

Family Fictions and Family Facts

Harriet Martineau, Adolphe Quetelet,
and the population question in England,
1798–1859

Brian P. Cooper

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T.R. Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population* created a sensation in the first half of the nineteenth century with its prognosis that population growth would outstrip the capacity of the world to feed itself. *Family Fiction and Family Facts* examines contemporary discussions in Britain on the definition and role of family in the workings of Malthus's population principle, and the relationship of family to other social and economic categories, such as "household," "poverty," "race," and "nation."

The book uses economic and literary theory as well as insights from the history of science to survey a wide array of texts, including conduct books, travel literature, periodical essays, novels, educational treatises, economic treatises, parliamentary papers, and statistical accounts. Brian Cooper pays particular attention to how family is classified in three sets of works designed to inform and instruct the general public on the newly emerging social sciences: Harriet Martineau's *Illustrations of Political Economy*, short novels on the principles of political economy; Adolphe Quetelet's *A Treatise on Man*, essays which introduced the concept of the average man to the general public; and the tables and commentary in the decennial population censuses in Britain of 1801–51. The book illustrates not only how political economists wrote about similarity and difference with respect to the family, but also how other segments of the public affirmed, modified, or contested these classifications.

Cooper places these struggles over the meaning of family in the context of reforms including changes in English marriage laws, and the New Poor Law of 1834. Reform necessitated defining family in order to determine both the causes and cures of social ills. Yet contemporaries were unable to definitively classify family; family embodies both positive attributes and normative beliefs about gender, class, and racial and national identities. The book concludes by noting that this mixing of facts and values continues today: defining what family "is" in social analysis and policy, on issues ranging from reproductive law to gay marriage, depends in part on what one believes family "ought" to be.

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First published 2007
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada
by Routledge
270 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10016

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2007.

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been requested

ISBN 0–203–44185–0 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN10: 0-415-15058-2 (hbk)

ISBN10: 0-203-44185-0 (ebk)

ISBN13: 978-0-415-15058-3 (hbk)

ISBN13: 978-0-203-44185-5 (ebk)

To Marguerite

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Acknowledgments

Different versions of portions of Chapters 2 and 3 appeared in “Family Troubles,” in E. Mutari, H. Boushey, and W. Fraher IV (eds) *Gender and Political Economy: Incorporating Diversity into Theory and Policy* (1997), Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 21–41; portions of Chapters 4 and 5 appeared in “The Death of the Author at the Birth of Social Science: The Cases of Harriet Martineau and Adolphe Quetelet,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 31: 1 (March 2000), pp. 1–36, co-authored with Margueritte S. Murphy; portions of Chapter 6 are drawn from “Social Classifications, Social Statistics and the ‘Facts’ of ‘Difference’ in Economics,” in D.K. Barker and E. Kuiper (eds) *Toward a Feminist Philosophy of Economics* London: Routledge, 2003, pp. 161–79. I would like to thank M.E. Sharpe, Elsevier and Taylor & Francis, respectively, for permission to use this material. I would also like to thank the Harvard libraries for permission to use tables and illustrations from their collections, and their staff for helping to prepare this material for publication.

The book stems from a brief conversation with Alan Jarvis at a conference in 1992. I would like to thank Alan and my other editors at Routledge – Annabel Watson and Yeliz Ali, and Amrit Bangard, Terry Clague, and Katherine Carpenter – for their patience in seeing it through to the end. I’d especially like to thank my friend Tim Alborn. Tim steered my dissertation, the basis for this book, to completion. Beyond that, he has demonstrated, in his work on bankers, bureaucrats, and East India College professors and administrators unable to instill their students with moral restraint, that there is indeed a market for works about “the other economists.” I have also been well served by specific comments, material, general inspiration and encouragement from numerous colleagues, particularly Silvana Colella, Lorraine J. Daston, Alex Dick, Peter Galison, Steve Marglin, Bette Polkinghorn, Gordon Hatchett, Suzanne Poland, Teresa Marx, Orianda Guilfoyle, Nate Morey, Julie Nelson, Diana Strassmann, Arjo Klammer, D.N. McCloskey, Philip Mirowski, Amartya Sen, Marc Shell, and participants in the Pembroke Center for Teaching and Research on Women seminar on “Scientific Knowledge and ‘Difference.’” I owe thanks most of all to the closest members of my own families, Margueritte, Philip, Celia, Maisie, and Lassie, and Helen, Walter, and Robert, for their love and support.

Abbreviations

<i>Auto</i>	Harriet Martineau, <i>Harriet Martineau's Autobiography</i>
<i>1851 Census</i>	<i>Census of Great Britain 1851, Population Tables. I. Number of the Inhabitants., Report and Summary Tables, part 2, volume 1</i>
<i>CM</i>	Harriet Martineau, "Cousin Marshall"
<i>EPP</i>	T.R. Malthus, <i>An Essay on the Principle of Population</i>
<i>Treatise</i>	Adolphe Quetelet, <i>A Treatise on Man and the Development of His Faculties</i>
<i>TSM</i>	Adam Smith, <i>Theory of Moral Sentiments</i>
<i>WN</i>	<i>Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations</i>

1851 Census refers to the census results published by the Census Office in 1852 and distributed, in a limited run, as part of a separate three-volume folio. The pagination follows that of the 1852 Parliamentary Papers printing of the census results. For the first (1798) edition of *EPP*, designated *EPP 1*, I use *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, Philip Appleman, ed. (2004). For subsequent editions I use *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, 2 vols, Patricia James, ed. (1989). For *EPP 1*, references are in the following order: chapter, paragraph, and page number. For *EPP 2* and subsequent editions, references are in the following order: book, chapter, paragraph, and page number. For *TMS*, I use the 1982 Liberty Classics reprint of A.L. Macfie and D.D. Raphael (eds) (1976 and 1979) *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, vol. 1, Oxford: Oxford University Press. References are in the following order: part, section, chapter, and paragraph. For *WN*, I use the 1976 *Glasgow Edition*, 2 vols, R.H. Campbell, A.S. Skinner, and W.B. Todd (eds), Oxford: Oxford University Press (Clarendon Press). References are in the following order: book, chapter, part, article, and paragraph. Not all elements appear every time for *TMS* and *WN*.

1 Classification comes home to the family

In a country parish in Kent a woman hurries to the aid of a neighbor to assist her in childbirth, then quickly goes into labor herself. A doctor called to the scene delivers infants to the two mothers. The births are almost simultaneous. When the doctor places the infants side by side, he, in his haste and worry, neglects to keep track of which infant belongs to which mother. The district the doctor covers is so beset by poverty that, upon hearing that one infant has died, but that the doctor has no inkling of whose, both women seek to claim the dead child as their own.

This episode is recounted early in Harriet Martineau's "Homes Abroad" (1833), one of her *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832–4), fictional stories on the principles of political economy.¹ Based on the Malthusian equation of population pressure and vice, the incident offers a sensational retelling and inversion of the judgment of Solomon. In fact, the text refers to the Biblical antecedent – as the two mothers reject the living in favor of the dead, so too, the narrator implies, would they implore Solomon to rend the child in two. Such is the press of extreme want that it snuffs out the maternal instinct. What is striking about the incident is not just the Malthusian theme of tragically perverse family behavior, but how Martineau chose to footnote it: the note reads, simply, “*Fact.” Despite this marker, the reader doesn't know where family facts end and family fictions commence in this story. Obvious questions come to mind. What is the source of the story? Has it been faithfully retold? How does the story end? Do its embellishment by textual asides (including the fact of “*Fact” itself) on the one hand, and the enhancement of its effects by narrative condensation (just the facts) on the other, significantly alter the relationship between “*Fact” and “Fiction”? Did Martineau assume that the “*Fact” would add to the story's verisimilitude and its effectiveness as a lesson in political economy? Would it really matter if we could ascertain where family facts ended and family fictions began in this narrative?

