweet, and palatable, but more importantly added calorific energy to an otherwise nutritionally deficient drink. Available in varying qualities and prices, and served in the finest china cooled with cream, or in a simple teacup with the brownest of sugar, tea was accessible to all, and crossed class barriers. Consumption at such high rates was something unique to Britain, and moreover, something only the nation’s imperial trade could supply. Thus, this chapter argues that tea would become an important tool to promote and justify Britain’s imperial politics and expansion.

This chapter examines the significance of tea in the publications of the SDUK, and the way in which tea was used to support the British Empire therein. To achieve this, this chapter will primarily discuss three questions: how did information on tea help to raise awareness of the Empire? How did information and articles on tea represent the Empire and contribute to the construction of national identity? And finally, how did information on tea further the creation of racial or cultural hierarchies? The articles used to answer these questions largely stem from The Penny Magazine which, out of all of the Society’s publications reached the largest number of readers, and was able to permeate every class. However, as several articles were abridged from Library of Entertaining Knowledge volumes, the complete unabridged source will also be assessed, particularly if it provides supplementary information. Current literature surrounding these questions is scarce, and much of the focus on tea lies in both later sources and time periods.

Scholarly work on the role of tea drinking has provided several debates about its contribution to English cultural identity, and its unique ability in crossing class boundaries. Most analyses, however, are limited to novels and periodicals published later in the nineteenth century. Studies undertaken by Julie E. Fromer explore the role of tea in a variety of texts, from tea histories to novels, analysing their contribution to an English national identity, and the moral and cultural values associated with tea drinking. Fromer’s concept of ‘communitas’, and the role that tea serves as a ‘universal symbol of Englishness and as a more specific marker of class status and moral values’ as well as ‘at the same time…highlighting categories of difference, creating discernible hierarchies of respectability’ is a notion also represented in The Penny Magazine. Fromer’s work on the representation of tea in periodicals is, however, restricted to those in

production after the operations of the SDUK were drawn to an end, and her focus on the 1830s lies in tea histories. Furthermore, current literature often considers the creation of an English identity through tea as beginning in England, rather than with the cultivation of the plant in the Empire.

As postcolonial scholars begin to address the awareness of empire across Britain, the role of tea in creating a visible and tangible empire in the first half of the nineteenth century requires more attention in scholarly literature. Although it features in several texts, it receives little analysis and often is a passing mention. Tea, for many others, is only of economic interest in the late nineteenth century as its cultivation in British India was consolidated, and it became a valuable export.403 Indeed literature on commodities often argues that imported goods did not make the British populous imperially aware. Scholars such as Ronald Hyam argue that despite constant exposure to products from the Empire, the working classes were ‘unlikely to interrogate it, or connect it all up’.404 Bernard Porter also emphasises that ‘people are usually highly ignorant of the sources of their foodstuffs, unless they are clearly labelled’, and states that ‘most foreign food imports had to be anglicized…before the British would touch them’.405

Thus for Porter, the role of imperial produce in British life was as a British product rather than one of colonial origins. Similarly, Erika Rappaport argues that ‘we should not assume, however, that the British understood that the products they ate, drank and wore were foreign goods or that they represented the empire.’406 Troy Bickham by contrast argues that objects such as adverts and window bills reminded ‘consumers that tobacco was a product of North American colonialism and slavery, coffee came from trade with the Middle East and British plantations, and that tea was a product of the East India Company’s activities in Asia’.407

Although there appears to be no direct link between the SDUK as an organisation, and tea cultivation, many of its individual members had connections to the cultivation of tea in newly acquired territories, perhaps enough to warrant the promotion of tea throughout their works. For example, the Society’s networks connected it to the both the East India Company, and after the ending of their monopoly on trade, the independent merchants in Canton. SDUK committee member, John Francis Davis’s writings were used by the Tea Committee in establishing knowledge of tea leaves and, with a Society committee in Canton, information concerning China’s interruption of the tea trade could be received. Similarly, life subscribers to the SDUK’s works, such as Stewart Marjoribanks, member of Parliament for Hythe, whose

403 For example, Ronald Hyam, Britain’s Imperial Century, 1815-1914.
405 Porter, Absent-Minded Imperialists, 34.
brother was Director of the East India Company for several stints between 1807 until his death in 1840, would have welcomed the promotion of tea as the owner of several East India Company ships.

The SDUK’s networks also connected them with the cultivation of the tea plant in India, through their local committee in Calcutta. Edward Ryan, as the president of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India (ASHI), was presented the Assamese tea plant in 1832. Ryan ensured that the Tea Committee remained in constant contact with the ASHI, sending them plants and samples to test their quality. Such communications would also have reached the SDUK’s Calcutta chairman, Governor-General of India Lord William Bentinck who aimed on reaching office to improve the finances of the East India Company. Bentinck’s successor and SDUK committee member Lord Auckland approved the leaves from the Assamese plant, allowing their import to England. Thus through the publication of articles on both China and India, the SDUK made the reading public aware of their colleagues’ efforts: publicised in the front matter of bound volumes were the names of those who helped to supply them with the most necessary imperial commodity, tea.

From the early stages of the Society’s operations, the link between imperialism and trade, particularly trade in commodities, was apparent. Edwin Lankester in his 1832 addition to the *Vegetable Substances* series overtly connects the two, stating that a nation should provide commodities at a price accessible to all, and this ‘is principally accomplished by the natural progress of a people in knowledge and industry. It is advanced by good commercial laws; it is retarded by bad.’ Here, Lankester as well as promoting Britain’s trade operations, also implies a connection between scientific knowledge and technological innovation with advances in industry and trade: an aspect he emphasises as part of Britain’s economic success, over the less industrious colonised throughout the volume.

Moreover for Lankester, expanding trade relations and creating an imperial network is the mark of a civilised nation, a status for which Britain meets the criteria:

> when foreign commerce places the natural productions of every country within our reach in exchange for our own natural productions, – then, and not till then, can a nation be said to be so advanced in civilisation, as to have secured, as far as possible, a constant supply of the best vegetable food that earth can furnish, at a price accessible to the great mass of consumers.

It was also paramount to educate the population as to the origin of their ‘daily comforts and enjoyments – how they are produced, whence they are brought, and by what exertions their appearance at his board has been accomplished’. Understanding how Britain and the Empire provided for its people was of paramount importance for the SDUK, and casts doubt on the views of scholars such as Rappaport and

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411 Lankester, *Food of Man* (London: Charles Knight, 1832) 5.
412 Ibid, 6.
413 Ibid, 7-8.
Porter who dismiss the concept that produce stemmed from, and represented the Empire to the masses of Britain.

**Becoming ‘Acquainted with China’**

If understanding the origins of produce was of importance, it was vital that the readership be informed of the source of Britain’s tea supply: China. From 1834 as Britain’s relations with China became fraught, and the possibility of the supply of tea being disrupted looming, informing the reader of these circumstances would have been crucial in the justification of war. In 1835 Knight began a series of articles concerning China to quell the curiosity ‘concerning so singular and remote a nation’:

> It is our impression that most of our readers will be glad to become acquainted with China as the country… to which we are indebted for that refreshing beverage which has wrought a great alteration in our own domestic usages, – which so nearly adjoins the British dominions in the East, – and in which a more than ordinary interest is at present felt in consequence of the opening of the tea-trade and the recent transactions at Canton.

Knight’s articles would have aimed to supplement the information found in newspapers outlining Britain’s interactions and tensions with China for the mass reader, whose access to such information would have been limited.

The article’s seventh instalment focuses purely upon tea, and more importantly, its transformation from luxury to necessity. The prospect of growing the plant in British territory offers hope of ending the reliance on China for commodities, as it suggests that the Cape of Good Hope ‘is the best adapted for its cultivation, both on account of its geographical situation and of the nature of its soil, which is, like that of the tea-districts of China’.

This information, drawn from Clarke Abel’s *Narrative of a Journey in the Interior of China* (1818), promotes Britain’s scientific innovation in attempting to secure commodities for its people without the reliance of another empire. It is an example of the British using scientific knowledge to ‘modify and master nature’ and to achieve the ‘central position’ that it assumed throughout the nineteenth century, aspects also seen in Chapter Four, in the Society’s treatment of natural history.

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415 Ibid.
416 Ibid, 298.
420 Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 205.
Tea is also celebrated as an alternative to alcohol, as ‘our ancestors gradually acquired a preference for the social and exhilarating beverage over the heady ale which accompanied their former repasts’. Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, with the simultaneous rise of friendly societies, self-improvement, anti-spirit movements, as well as wartime taxes on wine, drunkenness was ‘becoming unfashionable’, and respectability was endorsed among the middle and working classes. Alcohol, seen as a beverage that provided energy earlier in the century, was being replaced by drinks such as tea, which, especially when consumed with sugar and milk also provided refreshment and vigour, with an added moral element. Thus tea, even as an import from China, was promoted as a morally restorative drink that shapes the social character of Britain.

Understanding the origins of produce was considered a subject of vital importance to the SDUK. With produce coming from Britain’s trade networks across the globe, articles informed the reader of the nation’s efforts in securing supplies of commodities, particularly from the colonies. Not only did this raise awareness of the Empire, but it promoted Britain as a superior nation, supplying its people with accessible and affordable commodities, which were denoted the markers of a successful nation. Similarly, articles on China, the source of Britain’s tea supply, helped to rationalise Britain’s actions abroad, giving a relatable motive for war.

**Tea and Trade in The Penny Magazine**

Tea played a significant role in the ‘ideological development of an imperial nation’ as it became both a British necessity and a luxury imperial import. First appearing in issue five, of *The Penny Magazine*, tea was used to stress the links between empire, commerce, and their role in the lives of Britain’s people, prompting a sense of pride in the reader in being a part of a nation providing for its people:

> the East India Company are obliged by their charter to have always a supply [of tea] sufficient for one year’s consumption in their London warehouses; and this regulation which enhances the price for the consumer, is said to have been made by way of guarding in some measure against the inconveniences that would attend any interruption to a trade entirely dependent upon the caprice of an arbitrary government.

Although the reader is informed of the plant’s source, careful cultivation, and long history of consumption in the East, the article concludes by providing the reader with a commentary on the quality of tea provided to them at home in comparison to the inferior leaves acquired by their Chinese counterparts:

> The working classes in that country are obliged to content themselves with a very weak infusion. Mr Anderson in his Narrative of Lord Macartney’s Embassy, relates that the natives in attendance never failed to beg the tea-leaves remaining after the Europeans had breakfasted, and with these, after

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424 ‘Tea’, *The Penny Magazine* (1832), 34.
submitting them again to boiling water, they made a beverage, which they acknowledge was better than any they could ordinarily obtain.\textsuperscript{425}

Knight’s article, abridged from Lankester’s \textit{Vegetable Substances Used for the Food of Man}, serves several purposes: not only does it inspire a sense of patriotism and pride in Britain’s imperialism for supplying such a high quality product to Britain’s working classes, when the natives of the tea plant’s source receive an inferior product, but it also provides a commentary on China as a nation. With trade becoming increasing difficult due to the Canton system, and the reliance on the illegal opium trade to provide a reciprocal item of trade to the Chinese, Knight’s description of the Chinese imperial court as an ‘arbitrary government’ is contrasted with the benevolence of Britain, whose empire and trade networks span the globe to provide for its people.

Despite tea being an imperial import, it is nonetheless vital in the creation of a British national identity. Even though the product could not be produced on British soil, that the masses have access to such a valuable commodity, is of the utmost importance. Conversely the Chinese do not supply their own people with tea despite being a native plant. Instead the Chinese too gain their tea from Britain and the West, begging the used leaves from Europeans in order to create a better infusion that the leaves available to them.

This relates to Fromer’s concept of tea as a mediator, connecting not only the British tea drinker to the drink’s foreign source, but also bringing the nation together as a whole, overcoming class barriers to create an ‘English national identity’. Tea drinking for Fromer, ‘domesticates tensions between these categories and ideological positioning, bridging distinctions in ways that both forge connections and highlight the differences that mark those distinctions in the first place.’\textsuperscript{426} Thus, although tea connects the reader to its Chinese origins, the article also demarcates Britain’s superiority in the quality of leaves obtained for its own population. The publications of the SDUK however somewhat negate Fromer’s assertion that tea created an ‘English’ national identity. Tea, as a demonstration of Britain’s economic strength, imperial trade relations, and power abroad, is used to represent the entire nation, if not the entire empire, suggesting that a wider term would better suit the identity constructed. Thus it can be argued that the SDUK’s publications served to construct a global or imperial Briton rather than a unified, singular, English identity, and that tea, of all imperial commodities, is unique in its impact on the shaping of national identity.

This creation of a global identity was bolstered through the construction of hierarchies that raise Britain above the colonised nations. Britain’s trade relations, economic strength and modernisation make the national morally and scientifically superior – much akin to the Society’s mastering of nature seen in Chapter Four. Their efforts to utilise the fertile soils of the Empire, at the same time introducing employment and creating a diligent workforce justifies Britain’s imperialism in the guise of the civilising mission.

\textsuperscript{425} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{426} Fromer, \textit{Necessary Luxury}, 11-12.
Creating Hierarchies

Imperial Britain’s mastering of nature, that is, its acquisition of lands and fertile soils, a subject discussed by many historians of science, is also a subject that should be addressed with regard to foodstuffs. How did mastering nature and agriculture contribute to Britain’s domination abroad? Jayeeta Sharma’s article ‘British science, Chinese Skill and Assam Tea’ (2006) goes some way into dealing with this subject, examining the scientific and ideological processes involved in the cultivation of the tea plant in territories under British control. Moreover Sharma’s exploration is also one of the few studies that touches on the emergence of race science in India at this time, particularly concerning the concept of ‘authenticity’ of both the tea plants and the workers that harvested its leaves. Although it provides an insight into the racial ideals of the 1830s, its influence in Britain is omitted. How did these ideas impact on the creation of a national or imperial identity in Britain? The hierarchal organisation of race through articles on tea, became prevalent in The Penny Magazine and deserves attention in this study.

The mastering of nature and the creation of hierarchies also draws on the West’s ‘civilizing mission’. Britain was, to quote Edward Said, on ‘la mission civilisatrice’, that ‘produces what has been called “a duty” to natives, the requirement in Africa and elsewhere to establish colonies for the “benefit” of the natives or for the prestige of the mother country.’ This notion has been built upon by Michael Adas who states that the civilising mission ideology ‘gave the Europeans the sense of righteousness, self-assurance, and higher purpose’ which made colonisation possible. The civilising mission emphasised the indolent, unorganised and irrational traits of the primitive colonised in comparison to the British who demonstrated efficiency, diligence, and scientific modernity: the nineteenth-century markers of a civilised nation.

The hierarchical ordering of peoples is prevalent in articles regarding Britain producing her own tea supply. In 1840, almost a year into the First Opium War, an event discussed in Chapter Three, Knight printed two articles on the ‘Cultivation of the Tea-Plant in Assam’ in The Penny Magazine. The wartime suspension of the tea-trade in China and subsequent rising prices are not the only reasons outlined by Knight for finding a new source of tea for Britain, but also ‘its connection with the welfare and happiness of that mighty empire placed under our dominion in India’. Throughout the articles, Knight connects Britain’s expansion into Assam with the provision of employment for natives, as well as supplying tea affordably to the domestic population, the rhetoric of improvement and civilisation. This article also begins to establish a social, and perhaps racial hierarchy of peoples from the Chinese, ‘uncourteous as they are to the English and other foreign “barbarians”’, to the ‘quiet and sedentary habits’ of our ‘fellow-subjects in India’.

Knight contextualises the need to provide employment in Assam, stating that Britain’s textile industry blossomed at the detriment to those in India, but the introduction of the tea plant will remedy the otherwise sedentary native of India, and also benefit the East India Company:

427 Said, Culture and Imperialism, 130.
428 Adas, Machines as the Measure of Men, 268.
430 Ibid.
They have been deprived of their occupations in many instances, and their skill and industry have been superseded by the power-looms of Manchester and Glasgow; but if we could be supplied with tea from India instead of China, such an employment as the cultivation and making of tea would promote peaceful habits of industry among the Hindoos, would render the slopes of barren mountains fruitful, and add an additional staple for export equal in value to that of the aggregate mass of indigenous articles now shipped to England, and thus prevent the loss in exchange with the East India Company experience in remitting home their territorial revenues.\textsuperscript{431}

Britain’s intervention in introducing the tea plant would not only improve the barren landscape of India, but also organise and direct the labour of India into huge economic profit: Lankester’s mark of a civilised nation.

The cultivation of tea in India under the auspices of the ‘Tea Committee’, formed in 1834, becomes a tale of science, adventure, and imperialism as Britain ventures into unexplored territory in the East. According to \textit{The Penny Magazine} in 1840, wild tea-plants were growing inside the territory of the East India Company, only one month’s march away from the Chinese province of ‘You-nân’ where the plant is cultivated for its leaf. Not only do parts of Assam ‘greatly resemble two of the best tea-districts in China’, but some parts of the district are ‘completely under British authority’ with others ‘more or less subject to our influence.’\textsuperscript{432} Charles Alexander Bruce, the superintendent of the tea-nurseries that were to be formed in Assam and other north western districts of India, was one of the few Europeans who had explored the little known districts where the tea plants are grown, and it was he who converted an area of jungle land into one of the finest ‘tea-garden[s] on account of the East India Company’.\textsuperscript{433} Even some of the native chieftains recognised Britain’s superiority, ‘acknowledging that the British government was lord paramount of the soil, and consequently was entitled to claim unoccupied lands, surrendered the tea forests unconditionally, and offered to supply labourers and a guard’.\textsuperscript{434} India’s inferiority is further stressed with a quote from Captain Jenkins of the East India Company, as he describes the population of Sudiya as ‘able, strong men, but without the introduction of a more civilised race, they are not convertible to immediate use’.\textsuperscript{435} Indeed encouraging the emigration of more ‘industrious races from other parts of India’ was of ‘immediate importance’, and intended to encourage Chinese emigration, after which ‘the detachment of the province of You-nân from the Chinese empire would possibly follow.’\textsuperscript{436} Although the Chinese have been considered ‘uncourteous’, their knowledge and superiority in tea cultivation, a native plant of their country, raises them above the Indian labourers.

The idea of civilising the Indian population is continued throughout the article, which offers to bring tea, a necessity to the masses of Britain, to the colonised in India:

\textsuperscript{431} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{432} Ibid, 70-71.
\textsuperscript{433} Ibid, 71.
\textsuperscript{434} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{435} Ibid, 72.
\textsuperscript{436} Ibid. Now Yunnan.
Tea is regarded as a great luxury by the natives of India, but the high price of Chinese teas does not permit them the enjoyment of this grateful beverage. Captain Jenkins, an agent of the Indian government on the north-western frontier, is of the opinion that “a very moderate outlay will suffice to give our poor but immense population in India the means of adding to the very few luxuries they now enjoy, one of the most innocent, pleasant, and salutary known, and thus create an internal trade, the extent of which it is impossible to foresee.” Even if England should not derive its supply of tea from Assam, immense advantages would be derived from the partial success of the Assam experiments.437

This relates to Sharma’s statement that ‘British boosters imagined the proletarian in the mother country and the native in the colony as an immense pool of demand for a beverage whose potential for moral and economic improvement could not even be overestimated.’438 Even if the cultivation of tea in Assam is not great enough to serve Britain, it will nonetheless offer a commodity common in Britain to the colonised, itself an act of civilising, and justifying British expansion into Assam.