This chapter introduces the themes and methods that I use to investigate how Martineau and her contemporaries in Britain approached these questions. I pursue three main areas of inquiry. The first involves the efforts of Martineau and her contemporaries to define different kinds of families and family behavior in order to further social inquiry about the relationships between individuals,

2 *Classification comes home to the family*

families, and populations. These are issues of classification, of how to aggregate and disaggregate, and how to relate the parts to the whole. Contemporaries used two principal methods, representative types and statistical aggregates, to “sum up.” We like to think of the methods as incompatible ways of generating knowledge: Hacking calls Frederick Le Play’s use of representative households in his budget studies “antistatistical” (Hacking 1990: 133–41). But, just as novelists used government blue books as inspiration for their heroes and villains, social statisticians such as the Belgian Adolphe Quetelet tried to endow statistical aggregates with the attributes of real, if idealized people (Cooper and Murphy 2000).

A second theme underscores the central role of education in this classificatory work. Categories not only help produce and organize facts as descriptions of the social state, they serve as prescriptions for governance. Social scientists and other reformers sought to make people like the types in their theories so that observed particulars would more exactly add up to the socially desired result: change the particulars (individuals) and you shift the aggregates (populations). As the political economist, educational reformer, and Archbishop of Dublin Richard Whately urged in 1833, teaching political economy to the poor, especially their children, would lead to fewer of the revolutionary type, and more of the prudent sort: “The lower orders would not . . . be, as now, liable to the misleading of every designing demagogue . . . If they were well grounded in the outlines of the science, it would go further towards rendering them provident, than any other scheme that could be devised” (quoted in Goldstrom 1966–7: 131). Making the lower orders like their betters was a project consistent with notions of Christian charity, and good governance, a point around which different elements of society could cohere, despite differences in income and status, gender and race (Goodlad 2001). Such a project presumed limited agency on the part of the “lower orders.” Even if people could alter their behavior, the reforms of the 1830s denied greater political agency to the poor. They were instead exhorted to conduct themselves as virtuous masculine and feminine subjects with the implied promise that political agency would follow in the indefinite future.

Not only did social observers and reformers in the first third of the nineteenth century feel the need to educate various reading and listening publics, they had to educate themselves as they cast about for new ways to observe, represent, and reform the new social conditions they encountered. The third general theme, then, follows threads of ideas and various facts about family through several genres, and traces the relationship between different types of literature that offer knowledge about the family, economy, and political economy. Thus, for example, Martineau’s use of “*Fact” in fiction has at least one precedent in work by a writer she admired: it appears in Maria Edgeworth’s novel, *The Absentee* (1812), which centers on the efforts of its hero, Lord Colambre, to restore prosperity and respectability to his family’s Irish estate through astute, paternalistic management (Edgeworth 1999: 100). And, as in the case of the Cambridge polymath, Reverend William Whewell, this work involved developing a set of terms and meanings to communicate to the public, work which, at the same time, was

crucial to the development and the definition of the social sciences, and a sense of their limits, themselves (Yeo 1993).

Contemporaries were called to act on these representations, and these calls did not go unheeded. The popularity of *Illustrations* led the political economist and Lord Chancellor Henry Brougham, one of the poor law commissioners, to enlist Martineau in the poor law reform movement. Brougham instructed Edwin Chadwick, then secretary to the commission, to pass along documents, including an advance copy of the extracts, to Martineau to supply facts as source material for her series *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* (1833–4). *Poor Laws* was funded by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), an organization devoted to distributing cheap educational tracts to the working classes. In the series, Martineau details the abuses generated by the old poor laws and puts forth a proposed reform that anticipated much of the New Poor Law passed in 1834.

If the old poor laws and their categories were not mere words, neither were the classifications and regulations of the new. The introduction of child allowances in 1795 had a significant effect on birth rates and population, and, as Malthus and others asserted, to some extent did serve to “create the poor which they maintain” (Boyer 1990: 142); the 1834 reform, though less harsh in practice than intent, clearly reduced the incomes of the very poor.² Determining the magnitude of these effects is not my primary concern here. Classification, however, is critical to determining who was affected, hence to the meaning we attach to these effects. Data on (changes in) birthrates and income, in and of themselves, tell us little about (changes in) the quality of life for individuals. For this we need to know family composition in its broadest outlines, and the allocation of resources and support among and between individuals. That is, we need to determine whether a change in the distribution of income among households corresponds to a change in the distribution of income per capita. Family composition, in turn, depends critically upon these policy changes.

Chapters four, five, and six are case studies that examine how social scientists represented the operations of the family to the general public in three sets of texts that employed fictions and facts, and how various parts of the public responded to these representations. The categories of family, and of individual and population, while apparently purely natural constructs in these texts, reflect historically specific attitudes about race, gender, class, and nation. Chapter four focuses on Martineau’s “Cousin Marshall” (1833), its argument for poor law reform, and the reactions of contemporaries to the tale. It is the centerpiece of this book. Gallagher devotes a chapter to *Illustrations* as she discusses the problems raised for the novel as a genre by novelists’ treatments of the “condition of England debate” (Gallagher 1985: chapter 2). She explores how the debate made explicit three questions that had previously implicitly structured the form of the novel itself:

- 1 the nature and the possibility of human freedom (the free will versus determinism question)

4 *Classification comes home to the family*

2 the sources of social cohesion

3 the nature of representation itself, “probing in particular [the novel’s] method of transforming facts into values” (Gallagher 1985: xi).

I shift Gallagher’s analytical structure. In the fourth chapter I consider the epistemological problems for political economy produced for readers by the formal, literary aspects of Martineau’s short novels. I look at her attempts to define and classify family – the epistemology question – and how reform is conceived of in the novels – the “social cohesion” question. Her Malthusian descriptions of and prescriptions for the family illustrate the difficulties apparent in turning facts and theories into fictions and values. The private nature of family behavior, and the invisibility of the operations, if not effects, of desires made it difficult for Martineau to produce and combine the fictional domestic details and the political economic facts of *Illustrations*. In the context of debates over the efficacy of education as a means to keep revolution at bay, contemporaries believed individual agency was restricted in yet another sense. They were astonished by the statistical regularities revealed by facts on crime, suicides, and other moral and vital statistics published by Quetelet and others, and fretted over the very real chance that they were ruled by statistical determinism and lacked free will. The poor, despite their best efforts, might not be able to free themselves from their impoverished state. This uncertainty is reflected in Martineau’s stories, and indeterminacy on this question is related to both the structure of fiction and her fictions of political economy.

The measured effects of family policies such as the poor laws depend on how we define family. Martineau’s fictions were antistatistical, using representative individuals and families who either embodied or failed to embody Malthusian principles. Foucault identifies the ideal that embodies didactic efforts like Martineau’s as the “Malthusian couple” (Foucault 1990: 3, 105–6). Yet, while contemporaries may have agreed upon the attributes of the virtuous and thoroughly heterosexual Malthusian couple, there was no consensus about how real people were to act upon them. Malthus deemed these differences a problem of classification: “The terms virtue, morality, equity, charity, are in every-day use; yet it is by no means universally agreed what are the particular acts which ought to be classed under these different heads.” As chapter four demonstrates, Martineau’s project was complicated by the “every-day” nature of the terms of political economy, and the fact that readers could and did thereby classify the classifiers, too. The imprecision of these categories, their meaning dependent upon time and place, led Malthus to conclude that political economy “approaches more nearly to the sciences of morals and politics,” than to mathematics (Malthus 1827: 2).