The series of articles on the cultivation of tea in Assam ends on a patriotic note that reminds the reader of Britain’s commercial and imperial power: Britain need not rely on other nations to provide for her people, so even if trade disputes are not resolved in China, ‘we have the alternative of raising our own supply of tea from Assam’.439

The portrayal of Indians as indolent and uncivilised, reminiscent of the Indian worker in Chapter Four, seems to stem from the local Assam labourers’ reluctance to leave their rice fields for the tea plantations, particularly if it required travelling. Tea picking was attractive as seasonal work, but maintaining a full-time labour force became difficult for the plantations. Thus, as Sharma states in Empire’s Garden (2011) ‘British officials increasingly speculated that it was an innate indolence in Assam’s people, perhaps a climatic or racial trait, which made labouring work so unpopular… In this manner colonialism discovered Assam’s lazy natives.’440 Similarly, their easy access to opium and their resistance against conversion to Christianity reinforced this perception of their idleness.441

The colonial powers believed this indolence could be partially remedied with the introduction of science and technology which would help to raise the non-industrialised Indians out of ignorance. The perceived reluctance of the Indians to improve technologically and scientifically also led to racial and cultural judgement being passed over Indian producers, as this extract, from Lankester specifically directed towards sugar planters, demonstrates:

Unfortunately for the Indian sugar-cultivator, something more than mere labour is required for the proper manufacture of his produce – an acquaintance with chemical science, and the possession of the adequate apparatus – in both which particulars he is lamentably deficient. The

437 Ibid, 72.
438 Sharma, Chinese Skill, 442.
439 Ibid.
440 Sharma, Empire’s Garden, 63.
Indian agriculturalist would suffer martyrdom rather than be guilty of the crime of innovation; the discoveries of scientific men are to him as though they never had been made, and in conducting processes he is contented with apparatus, the total cost of which does not exceed many shillings, where manufacturers of other countries think it necessary to expend many thousands of pounds. If their inveterate prejudices could be overcome, and the Indian sugar-planters were furnished with adequate utensils, there is every reason to believe that the markets of Europe could be supplied thence with sugar of a quality quite equal to that of West-India manufacture, and at a considerably lower cost.442

This extract is just one example of colonial stereotyping that portrayed Indians as backward, and resistant to progress. For the reader at home, such attitudes would justify Britain’s expansion into India, supporting notions that the natives need the introduction of a more ‘industrious race’,443 and champion Britain as racially superior. Moreover, Lankester’s demonstration of Indian reluctance to modernise correlates to Michael Adas’s view that proficiency in science and technology was ‘central to the European sense of what it meant to be civilized. They were by far the aspects of non-Western cultures most frequently scrutinized by the plethora of nineteenth-century authors who sought to construct hierarchies ranking human groups.’444

Racial hierarchies are further forged in discussions of the authenticity of Assamese tea. Throughout its articles on the subject in 1840, The Penny Magazine reveals the contention over the plant’s genuineness stating that: ‘to all appearance the plant is as flourishing as those which produce the best kind of tea, and yet the leaves do not possess their genuine properties’.445 It seems that for the cultivation of a genuine tea plant, the colonial powers required a ‘genuine’ worker. Thus the skills and habits of the Indian labourer are brought into question and Chinese knowledge is perceived as vital, despite The Penny Magazine’s negative portrayal of the nation.

**Conclusion**

Britain’s trade in commodities, particularly tea ‘was essential to the success of empire and the military fiscal state that helped fuel it’, and informing the working classes how they benefit from the Empire, that is, gaining access to former luxuries like tea, would help in mustering and maintaining support of Britain’s imperialism at home.446 Thus commodities, specifically tea, were emphasised in the publications of the Society, particularly in The Penny Magazine, and allowed readers not only to derive a sense of pride in the imperial power of Britain, but also to feel a connection to distant colonial lands. And in this way, the Empire was able to infiltrate the everyday lives of the British population.

Throughout the nineteenth century Britain’s advancement into India, a ‘clarion call of science, religion and commerce’, made commodities from ‘unknown names such as Demerara, Assam, Darjeeling and

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442 Lankester, *Food of Man*, 386-387.
443 ‘Cultivation of the Tea-Plant in Assam – No. II’, *The Penny Magazine* (1840), 72.
446 Bickham, *Eating the Empire*, 72.
many more, from obscure corners of the globe’ familiar to the working classes of Britain. James Walvin states:

In its native region, tea was consumed unalloyed by sugar or milk. But the British variant depended for its success on sugar. And here, yet again, the existence of empire proved crucial...And both products were made possible by the power of Britain’s military and commercial strength.

Thus articles in *The Penny Magazine*, as well as Lankester’s volumes, contributed to justifying Britain’s imperial politics and actions abroad. As Troy Bickham argues for the eighteenth century: ‘products of empire were far more pervasive than any of the traditional print media – pamphlets, newspapers, travel narratives’, and this rings true, if not more so, for the nineteenth century.

Britain’s expansion into areas of Assam was justified as a means of civilising and modernising India, a nation that failed to utilise new innovations in science and technology, rather than in terms of Britain’s economic gain. Furthermore India’s failure to advance scientifically encouraged racial ordering into a hierarchy of moral superiority and industriousness. The Indians, because of their lack of scientific progress, and their perceived indolence are denigrated. According to Adas, in the nineteenth century measuring the colonised in terms of science and technology became the most prominent component in justifying imperialism and ordering the colonised. Moreover, although the British considered themselves superior, this was not necessarily expressed in racist terms. Instead, the superiority was acknowledged to be primarily military and economic. As Adas asserts, ‘the conviction that they possessed vastly better tools and weapons and attitudes towards work and discipline...was sufficient to justify European conquest, commercial expansion, and efforts to educate and uplift the “benighted” peoples of the non-Western world.’ Adas’s statement is certainly representative of attitudes expressed in the publications of the SDUK, also seen in earlier chapters.

Thus, this chapter argues that articles in *The Penny Magazine* were not only used to disseminate information on the origins of tea, but also bolstered support for the Empire, and propagated a sense of racial hierarchy, which, moreover, intended to encourage support for Britain’s imperial politics. Notions of identity and racial hierarchy can also be seen through the Society’s representation of slavery, a contentious subject throughout the period and the focus of the following chapter.

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449 Bickham, *Eating the Empire*, 73.
450 Adas, *Machines as the Measure of Men*, 342.
Chapter Six

The Representation of Slavery: Providence, and the Civilising Mission in the works of the SDUK

After the passing of the Abolition Act of 1807, slavery continued to be a dominant subject of discussion in the public sphere, particularly throughout the 1820s as abolitionists mounted pressure on Parliament to approve emancipation, and ‘by the 1830s slavery was widely regarded in Britain as a national disgrace, a stain on the country’s honor.’\footnote{Catherine Hall, ‘Britain, Jamaica, and the Empire in the Era of Emancipation’, in \textit{Art and Emancipation in Jamaica}, eds. Gillian Forrester Tim Barringer, and Barbaro Martinez-Ruiz (New Haven: Yale Center for British Art in association with Yale University Press, 2007), 14.} Moreover, after the foundation of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1823, abolition became a national concern and local anti-slavery societies, as well as a rise in the number of female abolitionists contributed to the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act in 1833, after which abolitionists turned their attention to ensuring that slave conditions improved throughout the colonies.\footnote{Clare Midgley, \textit{Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870} (London: Routledge, 1992) eBook Collection (EBSCOhost). Web. 16 Dec. 2014, 44-45.}

The founder of the SDUK, Lord Henry Brougham, and numerous Society members such as Steven Lushington, William Allen, and Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton were staunch abolitionists, and incredibly influential in the passing of both the Slave Trade Act of 1807 and the Slavery Abolition Act of 1833.\footnote{The Slave-Trade Act of 1807 forbade the capture, transportation and importing of slaves; The Slavery Abolition Act or Emancipation Act of 1833 abolished slavery in the British colonies, with the exception of those held by the East India Company.} In view of this, this chapter will examine the treatment of West Indian Slavery in the publications of the Society. It will consider whether the representation of slavery was dependent on the type of publication and its associated readership, as well as exploring any progression in the use of rhetoric throughout the years of slavery, emancipation and slave apprenticeships. In addition, this chapter will identify the editorial intentions of the SDUK and discover to what extent the representation of slavery correlated with the ideology of their anti-slavery committee.

There is a wealth of literature on slavery and the slave trade, with more traditional economic and political histories recently encompassing social and national issues, as well as the expansion of popular abolition.\footnote{Barbara Lewis Solow, and Stanley L. Engerman, \textit{British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams}. 1st pbk. ed. edn, \textit{Studies in Interdisciplinary History} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Howard Temperley, \textit{After Slavery: Emancipation and its Discontents} (London: F. Cass, 2000), and Claire Midgley, ‘Slave Sugar Boycotts, Female Activism and the Domestic Base of British Anti-Slavery Culture’ \textit{Slavery & Abolition} 1996, Vol.17(3), p.137-16.} Literary scholars have sought to explore abolitionist sentiment in poetry and novels of the Romantic period, providing narratives of anti-slavery and sensibility. In \textit{Culture and Imperialism} Said states that the Empire is referenced ‘nowhere with more regularity and frequency then in the British
novel’ but asserts that it did not serve to sway the reader ideologically, instead its ‘main purpose is not to raise more questions, not to disturb or otherwise preoccupy attention, but to keep the empire more or less in place.’ Authors such as Jane Austen alluded to the slave trade and slavery through many of her novels, despite Said’s statement that: ‘It would be silly to expect Jane Austen to treat slavery with anything like the passion of an abolitionist or a newly liberated slave.’ As Marcus Woods states, more recent scholarship, although respecting the arguments of Said, have declared that authors and novels were politically engaged, critical of slavery, and ‘distanciation’ and ‘oblique approaches’ should not be ‘mistaken for unconcern’. Instead it should be treated as a reaction to the ‘sensational, sentimental, and frequently violent propaganda literature relating to the abolition debate’ at the time of publishing. Furthermore, the inclusion of slavery in novels ‘recorded awareness and formed awareness that would act as a future force.’

Although ‘the fifty years from 1780-1830 saw the generation of a fantastically varied set of literatures concerning slavery written by men and women and directed at every available area of the publishing market’, the representation of slavery in popular literature throughout the 1820s and 1830s remains understudied, with but a few authors straying from analyses of Romantic poetry and turn-of-the-nineteenth-century novels. One such author is Marcus Wood, whose Slavery, Empathy and Pornography (2002) provides a rereading of literature from 1780-1865, finding hidden or forgotten meanings in texts including novels, pamphlets and poetry, contextualising them with contemporary phenomena in the forms of Evangelicalism, pornography, and sensibility. Although Wood’s exploration covers a vast expanse of literature, it omits the popular periodical, an important mode of mass communication in the long nineteenth century.

Scholarship on slavery and language is similarly limited to Romantic literature, prose and verse, yet Srividhya Swaminathan’s Debating the Slave Trade (2009) breaks away from such studies that ‘view antislavery language as a product of Romanticism’. With the inclusion of non-literary formats, Swaminathan considers both abolitionist and proslavery rhetoric as factors that contributed to the construction of a British national character. Although she provides a close reading of many texts, Swaminathan is not concerned with the intent of the publisher, or the effect on the intended readership, two aspects crucial to this chapter.

455 Said, Culture and Imperialism (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), 73.
460 Wood, Slavery, Empathy and Pornography, 149.
462 Srividhya Swaminathan, Debating the Slave Trade: Rhetoric of British National Identity, 1759-1815 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 3.
Despite being ‘rarely depicted, even in England where abolitionism was such a popular cause’, images of slavery and plantations are present in works of the SDUK, and might, alongside the text, have influenced the reader’s visions of slavery. Although the SDUK’s archive does not hold information on the images they chose to publish, the origins of many woodcuts are nonetheless traceable, as they were adapted from older illustrations in order to correlate to the Society’s text. The reception of the original image, as well as the alterations made before its publication help to reveal the intentions behind its inclusion. Images and imagery, often intertwined with the picturesque genre, are an integral part in understanding how the Society’s views were conveyed to the reader, despite achieving little attention in literature regarding the representation of slavery.

Elizabeth A. Bohls’ close reading of Matthew Lewis’s Journal of a West India Proprietor (1812) delves into its connections with the picturesque, and its use as a method of distancing Britain with the realities of slavery and plantation life, a technique applicable to many of the Society’s texts and illustrations. Yet Bohls’s article is limited to a single text with no analysis of readership or reception. Tim Barringer’s essay on the ‘Picturesque Prospects and the Labor of the Enslaved’ (2007) considers paintings of plantations as a method of representing slavery as economically beneficial to Britain, distancing planters from violence and repression. But Barringer’s essay focuses solely on commissioned works for individual proprietors, and does not comment on the reproduction of images for the masses of Britain similar to those found in The Penny Magazine.

This chapter aims to fill a gap where these three bodies of literature meet: the entanglement between rhetoric, text, and the representation of West Indian plantation life. To achieve a comprehensive view of these issues, this chapter will draw on all publications of the Society that include references to slavery, particularly in the British West Indian territories. References were found in The Penny Magazine, and the Penny Cyclopædia as well as volumes from the Library of Useful Knowledge, which together cover a nine year period, from 1832, before the passing of the Emancipation Act, to 1841, three years after the completion of Caribbean slave apprenticeships. This chapter will also compare the representation of slavery in The Penny Magazine with Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal, and the SPCK’s The Saturday Magazine, two popular miscellanies aimed at Britain’s masses first published, like The Penny Magazine, in 1832.

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**SDUK Members and Anti-Slavery**

The SDUK committee included a number of prominent abolitionists, who played many roles in the abolition of the slave trade (1807), amelioration (1823-4), as well as emancipation (1833). Their overlapping humanitarian ideologies, the promotion of education and the extension of the franchise in Britain are integral to the aims of the SDUK, and their profiles are similarly necessary in understanding how their ideologies were transferred to the publications they superintended.

Henry Brougham was considered the mouthpiece of the Anti-Slavery Society in the House of Lords, and upon entering peerage, he was already an accomplished pamphleteer, publishing several titles on colonial policy, slavery and the state of the nation. Brougham was also a founder member of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1823, and his interests were also in extending access to education, supporting Birkbeck’s Mechanics’ Institutes, as well as widening the franchise, which was achieved through the Great Reform Act of 1832.

William Allen, Quaker and philanthropist, had joined the SDUK as a committee member at its foundation. Allen, according to his biographer ‘had taken a deep interest in the cheap and valuable literature circulated by means of the society… and greatly contributed to its success’. Therefore one would consider Allen to have had influence over what was published by the Society. However, a number of letters show his dismay at the contents of the literature post-publication, which would indicate that in this instance the committee had less power over the publications than one would assume. Allen had been a prominent abolitionist around the passing of the Slave Trade Act of 1807, contributing to the foundation of the African Institution, the successor to the Sierra Leone Company, which created a territory for freed slaves. Although he remained an abolitionist, after 1807 his attention then turned to education for the working classes, as he supported (and became treasurer for) the British and Foreign School Society.

Zachary Macaulay, after escaping his life in Glasgow, resided in Jamaica, working on a sugar plantation as an overseer, and later in 1794 took the position of governor in Sierra Leone. After returning to Britain, Macaulay became integrated in the Clapham Sect, a group of Evangelical abolitionists, including Hannah More, and James Stephen, with William Wilberforce at its centre. After their dissolution around 1815, Macaulay was elected into the Sect’s successor, the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, where he

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466 See ‘Amelioration of the Condition of the Slave Population in the West Indies’ [Last Accessed 5 February 2015].
470 See a letter printed in Sherman’s memoir, p357, as well as a letter addressed to Knight regarding an article on sugar, discussed later in this chapter.
collected information on the slave trade to assist the cause in the House of Commons. After joining the Anti-Slavery Society in 1823, Macaulay continued his role of collecting information, preferring to avoid the limelight of the abolitionist cause, but used pamphlets, as well as the Anti-Slavery Society’s Reporter to voice his opinions. Macaulay’s philanthropic interests spread far and wide as he became an active member of several societies such as the Royal Society, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Church Missionary Society, the Society for the Suppression of Vice, as well as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

The final abolitionist member to be considered here is Thomas Fowell Buxton. Buxton stood as a Member of Parliament for Weymouth between 1818 and 1837, ‘advocating prison reform, education and relief for the distressed inhabitants of Spitalfields.’ After meeting Wilberforce in the 1820s, Buxton became interested in the anti-slavery movement, and alongside others, also became a founder member of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1823. Moreover, with his health fading, Wilberforce asked Buxton to continue his campaign for the anti-slavery cause in Parliament. In 1833, Buxton arrived at Parliament with a petition in favour of anti-slavery, which ‘contained so many signatures that it took four people to carry it’. Months later, and largely due to such efforts, the Emancipation Act was passed. Throughout the 1830s, driven by his belief in the equality of all men, Buxton’s attention also turned to the treatment of aborigines in Cape Colony, collaborating with missionary and philanthropist John Philip and Thomas Spring Rice, colonial secretary and SDUK committee member, which, in 1835, culminated in the creation of a select committee ‘to inquire into the condition of indigenous peoples throughout the British colonies.’

Although Buxton was to lose his seat in Parliament in 1838, he continued to promote international anti-slavery and abolition until his death in 1845.

Despite connections with the Anti-Slavery Society, and members representing the abolitionist cause in Parliament, the Society failed to express abolitionist sentiment throughout their publications. Instead, as the following chapter will suggest, the publications attempted to remain neutral, providing factual information, thus disassociating the British Empire from the realities of slavery and plantation life.

**Slavery in the SDUK’s Texts**

Sugar is considered to be one of the most important commodities of the nineteenth century, and the West Indies, its place of production, held huge numbers of black labourers. Indeed, in 1834 311,070 slaves were recorded in Jamaica alone, with another 82,902 and 69,167 recorded around this time in Barbados,

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474 McKivigan, Hinks, and Williams, *Encyclopaedia of Antislavery*, 143.
476 Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 147.
and Demerara and Essequibo respectively.477 For this reason the West Indies ‘became the hub of the
British Empire, of immense importance to the grandeur and prosperity of England. It was the Negro
slaves who made these sugar colonies the most precious colonies ever recorded in the whole annals of
imperialism.’478 The importance of sugar as a commodity and the West Indies as the site of its cultivation
was explored throughout the Society’s works, with articles in The Penny Magazine aimed at a mass
readership, entries in the Library of Entertaining Knowledge’s Vegetable Substances series aimed at a
more educated audience, as well as an entry in the Penny Cyclopædia in the early 1840s, after the
completion of emancipation.