Martineau’s tales, and her contemporaries’ reaction to them, demonstrate the difficulty of asserting that the gathering, classification, and representation of observations in political economy are objective and not clouded by an analyst’s own subjectivity. The fifth and sixth chapters cover works in which social scientists tried to measure, with numbers, the Malthusian population principle in

action. In these chapters I invert Gallagher's third question and ask, "how do statistics transform values into facts?" The classifications of family in the tables and commentary in these texts show how social statistics informed by Malthusian political economy contributed to as well as reflected shifts in the meaning of family. Normative concerns help constitute seemingly objective definitions of family in these statistical works. They employ the overlapping but not completely interchangeable (and sometimes contradictory) adjectives "traditional" or "legitimate" or "natural" or "normal" or "genuine" as both descriptions of and prescriptions for families. The statistical texts I examine mix epistemology and politics; they also changed the way people viewed the world. The fifth chapter involves readings of the multiple meanings of family in a collection of statistical works contemporaneous to *Illustrations*, Quetelet's *Treatise on Man* (1835, with the first English translation in 1842). *Treatise* contains statistical tables, a smattering of mathematical formulae, and plenty of words, including snatches of poetry and other literary, artistic, and historical references. Quetelet's average man lives on as a standard, if disputed measure in American jurisprudence – the reasonable man is average man's descendant – and in medical studies on environmental risk factors. *Treatise* proposes a new science, social physics, which will represent every aspect of life – moral, intellectual, and physical – as statistical fact. Quetelet collected data for but did not name "average woman" as the companion to "average man," and thus did not explicitly identify the Malthusian couple as an ideal. But social physics is heavily indebted to Malthusian political economy. Indeed, Quetelet seeks to legitimize political economy to the public, while expanding its focus: Quetelet asserted that mathematical analyses would make Malthusian political economy into a science.

Treatise takes a representational strategy far different from Martineau's narrative expositions to reveal the same universal laws governing human behavior. Martineau tries to reduce her classifications to two; Quetelet attempts to avoid the problem of choosing the right classifications altogether. He endorses a call to "measure promiscuously," and professes to seek an "exact enumeration" of all human faculties: the statistics of *l'homme moyen*, average man (introduced to the general public in *Treatise* as a "fictitious being" (*TREATISE*: 8), effaced individualism in favor of analyses of all aspects of population. The result of all this measurement, the statistical aggregate average man, would represent the ideal for any race, a population of a given place and point in time, and would allow for comparison between different civilizations. Lacking the information necessary to fully flesh out average man, however, Quetelet settles on a few Malthusian family facts to classify nations according to their conformity to the principle of population (Cooper and Murphy 2000).

To Quetelet, the rankings of nations according to the scale of population determined their place on the scale of civilization. Both Martineau and Quetelet believed that their taxonomies were objective, reflecting an underlying order where natural laws, analogous to those governing the physical world, govern the social behavior of people in all civilizations. But both authors' classification systems were attacked by contemporaries. Each was subject to instability due to

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movements of people and whole populations across time and space. Martineau's characters trooped in and out of view in the pages of her stories. Numbers freeze moments of social life, and allow for the communication of facts, in orderly arrangement, at a distance; thus categories and the people who fill them need to remain in place for analysts to compare statistics. Quetelet, however, did not specify which time and which space determined a race: in *Treatise*, whole populations shifted across the geography that constituted the home of a race. If Martineau's classifications were deemed too narrow to capture the rich variety of social life, Quetelet's average man was seen as too broad, not to mention, too mediocre a measure.

In Chapter 6 I compare these representations of family with the efforts to define and assign meaning to the category in the British censuses of the first half of the nineteenth century. Census classifications and statistics generate debate on who we are and who we might become. The census procedures sought to stabilize people and categories by counting everyone in a specified place, a household, at a specified time, the night of 30 March 1851, for example. William Farr, the statistical chief who organized and wrote the commentary for the 1851 census, the first widely distributed to the general public, strongly opposed Malthus's population principle; nonetheless the classifications of the 1851 census were framed in part by theories of political economy, since Farr recognized the need to address their premises and conclusions. Farr's own method of summary classification was pragmatic. He settled on a few simple, easy-to-understand categories and statistics as a means to highlight social problems and promote reform. In particular, Farr redirected the Malthusian impulse to monitor and clean up family behavior away from an emphasis on moral restraint by the poor, and toward cleaning up the homes and neighborhoods of the poor as the means to improve the health of the population. Farr's goal, like Malthus's, was the preservation of life. He also sought to preserve agency. People and communities could act to decrease mortality rates; they weren't helpless in the face of Malthus's ratio. The predetermined outcomes of Martineau's stories, on the other hand, appeared to leave no room for free will and agency on the part of her characters. And Quetelet's talk of statistical regularities, where social states paid annual budgets of so many births, so many deaths, so many homicides, and so on, led many readers to fear the presence of statistical determinism. Yet Farr's vision of reform, guided by statistics, has its limits, too. Farr did see a time when the Malthusian ratio would take hold in England. Eugenics – a Darwinian process of self-selection in the marriage market, a continuation of a dynamic already in play (place) – would produce an ever greater number of healthier family types. Abetted by restrictions on marriages by the state and sanitary reform, two interventions in the governance of the family and household urged by Farr, this evolutionary process would produce more and healthier people. But Farr did not believe this would result in overpopulation. Emigration would be the solution, as the English (and other European races) successfully competed with native races in colonial territories. Farr acknowledged, however, that the refusal of populations to fit into the statistical categories necessary for

bureaucratic and political means, the agency of the very subjects, English and non-English, who were the focus of ameliorative measures, could and did thwart reform by statistics.

The controversy ignited by Malthus and his *An Essay on the Principle Population*, first published in 1798, is central to all these lines of inquiry. An acquaintance pointed out that Malthus wrote on population, not the family. True, Malthus's principle worked out the implications for human welfare of the combination of the growth rates not of families but of population, which, if unchecked, increased exponentially, and subsistence, which grew at an arithmetic rate. And the list of terms defined in Malthus's *Definitions in Political Economy* (1827), which includes no mention of "family," confirms this fact (Malthus 1827: 234–48). Yet one might as well say that Malthus's work is not about individuals or sex, either. Malthus indicated the paradox that strong and sexually active individual bodies could aggregate to a weak social body (Gallagher 1987). If a nation's strength ultimately resided in playing out the contest between elements of what Malthus called man's "compound nature" – passion and reason – the effects of this contest manifested themselves through the existence of a greater or lesser number of bodies in families.

Malthus held out hope that later marriages, which resulted in fewer children, would produce, in turn, better living standards for the poor, who constituted the vast majority of Great Britain's population. Absent moral restraint, a term Malthus introduced in 1803, or delayed marriage as the result of the greater consumption of goods, an idea he promoted in later editions, poverty would surely result, putting children's lives at risk, and threatening social order. In order to determine if, and to what extent, Malthus's population principle held true, and to make family a useful object of regulation, classical political economists found it necessary to classify families and their members according to their behaviors. This was true of both fictional and factual texts. In "Homes Abroad" the reader is left to ponder which family the dead baby belonged to; in 1834, the year following the publication of the story, parish officials and poor law commissioners, including the political economist Nassau Senior, struggled to define and distinguish the deserving and undeserving poor in their inquiry into the poor laws in England as they pieced together the poor law commission report that served as the factual basis for the New Poor Law, passed in 1834.

The debates about family facts and what they mean with respect to population exemplify what Poovey calls the dilemma of the modern fact. Facts in economics certify truth, but are suspect, as mere particulars looking for a story. Theoretical systems generate particulars that count as facts, yet the facts, which serve as evidence to prove or disprove theories, appear to be completely separate from any particular theory (Poovey 1998: 92). The problem of induction/deduction or the question of what methods were appropriate to relate theories and facts in political economy in order to make it a science, which rumbles through the first half of the century in Great Britain, merits a digression. Here I will emphasize the significance of Malthus's population principle for two key aspects of the debate that have been relatively neglected in recent discussions. First,

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contemporaries worried over the place of private versus public knowledge about the family. This formed part of a more general concern about the relationship between expertise as opposed to amateur observation and classification. Second, Malthus's population principle breached the wall that some contemporaries sought to erect between political economy as a science, and the arts of public policy and didactic fiction.

The first question involved yet another query: just who was a "political economist?" Even political economists were apt to answer "everyone" in response to this question, since political economy dealt with issues that were germane to everyone's interests. Whately, for instance, claimed that the fundamental principles of political economy rested on "very little information beyond what is almost unconsciously, and indeed unavoidably, acquired by everyone." Such facts were "few and simple, and within the range of everyone's observation" (Whately 1855: 149–50).

There were political economists and then there were political economists. Part of the difficulty in distinguishing the two had to do with the facts with which political economy was concerned: they were open to everyone. And everyone's interests were at stake in these facts. Senior, the Drummond Professor of Political Economy at Oxford, lectured at mid-century that partiality in political economy was "inherent in its nature [due to] its direct influence on the welfare of mankind . . . and of all branches of human knowledge . . . offers the easiest scope to a prejudiced or uncandid reasoner." In Senior's opinion, political economists would never "examine questions which come home to their business and bosoms, with the unbiased spirit which charges the astronomer or the mathematician" (Senior 1852: 12, 13, 14).

Nonetheless, political economists maintained that those worthy of the name were less prejudiced in their observations and reasoning than everyone else. Systematic knowledge in political economy required an education in its principles. Without such an education, according to Whately, one would naturally stray into erroneous beliefs, and classify incorrectly:

It is hardly possible, however carefully any one may have abstained from setting out on his course of study with any principles of Political-Economy in his mind, that he should not, in the course of his reading, form to himself, insensibly and undesignedly, some kind of crude theory which will bias his future speculations . . . Man is so formed as to theorize unconsciously; facts will arrange themselves in his mind under certain classes, without his having any such design; and thus the materials he has been heaping together, will have been, as it were, building themselves up, into some, – probably faulty, – system, while he was not aware of the process going on in his own mind.

(Whately 1855: 155)

The work of Whately and other political economists, then, is to correct the ill-formed notions of the self-taught "political economists." If everyone is a polit-

ical economist, there remains a division of knowledge: some classify correctly, others incorrectly; the former deal in the truth, the latter in error.

An aloofness from the messiness of private life was the hallmark of disinterest, and allowed the analyst to see the true, universal relations between objects. It distinguished social scientists from mere observers who were too close to the phenomena in question to adequately explain them, and who too often invoked a mistaken “crude theory” of how the world worked. Still, political economists themselves labored at a disadvantage in this game of facts and theories. They lacked knowledge of the private lives of their subjects, and valued more information about individuals’ behavior than Whately’s “few and simple” facts: more facts would help them refine their theories. Yet, as Alborn has shown, in debates on the rhetoric and practice of democratic banking in the 1830s, and in political economists’ later interest in Victorian balance sheets, private information could not be made public, and put at the disposal of political economists, among others, without placing individuals and businesses at a competitive disadvantage, and, many feared, at the mercy of the state (Alborn 1997 and 1998: chapter 4).³ The solution latched onto by many political economists, to invoke general, abstract principles as their specialist ken, still left open the difficulty of moving from the particulars (now unknown, assumed, or left to other branches of knowledge) to systematic knowledge.

The facts and systems of political economy could not be easily disentangled from public policy questions. Again, these were issues of (self)-interest to everyone. Malthus’s population principle thrust to the foreground family and family conduct as facts to be reckoned with. These too were preserves of private information of special import to the public. The central role Malthus accorded moral restraint as a link between the two troubled those who desired a clear line between what they called the science of political economy – description, or “what is” – and the art of political economy- prescription, or “what should be.” Viewed from this perspective, where we might characterize the relationship between domestic or family economy and political economy as one between family facts and family theories, the debates over the scope and methods of political economy left unsettled the questions of the boundaries of the discipline and the question of whether political economy was a science or an art.

I will return to this topic below. For Malthus’s contemporaries, facts didn’t necessarily prove or disprove theories. The peripatetic Arthur Young, in the 1804 edition of *Annals of Agriculture*, responded to Malthus’s criticism that he was inconsistent by acknowledging the importance of facts. But, Young contended that,

a writer like myself, who has employed not a short life in the acquisition of facts, which he has been in the progressive habit of laying before the public, is not bound to reconcile such facts, or to withhold any, because they militate with others, that he has before communicated.

(Young 1994: 105)

Young claims expertise in observation, while simultaneously elevating the status of publicly communicated facts and minimizing the import of systems of knowledge. With respect to Malthus's general recommendation against systems of poor relief, Young cautions that prior theoretical positions may prejudice one's observations. Further, if one believes historical context – a nation's political institutions and the relative security and ease of acquisition of property – significantly modify the (putatively universal) law of population, then facts from different countries are simply not comparable: "How Mr. Malthus, can compare such facts [of rural land tenure as are found in France] with the system partially adopted in England, or with the proposition [of alleviating poverty] founded on it, I am utterly at a loss to conceive, for they have not one single point in common" (Young 1994: 105). Nor was Malthus himself averse to arguing that there was only a loose relationship between facts and theories. When in 1816 John Weyland criticized him for underestimating potential population growth, Malthus replied that the population principle still held: whether the checks of "moral restraint, vice and misery" were "light or heavy" accounted for the different rates of population increase in different countries (*EPP* 5 "Appendix": 239).

Facts may not disprove theories, but theories could "disprove" facts. The uncertain truth of Malthus's population principle – his insistence that it described a "tendency" for the rate of growth of population to be greater than that of subsistence left the principle both spatially and temporally open-ended – led contemporaries to question the facts used to support his theories. In an 1810 essay in the *Edinburgh Review*, the editor, Francis Jeffrey, attempts to separate Malthus's *Essay* into facts and systems:

This celebrated work may be said to consist of two separate parts. In the first place, of some very important statements in point of *fact*, the truth of which neither is nor can be denied, though the different parts of the statement had never before been brought together, nor the nature of their connexion pointed out: and, in the second place, of certain *reasonings* and practical inferences deduced from these facts.

(Jeffrey 1994: 212, emphases in original)

To Jeffrey, Malthus's "statements in point of fact" are true and incontrovertible, "confirmed by a crowd of indisputable facts, to whatever country on the globe our view may be directed." But Jeffrey indicates that the status of "indisputable facts" can indeed be called into question: "It is for having stated, with inimitable caution and accuracy, facts which cannot possibly be called into question, that Mr Malthus has been assailed with such clamorous reproaches" (Jeffrey 1994: 213, 212). One could attack the Malthusian narrative, and then proceed to attack "true" facts. John Bird Sumner, who worked strenuously to reconcile Malthus's population principle with evangelicalism, also sought to protect data from the criticism directed at Malthus's system when he observed that the population principle obscured important facts. Sumner, in 1817, expressed regret at the

placement of Malthus's famous ratio "in the head and front of the essay." To Sumner the rate of subsistence growth is "in a great measure hypothetical" and the ratios "seem to perplex the reasoning, by keeping out of sight the facts which it is the real object of the book to prove" ([Sumner] 1817: 375–6).