1832 – Sugar: Providence and the ‘Complicated Question’

Sugar first became a subject of interest in the publications of the SDUK as part of Edwin Lankester’s
1832 second Entertaining Knowledge volume, Vegetable Substances used for the Food of Man, with an
abridged version appearing in The Penny Magazine in April of the same year. Knight introduces his
article stating that ‘sugar may be properly reckoned a necessary of life’, informing the reader that
‘through the natural operation of our commercial power this important article of comfort is placed within
the reach of the humblest in the land’.479 This is further emphasised by Lankester, who states that sugar is
‘inferior only in the vegetable economy to… cereal grains’.480 Even the poorest in Britain are able to reap
the benefits of Empire, and acquire ‘one of the most valuable vegetable substances with which civilized
man has become acquainted.’481

However, both Lankester’s volume and The Penny Magazine fail to delve deeply into the nature of the
work undertaken by the slaves growing and harvesting the sugar canes, but do nonetheless reveal that
sugar cultivation is a difficult task: the ‘hoeing of a cane-field is a most laborious operation when
performed, as it must be, under the rays of the tropical sun.’482 The Penny Magazine’s failure to
emphasise the use of enslaved labourers caused some tension between Knight and William Allen, who
wrote to express his anger at the article’s omissions:

The Penny Magazine giving an account of the cultivation of Sugar has struck him very
unpleasantly – especially coming out at this particular instance – it has the appearance of design
– the value of the West Indies is insinuated [,] the labour of holing for the Canes, the nature and
consequences of which some of us know pretty well is indeed represented as hard work but then

477 Green, British Slave Emancipation, 13. Also note that in 1831 Demerara and Essequibo were
united with Berbice to become British Guiana.
478 Green, British Slave Emancipation, 52, as well as Solow and Engerman, British Capitalism and
Caribbean Slavery, 5.
479 ‘Sugar’, The Penny Magazine (1832), 25.
480 Lankester, Food of Man, 381.
481 Ibid.
it is insinuated that great relief is obtained from the use of the Plough. This may go down with those who know nothing of the West Indies – the Slaves are [gently] denominated Labourers.\footnote{UCL, Papers of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge: Correspondence, William Allen to Thomas Coates, 24 April 1832. Allen’s correspondence is often introduced in the third person.}

The ‘appearance of design’ and timing of this letter could relate to many events around this period, but may be related to the slave revolt in Jamaica beginning five months before the printing of this issue of The Penny Magazine. It is possible therefore that Allen believes that relaying the importance of the West Indies would induce a pro-slavery sentiment among the magazine’s readership and the masses of the nation may be led to believe that slavery is necessary in maintaining, not only the importing of sugar, but also the ‘revenue received by that state from the consumers at 5,000,000l annually.’\footnote{‘Sugar’, The Penny Magazine (1832), 25.}

It seems both Lankester and Knight’s advocacy of the plough is misleading to the readership, as it was a somewhat unsuccessful venture. Firstly, it was disliked by some planters as it disturbed the balance of labour on the plantations: the employment of tools during planting would require a smaller number of slaves, but harvesting, a ‘laborious operation’, needed a larger workforce. Therefore, in order to avoid a higher degree of ‘labour redundancy’ out of season, as well as avoiding ‘costly agricultural machinery to magnify the extent of that redundancy, planters tended to rely on the manual labour of slaves whose maintenance costs they were obliged to bear whether or not they were fully employed.’\footnote{Green, British Slave Emancipation, 51.} Moreover, the planters also argued that manual labour was more precise, and ‘the maintenance of steady year-round work routines was essential to the preservation of a disciplined labour force.’\footnote{Ibid.}

Knight later replied to Allen’s remarks in a letter addressed to Thomas Coates:

> The answer to Mr Allen is not difficult. The cultivation of the Sugar-cane affords the supply of an article of necessity to the British population, in the proportion of 20lbs annually to each individual – besides paying 4 millions to the state. I suppose those who eat sugar may be told how it grows, without involving the discussion of a complicated question, with two sides, whatever certain people may think. \footnote{UCL, Papers of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge: Correspondence, Charles Knight to Thomas Coates, 1 September [1832].}

Although Knight advocates educating the masses in the origin of their commodities, he does not believe that the working classes need to be involved in questions of slavery. Knight’s reminder to Allen that slavery debates have ‘two sides’ could indicate Knight’s acceptance of slavery as a necessary part of empire, or even his support of the system.

By omitting any abolitionist sentiment, Knight’s work was likely considered to take a pro-slavery stance by Allen, negating anti-slavery campaigners’ efforts ‘to represent the West Indian slave colonies as ‘un-
English’, aberrant spaces’. Lankester’s and Knight’s texts promote the benefits derived from the sugar plantations and therefore, perhaps unwittingly, the positive benefits of slavery.

Furthermore, Lankester’s *Vegetable Substances used for the Food of Man* refers to slavery almost in Machiavellian terms on several occasions, as a necessary part of food production. In a description on the production of rice, Lankester states:

> The cultivation is found to be extremely unhealthy to the negroes employed in its prosecution. The alternate flooding and drying of the land in so hot a climate, where natural evaporation proceeds with great rapidity, must necessarily be prejudicial to health. To avoid exposure to this unwholesome atmosphere, the whole white population abandon the low grounds to the care of negro cultivators. The mortality thus occasions among the labourers in the rice districts is so great, that while the general increase of population in the States exceeds by far that realized in the older settled countries of Europe, fresh supplies of negro slaves must continually be brought, to repair the waste of life, from the more northern slave states of the Union.  

Racial difference is emphasised in this passage, as the white planters escape the low grounds, sacrificing their black workers for the profitable production of rice, establishing a racial and social hierarchy. Simply, the workers, due to their race, are disposable and replaceable, and regarded as a necessary loss in supplying the West with commodities. The importance of profit over humanitarian values is further implied by Lankester:

> The true way to keep mankind in peace is to let them prove how dependent every nation is upon the other for the profitable employment of its people, and for the general comforts of its people, resulting from that profitable employment.

Yet the ‘people’ that Lankester describes here are in fact two different entities: the colonised and the people of the metropole. In this case, the colonised rely on the colonisers for labour (enslaved or otherwise), who then in turn provide comfort, through commodities, to the people of Britain. This in turn acts as a justification for the Empire, and anti-humanitarian imperial politics. Given that the West Indian climate and soil are considered the most optimum for the cultivation of sugar by Lankester, it is implied that it is fitting for a nation such as Britain to channel the colony’s labour in order to achieve the best profit, cultivating a different crop in the West Indies would ‘by nature interfere with the otherwise certain progress of mankind in civilization, which is diffused over all the earth by peaceful intercourse.’

Importing the highest quality produce, in this case by exploiting the West Indian soil, prevented, in Lankester’s terms, ‘keep[ing] the mass of consumers wretched’. Without the Empire, produce such as sugar would be unavailable to the working classes, hindering the progress of British civilisation. Furthermore, Britain’s empire is more than imperialism, it is also:

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489 Lankester, *Food of Man*, 90.
490 Ibid, 396.
491 Ibid, 395.
492 Ibid.
a beautiful arrangement of Providence, and one which will probably lead to the ultimate civilization of the entire world, that one country has the means, in its climate, or soil, or other natural sources of riches, of directing the labour of its inhabitants into channels of production which cannot be so profitably followed, if they can be followed at all, by the people of another country.493

Not only does this article justify Britain’s occupation of other nations, and the exploitation of their natural resources, but it also justifies slavery: the ‘directing’ of labour, in the colonies. Only Britain, a nation under divine guidance, can achieve such great feats for its population.

1834 – ‘Am I not a Man and a Brother?’

Throughout its fourteen-year lifespan, Knight printed a single article specifically on slavery in The Penny Magazine. Appearing in 1834, ‘Slavery in the East’ explores ideas around slavery, morals and race not only in the East, but in the British colonies more broadly. The opening line was likely to be contentious to abolitionists in its statement: ‘We had lately occasion to describe the condition of the slave in the East as highly favourable…’.494 The article proceeds to compare the treatment of slaves in the East to those of the West, and argue that the condition of slaves under despotic governments, where the master and the government are not so closely intertwined, prove to benefit the slave with milder laws of conduct. Those in the East are offered education on the same level as the ‘mass of the people’, whereas those in North America suffer severe penalties if caught teaching their slaves to read or write.495 The English, however, have recently made one improvement over the favourable East: they actively encourage masters to teach their enslaved reading, writing and the ‘principles of religion’.496 This is one of many examples of bolstering support for the British regime, as the reader is then reminded of the recently approved Abolition Act, which ‘we presume that our readers are so well acquainted with’.497

The author’s exploration of the entanglement with slavery, race and hierarchy attempts to encourage the reader to forget preconceptions, and favour equality, as in Brazil:

when once the barrier of slavery was removed, little difference was made by law between the different castes, and less by public opinion; so that there was no country which presented so few obstacles to that amalgamation between the white and the coloured person by which prosperity and safety are best secured in countries so circumstanced.498

If Brazil can accomplish racial equality, the great empire of Britain can surely achieve the same. However the author laments the treatment of the black slave, sparking a sense of guilt among its readers, and questions of race and inferiority begin to become entwined with the rhetoric surrounding slavery:

493 Ibid, 394.
495 Ibid.
496 Ibid.
497 Ibid.
498 Ibid.
we are fully persuaded that if the single circumstance of colour had not been against the negro, he would long since have ceased to be a slave in the countries ruled by civilised men. Britain, although guilty of participating in the slave trade and slavery, now outlaws the importation of slaves, and has implemented the apprenticeship scheme – something that should cause the reader, like the author, to ‘rejoice exceedingly’. The masses of Britain are similarly encouraged to avoid ingrained habits of judgement:

it is possible that one who would cheerfully, and without hesitation, respond in the affirmative to the negro appeal, – “Am I not a man and a brother?” – would yet, in his every-day feelings, regard the ebon hue, the flat nose, the thick lip, and the woolly hair, as the characteristics of a distinct and inferior race. These circumstances certainly do make a distinction; and unfortunately it is too much the habit of all men, whether white, black brown, or red, to consider all others their inferiors in those circumstances in which they differ from themselves.

The rhetoric used throughout this article attempted to construct a Briton of the highest moral calibre, one who can defy the ingrained habit of placing races into a hierarchy, and one who is proud of the efforts undertaken throughout the Empire in securing the freedom of those previously enslaved. In emphasising Britain’s actions towards emancipation, the reader could be encouraged to believe that they are part of a progression that leads to a nation of humanitarian equality. This supports Swaminathan’s argument that while ‘abolitionists continued to vilify colonial planters, they also acknowledged that the colonies were an extension of the mother country. Rather than dividing colonial behaviour from metropolitan morality, activists sought to extend the “civilisation” that characterised Great Britain to her colonies. 

1836 – Plantation Picturesque

Two years later in 1836, Knight published a second article in The Penny Magazine, on the cultivation of sugar entitled ‘Sugar Farm in Jamaica’, in which he attempted to inform the reader of the ‘general economy of a West India sugar plantation.’ In the article, Knight reveals his information comes from Bryan Edwards, politician and planter in Jamaica, who would have been most known for his pro-slavery work History of the British Colonies in the West Indies (1793). The description given of a common sugar estate is a practical one, but one that nonetheless implies that a plantation is equipped to care for its workers with the inclusion of ‘a hospital for the sick negroes, with a separate room for lying-in women’. The reader is reminded of the division between the colonists and the labourers, as the plantation includes not only ‘the dwelling-house of the overseer’, but ‘the book-keepers and other whites have an establishment to themselves.” The favourable conditions of the labourers are further emphasised in Knight’s use of Matthew (Monk) Lewis’s 1834 publication Journal of a West India

499 Ibid, 244.
500 Ibid, 243.
501 Ibid, 244.
502 Swaminathan, Debating the Slave Trade, 209.
503 ‘Sugar Farm in Jamaica’, The Penny Magazine (1836), 348.
504 Ibid.
505 Ibid.
Proprietor kept during a Residence in the Island of Jamaica, which states that the houses the labourers inhabit are ‘well-furnished’ with the inclusion of a ‘four-post bedstead, and plenty of bed-clothes; for in spite of the warmth of climate, when the sun is not about the horizon, the negro always feels very chilly.’506 The black labourers’ habits, this time his displeasure with the temperature, are used as a marker of difference to demarcate the labourer from the plantation owner.

Lewis, as Knight notes, draws comparisons between life in the West Indies, and the English countryside. He writes that the villages in which his labourers live are described as ‘picturesque’, each house has its own garden, and the lanes intersecting the houses are adorned with ‘sweet smelling and flowering plants.’507 The plantation functions like an English farmyard, with present livestock, and oxen bringing in corn from the fields. Lewis’s rhetoric, reprinted and therefore endorsed by Knight, paints the sugar plantation as a utopia, an image implied to be representative of the whole of Jamaica, if not all British plantations. In doing so, both authors are able to establish what Elizabeth A. Bohls calls a ‘defensive distance from the troubling realities of plantation life’.508 Knight’s treatment of violence in the plantation system is another example of defensive distancing, as he informs the reader that the use of the lash is permitted, but the most violent acts on the plantation came from the driver of the slave gang, often a slave himself, rather than the white colonist. As well as distancing himself as an author, Knight also distances the colonists from a violent and negative portrayal.509

The article praises the new phase in Jamaica’s history, that of emancipation. Knight assures readers that conditions on the plantations, under the overall control of the Marquis of Sligo, will progress from the ‘antiquated system’ with which sugar was cultivated, and machinery will improve the task undertaken by the labourers. Sligo, appointed in 1834, was only a recent supporter of abolition, but he is remembered for his efforts in enforcing British law on to the planters. Yet Sligo is also remembered for the almost immediate introduction of the treadmill, replacing flogging as a more ‘superior’ punishment, an aspect omitted from The Penny Magazine.510 This relates directly to Bohls’ analysis of contemporary journals that create imagery that ‘integrates skin color – the visual marker of racial difference – into a pattern of pictorial contrast that manages both to acknowledge and to neutralize the evidence of slavery’s violence.’511 Knight acknowledges violence and the use of the whip, but fails to recognise that violence continues despite the enactment of the Slavery Abolition Act the previous year.512

506 Ibid, 349.
507 Ibid.
508 Bohls, Planter Picturesque, 63.
509 ‘Sugar Farm in Jamaica’, The Penny Magazine (1836), 349. The use of the whip in the field was forbidden in 1823, so Knight must be referring to punishment outside of the field.
511 Bohls, Planter Picturesque, 65.
512 See Joseph Sturge’s The West Indies in 1837: Being the Journal of a Visit to Antigua, Montserrat, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbados, and Jamaica; Undertaken for the Purpose of Ascertaining the Actual Condition of the Negro Population of those Islands (London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co., 1838). This work applauded by Allen and Brougham, despite mentioning the use of the treadmill (p16), and other obstacles in advancement of negroes in the following pages. Moreover it later argues that the public support is vital if the slaves are to truly achieve freedom after their apprenticeship period.
1838 – A New Trope: The Noble Savage

It was not until 1838 that Knight revealed some history of slave rebellions to his readers, and even then it was limited to the 1790s and French dominions, rather than the more recent uprisings in the British West Indian colonies. The narrative of Toussaint L’Ouverture, freed slave and ‘dictator’ of Haiti is from the very beginnings framed within questions of negro inferiority: ‘It is an important question whether negroes are constitutionally, and therefore irremediably, inferior to whites in the powers of the mind.’

Knight informs his readers: ‘Their actual inferiority of mind is too evident to be disputed; but that may be accounted for by the circumstances amidst which negroes have lived’. L’Ouverture stands as an example of an African who has been raised to prominence, and serves to negate those who consider slaves inferior of mind. Knight’s supplement berates the French treatment of slaves at the time of the 1789 Revolution, when the French ‘were thinking only of white men; and it seems never to have occurred to them that dark-complexioned men would desire or endeavour to obtain their share of social freedom.’ This implies to the reader that Britain would have acted differently towards their slaves, considering their needs on par with their own domestic citizens.

L’Ouverture’s portrayal is that of a noble savage, educated by the bailiff on the plantation, religious and virtuous, and patient and caring even towards his master, whom he smuggled onto an America cargo ship as the black republican armed forces approached his plantation. L’Ouverture was accepted into the royalist army, before learning that the republicans were fighting for ‘the liberty of all slaves’, after which L’Ouverture is considered to be a natural leader, despite being an awkward and ineloquent speaker:

The power which Toussaint speedily obtained over the ignorant and barbarous soldiery, (the released slaves, whom he commanded), was indeed wonderful enough to fix the attention of all who were around him, – the wisest and most experienced of whom were as much under the spell of his influence as the most degraded.

Despite his origins in slavery, L’Ouverture was able to become an influential leader restoring St Domingo after the rebellion ‘to a state of high prosperity’ with a devoted following of free citizens. Knight also informs his readers that because of L’Ouverture’s efforts to liberate the slaves of St. Domingo, ‘slavery has never been re-established in Hayti; and this island may be regarded as the centre from which negro liberty and civilisation are destined to spread into all the countries where the dusky race is found.’ Haiti was instead declared independent from France in 1804.

Although the article began with an assessment of black inferiority, Knight’s narrative concludes with a rebuttal against such thinking, and Toussaint L’Ouverture is used to demonstrate the abilities of his race:

513 ‘Account of Toussaint L’Ouverture’, The Penny Magazine (1838), 121.
514 Ibid.
515 Ibid, 122.
516 Ibid, 123.
517 Ibid.
518 Ibid, 124.
519 Ibid, 128.
Was not this a Man – in all respects worthy of the name? He was altogether African, – a perfect negro in his organization, yet a fully endowed and well-accomplished man... He was emphatically a Great Man: and what one man of his race has been, others may be.  

Knight’s use of L’Ouverture as a moral figure is consistent with earlier literature that praised him for ‘his poise and dignity, for a behaviour often clearly identified as typically British’.  

His moral values, fighting against slavery align him with contemporary British sentiments, and his story ‘made Toussaint a symbol of vain but universal heroism in the face of tyranny, an example of British-like behaviour contrasting with French villainy’. The rhetoric used throughout the article also demonstrates a shift in the representation of the slave and a new literary trope for The Penny Magazine, that of the noble savage.  

1841 – Ensuring Freedom for the Enslaved  

In 1841 Knight printed a definition and history of slavery in the Penny Cyclopædia, perhaps the most detailed and accurate account of slavery in any of the Society’s publications. The article, beginning with Roman and Greek slavery, describes the use of slaves as something deeply ingrained in every culture until the eighteenth century, when restrictions were gradually introduced to lessen violence towards slaves. Britain’s actions are emphasised over those of other nations:  

In the British colonies, especially in the latter part of the last century and the beginning of the present, much was done by the legislature; courts were established to hear the complaints of the slaves, flogging of females was forbidden, the punishment of males was also limited within certain bounds, and the condition of the slave population was greatly ameliorated.  

The article continues to name the forces behind amelioration, the same force behind the parliamentary approval of emancipation:  

The attention of mankind was first effectually awakened to the horrors of this trade by Thomas Clarkson. His labours, with the aid of the zealous men, chiefly Quakers, who early joined him, prepared the way for Mr. Wilberforce, who brought the subject before parliament in 1788...Mr. Wilberforce was throughout the great parliamentary leader in the cause, powerfully supported in the country by Thomas Clarkson and others, as Richard Phillips, George Harrison, William Allen, all of the Society of Friends, Mr. Stephen, who had been in the West Indies as a barrister, and Mr Z. Macaulay, who had been governor of Sierra Leone, and had also resided in Jamaica.  

Many of the names on this list also served on the SDUK committee, which implies a level of self-promotion, as well as emphasising the efforts of Britain in improving the conditions of slaves across the

520 Ibid.  
522 Ibid.  
524 Ibid.
global, a form of the civilising mission associated with imperialism. The article also states that despite the
ending of the slave-trade, approximately 150,000 slaves continue to be imported annually to ‘Brazil, 
Cuba, Puerto Rico, Monte Video and…clandestinely and circuitously, also to Texas’ despite being in 
‘contravention to the laws and the treatises existing between Great Britain and Spain and Portugal’. 525
Moreover, the article reveals another fact that negates the work of the British abolitionists, and would 
horrify the British anti-slavery reader:

But another appalling fact is, that since the slave-trade has been declared to be illegal, the 
sufferings of the slaves on their passage across the Atlantic have been greatly increased, owing 
to its being necessary for masters of the slave-traders to conceal their cargoes by cooping up the 
negroes in a small compass, and avoiding the British cruisers; they are often thrown overboard 
in a chase. 526

This passage decries nations that continue to import slaves, but in turn promotes Britain as a global, 
civilising force, that polices the seas in order to ensure that the horrors of the slave-trade are truly at an 
end. This serves to inspire a sense of patriotism in the reader, who would be proud of Britain’s efforts 
ending slavery not only in the Empire, but across the globe.