The exchanges between Malthus, his supporters and his critics occurred during a period in which political economy had begun to achieve tenuous status as a separate discipline and autonomous sphere of knowledge in Britain (Dentith 1983). Universities established chairs in the field, and political economists such as J.R. McCulloch cobbled together their histories of the science (McCulloch 1824). Still, difficulties in dealing with things visible to everyone but the economists, or whole classes of invisible things – these included mental states such as outbreaks of desire which in a former age might have been attributed to God or the Devil, as well as (according to critics like Richard Puller) the "metaphysical" and "incorporeal" existence of capital (Ravenstone [Puller] 1821: 292) – also led many to question whether political economy was a science or simply imaginative fictions. McCulloch himself, writing in 1824, called Ricardo's value theory a "mere chimera," deserving "no more respect, and [which] we believe, will be crowned with no better success, than the search after the philosopher's stone" (quoted in O'Brien 1970: 146). Hence, the prevalence of common but private knowledge about family and family relationships, facts crucial to the population principle but invisible and inaccessible to political economists, made it difficult to discern a separate space for political economy as a science.⁴

The debates on population and family are akin to what Latour calls a hybrid, which refers to the AIDS crisis, global warming, and other present-day news items, "imbroglios of science, politics, economy, law, religion, technology, fiction," where "[a]ll of culture and all of nature get churned up again every day" (Latour 1993: 2). Hybrids, in Latour's view, mix incommensurable time frames, horizons, and actors. They mix, as well, knowledge, interest, power and justice. We can, like Latour, count the many progeny of Malthus's work on population, including eugenics, as modern hybrids (Latour 1993: 50). The early nineteenth-century debate on population in England, with its confluence of biology, social science, statistics, religion, and sexual, class, and international politics, all tied to concerns over how individual and family behavior aggregated to national strength, resembles one of Latour's hybrids.

There remains, however, one crucial difference: the distinctions between discourses that allow Latour to call present-day debates hybrids were just beginning to form. The category "literature," for instance, subsumed all written material. This remains one its definitions, of course. If contemporaries desired to make political economy distinct from other forms of knowledge and literature, they had no clear guidelines on how to do so. Many political economists were unhappy with the moniker "political economy" – Whately half-heartedly suggested "Catallactics" ("the science of Exchanges") as an alternative – while others cast about for terms to describe social sciences related to but distinct from political economy: social economy, social physics, sociology, and social science, to name a few. Martineau, Quetelet, and Farr sought to simultaneously

legitimate and transcend political economy in their work. They position their analyses with respect to Malthus in order to move beyond his population principle, and to extend their investigations beyond the scope of political economy. Their works are both political economy and not political economy, and, as such, also call into question the boundaries of the discipline and its status as a science.

To be able to distinguish political economy as a science, one had to define what a science was, and what its methods were. Whewell, who invented the word “scientist” in the early 1830s, preferred the method of induction for political economy (obtaining theory from facts, and providing the young discipline a firm empirical foundation), as opposed to Ricardo’s and James Mill’s and John Stuart Mill’s methods of deduction. Both sides of the debate singled out classification as key to the solution of the puzzle of the relation of facts to theory, and to the development and establishment of boundaries of social, not just physical science (Henderson 1995: 31–3). But just how classification was to arbitrate the divide between facts and systems of knowledge was subject to dispute. Some members of Section F, the Statistical Section of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (BAAS), and the Statistical Society of London went so far as to draw up a classification blueprint, which was meant to justify their investigations as scientific, and not political (Henderson 1995: 36). In 1835 Rawson William Rawson, secretary both to the society (he later became its president) and to the vice president of the Board of Trade, Poulett Thomson, held that there should be a division of labor in the Statistical Society between those with modest skills, mere observers or gatherers of facts, and those who classified facts.

Classification, “arranging, condensing, and publishing,” constituted the real work of science, according to Rawson (cited in Henderson 1995: 39–41). Whewell, in his 1833 address to the BAAS, argued that such a separation was, in fact, undesirable, and that those who collected facts should also analyze, that is, classify. Whewell adduced his reasons for this belief:

we ought never to forget that facts can only become portions of knowledge as they become classed and connected; that they can only constitute truth when they are included in general propositions . . . It may be added – as a further reason why no observer should be content without arranging his observations . . . and without *endeavouring* at least to classify and connect them – that when this is not done at first, it is most likely never done. The circumstances of the observation can hardly be properly understood or interpreted by others; the suggestions which the observations themselves supply, for change of plan or details, cannot in any other way be properly appreciated and acted on. And even the mere multitude of unanalysed observations may drive future students of the subject into a despair of rendering them useful.

([BAAS] 1834: xxi, emphasis in original)

Whewell assumes that facts lose meaning or may even be rendered completely meaningless unless those who make the observations classify their facts. While

this does not preclude a vision of universal and universally agreed upon categories, it forecloses the presumption of a clear division of labor between observation and analysis, and a clear line between the everyday knowledge and classifications of mere observers and the specialized (disciplinary) knowledge for after the fact (has been observed and passed on to the proper authorities) classification. At any rate, the idea of such a division in the labors of Section F and the London society, between fact-gathering and classification, proved unworkable in practice.

John Stuart Mill, who was Whewell's nemesis in the debates over method, used an 1833 review of Martineau's *Illustrations* to expound his ideas on method, and, in particular, to describe how he believed the realms of literature and science were distinct (Dick 2003). Mill continued his criticism in more general terms in the 1836 essay "On the Definition of Political Economy; and the Method of Investigation Proper to it." In the 1844 version of the essay, Mill concluded his description of "a correct definition of Political Economy as a portion of the field of science," by noting that "the didactic writer on the subject will naturally combine in his exposition, with the truths of the pure science, as many of the practical modifications as will, in his estimation, be most conducive to the usefulness of his work" (Mill 1844: 140–1). Mill maintained that one needed to distinguish between science, such as political economy, and art:

The one deals in facts, the other in precepts. Science is a collection of truths; art a body of rules, or directions for conduct. The language of science is, This is, or, This is not; This does, or does not, happen. The language of art is, Do this; Avoid that.

(Mill 1844: 124)

To illustrate the difference, Mill explains how political economy is distinct from domestic economy:

Political Economy is really . . . a science: but domestic economy, so far as it is capable of being reduced to principles, is an art. It consists of rules, or maxims of prudence, for keeping the family regularly supplied with what its wants require, and securing, with any given amount of means, the greatest possible quantity of physical comfort and enjoyment.

(Mill 1844: 125)

Thus, Mill continues, the analogy, "Political Economy . . . is to the state, what domestic economy is to the family," is objectionable. Political economy and domestic economy are related, of course, and Mill believed the more the latter is practiced, the more the former becomes a fact in real life rather than simply a theoretical ideal. Still, for Mill, the fundamental difference would remain:

Undoubtedly the beneficial result, the great practical application of Political Economy, would be to accomplish for a nation something like what the

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most perfect domestic economy accomplishes for a single household: but supposing this purpose realized, there would be the same difference between the rules by which it might be effected, and Political Economy, which there is between the art of gunnery and the theory of projectiles, or between the rules of land-surveying and the science of trigonometry.

(Mill 1844: 125–6)

Put aside for a moment the question of whether Mill's analogies are apt. His objection raises the possibility that a representative single household – the Malthusian couple perhaps? – might serve to aid the development of the theory of political economy.

In fact Mill does allow family, household, and domestic economy a home in political economy, through the principle of population. Mill defines the science of political economy to be concerned with the “desire of obtaining the greatest quantity of wealth with the least labour and self-denial” (Mill 1844: 140). Malthus's work on population, however, with its emphasis on the desire for sex, is a notable exception. It is one of those (few) areas where

the effects of any impulses of a different description . . . can be shown to interfere with the result in any particular case. Only in a few of the most striking cases (such as the important one of the principle of population) are these corrections interpolated into the expositions of Political Economy itself; the strictness of purely scientific arrangement being thereby somewhat departed from, for the sake of practical utility.

(Mill 1844: 140)

Mill's labors in the pursuit of a definition of the science of political economy do not exclude domestic economy, despite his objections to the contrary. Changes in techniques for recording statistical information, of which histories of classifications in the social sciences form a part (Bowker and Star 1999), also recount a long record of arbitrary usages for the term family. They are rightly termed histories of “technologies of inquiry” (Rusnock 1999: 56); they also form, after Foucault, histories of technologies of power. The contingent and partial nature of census classifications (and those of other social statistics) have long occupied historians and social scientists, and Higgs warns that, “social scientists and historians ignore the intellectual history of classification schemes at their peril” (Higgs 1991: 477).⁵ By developing and using social classifications, individuals and groups identify or obscure individual subjects or whole collectivities. Classifications can blind us to certain facts about social life, or they can enable us to imagine new possibilities for description and action, including formulating policies aimed at reforming people, institutions, and spaces. Histories of classification involve analysis of judgments political, ideological, moral, and aesthetic, in addition to the technical decisions about which classifications and which facts count. Not only did Quetelet wish statistics to reveal average man in order to summarize and then change the social state, he designated his

(mediocre) “statistical fiction” as “the type of all which is beautiful – of all which is good.” Thus average man is a statistical aggregate, a representative type, and an aesthetic ideal, all rolled into one. And as they assembled and ordered evidence for the government’s poor law report, for instance, the commissioners’ taxonomical efforts involved, in part, a determination of whether those on relief belonged to a good family or not.

Efforts to assemble more accurate classifications and statistics still leave open questions of what contemporaries meant when they spoke and wrote about family. Gillis cautions, for example, that the statistical facts of British courtships and marriages between conjugal couples register very little meaning about family life. An examination of family life must consider a circle of relationships much wider than the couple – the role of kin, community, and others who make a marriage viable. The “courtship and wedding are themselves forms of expression, not just ‘facts’ to be recorded statistically but elements of the dramatic action that creates couples and transforms them into married couples” (Gillis 1985: 6). For the mothers in “Homes Abroad,” the facts of family membership, birth, and death all derive meaning from relationships between neighbors, and with professionals in the medical and legal systems.

So how do we classify “family” in this period in Britain? Is it a single individual, a domestic partnership, a legally married couple, a nuclear family with children, a kinship group, or, as in fictitious kin, is it a group of unrelated individuals? Is it a community, or nation, even? And what is its relationship to political economy? The third edition of James Mill’s *Elements of Political Economy* (1826), a textbook meant for young men, opens by citing the analogy between domestic economy and political economy that his son was to reject ten years later: “Political Economy is to the State, what domestic economy is to the family.” The metaphorical link draws on a long-standing lexical connection: the ancient Greek root for “economics,” *oikonomos* (from *oikos*, house, and *nomos*, law), “household management,” applied to both family and national budgets. For Aristotle, the household, defined as the biological family and servants, constituted the circuit of production and consumption, and the natural limit to exchange. Mill uses the analogy to describe the natural limits and division of the discourse of political economy, rather than the circuit of exchange: “Domestic economy has . . . two grand objects; the consumption and supply of the family. . . . The same is the case with Political Economy. It also has two grand objects, the Consumption of the Community, and that Supply upon which the consumption depends” (Mill 1826: 1–2).

The limits to the natural, Aristotelian household and the limitless analogy proposed by James Mill suggest two analytical problems for political economy. The first, specifying the relationship between an individual and the household; the second, specifying the relationship between family and nation. In the first half of the nineteenth century demographic statistics offered indirect evidence of proper or improper social reproduction, and the best hope for evaluating the relative progress, stagnation, or retrogression of nations. On the theoretical side, the causal determinants of demographic facts were the source of much

speculation but it was clear that good (bad) families aggregated up to strong (weak) nations.

As is clear from J.S. Mill's objection, above, the strict analogy that government of the family was equivalent to government of the population no longer held in the first decades of the nineteenth century. The notion of family as problematic analogy for society is not simply an artifact of language, but an empirical and theoretical problem. Family and population were no longer isomorphic, and family was devalued as a policy instrument for the management of the state, because population size itself was no longer thought of as a simple reflection of the power of the nation. But, thanks to concerns over overpopulation, management of the family was still recognized as a critical factor for managing society through its role in stimulating proper desires and taming unruly ones. Equilibrium in the social state required the marriage between economic man and domestic woman to be provident and not too prolific in issue: the self-governance of moral restraint could, in theory (that is, if put into practice), solve the population problem. Thus the decline of the status of family and the language of kinship as a sign of social position was accompanied by redoubled efforts to ensure that family remained the font of social order. It remained to contemporaries to specify anew the relationship between family and population, how it worked, and how it could be made to work better.

Classification systems generate the following epistemological tension: what is considered a class, a unit of analysis, is contingent on how it produces various meanings. Words, which determine these meanings, are not natural, but constructed, and their meanings are liable to change over time. For Malthus, the discussion of definitions "naturally led to the discussion of important principles and questions of classification . . . as the only foundation for a correct definition and application of terms" (Malthus 1827: viii). Placement in a category generates two distinct meanings: first, identification of an object; and second, ranking this entity in a hierarchical classification system. The first sense identifies "real" individuals, while the second assigns these individuals to categories. The process of classification leads one to ask about the factors that lead to classifying an object as "this" rather than "that." Now, if we ask why a particular individual is assigned to a particular family, we run into the following hermeneutic circle: causality justifies placement in a taxonomic grid and taxonomic placement affirms causality.

Defining family involves defining who belongs to it and who doesn't. Making the distinction also necessitates understanding the various, intertwined, and fluid meanings assigned contemporaneously in Great Britain to other, related terms. Take the relationship between family and household. The nuclear family, not the extended family household, was by far the most common family type in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England. Yet in common usage the two terms were interchangeable well into the eighteenth century, and the formulation "household-family," which defined a hierarchical relationship between head and dependents, did not necessarily imply a nuclear family (Tadmor 1996). Reay, for instance, traces the movements of various families in a sample of rural Kentish

parishes through successive nineteenth-century censuses, and concludes that it is “meaningless” to maintain the distinctions between (nuclear) family, kin, and community when considering the bases of support for individuals (Reay 1996). While the overlap between family and household remains to this day, their meanings split in the early nineteenth century. Use of “family” became increasingly restricted, not to genealogy, and a society based on tradition and status, but to the conjugal unit bound by affection, now described as the nuclear family (Harris 1987). Kinfolk, servants, boarders, and unrelated individuals, who had all previously been included in the definition of the nuclear families of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, now became increasingly defined as living in households. The drift in meaning reflected changes in living and working spaces that had begun in earnest in the eighteenth century. While working-class households persisted in taking in kin and lodgers well into the nineteenth century (Seccombe 1993), the architectural innovations of hallways and separate rooms or living quarters for servants, which began to take hold in the eighteenth century, created true private spaces for the middling classes. And the growth of suburban districts, which, while still relatively uncommon, separated businesses of the middle classes from their residences, contributed to a further physical separation between middle-class and working-class realms, as well as between market and household spheres. Changes in the nature of the system of apprenticeship in the eighteenth century changed the constitution of family as well. As Langford notes, “Masters were increasingly accused of no longer accepting apprentices on the old basis, effectively as members of their family.” Contemporaries feared that, rather than living in the household, apprentices would be used “merely as a form of cheap manpower which could be boarded out and treated much as if it were wage labour” (Langford 1992: 180).

The changing meanings reflected prescriptive norms driving and attached to such material changes. Martineau, Quetelet, and Farr tailored their works to instruct as wide a public as possible, to enlist support for social scientific analyses, and to influence policy. They all wished to create a public informed of the general laws of human behavior, as uncovered by social science, a public that would change its behavior and push for legislation that would more closely conform to those general laws. They succeeded quite handsomely in reaching a wide audience. *Illustrations* became an international sensation. Average man, introduced to the general public in *Treatise*, was the most famous abstraction of social analysis in the nineteenth century, and lives on as a convenient measuring rod for both popular and official purposes. Farr’s work enabled him to locate and publicize areas of high morbidity and mortality, and was influential in the process of state formation in England in the 1840s and beyond (Corrigan and Sayer 1985).