A Progression in Rhetoric?

Analysing the rhetoric used throughout the above article reveals a historical development in the language 
relating to slavery. Beginning with Lankester’s pre-emancipation Vegetable Substances series (1829-33) a 
sense of racial difference and the inferiority of slaves is stark. Political economics and profits are regarded 
as the most important issues, rather than humanitarian sympathies. The use of black labour is portrayed as 
an inherent part of empire, in Lankester’s words, ‘a beautiful Providence’. 527 Knight’s rhetoric is however 
more complex, transmitting several intertwined ideologies to the mass readership of The Penny Magazine. 
As the first article on sugar, printed in 1832, is abridged from Lankester’s Entertaining Knowledge 
volume, a similar message is expressed: slavery allows Britain to reap the benefits of empire. It allows 
commodities to be made affordable to even the poorest Briton. But in 1834, after the passing of the 
Emancipation Act, Knight’s discussion of slavery becomes aligned with the rhetoric associated with the 
civilising mission: by granting its slaves freedom, and encouraging education where others do not, Britain 
is portrayed as a progressive, civilising force of the highest moral calibre. Knight’s articles by omitting 
detailed information on slavery in the British colonies, and failing to condemn slavery ‘implies a tacit 
acceptance of the slavery system’. 528 Conversely, the Penny Cyclopaedia, although still omitting detail 
regarding Britain’s use of slaves in the colonies, admits that slaves continue to be imported despite its 
prohibition – a more realistic reflection on the current state of slavery compared to the utopian visions 
presented of the West Indies. This is largely attributed to Portuguese and Spanish colonies, which are 
criticised to heighten Britain’s status as a moral force policing the seas in order to stop the horrors of 
slavery continuing. Also by naming the men who awakened the nation to the horrors of slavery, and the

525 Ibid.
526 Ibid.
527 Lankester, Food of Man, 394.
528 Logan, Harriet Martineau, 83.
men behind abolition, some of whom are found in the committee lists in the front matter to SDUK volumes, Britain as well as the SDUK itself is promoted as the force to end slavery, and by reading their literature, the reader is by extension part of this force.

By 1836 the reader is urged to forego racial preconceptions and encourage equality across the Empire. The language used in a ‘Jamaica Sugar Farm’ suggests an air of finality. Its emphasis on favourable conditions and the comparison of plantations to English farmyards imply that Britain’s efforts towards emancipation are flawless and unproblematic, and moreover, complete. The reader should be pleased that:

in the case of the West Indian slaves, there have been displayed an energy of purpose and a feeling of self-reliance which promise for the much happy issue of the plan of emancipation. The value of their labour has increased, and the good feelings which begin to actuate them have been evinced in a most gratifying manner.  

Images: ‘A Defensive Distance’ and ‘Timeless Calm’

Having considered the textual representation of slavery in the publications of the SDUK, this study will now turn to the pictorial representation. There are a number of images depicting slavery, or apprentice labourers, printed by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, but how, alongside the text, did they represent slavery? What could the reader learn from the images provided?

Three images showing apprentice or slave labourers at work, when analysed, reveal a picturesque, romanticised view on life on a plantation. In 1833 the SDUK published Lankester’s *Materials of Manufacture* (the third in the *Vegetable Substances* series) which depicts four black slaves gathering indigo (Figure 10), possibly influenced by an eighteenth-century French text by M. de Beauvais-Raseau: *L’Art De L’Indigotier* (1770). This is not only a rare example of the depiction of working slaves by the SDUK, but also one of the few instances that names them as slaves rather than labourers. The reader is given virtually no information on the production of the indigo crop, other than ‘it is cut with a sickle a few inches above its roots’, as depicted, but is instead offered a history of production techniques, and associated Franco-British rivalry therein. Methods had vastly improved in the last century, which ‘rescued the English from the disgrace of borrowing wholly from the French all improvements in the art; and since that period the progress of the theory, as well as of the practice of dyeing, has been rapid in this country.’ The use of slavery is overlooked, or perhaps it is merely a necessary component in gathering a crop that has led to British scientific advances over the French, the aspect of most importance with regard to indigo, and similarly reflected in the scientific acquisitions discussed in Chapter Four.

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529 ‘Sugar Farm in Jamaica’, *The Penny Magazine* (1836), 350.
530 Bohls, *Planter Picturesque*, 63.
533 Ibid, 304.
Figure 10: ‘Slaves gathering Indigo’, Materials of Manufacture (London: Charles Knight, 1833), p.309
This half-page woodcut, accompanied Knight’s 1836 article ‘a Jamaica Sugar Farm’. ‘The Atlantic Slave Trade and Slave Life in the Americas: A Visual Record’ database states that this engraving is not based on an ‘eye-witness sketch’, but notes that the image ‘shows the sugar mill, and various buildings of the yard, as well as the laborers' houses; in the foreground, a small group of women appear to be washing clothes by the side of a river’. That the slaves are unattended without an overseer and not at work perhaps aims to indicate to the reader that the shift from slavery to emancipation is underway (particularly in contrast to the slaves gathering indigo); and the women washing their clothes at the waterside on the opposite bank to the plantation buildings could represent a distancing and a freedom of movement from their place of enslavement. The landscape, including prominent palm trees, mountains, as well as the forest, culminate in an exotic, picturesque view, which alongside the newly granted freedom of its inhabitants create a utopian vision of Jamaica. Using the framework put forward by Tim Barringer in his essay ‘Picturesque Prospects and the Labor of the Enslaved’, this landscape is typical of the picturesque


genre which is ‘an aesthetic category based on the idea of the landscape as a source of visual pleasure rather than a site of work’.

Barringer sums up the picturesque genre’s connections to Jamaica:

The Jamaican picturesque binds together change and fixity in an uncomfortable juxtaposition; it reveals the disjunctions between an archaic form of social organisation (slavery) and a modern economic system (global capitalism), and attempts to describe, using a rhetoric of timeless calm, a political and economic system constantly on the verge of revolt.

This correlates with both the pictorial and textual representation of Jamaica found in *The Penny Magazine* that uses a ‘calming’ rhetoric to describe the life on a plantation, distancing the reader from the site of slavery.

Figure 12: ‘Coffee-Plantation in Brazil’, *The Penny Magazine*, (London: Charles Knight, 1840), p.484

In 1840, this image (Figure 12), adapted from a drawing of Johann Moritz Rugendas was used to represent a Brazilian coffee plantation in *The Penny Magazine*. The adaptation has removed a number of white overseers or planters, as well as their black servants. The removal of a number of male labourers makes this workforce overwhelmingly feminine – perhaps adding to the suggestion of beauty and tranquility promoted by the seated position of the white overseer and the three female labourers on the right whose seemingly graceful stances are reminiscent of the three muses. The separation between the

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537 Ibid, 50.
538 ‘The Cultivation of Coffee in Brazil, &c.’, *The Penny Magazine* (1840), 484.
539 In the original image, the labourer on the far right is a young male child; however on the altered image for *The Penny Magazine*, the figure instead appears female.
white planter and the black labourer is still stark. The white planter is protected from the sun by both a small shelter and a tall hat, typically used to demarcate the white from the black, or the overseer from the slave in illustrations. The removal of the other figures from the shelter in the altered image, leaving a solitary white overseer, also removes suggestion of white domination and control.

Robert W. Selenes argues that even though Rugendas strove for accuracy in his images, his work ‘was more of a “lamp”, directed with political intent, than it was a “mirror”.’ Selenes states that Rugendas’s images need to be considered in conjunction with the original text, in which he demonstrated his ‘repudiation of the slave trade and slavery, his defence of the “moral character” of Africans and his optimism for the future of Brazil as a racially mixed nation.’ Perhaps this tone has been heightened with the removal of a number of overseers and the tranquil working environment pictured in the altered woodcut. The black labourers are far from inferior savage barbarians, they are instead figures of beauty and morality.

Images of slavery in the SDUK’s publications largely promote plantation life as a utopia, and the labourers, usually female, are graceful and not depicted to be undertaking the hard labour of the male slaves gathering indigo in *Materials of Manufactures*. These contrasts, however, could be a method in emphasising the move toward emancipation. Where early images represent slavery as a necessary component of scientific advancement, later images offer a view into a world of picturesque freedom.

**The Representation of Slavery in the Popular Press, 1832-1833**

Sugar production and slavery in Jamaica had appeared in the popular periodical press before the publication of *The Penny Magazine*’s article on a ‘Sugar Farm in Jamaica’. Although the two examples explored here are both pre-emancipation, their treatment of issues around slavery and labour still provide an interesting comparison to Knight’s article of 1836.

In 1832 *Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal* printed an article entitled ‘Jamaica – Slaves’, which also presents Jamaica, as in *The Penny Magazine*, as a picturesque utopia, describing it as ‘[exhibiting] all the wild luxuriance and natural character of a forest’ with ‘extensive woods of mahogany,…interspersed with beautiful verdant glades, or savannahs, while the trees and shrubbery spread to the very peaks of the mountains.’ The south side of the island is ‘different; it is sublime, but not so pleasing.’ With the only cultivated areas being ‘spots on the sides of the hills’ and ‘savannahs, covered with sugar canes, stretching from the sea to the foot of the mountains.’ Perhaps Chambers’ ‘different’ and ‘not so pleasing’ side of the island is a reference to the use of slavery, something Chambers assumes his readers have a ‘natural repugnance’ toward. He states that if the reader considers slavery rationally, they

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541 Ibid.
543 Ibid.
544 Ibid.
545 Ibid, 37.
'would at once arrive at the conclusion, that the slaves of Jamaica have for some time been in the enjoyment of greater physical comforts than are to be found among the peasantry of England and Ireland.'546 A traveller’s narrative is used to add authority to Chambers’ article, although its contents provide mixed messages:

I scorn with an English scorn, the Creole thought, that West Indian slaves are better off than the poor peasantry of Britain; they are not better off – nothing like it… But it is nevertheless, a certain truth that the slaves in general do labour much less, do eat and drink much more, have much more ready money, dress much more gaily and are treated with much more kindness and attention when sick, that nine-tenths of all the people of Great Britain, under the condition of tradesmen, farmers, and domestic servants.547

Due to the comforts that the slave enjoys, according to this travel narrative, they choose to stay under their ‘master’s purveyance’ rather than pursue greater freedoms. Overall Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal, despite admitting that the concept of slavery is abhorrent, portrays the conditions of the Jamaican slaves as favourable and comfortable, more so than that of British labourers. However, the British worker has his ‘English freedom’, something that elevates the reader above the status of the West Indian slaves and of course would dispel any need to rebel against worker conditions at home. To have the comforts of the slave is but a ‘consolatory substitute’ for the freedoms afforded to those in Britain.548

This can also be seen as a direct rebuttal against the writings of political Radical William Cobbett, who believed ‘himself to be fighting a humanitarian battle for the misrepresented labouring Englishman’ against the Clapham Sect, particularly William Wilberforce, who also chose to represent the conditions of the ‘fat and lazy and laughing and singing negroes’, above the struggles of the British poor.549 In an open letter featured in his Weekly Political Register in 1823 it can be seen that Cobbett’s ‘central concern is to prove that the labouring masses of Britain are more disadvantaged – that they suffer more, and are exploited more, and are abused more fully – than any other group, including colonial slaves.’550 Cobbett also references the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 to demonstrate that the ‘free British labourers’ are perhaps not so free after all:

These were persons whom you call free British Labourers. Well then, these labourers had not run away from any masters. They had committed no crimes or misdemeanours towards any masters. About five hundred of them were, nevertheless, killed or wounded: they suffered “in life or member.” And pray, Wilberforce,…Did any body pay fines for killing and wounding

546 Ibid.
547 Ibid.
548 Ibid.
550 Ibid, 168.
these free British labourers? Were not those who committed the killing and wounding thanked for their good conduct on that occasion?...Well then, this was all right, was it?551

This statement would have no doubt stirred Cobbett’s target readership: the politically minded workers of Britain. Also with a circulation of around 40,000 copies, with many copies being shared, Cobbett’s political writings would need to be negated in sources such as Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal to prevent another Peterloo.

A year after Chambers’ article in 1832, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), an Anglican organisation that aimed to provide a Christian education to the masses, published an article on the cultivation of sugar, complete with several woodcuts in their popular periodical The Saturday Magazine. Although focusing on the physical cultivation and production of sugar, The Saturday Magazine was able to portray the difficulty the labourers face in a sympathetic manner, perhaps more aligned with the Anglican view of its authors and editors:

Opening the land preparatory to the planting of the cane, is considered the most laborious occupation in which the poor negroes are employed, and in consequence they ought to be at this time allowed relaxation during the hottest hours of the day, and additional refreshments.552

Whereas both Chambers and Knight state that the labourers simply receive great freedoms and comfort, The Saturday Magazine’s descriptions of the labour they undertake make the need for these comforts comprehensible.

The Saturday Magazine’s woodcuts correspond to a description of labour, so each image has a purpose, rather than to simply emphasise exotic or colonial attributes. The Saturday Magazine’s Jamaican landscapes are carefully crafted from ‘John Clark’s Cultivation of the Sugar Cane, &c., in the Island of Antigua’ (1823).553 The first image depicts ‘opening the land for the sugar-cane’, where ‘the bundles of cane are carted and deposited as near as possible to the mill, to lessen the labour of the negro-girls, who convey them on their heads to the mill-door, where the tops with which they are bound are removed.’554 Clark’s original illustration depicted a black overseer interacting with the female black labourer, yet the magazine’s reprint shows a white overseer carrying a whip. If not a mistake of the engraver (probably G. W. Bonner) this may provide a subtle commentary on West Indian slavery and the failed attempts at amelioration. Similarly, almost all sticks carried by black servants or overseers in Clark’s images have been erased from the magazine’s reprint, removing suggestions of black violence towards the slaves.

553 Ibid, 222. These are incorrectly attributed, John should read William. (See www.slaveryimages.org, compiled by Jerome Handler and Michael Tuite, and sponsored by the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and the University of Virginia Library for William Clark’s images).
554 Ibid, 220.
The woodcuts in *The Saturday Magazine*, in comparison with those in *The Penny Magazine*, seem to depict a more accurate image of sugar labourers in Jamaica, moving away from the picturesque, and into the field, mill and boiling house. *The Saturday Magazine* has also included interactions between the black labourers and servants with the white plantation overseers, an interaction that *The Penny Magazine* fails to address pictorially or textually with the single exception of a woodcut adapted from Rugendas, and even then several white overseers have been removed in its transformation into *The Penny Magazine*. This is also an example of distancing those in power, the white plantation owners, and slavery in the colonies from the minds of the masses.
In comparison to *Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal* and *The Saturday Magazine*, *The Penny Magazine* appears to take a conservative approach in its portrayal of slavery to its readership. By omitting details of the labour undertaken and failing to provide any commentary on slavery, *The Penny Magazine* shields its readers from Britain’s connections with slavery. Moreover the only connections overtly made clear to the reader are Britain’s efforts towards emancipation and amelioration. *The Saturday Magazine*, however, taking the Anglican point-of-view of its publishers, was able to sympathise with the slaves, and thus promote anti-slavery causes, as one would expect of the SDUK with its abolitionist committee.

It is possible that Knight’s tacit acceptance of slavery stems from his position as a strong supporter of the Empire. Knight’s other publications, such as a pamphlet on emigration guidance for the Colonial Office, generally reports for the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission, and a proposal of a work on the colonies in 1830 presented to the SDUK committee indicate his support for the Empire. Additionally, all three of these popular publications fail to mention the 1831 slave rebellion in Jamaica, despite both Chambers and Knight stating that the labourers are grateful for their comforts and freedoms. The status quo, or as Mary Reckord names it, a ‘quiescence’ maintained by the slaves, is portrayed in the popular press as a willing acceptance of their position, and by omitting any reference to slave rebellions in these articles, the reader would also be accepting of slavery or harsh conditions. Despite support for

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555 *Information Published by His Majesty’s Commissioners for Emigration Respecting the British Colonies in North America* (London: Charles Knight: Publisher to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, 1832). Also promoted in *The Penny Magazine* (1832), 17.
557 UCL, SDUK Papers, Committee Book 2, p39, 27 October 1830.
emancipation in the late 1820s and 1830s, it seems that the popular press did not overtly bolster support for the anti-slavery campaign. Perhaps the mass readership was not considered to be a suitable audience for such a contentious issue, or perhaps it was feared that it would inadvertently stimulate worker rebellion in Britain.

**Conclusion**

This discussion of SDUK publications from 1832-1841 demonstrates a shift in rhetoric regarding slavery, that varies with the expected readership of the text. The Society’s publications lack abolitionist sentiment despite a considerable proportion of its members being influential anti-slavery campaigners. Where one would expect to find missionary texts revealing the abhorrent conditions of West Indian Slaves, one instead finds pro-slavery texts used to describe the working conditions of the slaves and plantation life is described as comfortable and favourable without question. Furthermore, when dealing with the production of sugar, the extent of physical labour undertaken is understated. The SDUK’s conservative approach in *The Penny Magazine*, although somewhat typical of the periodical press, presents a vague and descriptive account of sugar production, which is intended to inform the reader, rather than educate them politically. Knight’s editorial style is perhaps also designed to protect his own imperial views, promote the Empire, and by extension, an acceptance of slavery. The information given is indicative of the readership expected for each publication. The utopian visions of Jamaica and Brazil would have been more suited to the mass of readers associated with *The Penny Magazine*, whom as Knight stated, did not need to be involved in a ‘discussion of a complicated question’. Yet, when one compares some of the information received in volumes such as Lankester’s *Vegetable Substances*, much harsher depictions of labour are given, perhaps thought suitable for the limited readership of the more expensive Library of Entertaining Knowledge series.

The rhetoric used in relation to slavery shows a development between 1832 and 1841. Lankester’s *Food for Man* volume and *The Penny Magazine* begin with a tacit acceptance of slavery as a cog in the workings of empire before the passing of the emancipation act. But in 1834 and 1836 Knight’s rhetoric emphasises the improvement of the conditions on plantations, depicting them as a utopia akin to the English countryside. Moreover, Britain’s effort in offering education to the slaves is praised as a civilising and moral act, particularly in comparison to America where slave education is forbidden. In 1838 Knight embraces a new literary trope, as he explores questions of black inferiority, using Toussaint Louverture as a demonstration of the abilities of freed slaves. Finally, in the *Penny Cyclopædia* Britain’s role as a civilising force is highlighted, as British ships patrol the oceans to stop the illegal importation of slaves. Images of slavery largely offered the reader a picturesque view into plantation life, emphasising a scenic landscape over the laborious tasks of harvesting. Coinciding with the passing of the Slavery Abolition Act, this perhaps was intended to promote Britain’s move away from enforced labour, to the progressive introduction of apprenticeships. By contrast, *The Saturday Magazine*, another popular periodical, provided detailed illustrations of the labourers, adding white overseers carrying whips in several woodcuts, accentuating the violence of slavery on the overwhelmingly anti-slavery British public.