The texts continued a process begun in the previous century, where writers in different genres took up the tasks of representing the role of family in managing desire, and depicting the relationship between family and national strength. The second and third chapters sketch the context in which Malthus’s work on sex, marriage, family, and population was written and received. Chapter two

explores the debate surrounding the shaping and passage of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753, one of the major legal changes that occurred in the eighteenth century. The act affected the definition and meaning of family and its role in making visible, and thereby channeling and regulating, the passions for property and sex and companionship. The act transformed the category "marriage" from a spiritual to a civil procedure, from a private affair to a publicly sanctioned event. The controversy over the marriage act foreshadowed debates about Malthus's population principle. Bannet deems it "one of the first fruits of the new discipline of political economy . . . [It] represented the best contemporary thinking about how to manage the population in order to increase Britain's wealth" (Bannet 1997: 234). Though I think Bannet overstates the importance of political economy for passage of the legislation, the act did lead to a set of reclassifications. Women, including mothers and mothers-to-be, who had formerly been able to use the church or civil authorities to compel marriage from men, had no recourse to such action under the new laws. Instead, they were now classified as whores, and their children as bastards. And the act led to a decrease in living standards for those who occupied these classes, since they could no longer get support from (would-be) husbands and fathers.

The second chapter also examines the consequences and context of a legal change that did not occur in the mid-eighteenth century in Great Britain. The marriage act was originally linked to a bill for an annual census. Political arithmeticians, strong supporters of the census legislation, argued that peeking into the intimate property relations of households would yield fiscal benefits to the state, and place its finances on a more stable basis. The census bill failed, but its fate, played out against memories of the murderous political turmoil of the seventeenth century, also helped nurture a reconsideration of the passions, and the basis of authority on the part of political arithmeticians. Rather than the sovereign, the chief instrument of control of the nation's subjects would be the subjects themselves. This reconsideration took place as political philosophers and others debated, in mid-century, the sources of knowledge, social cohesion, and political legitimacy and agency of Great Britain. Was the mantle of "ideal (political) subject" to be restricted to aristocrats, who embodied the principles of disinterested republican civic virtue, and whose passions would be directed toward the national interest because of their landed interests? Or, as some mercantilist writers and their supporters, such as Daniel Defoe, and Joseph Addison and Richard Steele had proposed in the 1720s, were merchants endowed with commercial virtue, and worthy of serious political consideration because they possessed intimate knowledge of the workings of commercial society?

These developments came in the wake of a fundamental transition already underway in British political theory. Prior to the eighteenth century, prudence and self-interest were promoted to minor manly virtues, as counterweights to more dangerous passions like ambition and aggression (Hirschman 1977). Prudence and self-interest involved self-disciplined and calculable interests and thus "produced reassuringly calculable conduct. Avarice might not be noble, but it was at least predictable and therefore reinforced the orderliness of the social

order” (Daston 1994: 192). Scottish moral philosophers thus advanced another candidate for the ideal subject who would possess the knowledge to ensure order: everyone. Self-interest consisted of the wish by men and women to raise their material lot in life. In the absence of absolutism, self-interest thus produces political, economic, and sexual self-rule, or what’s been called “self-government.” The second chapter places this work on late eighteenth-century versions of economic man in the context of these musings by political and moral philosophers and apologists for merchants. The marriage act sought to enforce a version of self-rule, by compelling changes in individual attitudes and conduct with regard to sex and property. This rethinking itself occurred against the backdrop of yet another, more general reconsideration of desire and passion. Debates about the merits of sense, typically seen as masculine reason, sentiment and sensibility, typically seen as feminine passion, played out in English novels, as well as in conduct and manners literature that flourished in the last two decades of the eighteenth century to the first three decades of the nineteenth.

All this literature assumed that family, through marriage, could control sexual passion, the desire for material improvement, and the desire for a rise in status. Ideally, proper family behavior and good records could ensure the certainty of male parentage, and smooth the transmission of property over the generations. In the early nineteenth century political economists enthusiastically joined the debates on how the family instilled self-rule and regulated individual passions for sex and property. This required a delicate balancing act in their theories. While political economists emphasized stimulating the passions in order to stoke the productive fires of commercial civilization, unleashing the passion for goods could also set free the play of sexual passion. Though the quantitative evidence on the question of whether sexual activity (and by inference sexual desire) increased or decreased during the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England is mixed (Laqueur 1993: 101–11), sexuality was pervasive in this period, and evidence of its commercialization, in the form of prostitution in urban centers, was apparent to all with eyes to see. This goes some way toward explaining Malthus’s belief in the constancy of the passion between the sexes (Gaul 1998: 98–100), his concern with the consequences of this pervasiveness, expressed in his population principle, and the worries of innumerable others who dilated on the viciousness of illicit sex, prostitution (again) and, especially, masturbation, all of which apparently abounded in the new manufacturing towns and commercial centers of Britain. After Malthus, political economists had to rethink the link between domestic and political economies, in order to refashion the equilibrium between population and economy that Adam Smith had taken as unproblematic.

Contemporaries believed that education would reestablish this link on a better footing. It could foster better conduct, and lead to happier governance of the nation. Smith had supported efforts to educate the public as part of a push to emancipate the human mind. Political economists after Smith redoubled those efforts, but more out of fear of revolutionary discord, rather than Smith’s assumption that good conduct prevailed among the mass of the people. The new

generation of reformers were not satisfied, as Smith was, to simply educate the people and to let them behave as they would (Rothschild 2001). Education had to be along the right lines, to ensure proper individual conduct and social order. In the eighteenth century this belief helped shift the locus of idealized family life from the aristocracy to the still fuzzily defined middle ranks, who embodied the industry, frugality, and sobriety that many identified as the source of national prosperity. As detailed in Chapter 3, conduct books, devotional literature, travel accounts, novels, and other writings indicated that one could and should create the ideal family rather than being born or marrying into it. Novels and conduct books – literature aimed particularly but not exclusively at audiences of middle-class women – also helped define the possibilities for male and female identities (Watt 1957; Armstrong 1987; Poovey 1988 and 1998; Valenze 1995). Political economists contributed to this work and, though literary and historical studies have dealt with these themes in the period covered by this book, the role of political economy in all this – in the articulation of the male family wage and the development of the idea of separate spheres of men and women – has been neglected until recently (see Folbre 1991 and Valenze 1995, Chapter 7, for exceptions). Like writers on conduct and manners, political economists discussed individual, family, gender, class, and national identities, and sketched the ideals of individual and group conduct necessary to ensure economic progress and the advance of civilization. This literature included pamphlets, essays, and books on political economy, whose authors maintained that educating readers and listeners about political economy – especially about the proper ways to classify and modify family and family behavior – made them more conformable to the laws of society, and made the social state function more smoothly.

Chapter 3 discusses how this educational enthusiasm, part of the “rage for political economy”, overlapped with efforts by writers in other genres to describe and prescribe behavior by women, men, and children. The evangelical author Hannah More, friend of Samuel Johnson and David Garrick, and one of the most influential writers of the late eighteenth century, was typical in her assumption that “economy,” understood as the management of individual desires and passions in household affairs, was a key to national health. Conduct book writers and others, however, more often examined in greater detail than did the political economists the minutiae and rhythms of daily life, and how they translated into “economy” and were consistent with spiritual health, too. They thus developed a sense of “commercial virtue” somewhat different from those who wished to reconcile evangelical Christianity and political economy in the first half of the nineteenth century. Among other differences, writers on commercial virtue in conduct books made it clear that men *and* women were to conduct their commercial activity in accord with the demands of Christian charity. Their efforts probably reached a wider public, too, than those by political economists – over two million *Cheap Repository Tracts*, for instance, written by More and others, were distributed among the poor by local churches between 1795 and 1798.