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559 UCL, SDUK Papers: Correspondence, Charles Knight to Thomas Coates, 1 September [1832].
It appears that the publications of the SDUK neither supported slavery nor promoted abolition, despite its connection to abolitionist circles. Before the passing of the Emancipation Act, slavery was not an issue of contention, but simply a necessary part of an economically successful empire. Yet in the SDUK’s post-emancipation publications, Britain’s effort towards slave amelioration is praised. But the overarching theme put forward by the Society throughout all of their publications is Britain’s role as a civilising force, whether it is through Lankester’s view of Britain’s imperialism as a ‘beautiful arrangement of Providence…which will probably lead to the ultimate civilization of the entire world’,\textsuperscript{560} and the ordering of labour into profitable production, adding as Adas states, a ‘moral dimension’ to ‘economic self-interest’, or Knight’s visions in the \textit{Penny Cyclopædia} of Britain policing the oceans to ensure the freedom of the ‘man and brother’ of the British Empire from less progressive nations who continue to illegally import slaves.\textsuperscript{561} Indeed Britain’s role as a civilising force is explored further in the next chapter, which offers a case study of a supplement to \textit{The Penny Magazine} on the peoples of South Africa.\textsuperscript{560}\textsuperscript{561}

\textsuperscript{560} Lankester, \textit{Food of Man}, 394.
\textsuperscript{561} Adas, \textit{Machines as the Measure of Men}, 200.
Chapter Seven

Case Study: *The Penny Magazine* and the ‘Aborigines in British Colonies, South Africa’, 1838

In 1838 the Society published a monthly supplement to *The Penny Magazine* entitled: ‘Aborigines in British Colonies – South Africa’.\(^{562}\) Running over two issues of the magazine, this supplement visualised and described the burgeoning colony to the working classes of Great Britain, outlining its history and laying out hopes for South Africa’s future under continuing British rule. The majority of the supplement’s attention is however paid to describing the various tribes of the colony, summarising their physical features and moral habits, and ranking them in terms of importance. The supplement is compiled from a number of sources, including auditor-general to Cape Colony Sir John Barrow’s volumes *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa* (1806), missionary John Philip’s *Researches in South Africa* (1828), and the writings of poet and abolitionist Thomas Pringle before his death in 1834. The author, probably Charles Knight, makes some references to these publications, but direct references are not always obvious, and these works are used to relay the views of the SDUK. In order to avoid stamp duty, Knight was unable to include any remarks on politics or religion, thus works by missionaries such as Philip had to be stripped of their religious overtones into a piece of secular writing.

The SDUK had several connections with Africa, many centring around the abolitionist movement in Britain for which Henry Brougham was the mouthpiece in the House of Lords. Other abolitionist members, as discussed in the previous chapter, included Thomas Buxton, who steered the abolition movement in the House of Commons, and William Allen, founder and director of the African Institution. It seems, however, that their main connection with the colony itself was through Thomas Pringle, despite his death before the supplement’s publication. Pringle was the Anti-Slavery Society’s Secretary and exchanged correspondence with both Brougham and the Society. He had further connections with local missionaries, as well as being appointed editor of the first non-government newspaper *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, and after its banning, the bilingual periodical *The South African Journal*.\(^{563}\)

Taking into account the turbulent history of South Africa this chapter will explore the representation of the indigenous population of the Cape in *The Penny Magazine*’s supplement. It will investigate how these portrayals coincide with the growth of anthropology as well as scientific racism: how does this supplement support or counter the contemporary, dominant racial discourse? This chapter will also consider the Society’s portrayal of Britain as a colonising power. Why was South Africa so important for Britain? How was Britain’s imperial presence justified?

**Historical Context**

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The nineteenth century had been a turbulent time for the inhabitants of the Cape, which first became a Dutch colony in 1652 before becoming a governorate under the Dutch East India Company (VOC). Although the indigenous population bartered freely with the Dutch, they were soon displaced, leading to the Wars of Dispossession between the Xhosa and the Dutch colonists in c. 1779, 1790 and 1799. However in 1795, the French Batavian Republic took power in the Netherlands, prompting Britain to take action to protect the French gaining power in Dutch-ruled southern Africa. Needing to protect their trading route to India, the British arrived at the Cape, taking and holding power until 1806 when the Batavian government surrendered all property in the Cape to British forces.

During their rule in the Cape, the Dutch had faced many struggles against the indigenous population, who, after suffering the consequences of droughts, rebelled against dispossession in the early nineteenth century. Similarly, the Dutch endorsed slavery, relying on slave labour to maintain their land. In 1807 the British took the first steps towards abolition, with the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act banning the importation of slaves to the Cape. Owning slaves, however, remained legal. Although at first the British did not want to disturb the political layout of the Cape, leaving many of the Dutch elite in power, more steps were taken to secure equal rights for the indigenous population. The first of these was the Caledon, or Hottentot, Code of 1809, which attempted to limit violent treatment towards labourers, and provide them with security through written terms of employment. However, Wayne Dooling describes the Code as marking ‘the final step in the transformation from independent peoples to “Hottentots”, that is, subjugated Khoikhoi in the permanent and servile employ of white settlers.’

Although attempting to prevent ill treatment of those in serfdom, the Code also introduced the pass system, which required workers to acquire and carry a pass whenever they left their master’s land. Despite the Fourth War of Dispossession and the passing of the Apprentice Ordinance in 1812, as well as a Fifth War of Dispossession in 1818, missionaries and liberals still fought the aggressive polices of the Cape Governor Lord Charles Somerset for greater freedoms for the population.

In 1820, in order to increase the number of English speakers, the Government in London assisted approximately 5,000 British in emigrating to South Africa, granting them land and equipment, but requiring them to defend the frontier from the Xhosa. Throughout the next ten years, the British faced numerous struggles against the Xhosa, Griqua, and Koranna as they attempted to regain both cattle and land from the colonisers.

Despite rebellions from slave owners, 1826 saw the passing of Ordinance 19 which appointed a Registrar and Guardian of Slaves at the Cape of Good Hope. The role of the Guardian of Slaves was to further limit the violence towards those in serfdom, allowing them to officially lodge complaints against their masters, as well as enabling family members to purchase their freedom. Two years later this was

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supported by the passing of Ordinance 50 which gave everyone, regardless of their colour, legal equality. It retracted the pass system introduced with the Caledon Code, enabled the indigenous to own land, and allowed the labourers to determine whether their children were to be apprenticed, rather than their fate resting in the hands of their master.

Furthermore in 1833, led by Brougham in the House of Lords, the British Government passed the Slavery Abolition Act ending slavery across the Empire, with the exception of land controlled by the East India Company. However, to stop economies that relied on slave labour from simply collapsing, abolition was to come in stages, with workers remaining apprenticed to their masters until 1838. As Clifton C. Crais writes:

Ending legal controls on Khoikhoi labour and abolishing slavery was meant to promote social harmony, encourage economic growth and lift the region out from what many British – both in the metropole and in the periphery – considered was an unprogressive stage of humanity. In the eyes of the conservative settlers, however, the emancipations had resulted in the opposite of social progress. 568

Although the abolition of slavery was applauded by missionaries and liberals alike, it was less well received by the Dutch colonists who felt that the British no longer catered for their economic and political needs. Thus in 1834, the Dutch began migration out of British-ruled territories in what would come to be known as the Great Trek. But for the indigenous peoples, it should have marked the beginning of their journey into civilisation and modernity at the hands of the British.

The Penny Magazine’s supplement was published for the month of February 1838, in the period between Brougham’s speeches on slavery in the House of Lords on January 29 and February 20, although many more were to follow. The first called for more to be done to stop illicit slave trading and pleaded for further action to be taken against smugglers of slaves. For Brougham, Britain must be the saviour to those facing the injustice of slavery:

when the millions of Africa look up to us for help – when humanity and justice are our only clients – I am far from saying that we do not wish them well: I can believe that if a word could give them success – if a wave of the hand sufficed to end the fray – the word would be pronounced – the gesture would not be withheld. 569

Yet more action must be taken to ensure Britain secures abolition, against the wishes of the Spanish empire, and the monarchies of Brazil and Portugal, where slavery continues. For Brougham, claiming land at the hands of the indigenous is immoral and disrespectful to the monarch and to the reputation of Britain:

I would not surround our young Queen’s throne with fortresses and troops, or establish it upon the triumphs of arms and the trophies of war – no, not I! I would build her renown neither upon military nor yet upon naval greatness; but upon rights secured, upon liberties extended, humanity diffused, justice universally promulged.\(^{570}\)

His speech of February 20 addresses the issue of the ‘Negro Apprenticeships’. Since Britain has abolished the slave trade, Brougham turns his attention to:

a subject, not, indeed, more full of horrors or of greater moment, but on which the attention of the people has for some time past been fixed with an almost universal anxiety, and for your decision upon which they are now looking with the most intense interest, let me add, with the liveliest hopes. I need not add that I mean the great question of the condition into which the slaves of our colonies were transferred as preparatory to their complete liberation – a subject upon which your table has been loaded with so many petitions from millions of your fellow-country men.\(^{571}\)

For Brougham, the apprenticeships were designed to prepare the slaves for their liberation, but it is Britain’s social duty to ensure their liberation is continued, and not scuppered at the hands of the colonisers, and they are guided down a suitable path of employment and education. If the masses were to petition for the continued liberation of the slaves across the British Empire, raising the education, moral and economic prospects for colonies and the colonised would be paramount in mustering support for the liberals and the abolitionists. This supplement would also bolster support for British troops, and help to justify imperial rule in Africa. If the slaves and indigenous are not safe under the control of the Dutch, as outlined by Brougham, the British must fight for their liberation.

**Literature, Current Debates on Anthropology**

There is a vast wealth of literature on British rule in the Cape and colonial expansion throughout the nineteenth century. Useful recent works on interactions between race and imperial rule in Africa can be found in Crais’s *White Supremacy and Black Resistance in pre-industrial South Africa* (1992), Robert Grant’s *Representations of British Emigration, Colonisation and Settlement* (2005), and David Johnson’s *Imagining the Cape Colony: History, Literature, and the South African Nation* (2012), all of which contrast Dutch and British treatment of indigenous peoples, and analyse the impact of imperial politics on the Cape and its inhabitants. Although these offer historical accounts of the Cape, the representation of the colony to the British public is omitted and the focus remains entirely on the interior of Africa.

There are very few studies of the British press in the colonies, particularly in Africa. However, Julie Codell’s *Imperial Co-Histories* (2003) explores several interactions of the colonial and British presses, although omits the representation of South Africa in the British press at this time, instead analysing its

\(^{570}\) Ibid.

interactions between 1890 and 1892. Works on racial attitudes, anthropology and ethnology in the early nineteenth century are similarly scarce, with many focusing on the latter part of the century, but George Stocking’s *Victorian Anthropology* (1991) provides an excellent, although somewhat broad, insight into theories and their writers around the period.

To gain an understanding of the changing Western image of Africa, useful in situating this research, this research explores how these views were represented in Britain, a precursor to Dubow and Shearer’s works.

The pictorial representation of colonial tribes is also extremely understudied, with publications focusing on the late nineteenth-century or photographic material. Michael Goby’s ‘To do the Cape!’ (2014) analyses some of Samuel Daniell’s aquatints and their meaning in the context of British rule, but does not explore their reception in Britain. The most comprehensive work in this field is The Image of the Black in Western Art, Volume IV: From the American Revolution to World War I, Part 2: Black Models and White Myths (1989), which provides an excellent overview of the representation of the indigenous in Africa and also includes a short analysis of Daniell’s aquatints, but similarly omitting their reception by the masses of Britain.

The representation of the indigenous peoples of South Africa, particularly their portrayal in mass print remains a neglected field, with much of the focus lying on the second half of the nineteenth century. The Penny Magazine’s representation of the peoples of South Africa is entirely unstudied despite the wealth of information it provides on contemporary racial thought, anthropology and ethnography, as well as colonial politics in Britain. Its supplement provides the reader with a detailed racial typology of the indigenous tribes of South Africa, who are explored systematically and judged by their accommodation of Western standards, education, and morality at the hands of the missionaries. Their attitudes towards cleanliness, and their use of agricultural techniques are used to create a hierarchy based on Western standards of living. Most importantly, those who have permanent residences are favoured, as they till the same piece of land and often use tools to do so. Nomadic tribes are largely frowned upon, as their habitats do not meet standards of cleanliness or modernity. With the growth of anthropology throughout the nineteenth century, this chapter will consider the grounds on which the indigenous were judged.

There were several proposed theories of the origins of mankind, all largely an attempt to determine whether humanity could have derived from one source. Early theories supported the idea that climate and environment affected the progress of civilisation as well as outward appearance. Although widespread, it was challenged by polygenism: the belief that not all humans are descended from the same ancestor.

However, there were also those who compared domesticated and wild animals to ‘savage’ and civilised humans respectively. Known as the ‘analogical method’, this theory was forged and promoted by Comte de Buffon, a highly influential French natural historian. Buffon also believed that as humans can interbreed, they must be part of the same species, despite their colour or level of modernity. Hannah

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Franziska Augstein states ‘the “argument from analogy” led to notions of species development which were genuinely different from the ideal of racial purity which infested nineteenth-century theory.’ Yet arguments between mono- and polygenism nonetheless became entangled with culture, religion, and morality, as Augstein continues: ‘there is a certain correlation between the monogenist belief in the common descent of all mankind, philanthropist attitudes, and anti-slavery agitation.’ This entanglement can certainly be seen in the racial typologies laid out in The Penny Magazine’s supplement which promoted the improvement of the liberated indigenous population. George Stocking argues that where ‘the monster of atheism thrived on the blood of revolution’ in France, there were staunch polygenists, which led to a counter movement in Britain which aimed to counter this doctrine intellectually.

Stocking’s work also indicates that arguments post-1850 show a racial degradation and the idealistic noble savage returned to a ‘wretched native’ with explorers and anthropologists such as Francis Galton describing the Bushmen and Hottentots of South Africa in his The Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa (1853) as ‘the same “yellow, flatnosed, woolly-headed” people differing only in “dirt, squalor and nakedness”’. However for Stocking, such writings offer ‘a functionalism of the abhorrent. Confronted by institutions and behaviour that did violence to their own value systems, and committed to rapid cultural change, they tended to see the customs and beliefs that frustrated their reforms not simply as isolated manifestations, but as part of a system of savagery, a system of heathenism.’

Throughout earlier periods, the work of the missionaries in Africa was held in high esteem, and favoured intellectually. The missionaries, although carrying out their own Christian duties, gathered first-hand experience of the indigenous across the British Empire, an experience unavailable to most. The Penny Magazine’s writings are drawn almost entirely from missionary texts, with other information coming from abolitionists. Thus a humanitarian tone is present. The supplement is laid out like the majority of contemporary ethnological writing, and provides the reader with a simple racial typology of the tribes of South Africa, noting their skin colour and general appearance as well as their habits, something Stocking calls ‘residual information’.

Racial Descriptions

Knight’s introduction implies that the assessment of the races of South Africa is not a racial judgement, but a judgement on the actions of the Dutch:

If South Africa had been destitute of inhabitants when it was settled by the Dutch, it would have been a subject of unmitigated satisfaction to have seen the natives of Europe occupying its valleys and fertile places…but there are drawbacks to this gratification in the present instance…Has the progress of civilized man in this quarter of the globe tended to the improvement of its

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574 Ibid, xxii.
576 See Stocking, Victorian Anthropology, 94. See also Francis Galton, The Narrative of an Explorer in Tropical South Africa (London: John Murray, 1853), 69.
577 Ibid, 104-105.
antient possessors? If their condition has become deteriorated, then a great social duty has been neglected.\footnote{578}

Thus descriptions of the state of the indigenous, the ‘antient possessors’, are not necessarily a criticism of their actions, but a criticism of the neglected duty on behalf of the Dutch. Similarly, any notion of modernity and progress is attributed to the work of the missionaries rather than the ruling party. The British are praised for instilling political and legal modernity, but credit for any societal progress is purely due to missionary actions. As the physical appearance of the indigenous is not always given, it would indicate that it is not the most crucial factor in their assessment, attention is instead given to their work ethic, farming abilities (the ability to sustain themselves), and the acceptance of missionary aid.

Where appearances are described in the supplement, they are overly positive as if to convince the reader of their worth. For example, the Bechuanas (the modern day Tswana) are described as ‘a fine race’ with ‘nothing in their appearance to offend the most refined delicacy’.\footnote{579} It is noted that their complexion, more than any other tribe, is similar to Europeans. Their exoticism is also noted: ‘their heads are cropped, leaving a tuft of hair upon the crown, some of them wearing ostrich feathers or wild cranes’ feathers’.\footnote{580} Although their positive description could be due to their favourable appearance, it may also be their mannerisms, as they ‘have an air of dignity which shows at once that they have never been enslaved.’\footnote{581} One final element is used to classify the Bechuanas as ‘at first they would not permit the garden to be manured’.\footnote{582} A superstition that declared that cattle would perish if manure was removed was seemingly overturned, most likely by the missionaries. Thereafter, the Bechuanas comply with \textit{The Penny Magazine}’s values of accepting missionary aid to improve their farming abilities and are thus positively represented.

Following this description, the reader is introduced to the Griquas, ‘a race of mulattoes, whose ancestors were the offspring of colonists by Hottentot females. Treated as an inferior class by those of kindred race and prevented from acquiring property, they gradually established themselves amongst the tribes beyond the Great Fish River’.\footnote{583} The missionaries have had great success in improving their farming skills and despite the unsuitability of the land for crops, they have ‘combined pastoral with agricultural occupations.’\footnote{584} Simply, ‘their habits, which were formerly scarcely superior to the brute creation, have been greatly improved.’\footnote{585} This is another indicator that the ability to sustain themselves is paramount.

The Kaffres are highly praised for their habits, more so than any other tribe. They rely on cattle for their sustenance, preserving milk in skin flasks until it thickens, and the cultivation of land and the construction of the kraals is carried out by the Kaffre women. They also dress grandly in the skins of sheep, or to

\footnote{578} ‘Aborigines in British Colonies’, 75.\footnote{579} Ibid, 86.\footnote{580} Ibid.\footnote{581} Ibid.\footnote{582} Ibid.\footnote{583} Ibid.\footnote{584} Ibid.\footnote{585} Ibid.
demarcate the chief, a leopard skin. Lieutenant Moodie, army officer, magistrate and friend of Thomas Pringle, states "they are elegantly formed, and so graceful that they appear to be a nation of gentlemen."\textsuperscript{586}

Furthermore, the work of Pringle is quoted throughout the supplement:

\begin{quote}
The Caffres are a tall, athletic, and handsome race of men, with features often approaching to the European or Asiatic model; and excepting their woolly hair, exhibiting few of the peculiarities of the negro race. Their colour is a clear dark brown: their address is frank, cheerful, and manly.\textsuperscript{587}
\end{quote}

The Kaffres also meet the criteria set out by \textit{The Penny Magazine}, combining pastoral and agricultural occupations to subsist, as well as having a pleasing appearance to the European eye.

Figure 15: ‘Kaffre Man’ ‘Kaffre Woman’ and ‘Kaffres on a March’, *The Penny Magazine* (London: Charles Knight, 1838), p.77-80
There is one tribe, however, that does not fully meet the values of *The Penny Magazine* but is nonetheless considered to hold ‘an intermediate rank between the Kaffres and the ancient Hottentots of the Cape.’\(^{588}\)

The Koranna, also the subject of the frontispiece of the supplement (Figure 16), are not given a physical description, but instead all attention is given to their habits: ‘as a nomadic race, the Koranna move their habitations and cattle to fresh pasture for their herds.’\(^{589}\) A fuller description comes in the form of a poem, written by Pringle, which speaks of the ‘listless Córan’:

> Lulled by the sound of the Gareep,
> Beneath the willows murmuring deep;
> Till thunder clouds, surcharged with rain,
> Pour vendure o’er the panting plain;
> And call the famish’d dreamer from his trance,
> To feast on milk and game, and wake the moon light dance.\(^{590}\)

Their ranking between the ancient Hottentots and the Kaffres is most likely determined by their status as a nomadic people, which consequently leads to their description as indolent or listless. Not having a permanent residency and not cultivating land are crucial elements in their ranking. Yet, in *The Penny Magazine*’s hierarchy, they are ranked highly; the reasoning behind this may be found in the original text that Knight has drawn his information from: Samuel Daniell’s *Sketches Representing the Native Tribes, Animals, and Scenery of Southern Africa, from Drawings Made* (1820). Daniell was employed as secretary to William Somerville, a Scottish army surgeon, and provided illustrations for Sir John Barrow’s 1806 publication *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*.

Daniell’s text regarding the Koranna, or Korahs, describes them as having ‘attained the highest degree of civilisation.’\(^{591}\) For Daniell, their high level of craftsmanship in creating their habitats, which compared to other tribes are ‘constructed with more care and regularity, and…[are] more firmly and neatly made’, as well as their use of ‘a greater number and variety of utensils for domestic use’, are fundamental in assessing how civilised the Koranna are.\(^{592}\)

The cleanliness of the Koranna is also praised, its

> owing probably to the abundance of water which the Orange River is at all seasons, and more especially in summer, supplied, and which in almost every other part of the southern angle of Africa is a scarce article.\(^{593}\)

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588 ‘Aborigines in British Colonies’, 79.
589 Ibid.
590 Ibid.
591 See also the 1820 reprinting, and two volumes combined: S. Daniell, *Sketches Representing the Native Tribes, Animals, and Scenery of Southern Africa, from Drawings Made* (Volume 2), Text 20.
592 Ibid.
593 Ibid.
What one might call their ‘civilised’ attributes determined their status between the Kaffres and the ancient Hottentot.

Missionary Aid

*The Penny Magazine* remarks on the work of the missionaries, particularly John Philip of the London Missionary Society, who encouraged the Hottentots to work six to eight hours a day, instead of the short day they usually undertook. Philip informed the Hottentots that their labours allow them to purchase commodities, which provided the missionaries with an encouraging development. Finding ‘they could obtain European articles of clothing, [the Hottentots] gradually renounced the sheep-skin kaross and clothed themselves in British manufactures.’ According to *The Penny Magazine*, there is a direct correlation with the adoption of labour, and the adoption of Western standards.

In line with Daniell’s comments on the Koranna, Philip writes in his own publication *Researches in South Africa: Illustrating the Civil, Moral, and Religious Condition of the Native Tribes* (1828), that it was difficult for most of the tribes to maintain their clothes:

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594 ‘Aborigines in British Colonies’, 79.
While they live in these huts, habits of cleanliness can never be acquired. They may put on new clothes, and the young girls may, out of vanity, or the desire of admiration, appear clean on particular occasions; but they will still remain slovenly in their habits, till they have habitations in which they can preserve their clothes and persons uniformly clean.\textsuperscript{595}

While the Koranna have access to water in order to maintain a good level of hygiene, others fail to do so largely because of their habitats. Thus the supplement ultimately decides that appearances cannot always correlate with progress:

The taste for neat clothing, which might be anticipated as the first indication of improvement, was discouraged; as a dress on which at first the set some store was in a short time laid on one side.\textsuperscript{596}

Simply, the indigenous peoples did not favour Western clothing and thus could not meet the standards of cleanliness considered necessary to civilisation. For The Penny Magazine clothing is an indication of improvement, but is not definitive: the indigenous peoples can still be improved even in their traditional dress. The concept that clothes indicate modernisation and civilisation is in fact a theme that runs through many other articles in The Penny Magazine. In a corresponding article on New Zealand, the author specifically states that as time had passed and the British have intermarried, the new generations wear Western clothes and speak English as their first language.\textsuperscript{597}

If the improvement needs to begin at a more basic level, then it must begin with housing. The kraal is outlined as such:

The huts of the Kaffres resemble bee-hives in shape, and are usually from 18 to 20 feet in diameter, and from 6 to 7 feet high. Poles are struck in the earth and boughs are wattled in the intertices and made to arch over at the top. They are thatched with straw and plastered with cow-dung or clay. The fire is placed in the centre, without any aperture but the doorway for ventilation. The door is formed of basket-work. A few mats, coarse earthenware pots, of native manufacture, made of the fine clay taken from deserted ant-hills, a rush-basket…and a wooden bowl or two, constitute the sole furniture of these simple dwellings.\textsuperscript{598}

The description of the kraal is applied universally to all of the tribes of South Africa, and is a constant obstacle in the way of civilising the Hottentots. Philip writes in Researches in South Africa:

Little can be done towards their general improvement, till you can get them to exchange their straw cabins for decent houses. Their miserable reed-huts are unfavourable to health and morals. Great number of the Hottentots dies of consumptions, partly from this cause. Continually enveloped in smoke, sleeping on their earthen floors, and covered with filth, they are almost

\textsuperscript{595} John Philip, Researches in South Africa: Illustrating the Civil, Moral, and Religious Condition of the Native Tribes, Volume One, (James Duncan: London, 1828), 210.
\textsuperscript{596} ‘Aborigines in British Colonies’, 86
\textsuperscript{597} [Untitled], The Penny Magazine (1842), 133.
\textsuperscript{598} ‘Aborigines in British Colonies’, 80.
always sickly... These huts are as unfavourable to industry, as they are to health. If one visit [sic] them in the evening, he will find from five to ten human beings sitting round a fire on the floor, in a place where they want elbow room...\textsuperscript{599}

*The Penny Magazine* has clearly drawn on Philip’s work, mirroring his provocative and negative language, stating:

Their former dwellings of reed or straw were unfavourable both to health, morals, industry, and economy. The earthen floor covered with filth, and the atmosphere full of smoke, not only increased that listlessness to which the Hottentot was prone, but rendered him sickly, and occasioned consumption to be one of the most frequent diseases amongst them.\textsuperscript{600}

Thus until the habitat of the Hottentots was improved, a process which the supplement implies is in progress, they cannot be fully civilised. The supplement has one extra complaint concerning the kraals that links all of its shortcomings together:

The absence of shelves where they might put their cooking utensils, and of conveniences for preserving their wearing apparel, was a grievous defect, which led to habits of slovenliness.

For *The Penny Magazine* the kraal is one of the fundamental elements that must be improved before the indigenous can continue their progress towards civilisation. With the correct furnishings, the kraal can bring order to the domestic economy through tidiness, and therefore begin to improve the health of the Hottentots.

**Illustrations**

The illustrations chosen to depict the indigenous peoples of South Africa were the aquatints of Samuel Daniell, first published in 1806 in two volumes priced at £21.\textsuperscript{601} Although there is no archival evidence to support Knight’s reasons for choosing to reprint these aquatints, it was known that he held art in high esteem and felt that it should be disseminated among the masses. With the published volumes of Daniell’s work at such a high cost, it would not have been readily accessible to the masses outside of such a cheap reprinting. Bindman and Gates Jnr also write that Daniell’s aquatints, although providing ‘ethnographical fidelity’, ‘tend to present their subjects in the context of current notions of “noble savages” inhabiting a natural paradise, though it is impossible to determine how far this was due to his following artistic prototypes... and how far he subscribed to the views of John Barrow who took part in the same mission.’\textsuperscript{602} Whereas Barrow ranks many of the tribes of southern Africa, Daniell ‘endowed all his

\textsuperscript{599} Philip, *Researches vol.1*, 209. Philip’s footnote is also of interest, as it perhaps presents a contradiction, or at the very least, a contrast between situations in the periphery and the metropole: ‘You may observe huts in Scotland and Ireland; but fire and smoke in such miserable hovels in our climate are not by any means as pernicious to health as in South Africa.’

\textsuperscript{600} ‘Aborigines in British Colonies’, 86.


figures, apart from the Boers, with natural grace and dignity." It can also be seen that Knight chose picturesque art to represent the indigenous. Moreover Knight chose not to include the caricatures of Africans common to this time, where features are emphasised and enlarged.

**Representing Britain in Africa**

Although *The Penny Magazine* does much to praise the progress of the aborigines of South Africa on their journey towards civilisation, it acknowledges that much is left to improve. The *Magazine* informs the reader that the Dutch have neglected their social duty. Indeed:

> If the aborigines of a country still remain barbarous after a long intercourse with a more highly favoured peopled, it is a proof that the intercourse has never been governed by principles which give a fair chance to the original people of adopting new and improved habits.

The supplement therefore contrasts British rule against that of the Dutch in order to justify their imperial presence in South Africa. Utilising the rhetoric of the civilising mission, Britain carries out her ‘duty’ in modernising and improving Africa. And it is the neglect of this duty that *The Penny Magazine* emphasises in order to criticise the Dutch and promote British rule. The supplement, in line with the writings of Crais, argues that British rule held opposing standards to that of the early colonists, the Dutch East India Company (VOC), and the new rulers ‘potentially threatened the position and identity of colonists in the Eastern Cape who relied on the possession and control of a class of unfree workers.’ Crais also associates torture, such as beating and whipping, with Company patriarchy – a subject discussed in *The Penny Magazine*’s article through which ‘an observer’ states:

> There is scarcely... an instance of cruelty said to have been committed against the slaves in the West Indian Islands that could not find a parallel from the Dutch farmers of the remote districts of the colony towards the Hottentots in their service. Beating and cutting with thongs of the hide of the sea-cow (hippopotamus) or rhinoceros, are only gentle punishments... Firing small shot into the legs and thighs of a Hottentot is a punishment not unknown to some of the monsters who inhabit the neighbourhood of the Camtoos river.

These practices faded under British rule, and as Crais states, the British instead favoured incarceration for a ‘recalcitrant labourer where he or she could be ‘reformed’ than have the master apply ‘domestic correction’. Throughout the supplement, the Dutch are vilified and subjected to a negative comparison to the British: the Dutch, instead of educating the indigenous, enslaved them. The British ended slavery and put the indigenous on an equal legal footing.

Much of the information provided on the Boers in *The Penny Magazine* comes from Sir John Barrow’s *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa: In Which are Described the Character and Condition of the*...
Dutch Colonists of the Cape of Good Hope, and of Several Tribes of Natives Beyond its Limits (1801), the second edition of which included some newly commissioned aquatints, many portraying the Boers. Michael Godby in his article on Daniell’s artwork states: ‘the key to Daniell’s representation of the indigenous peoples of Southern Africa is his image of the Boer… or in British terms, the “colonist”’. Although Daniell’s images of the Boers do not appear in the supplement, many of Barrow’s opinions illustrated in the aquatints of the Dutch are expressed in The Penny Magazine and therefore are most likely representative of the time.

For example, Barrow complains of the Boer’s lack of entertainment and interest in life, they have: ‘no fairs, no dancing, no music, nor amusement of any sort’, and ‘a book of any kind is rarely seen in any of the farmers’ houses, except the Bible… They affect to be very religious, and carry at least the practical part of devotion fully as far as the most zealous bigots.’ The Penny Magazine associates this lack of art and amusement, with more than just an uncivilised character, stating:

A people destitute of arts must inevitably recede before men who can command and combine the means of improvement; or if they do not gradually ebb away, they must accept of servitude as the condition of their existence.

Here The Penny Magazine links the arts with improvement, and if the Dutch are unwilling to embrace the arts, this interest will not be passed on to the colonised, who in turn cannot be improved. Both texts also judge the outward appearance of the Boers. Barrow writes that: ‘The men are in general much above the middle size, very tall and stout, but ill made, loosely put together, awkward [sic], and inactive.’ The Penny Magazine agrees, with an almost identical criticism: ‘They are large in stature, but not possessing great muscular strength, and generally inclined to corpulence.’ Barrow even links the Boers’ lack of entertainment with their ‘corpulence’:

Their main motif is fat, whether on the boers’ table, belly or floor. In this land of grease, in which all forms of cultured entertainment were lacking, indolence once again prevailed, sustained by systematic brutality towards the Khoi labourers.

The Boer’s character and morals are scrutinised by both texts – this treatment is not solely for the aboriginal tribes of South Africa – one could even say the Boers are judged on harsher terms than the colonial peoples, as the descendants of Europeans, not only have they become uncivilised, but they have not passed on Western habits to the aborigines of South Africa. Yet the Boers do not receive pictorial representation in The Penny Magazine’s supplement, which is wholly reserved for the aborigines of the colony. The lack of pictorial representation of the Boers, relates to Robert Ross’s concept of instilling Englishness as an alternative to the lazy and violent Dutch colonists. This Englishness encouraged a sense

609 Godby, To do the Cape, 32.
610 Ibid, 33.
611 ‘Aborigines in British Colonies’, 75.
612 Godby, To do the Cape, 32.
613 ‘Aborigines in British Colonies’, 75.
of national pride in South Africa and the English way became the correct way in which to do things: ‘indeed later, Englishness was the major symbol used to determine what was right and acceptable in the political life of the Cape Colony.’615 By portraying the Boers negatively, emphasising their violent actions towards slaves and labourers, their pampered lifestyles and their lack of culture, the British – whether it be in South Africa or in The Penny Magazine – were able to promote British rule as something beneficial on all levels. It was considered that British rule would boost the economy, modernise the country and its inhabitants, and begin to bring more egalitarian politics to the Cape.

Glossing over Economic Motive

The supplement does much to commend the work to improve the lives of the indigenous peoples of South Africa and seems to give this as the reason for the British presence in Africa. However, there are indications that there are also economic motives. It is stated that the Kaffres have been encouraged to engage with the British, with whom they have begun to trade, bringing ‘bullocks’ hides, elephants’ tusks, light javelins, baskets, mats &c, in exchange for glass and metal beads, tinderboxes, knives, and other articles.’616 Referring again to Lieutenant Moodie’s publication, the supplement states that ‘the beads and articles of small European value may be a legitimate medium of exchange for objects of a much higher intrinsic value.’617 Similarly promoting the mutual exchange of commodities in the interior would ‘sow the first germs of civilisation among them.’618

The Penny Magazine largely glosses over the economic gain to be made from South African products, informing the reader that the African tribes are currently trading ‘trifling and useless ornaments and baubles’, but this should plant the seeds of economic growth, eventually creating a reciprocal market for African goods abroad.619

Timothy Keegan in Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order (1996) examines the importance placed on economics in the Cape while discussing the impact of abolition. Although the slave owner was not given the high level of compensation originally promised (£73 per slave) he nonetheless received £34, which helped to ease the burden of rising mortgage levels and more importantly coincided with an expansion of economic growth in the Cape as imports boomed and interest rates dropped.620 Similarly, the colony’s new market for merino sheep, sparked a boom in wool speculation and trade, as predicted in issue 156 of The Penny Magazine in 1834.621 Furthermore, the Society published John R. McCulloch’s A Statistical Account of the British Empire (1837) including a supplement that disclosed the

615 Ibid.
617 Ibid.
618 Ibid.
619 Ibid.
621 See The Penny Magazine (1832), 107, and (1834), 395 for the economic benefits of merino sheep.
number of ships and tonnage of goods both imported and exported, as well as the value of goods from East India Company and private trade with the Cape. 622

The importance placed on trade and the need for Britain to obtain (and maintain) colonies is evident throughout this supplement, relating to a wider argument presented by David Finkelstein who writes that even in articles about nature and travel in the ‘far-flung outposts of empire, there was an underlying presumption about the commercial potentials available and the benefits of imposing British rule to achieve this.’ 623 Thus the expansion of trade and the benefits on the British economy served as a method of justifying imperialism in the supplement. Indeed, some have argued that capitalism was the defining factor of British rule in South Africa, and that politics revolved around the growth of trade. Bernard Magubane even extends this argument to include the missionaries stating that their ‘desire to abolish slavery was only matched by his concern to advance British commerce’. 624 Keegan, takes a similar line, that after the abolition of slavery in the Cape:

The consequent freeing of the colonial economy for the forces of accumulation was in large part driven by humanitarian forces, closely associated with mercantile enterprise. 625

It seems that for the British, South Africa was important economically and the ability to justify an imperial presence to the reader was paramount, even if it came in the guise of humanitarian duty.

Representations in Context

The Penny Magazine’s representation of the indigenous peoples of southern Africa was drawn from several texts and altered to match the aims of the SDUK, but how did it correlate to other popular journals? Matthew Taunton in the Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalism (2009) writes that The Penny Magazine, along with the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge’s (SPCK) Saturday Magazine (1832-1844) and the Edinburgh-based Chambers brothers’ Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal (1832-1956), were ‘key players in the development of a mass readership for periodicals in the 1830s.’ 626 Both magazines ran articles on the Cape and South Africa in the years preceding The Penny Magazine’s supplement, but provide their readerships with different attitudes and aspects of the colony.

The Saturday Magazine ran two accounts on the Cape of Good Hope in 1837. The first, published in February, provides a history of the colony and in a similar manner to The Penny Magazine, laments the damage caused by the Dutch:

The history of this country, from its first colonization almost to the present time, consists of a series of unjust measure and cruel acts, perpetrated by the settlers against the natives.627

The Dutch, according to The Saturday Magazine, occupied the Cape for the sole purpose of maintaining and resupplying the vessels connected with their East India Company without regard for the indigenous population, who they had named ‘Zwarte stinkende honden’, or ‘black stinking dogs’.628 Unlike The Penny Magazine however, The Saturday Magazine names the saviours of the indigenous not as the British, but more specifically, the Christian missionaries:

The only alleviation of their miseries which the aborigines experienced, arose from the exertions of the Christian missionaries, who, under great disadvantages, undertook their conversion, and their instruction in some of the arts of civilized life.629

As a publication of a religious organisation, it is perhaps unsurprising that The Saturday Magazine portrayed the missionaries as the sole supporters of the indigenous, praised their work and implied that their civilising objectives had been met.

Yet, The Saturday Magazine provided the reader with only one short entry on the subject of race, some of which is drawn from Barrow’s Travels Into the Interior and simply outlines the physical appearance of the ‘Caffres’.630 The constant in both articles though is the negative representation of the Dutch. The Saturday Magazine also contains a wood engraving of the Caffres which shows their kraals and dress. Although containing some colonial signifiers and markers of difference, such as the headdresses, the spears and the typical umbrella thorn tree, the engraving is largely unrelated to the text, and is only useful for decoration rather than education. And its low print quality prevents the reader from gaining any insight into the lifestyle led by the Caffres.

A month after The Saturday Magazine’s second article (June 1837), Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal included several smaller articles on varying aspects of the Cape and its inhabitants. For example in 1836, an article on ‘The Human Stature’ was printed, which stated:

Man, in his physical as well as in his moral qualities, is an improvable savage. His race, by means of training, attention to feeding, clothing, and exercise, is susceptible of being raised from ungainly to elegant proportions; as, for example, from the condition of the natives of New Holland to that of the refined inhabitants of Europe.631

Chambers’ article makes only one remark about the indigenous peoples of South Africa. He simply comments that while the majority ‘are very short, the Caffres… are tall, robust, and muscular.’632 The

627 ‘Some Account of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope. No. 1.’, Saturday Magazine, (London: John William Parker, 1837), 42.
628 Ibid.
629 Ibid.
630 Barrow’s An Account of Travels Into the Interior of Southern Africa, in the Years 1797 and 1798 (London: T. Cadell Jnr. and W. Davies, 1801), 159.
632 Ibid.
Bosjesmans or Bushmen are featured in ‘The Dwellings of Rude Nations’, an article in which they are described as living in bushes, holes in the ground, thickets, and crevices of rocks, all of which ‘serve them in common with the beasts of the field’, as well as being ‘perhaps, of all human beings, in the most forlorn and abject condition.’  

The Namaquas, according to Chambers, being superior are able to create a dwelling that reminds him ‘of the framework of a modern mansion in a civilised country’, yet they build a covering for their habitat, using only ‘matting made of sedge.’

Although Chambers’ Edinburgh Journal does not dedicate specific issues to racial typology or British rule, it offers the reader a thematic insight into nations in the Empire. The Chambers brothers, without explicit connection to a religious society, or a political affiliation, were able to approach the subject of empire without bias. There is, however, evidence of the concept of the progress of mankind from savage to civilised, with the ultimate goal of being a civilisation on a par with Europe.

**Conclusion**

The supplement to The Penny Magazine reminds the reader that although indigenous peoples are worthy of taking ‘their place as freemen’, their journey towards civilisation remains incomplete. The closing paragraph states:

> It will be at once evident that the elevation of the Hottentot character must be the result of attempts which shall be directed both to their moral and physical improvement, and which will re-act upon each other.

Southern Africans must be educated morally: they must learn to subsist without plunder or sporadic hunting, and they should be taught agricultural skills, and a work ethic that will encourage a sustainable lifestyle, and spark the beginnings of trade. Physically, their outward appearance should be altered to match that of other civilised nations. As Finkelstein writes ‘invariably, the Empire [in Blackwood’s Magazine] was seen as part of a disordered universe which was being put right by British skill, technology, and moral superiority’, and this also rings true for the content of the supplement.

Although other popular periodicals offered similar articles on southern Africa, The Penny Magazine provides its readership with a racial typology of the indigenous tribes, as well as the history of the colony. Anthropological information is, however, entangled with imperialist and humanitarian values and the supplement takes the form of a racial, rather than racist discourse. Any contempt for the inhabitants of South Africa is reserved solely for the Dutch. The need for the indigenous groups to receive ‘training’, to use the Chambers brothers’ phrasing, is used as a justification for British imperial presence, which in turn is fuelled by trade and the creation of a location for resupplying British vessels en route to India. Although explicit information concerning trade is omitted in this supplement, articles on commodities

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634 Ibid.
635 ‘Aborigines in British Colonies’, 79.
636 Ibid, 86.
637 Finkelstein, Imperial Self-Representation, 100.
such as merino wool had been explored in previous issues. Many of the members of the SDUK were also abolitionists and had networks abroad, as their connection with Thomas Pringle demonstrates. The supplement’s declaration of the worthiness of the indigenous peoples to become freemen also promoted anti-slavery thought to the readership of The Penny Magazine.

The timing of publication coincided with several significant events. ‘Aborigines in British Colonies – South Africa’ was published in 1838, the same time as the commencement of the Great Trek in which the much of the Boer population moved northwards to Natal in order to escape British rule in the Cape. However, they faced resistance from the Zulus, whose king, Dingane kaSenzangakhona murdered the Trek leader, Piet Retief, on 6 February 1838 – just weeks before the publication of the supplement. Although the Dutch had been settling in Zulu-inhabited land for a number of months, this event triggered months of bloody warfare between the Dutch and the Zulu. Perhaps with such unrest in the vicinity of the colony, this supplement would provide relevant information in encouraging the reader to support any later military action to defend British land abroad. 1838 was also the year that apprenticed slaves were finally to receive their freedom and a point often considered the true end to slavery. This, coupled with several speeches by Brougham in the preceding weeks, would have informed the reader of current affairs and mustered support for the abolitionist cause. Chris Holdridge asserts that ‘Anglophone newspapers in the colonies acted “as mobilisers of Englishness” and were powerful tools for coalescing a community of interests amongst self-identified Britons’, to this end, I argue that The Penny Magazine, as a disseminator of information in Britain, allowed the British masses to identify as part of the British Empire – creating a global identity, rather than a national one. 638

The illustrations used to accompany the text are of high quality and accuracy, and are far removed from the caricatures of the period. They do, however, offer the reader an idealised and picturesque view of southern Africa in which the indigenous are presented as noble and graceful and their treatment at the hands of the Dutch was unjust and abhorrent. The Penny Magazine fits into theories put forward by, for example, Christine Bolt and reiterated by Andrew Bank, that attitudes in the early nineteenth century were of altruism, improvement, and anti-slavery, and that later, in the middle of the century ‘Victorian attitudes towards indigenous people grew pessimistic and hostile’. 639

Drawing on several texts, all of which were first-hand experiences, allowed Knight to create an air of authority and accuracy in the supplement, creating a clear vision for the British reader. This was a practice continued into the late nineteenth century of which Helly and Callaway write:

> These writers used their own vivid observations of people and places to construct the reality of South Africa for their readers at home, but they looked at the passing scene through the lenses of an imperial worldview and its value system. Their texts – similar to travelogues, missionary tracts, and the fiction of the period – used the images, stereotypes, rhetorical strategies, and

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narrative devices of a powerful discursive formation projecting the ideology of empire in relation to specific historical locations. They drew on already established modes which formatted ways of seeing and understanding the colonies in the attempt to justify Britain’s late-nineteenth century drive for domination in southern Africa.640

This construction of the Cape encouraged readers to support Britain’s colonial and imperial politics. The information provided ensured them that Britain was a force for good in the Empire – an empire of which they were at the centre and would surely reap the benefits. This supplement was a ‘physical manifestation’ of not only the SDUK’s ‘network of knowledge’, but also representative of British governmental aims as a whole.641 This collation of information on South Africa was utilised as a method of justifying British imperial politics, which in turn reminded the reader that they are at the centre of a vast global empire; an empire that believes in humanitarian values and legal equality.


Conclusion

In 1826 the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was founded in order to impart useful information to all classes of the community, ‘particularly to such as are unable to avail themselves of experienced teachers, or may prefer learning by themselves.’ But twenty years after its foundation the SDUK came to a close. The crippling blow to the SDUK’s operations had actually come ten years previous: the repeal of newspaper stamp duty in 1836 allowed the market to be flooded with cheap information, particularly the news and politics sought after by the masses. This, along with the SDUK’s final project, a biographical dictionary, proved fatal. The dictionary, suggested by Lord Spencer in 1841, was a universal biographical dictionary, rather than limiting its focus to British individuals. The dictionary was a mammoth task and only survived until 1845 on the insistence and funding of Spencer himself. Despite only completing the letter A, the project cost approximately £5000 and sold far too few copies to break even, selling on average only 957 copies per half volume. In their closing address of 1846, the Committee celebrated their work and acknowledged its global reach:

The Society’s work is done, for its greatest objective is achieved – fully, fairly, and permanently. The public is supplied with cheap and good literature to an extent which the most sanguine friend of human improvement could not, in 1826, have hoped to have witnessed in twenty years. The powerful contributors to this great object, who have been taught by the Society how to work without the Society, may almost be reckoned by the hundred, and there is hardly a country in Europe, from Russia to Spain, which has not seen the Society’s publications in its own language, and felt their influence on its own system of production.

The group, despite the failings caused by the biographical dictionary, felt they had removed obstacles to those who sought education and looked optimistically toward the future:

The time is coming, they trust, when all will act upon what most now see, namely, that knowledge, though it adds power to evil, adds tenfold power to good; when there shall be no part of the community on which this maxim shall not have been verified; and when the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge shall be co-extensive with Society itself.

The Society thus declared that their objectives had been met. They had provided accessible education to those who sought it and extended their reach across the globe.

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642 Prospectus 1829, 17.
643 See Ashton, Victorian Bloomsbury, 77-78 for more information on the Biographical Dictionary.
The publications of the SDUK can be seen as a precursor to the imperialistic adventure stories and traveller’s tales available later in the nineteenth century, after British control was extended throughout the African continent and rule in India was established under the Raj. Later in the century the themes and ideologies present in the SDUK’s publications developed. Where The Penny Magazine described races in terms of the civilising mission, new sciences later in the century such as phrenology and Darwin’s evolutionary theory were used to ‘prove’ black inferiority, or more importantly, white superiority, and a division was created between the British and the colonised. The Empire became a place of mystery, adventure, and a site of economic exploitation, rather than the exotic site of discovery and improvement represented by the SDUK. With new educational acts and the repeal of taxes, novels and newspapers became more accessible and the mass reading public of Britain was offered a wider choice of reading material. Novels, as the emerging dominant form of reading, became, like the publications of the SDUK had been before them, a vehicle with which to promote British imperialism and empire.

This thesis argues that the British Empire is a central theme throughout the texts of the SDUK pervading articles of all genres and encouraging a sense of patriotism in its readership. It suggests that Britain is constructed as a global and moral power, values also projected on to her people. Having revealed the extent of the SDUK’s network, it is no surprise that with so many committee members in positions of prominence, the SDUK would promote such ideals. Indeed, if the Society wished to channel working-class reading down safer paths than those offered by the radical press, showing the masses the wonders of the Empire – all that they stood to lose at the hands of political upheaval – would be a sure-fire method. By demonstrating the wide and expanding horizons of the Empire, the Society aimed to create a confident, patriotic and proud global identity in its readership.

Although the success of the SDUK has been overshadowed by the brevity of their operations, it is important to examine what they were able to achieve in their active years. In meeting their objective, that is ‘the imparting [of] useful information to all classes of the community’, the Society was largely successful. The circulation figures of The Penny Magazine, particularly at its outset were substantial, and successful sales of the SDUK’s Library volumes, which covered a wide range of subjects, indicate that the Society were able cross class boundaries and reach all classes of the British public. Moreover, the Society set a precedent in what could be expected from cheap publications, namely, accurate and factual scientific information, as well as high-quality illustrations.

The extent to which the latest technological methods were instrumental in communicating the imperial message cannot be underestimated. In publishing The Penny Magazine, the SDUK utilised the latest technological methods in rapidly producing a cheap and accessible periodical. Similarly, after travelling the country to meet booksellers and hawkers, Knight ensured that the magazine would be available to purchase nationally outside of the metropole, embracing Britain’s burgeoning travel network. Being able to reach so many readers would allow the Society to spread their ideals and ideology as far as possible.

Illustrations in the magazine accompanied otherwise difficult articles without compromising the text, and were, like their textual counterpart, infused with support for the British imperial endeavour. They

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647 Ibid, 18
heightened the publication’s appeal, engaged the masses’ imaginations, and encouraged sales. The construction of an ideal British worker is also seen through the printing of a floorplan of the National Gallery and encouragement for readers to visit the British Museum; the British reader should experience the wonders of the Empire, not only for educational improvement, but also to understand and support for British imperial activities. It has been suggested throughout this study that the SDUK provided a middle way between the efforts of the radical press and religious groups, both of which offered literature to the mass reading public. And perhaps it is this middle way that accounts for the popularity of their publications.

With Henry Brougham at its centre, the SDUK had members across all fields, which both lent authority to the Society as an organisation, and provided an authoritative voice through its publications. Moreover, when Brougham’s influence is coupled with that of Buxton, the members of the SDUK begin to reach further across the globe. Indeed, Buxton had a network of contacts in South Africa, and counselled William Bentinck before his appointment in India. Furthermore, with members of the SDUK actively promoting education in India, namely Sir Edward Ryan, the Society’s works were spread further abroad and into different cultures through translations.

The Society’s networks demonstrate the reach of this vast and influential group that allowed it to disseminate its publications and ideals across Britain and the colonies. Simply, the SDUK should be remembered as more than a failed publishing group who promoted a top-down education.

In imagining the Empire, this thesis demonstrates that the publications of the Society were more than safe and banal entertainment, as previous scholarship has implied. Several recurring themes are apparent, particularly regarding Britain’s status as a global power.

Throughout *The Penny Magazine* Britain is represented as scientifically advancing, utilising the resources of other nations, whose natives with no direction or education, have neglected their country’s scientific resources. Articles on imperial trade and commodities reminded the readers of the benefits of the Empire and were thus utilised in encouraging a patriotic and imperialistic national identity. This can be seen in the discovery and domestication of animals, through Britain’s acquisition of high quality tea leaves, and its cultivation of the plant in Assam. The failure of other nations in exploiting their natural resources and to establish industry is used to justify Britain’s intervention and imperialism. Trade relations and a burgeoning economy are two of the markers of civilisation for imperial Britain and one of the reasons for the negative portrayal of China, which was reluctant to open its borders to Western trade. The portrayal of this kind of failure throughout the SDUK’s publications also caused the hierarchical ordering of the colonised peoples, who are described as stationary and indolent as they neglect to exploit the natural resources of their land and embrace industrialisation. Throughout their publications, living under British rule is portrayed as a positive and beneficial change to the lives of the colonised, part of the civilising mission’s rhetoric.

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In a similar vein, Britain’s status as a global leader is emphasised, both as a power for moral good, patrolling the seas to prevent illegal slave trading, but also as a front-runner in intellectual pursuits, particularly in comparison to her long standing rival, France. Moreover, these two aspects, the civilising mission and Britain as a global leader, converge in the portrayal of Britain’s occupation of South Africa, where the Dutch have failed to improve the lives of those under their rule, a duty that simultaneously justified British intervention and vilified the Dutch, one of Britain’s imperial rivals.

The publications of the SDUK, particularly The Penny Magazine with its wider audience, acted as a mediator, delivering information about the broadening horizons of the Empire to the public and serving as an accessible site of display for Britain’s imperial endeavours. Publications acted as a guide to the reader, helping them to understand and decode information on the acquisitions of land, scientific specimens and imperial commodities, and ultimately, to understand the world around them.

In Imperial Co-Histories Julie F. Codell asserts that ‘representations of British ideals served to justify Empire at home and imperial control abroad, and the press was a major venue of such representations and their political uses’ and for Codell ‘the representation of the Empire in the press called on readers to support or reject policies for places they would never see and for people they would never meet except in texts and images’. This aptly describes the work of the SDUK, which used British ideals throughout their publications in order to justify the Empire. Ideals of diligence and morality were used to support the civilising mission, raising the status of the colonial subjects to that of the privileged British reader. However the SDUK did not call on readers to support or reject policies actively. Instead, British methods were accepted as the correct and unequivocal in the necessary process of colonisation or occupation.

In analysing the publications and networks of the SDUK, this thesis resonates with Keighren, Withers and Bell’s discussion of travel writing, which, while focusing on works published by John Murray, explores travel writing as as conduit to promote imperialism under official directives or patronage from such organisations as the Admiralty, the Royal Society or the Colonial Office, describing them as ‘a narrative of scientific exploration and, even, of British geographical and imperial aggrandisement.’ Moreover, travel books were written and published from an ‘obligation owed in the service of Britain’s political and mercantile interests or, more generally, to the geographical and scientific understanding of the world.’ The SDUK also had affiliations with institutions such as the Admiralty and the Colonial Office, and similarly acted as a conduit for aspects of imperial aggrandisement, such as scientific exploration and the economic benefits of empire.

The SDUK’s publications show a careful construction of Britain as global power, leader, and moderniser. It has been argued that social hierarchies in their publications established a global order among the British masses, placing them horizontally with their colonial counterparts, but reminding them that the benefits bestowed on them by the nation, such as education and trade, all stemming from imperialism, make the British worker great. If the colonies have allowed their workers to remain stationary, British intervention

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649 Codell, Imperial Co-Histories, 18.
650 Ibid, 21.
651 Keighren et al, Travels into Print, 38
652 Ibid, 215
has led to modernisation, civilisation, progression, and scientific discoveries. Thus the SDUK built a positive perception of empire in order to justify and muster support for British imperialism.

While my research has shed new light on the SDUK’s networks and representation of empire, several themes are yet to be explored in order to fully understand the impact of the group. There is certainly scope for more work on the SDUK and empire, particularly on the vast number of subjects and illustrations in The Penny Magazine, only a small portion of which this thesis has been able to consider. Moreover, there is a distinct lack of detailed analyses on the volumes of the Library of Entertaining Knowledge, which offered the working class glimpses into Egypt, New Zealand, and China, as well as volumes on the holdings of the British Museum.

Through an investigation of the Society’s networks it has been shown that the SDUK’s publishing practices ensured that their publications were produced cheaply and rapidly, but were also far reaching, thanks to Britain’s burgeoning travel networks, the efforts of Charles Knight, and the group’s contacts abroad. An analysis of the Society’s composition shows that its carefully crafted network meant that the SDUK had influence in several areas, including politics, law, religion, and academia. Furthermore, the inclusion of key gentlemen, particularly Thomas Fowell Buxton stretched the group’s network into the colonies and allowed them to exert pressure on some colonial policies and encourage the distribution of their publications abroad.

This thesis has demonstrated that the texts of the SDUK have several recurring and prominent imperial themes throughout. Britain’s status as a leader of intellectual pursuits, improving, civilising and modernising the globe is prevalent throughout their publications, and is often intertwined with the rhetoric of the civilising mission. For the SDUK, the nations colonised by Britain were in need of intervention in order to progress, and this was used to justify imperialism and the Empire to the readership at home.
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Walvin, James, *Fruits of Empire: Exotic Produce and British Taste, 1660-1800* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997)


Published Works
Consuming Knowledge:

Produce from the Empire in *The Penny Magazine* of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge

There is debate among historians as to whether the British public was uninterested or unaware of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. This article considers the extent to which the Empire and the colonies in fact infiltrated everyday life through trade and produce, specifically in the form of tea, a product that even Britain’s poorest considered a necessity. To do this, this paper draws upon *The Penny Magazine* of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) which ran from 1832-1845. Selling an unprecedented 200,000 copies weekly at its peak, what did the public learn about the Empire through articles on its produce in *The Penny Magazine*? This paper demonstrates that the SDUK promoted Britain as an industrious, imperial land with a strong work ethic- an example to its colonial peoples, and a nation its people should be proud of.

Keywords:

Knowledge- Empire- Penny Magazine- Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge- Tea

In 1984 Oxford historian Frederick Madden wrote that the British Empire had ‘no everyday relevance, it was a ... peripheral fact, which rarely surfaced’ (Fieldhouse and Madden 1991, xix). Similarly Professor Bernard Porter asks whether the Empire was in fact not as important as it seemed as ‘that would certainly explain its lack of impact at home. Alternatively, the evidence of the impact may be there, but have been missed’ (Porter 2004, 3). Conversely Ruth Watts in her article ‘Education, Empire and Social Change in Nineteenth Century England’ (2009) suggests that the Empire can in fact be seen in ‘various ventures’, including London Zoo, Kew Gardens, museum guidebooks and travellers’ tales. Simply, she states: ‘Knowledge was drawn from the empire, but
Lessons learned were not necessarily imperialistic’ (777). Similarly, C. A. Bayly (1996) argues that the ‘expansion of knowledge, is not so much a by-product of empire, but a condition of it’ (56). This is one topic this paper will attempt to assess: did knowledge of the empire infiltrate the everyday lives of British men and women, or was it really peripheral fact, uninteresting to the population?

During the nineteenth century, Britain was ‘the world’s richest single consumer market for food... and former luxuries such as tea and sugar became common items of diet’ (Tomlinson 1999, 62). Furthermore, tea drinking in this time period was considered patriotic as it supported British trade and empire, unlike wine and coffee, the beverages of imperial rivals (British Museum). The British Museum has even included an early Victorian Wedgewood tea set in its innovative exhibition and publication ‘A History of the World in 100 Objects’. Therefore, I propose that, contrary to the ideas of Madden and Porter, the Empire was important to the people of Britain, and was present even in the everyday lives of Britain’s poorest in the guise of produce, particularly tea. In this paper, I wish to explore how produce was used to express the idea of empire to Britain’s masses in The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.653

How, by using items known to even the poorest reader, did the SDUK portray the idea and meaning of empire to the everyday Briton?

The Penny Magazine sold 200,000 copies weekly at its peak, and 40,000 at its decline (nonetheless a huge readership for its time). The Penny Magazine was sold nationally and permeated every social class, and therefore would have been able to disseminate information concerning the Empire across Britain. Furthermore, it has been argued that the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was one of the first middle or upper class groups to interest the working classes in empire, suggesting to them ‘that national identity involved possessing an empire’ (Barrow 2004, 678).

Despite including a vast number of articles on the Empire, The Penny Magazine does not provide a history of the acquisition of the territories. Knowledge of the extent of the Empire is therefore assumed to be present. This draws on a key issue outlined by Bernard Porter in his work The Absent-Minded Imperialists: how, without formal schooling, did the working classes acquire knowledge of the Empire, when even in the

653 The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was active from 1826-1846; The Penny Magazine ran from 1832-1845.
available schools ‘it was simply not taught there’ and neither was a ‘regard for the empire’ (Porter 2004, 116).

I believe this was at least partially done through the omnipresence of East India Company in Britain. In 1813 for example, Thomas William Plummer, a London merchant, wrote that ‘scarcely any part of the British community is distinct from some personal or collateral interest in the welfare of the East India Company’ (Appendix 14, xxxi).

The Company, formed in the late sixteenth century, and given a royal charter in 1600, intended to bring spices and textiles to European markets. Strengthened by Charles II in the seventeenth century, the East India Company was able to acquire territories and administer presidencies, as well as muster and train its own troops, and it seems that the Company heavily promoted recruitment opportunities. For example, a correspondent in the Caledonian Mercury (1842) reported that ‘the greatest activity has prevailed in raising recruits for the East India Company. The walls of the metropolis are placarded in all directions, offering an increased bounty to recruits…’. Recruitment drives also extended to the provinces through newspaper advertisements.654 Newspapers in fact reported on all aspects relating to the Company, from their success in overseas trade, to the movements and crew of ships, and most importantly for this purpose of this paper, newspapers advertised commodities brought to Britain by the East India Company. These advertisements also took the form of window bills, and trade cards, of which Troy Bickham (2008) writes, ‘[In the eighteenth century] British colonies and imperial trade were abounded in British advertisements for empire-related foods, regularly reminding consumers that tobacco was a product of North American colonialism and slavery, coffee came from trade with the Middle East and British plantations, and that tea was a product of the East India Company’s activities in Asia’ (81). This trend, of emphasising the exotic origin of a product as a method of promotion, continued into the nineteenth century but can be seen to have expanded into further media such as informative articles in periodicals such as The Penny Magazine.

Therefore, given the long history of the East India Company, its overarching reach into society, and the wealth of commodities it brought to Britain, it would no doubt be a

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suitable subject to be explored by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, who strove to provide the Britain with safe and informative reading. *The Penny Magazine* offered a vast number of articles discussing the origins and use of colonial produce, but perhaps can be seen to shy away from the more militaristic actions of the East India Company; it does not however completely ignore it, writing:

But although, towards the conclusion of the seventeenth century, the Company felt and avowed that territorial acquisitions were necessary for the security of its commerce, its political power in India can only be considered to have commenced subsequently to the renewal of its charter in 1744. Until that period the military organization of the Company had been merely defensive, but it soon began to occupy such a situation as made it, to the native powers an important ally, and no contemptible opponent. We cannot here even touch on the onward march of a power which now rules over a population of 85,000,000 natives of India, besides 51,000,000 who are directly or indirectly under its control. (1840, 96)

This paragraph not only emphasises the military actions of taking and occupying new territories for British commercial gain, but also stresses the power of Britain’s forces abroad through the sheer number of people under the control of the long established East India Company. It does not however discuss the details of how this territory was acquired, or the consequences of battle. Also describing the acquisition of new land as an ‘onward march’ would indicate to the reader the necessary expansion of British imperial and military power across the globe, promoting patriotism and a sense of national identity across the working class audience.

*The Penny Magazine* discusses the most familiar imperial commodity, tea, as early as issue five. Articles on produce further stress the links between empire, commerce, and their role in the lives of Britain’s people, prompting a sense of pride in the reader in being a part of a nation providing for its people:

The East India Company are obliged by their charter to have always a supply [of tea] sufficient for one year’s consumption in their London warehouses; and this regulation which enhances the price for the consumer, is said to have been made by way of guarding in some measure against the inconveniences that would attend any interruption to a trade entirely dependent upon the caprice of an arbitrary government. (1832, 34)
Similarly, the reader is reminded of the quality of tea provided to them, compared to the inferior leaves given to those in the Occident:

The people of China… are obliged to content themselves with a very weak infusion. Mr Anderson in his Narrative of Lord Macartney’s Embassy, relates that the natives in attendance never failed to beg the tea-leaves remaining after the Europeans had breakfasted, and with these, after submitting them again to boiling water, they made a beverage, which they acknowledge was better than any they could ordinarily obtain. (1832, 34)

Even when troubles in trade did arise, Britain’s population would not be without its necessities, as they can rely on the ‘welfare and happiness of that mighty empire placed under our dominion in India’ to replace the produce previously provided by China who are ‘uncourteous’ to the English and other ‘foreign “barbarians”’. Instead tea production was to be taken over by the ‘quiet and sedentary habits’ of ‘our fellow-subjects in India’ (1840, 59).

It was suggested that drinking tea deriving from India would promote moral habits, having a restorative karmic affect, putting the fate of India’s people and landscape in the hands of the British at home:

They have been deprived of their occupations… and their skill and industry have been superseded by the power-loom of Manchester and Glasgow; but if we could be supplied with tea from India instead of China, such an employment as the cultivation and making of tea would promote peaceful habits of industry among the Hindoos, would render the slopes of barren mountains fruitful, and add an additional staple for export equal in value to that of the aggregate mass of indigenous articles now shipped to England, and thus prevent the loss in exchange with the East India Company experience in remitting home their territorial revenues. (1832, 34)

The cultivation of tea in India under the auspices of the ‘Tea Committee’ (formed in 1834), became a tale of science, adventure, and imperialism. According to The Penny Magazine, wild tea-plants were growing inside the territory of the East India Company, but only a short month’s march away from the Chinese province of ‘You-nân’ where the plant is cultivated for its leaf. Charles Alexander Bruce, the super-intendant of the tea-
nurseries, was almost the only European who has explored the little known districts where the tea plants are grown, and it was he who converted an area of jungle land into one of the finest ‘tea-garden[s] on account of the East India Company’ (1840, 71). Even some of the native chieftains recognised Britain’s power, ‘acknowledging that the British government was lord paramount of the soil, and consequently was entitled to claim unoccupied lands, surrendered the tea forests unconditionally, and offered to supply labourers and a guard’. (1840, 71) India’s inferiority is further stressed with a quote from Captain Jenkins of the East India Company, as he describes the population of Sudiya as ‘…able, strong men, but without the introduction of a more civilised race, they are not convertible to immediate use’ (1840, 72).

The series of articles on the cultivation of tea in Assam ends on a patriotic note that reminds the reader of Britain’s commercial and imperial power: Britain need not rely on others to provide for her people, so even if trade disputes are not resolved in China, ‘we have the alternative of raising our own supply of tea from Assam’ (1840, 72).

An article on the banana also promotes Britain’s superior industrious society, similar to Captain Jenkins’s notion of the idleness of colonial people, whose nations are complacent, failing to progress in to industry, ‘proposing no higher ends in life’:

The idleness of the poor Indian keeps him where he has been for ages, little elevated above the inferior animal; - the industry of the European, under his colder skies, and with a less fertile soil, has surrounded him with all the blessings of society- its comforts, its affections, its virtues, and its intellectual riches. (1832, 253)

An article on sugar presents the nation of China in an equally idle manner:

…every nation which has cultivated commercial relations has been steadily advancing… while the inhabitants of China, although possessed of the greatest advantages, arising from variety of soil and climate… have remained altogether stationary… (1832, 33)

All of these examples are used to present Britain as a utopian, patriotic nation which promotes and maintains a population with a strong work ethic compared to the idle colonial people. To be British, is to be powerful, moral and superior.
Throughout *The Penny Magazine* it can be seen that colonial produce is implicitly linked to several qualities, particularly, industriousness, which in turn has led to power, success, and the happiness of the population, both domestic and colonial. Imperialism and empire is the root of Britain’s industriousness and to be part of this wider community\(^{655}\) has led to a harmonious, utopian Britain; but it is the Empire that makes Britain great. It can be seen however that *The Penny Magazine* assumes that the reader already has a basic knowledge of Britain’s imperial expansion and does not explain or elaborate on (what could be considered) prominent people, places or organisations.

This basic knowledge, without being part of formal schooling, would have come from several places, from stories in broadsides and newspapers, military recruitment drives, as well as things as simple as advertisements from the East India Company promoting produce. This produce and the wider food trade ‘was essential to the success of empire and the military fiscal state that helped fuel it’ (Bickham 2008, 72). The origins of this produce were emphasised in publications like *The Penny Magazine* as well as the trade cards and adverts, allowing the people of Britain not only to derive a sense of pride in the imperial power of Britain, but also allowing them to feel a connection to the wider world and distant colonial lands despite class barriers (Bickham 2008 and Barrow 2004). And in this way, the Empire was able to infiltrate the everyday lives of the British population.

In conclusion it can be seen that *The Penny Magazine* painted a utopian picture of empire, and by making consuming produce from the colonies a patriotic act, support for, and knowledge of the empire would be rife. Articles concerning the Empire were therefore not only used to disseminate information, but can also be seen to have been used as an ideological vehicle, used to shape colonial stereotypes, and encourage support for Britain’s imperial politics. As Troy Bickham argues for the eighteenth century: ‘products of empire were far more pervasive than any of the traditional print media- pamphlets, newspapers, travel narratives… ’ (Bickham 2008, 73), and this rings true, if not more so, for the nineteenth century. Simply, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, through informative articles, associated the Empire with a sense of national identity, pride and industriousness.

\(^{655}\) Barrow uses this term to describe Britain, the Empire and the colonies
Works Cited


Caledonian Mercury. 1842.


They are probably the most dreaded and feared words for any researcher: ‘not in place’, or even worse, ‘missing’, ‘lost’. These words strike fear into my heart as a library invigilator as well as a researcher.

Sometimes the archives just don’t exist, they’ve been ‘lost to the war’, or simply thrown away, but sometimes items have gone missing more recently. This is often a more frustrating situation, and has been a frequent occurrence on my mission to uncover the work of wood engraver and draftsman, Stephen Sly.

One of Sly’s most attractive woodcuts appeared in the ‘Penny Magazine’, 25 May 1833 (Issue 73)

My work on Stephen Sly is part of my PhD thesis at Oxford Brookes University which investigates how the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) represented the British Empire in their publications. The Society was founded in 1826, with Henry Brougham as its chair, and several prominent men on its committee, including politicians, academics, men of science, and of religion. The SDUK aimed to
‘impart knowledge’ to those who had no access to schooling, or simply wished to learn alone. It began its publishing operations in 1827 with scientific treatises on subjects such as mechanics and optics, before moving on to subjects of a broader appeal, including several on wildlife - wild and domestic, plants - edible and ornamental, and travellers’ tales of foreign lands. However these were sold at 2s, or 4s 6d (bound in fancy cloth) and were therefore still fairly expensive. In March 1832, under the superintendence of publisher Charles Knight, the Society began its Penny Magazine, aiming to provide an alternative to the coarse language and provocative politics of the radical unstamped press. From the start, Knight, as editor of the Penny Magazine, wanted to provide his readership with high quality illustrations to aid the reading of otherwise complex articles.

The Penny Magazine is not unknown to us, but there is a distinct lack of information on those who created the illustrations the magazine is known for, and indeed, was bought for. This left a gaping hole in my research which I was determined to fill. In order to understand the magazine’s production I wanted to know the minds behind its biggest selling point. The illustrations in the magazine are nothing less than eclectic and encyclopaedic; they range from reproductions of great works of art, to views of British cities, to peoples and animals from far-flung corners of the globe. Who were the men that brought the world to the fingertips of the Great British reader?

Knight’s circle of draughtsmen brought together by the Penny Magazine included two prominent names: William Harvey, and John Jackson. As pupils of the ‘father of wooden graving’—Thomas Bewick—their names survive, but another part of Knight’s circle remained shrouded in mystery: Stephen Sly & Co.

As far as I am aware, Knight’s archive was largely thrown away by his wife, and any remains were destroyed in the Second World War, so my first port of call in researching the mysterious Stephen Sly was the SDUK archive. To my delight, Sly was listed twice in the SDUK correspondence index, for one personal folder of correspondence, and another addressed to the firm of Sly, Wilson and Evans. UCL, who hold the archive, allow six items to be pre-ordered two weeks in advance – you have to pick wisely! I chose the Sly correspondence and the corresponding out-letter books, as well as the boxes of papers on illustrations belonging to Charles Knight. This seemed to me like it
would give me the whole picture of the relationship between Knight, the SDUK, and Sly.

In the two weeks leading to my archival visit, I did as much additional research on Sly as possible. I found entries for him in map engraving indexes, and several mentions in contemporary periodicals. These sources all gave me glimpses into his life, but most turned out to provide contradictory dates, and almost no insight into Sly’s work outside of the SDUK.

Arriving at the archive, I was incredibly excited to be treading new ground, revealing the life of a talented, but forgotten, engraver. I opened the box of ‘S’ correspondence and sifted through to find Sly’s folders. They weren’t there. I checked, and checked again. That dreaded word ‘missing’ came to mind.

Without archival records from Knight or Sly, analytical lists, found in ‘One Hundred and Fifty Woodcuts Selected from the Penny Magazine: Worked by the Printing Machine, from the Original Blocks’ (published by Knight in 1835) and copies of accounts forwarded by Knight to the SDUK, are the only method of discovering which woodcuts were Sly’s, and where they were used. The second image lists which woodcuts were designed, drawn, and engraved by the firm. (UCL, SDUK Papers, Bills and Receipts, Item 94).

Only a year into my doctoral research, I hadn’t experienced this before. What do you do when archival papers are missing? They’re the truest window into the past a researcher can find, and provide answers that no secondary source can replace. I continued to see if I could salvage details of Sly’s life and work anywhere. Charles Knight sent lists to the SDUK of every woodcut Sly made for their volumes, as well as information relating to how much they cost, but there was nothing on the Penny Magazine at all. There was, however, a circular in the box that listed Sly, Wilson and Evans as the proprietors and
publishers of a scientific and literary journal, *The Verulam*. I located two copies of the journal, both in the British Library. I was elated! Sly’s work was within my reach. But when I arrived to the reading room, my order had been cancelled, and I met those words again: ‘lost in the war’. Sly continued to evade me.

My last hope was a copy of *The Verulam* in the British Library’s Newspaper Reading Room, which, against the odds, was there and in place! It revealed much about both Sly’s early work, and a little about his interactions with the SDUK.

The masthead of ‘The Verulam’ reveals the importance the firm placed on illustration, and the journal includes several woodcuts throughout each issue. Interestingly, the imprint reads: ‘Printed, Published, and Engraved by the Proprietors, SLY, WILSON, & EVANS, Wood Engravers TO THE SOCIETY FOR THE DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE…’. This is just one indication that the firm were the main wood engravers to the Society despite their invisibility.

So I was left with fragments: snippets from Sly’s career with the SDUK, patchy information from engraving dictionaries, and some mentions in secondary sources. But what I considered the keystone—the correspondence—was missing. Nonetheless I was able to piece together what I had, to tell at least a partial story of Sly and Co. from their beginnings with *The Verulam*, to their work with the SDUK, and their feats in colour printing, including William Lee’s *Classes of the Capital*, Knight’s *Old England*, and advertisements for the London and Dover Railway. Despite his invisibility in our history books, one of Sly’s illustrations is well known: the view of the Thames on the masthead.
to the first issue of the *Illustrated London News*. It contains his name hidden in a boat in the corner of the woodcut.

![Image](image.png)

Probably Sly’s most famous piece of work: the view over the Thames for the first issue of the ILN, 1842.

I have only scratched the surface of the mammoth undertakings of Sly and Co., and I will continue to research the firm to uncover the works of these brilliantly talented tradesmen. But for now, what I have found so far on Sly and Co. is indicative of what I’d like to convey in this post, that research is not always straightforward, and it is easy to consider your topic lost beyond hope when there are missing pieces. To uncover untold stories and bring to light the lives of those missing from our history books is not easy, and sometimes you have to piece together what you can, patching the holes that cannot be filled by archives. There is no ‘right way’ to deal with the problem of missing archives, but the years we spend researching help to train us to find innovative strategies to deal with these otherwise disappointing situations.

This correlates with my work in antiquarian book buying and the rehoming of editions abandoned by libraries. We often see pleas for help saving archives on book history mailing lists, and it is devastating to think of this primary material being lost. I blame this feeling for my SDUK-book buying habit and recent acquisition of 102 years of the history of science journal *Isis* that was being disposed of by a university library in favour of digital editions.

But, in the words of Tristram Hunt MP, on missing files in the National Archives: ‘I’m hopeful it’s a temporary aberration…These things do get lost and come back to life.’

And that is our job as researchers, to bring history back to life.
This map, a town plan of Calcutta, was issued from 1842, and is part of the Family Atlas of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge [SDUK]. The SDUK, founded in 1826 with Henry Brougham as its chairman, aimed to provide instructive reading to the masses of Great Britain. Moreover, at a time of such political unrest, the SDUK offered a ‘safe’ alternative to those who fought for workers’ rights and parliamentary reform: the radical press. The SDUK published works on a wide range of subjects from history and ornithology, to optics and hydraulics, but their most successful publication was The Penny Magazine which sold 200,000 copies weekly at its peak.

The SDUK formed a Map Committee in 1828, and headed by the enthusiastic Captain Francis Beaufort, they produced their first sheets the following year: modern and ancient Greece. Releasing the maps two sheets at a time, fourteen-and-a-half years later the SDUK completed their atlas, arguably the first for use at home. Furthermore, despite raising the production costs, the SDUK chose to engrave their maps on steel. Steel-engraved plates would not only survive more reprints than their copper counterparts, but would also offer a higher quality of image. Taking this into account, the Society settled on selling their maps for 1s, or 1s 9d for coloured editions.

This plan offers the reader a glance into the streets of Calcutta, marking places familiar to those in the metropole such as the post office and the cathedral, but its most prominent feature is Fort William. Built by the British East India Company in 1696, the Fort stands as a symbol of British rule in India, reminding the reader of India’s status as a colony. Similarly, the accompanying illustrations at the bottom of the map demonstrate Calcutta’s beauty, and more importantly emphasise its colonial attributes. The third image, featured here, depicts a fleet of ships at harbour marking India’s connection with colonialism and commerce. Calcutta was a vital component in Britain’s maritime trade and not only were valuable items such as textiles, salt and tobacco exported to Britain, but Calcutta was also the heart of the opium trade to the East. Indeed, the names of merchants’ and tradesmen’s factories line the river.
This map, particularly when read in conjunction with the Society’s other works on India, would allow the working-class readership to vividly picture Britain’s empire, an empire that they as Britons were at the heart of.