The recitation of norms of behavior in these texts can just as easily be interpreted as evidence that prescriptions weren’t taking hold in real life. An out-

pouring of writing by readers formed part of this educational process. Men and women of the upper and middling (and to a lesser extent the lower) classes have left numerous letters and diaries detailing their concerns about their own education and future prospects, as well as the upbringing and education of their boys and girls (Kane 1995). Despite this, for the most part, we don't know much about what readers read and reread, or how they read – silently or aloud, singly, or in groups, at home or in a library, taking notes or marking marginalia, and what they took away from the reading experience. Yet we do know that readers and listeners are not passive sponges. Many contemporaries feared that reading or listening to texts read aloud could just as easily lead pupils to challenge as support what was on the printed page. If writers warned that you were not supposed to believe everything you read in print, readers were liable to take that injunction as a caution applicable to the very texts they were reading. We also know the vast expansion of print culture, which effected the “industrialization of communication and transformation of reading audiences” (Secord 2000: 4), facilitated the instability of genres, opened new forums for debate about economy and political economy in Great Britain, and also undercut authorial authority and textual fixity, never mind univocal meaning.

Census administrators also helped delineate the possibilities of female and male subjectivities and family forms in the nineteenth century, as they tried to fit real behavior into ideal categories. Families, often mobile, may be difficult to enumerate and classify, and they are defined by affective relationships, such as love and hate, which, if not visible and enumerable, must be accounted for as causes of various family activities. Malthus sought to turn to good effect the social facts made newly visible by the census. So, while Byron may have charged, in *Don Juan*, “that without cash, Malthus tells you, ‘take no brides,’” and that Malthus turned “marriage into arithmetic” (Byron xii: 14; xv: 38), Malthus also proposed that a few family facts, arranged in simple statistical categories – marriages illegitimate and legitimate, births, deaths, and population – could indicate a nation's health, that is, its success in achieving moral restraint. This parsimonious classification system, as much as the bluntness of his prose, clearly communicated his message to the public. Still, these categories raised troubling questions. As Oscar Wilde was to quip, “The great mystery of the world is not the invisible, but the visible.” What workings of desires caused the demographic changes that produced changes in statistical facts? The population principle served as a useful way of organizing demographic data as well as other information generated by recently established statistical offices and overseas travelers. These portrayed a dizzying diversity of human practices and kinship patterns, and their reports could be fitted into a stages-of-growth framework, which placed a struggle for resources at its head: this, indeed, proved a most profitable analogy for Charles Darwin, Francis Galton, and Alfred Russel Wallace (Stocking 1987: 92–109). But could one really fit or classify all these facts in the systematic framework of political economy, or was there need for a better (or even more than one) systematic framework? These questions, which I address in Chapters 2 and 3, generated, in turn, concern that observers might be

inundated by a multitude of possible explanations for their facts. Chapter 5 considers contemporary commentary on this problem produced by the flood of data and possible interpretive frameworks.

The flood of new statistics and classifications, like the torrent of printed words, conveyed too much information for anyone or any collective to process. As noted in Chapter 5, contemporaries termed this condition “excess.” This was not the excess associated with luxury consumption and its ambiguous relationship with virtue, a topic that had long vexed English commentators on political philosophy: eighteenth-century political economists had worked hard to include luxury as part and parcel of the natural, self-regulating order of commercial society. Nor was it the excess of the passions that Malthus, citing William Paley, referred to as both the source of vice and the inspiration for reason and self-government (*EPP* 2 IV I 16: 92–3). Rather, this excess represented phenomena that could not be represented, and which, as a result, could not be regulated: they escaped social order. In narratives, excess constitutes the unwritten, the details outside the plot, including the story before the beginning of the tale and the story after the tale’s ending. Statistical excess suggests numbers, words, and narratives or theories, including those that produce the categories that the numbers fill, beyond those visible on the written page, even beyond representation itself (Poovey 1993: 275–6).⁶ Excess thus denotes something like the present-day deconstructive connotation of present absences, which also produce analytical “defect.” While lacking the theoretical trappings of deconstructive criticism, contemporaries did express concern that, despite the plentitude of printed words and numbers, both factual and fictional narratives produced “defect.” Defect conveyed anything from a paucity of agreed upon definitions and classifications, to too few clearly defined objects, to a lack of causal explanations about society. The relationship between defect and excess embodied the very causal uncertainty they were meant to signify; some, indeed, blamed defect for producing excess. The play of excess and defect are palpable both in the endless churning over just when and where the Malthusian population principle might take hold in real life, and in the desire of Malthus and others to accumulate more and more family facts to settle the question. Their presence undermines the claim that statistics occupy a privileged epistemological position for depicting the “real,” and that political economy is a science with fixed, universal laws, distinct from lay understandings of economy and political economy.

Social observers wished to account for and then fix both visible and invisible phenomena, yet evinced a pervasive concern over the ability of facts and fictions, and words and numbers to adequately represent and change social life. The debate over the status of family facts and systems was also a debate over forms of representation, whether numbers or words were more reliable means of generating knowledge. Words were unreliable. More precisely, those who wrote could be unreliable. Some, like romance and novel writers, wished to entice readers; others wished to deliberately mislead the unwary. Political economists came under suspicion for their unsteady use of words too. David Ricardo, in a 1 January 1821 letter to James Mill, complained that Malthus

appears to me not to be aware of the import of the words which he uses – they convey a totally different meaning to his mind, and to mine. Another of his great mistakes is I think this; Political Economy he says is not a strict science like the mathematics, and therefore he thinks he may use words in a vague way, sometimes attaching one meaning to them, sometimes another and quite different. No proposition can surely be more absurd.

(Sraffa 1952, VIII: 331)

Yet words, even fictions, can create facts that register as true. An accumulation of realistic details helps fictional narratives achieve their realistic effects, as when Robinson Crusoe lists the items in his possession. Much of the power of the British novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, derives from the selective use of details. Studies of the history of the novel have long taken for granted that such partial vision supports their normative structure. Watt observes, in his classic *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), that, despite their realist clarity, English novels of the eighteenth century perform normative work by subtle perspectival framing:

“Point of view” was to become the crucial instrument whereby the writer expressed his moral sensibility, and pattern came to be the result of the hidden skill whereby the angles at which the mirror was held were made to reflect reality as the novelist saw it.

(Watt 1957: 118)

Some fiction writers were not so subtle, and offered clear morals for their readers. In the late eighteenth-century tale, “The Wonderful Advantages of Adventuring in the Lottery!,” John Brown cites a list of winners, recounted in a handbill, as evidence that he will win the lottery; his wife Mary counters by noting “there are a great many lies in print” (*Cheap Repository Tracts* 1995, 2: 45). And the details need not necessarily be true to register the proper (moral) effect. To Steedman, nineteenth-century British literary and historical descriptions of the homes of the working classes were unreal, and had “absolutely *nothing at all* to do with the people who actually . . . occupied the cruel habitations.” Rather, they were crucial to the formation of the identity of the middle classes, through a process of non-identification: “you understand and write the self through others who are not like it” (Steedman 1999: 30, emphasis in original).

Likewise, social statistics offer a rendering of reality through framing effects. The tables and the commentaries running alongside the tables are descriptive and prescriptive (White 1978; de Certeau 1986), and, as Poovey indicates, numerical or tabular formulations are themselves engendered by the “explanatory narratives” (Poovey 1993: 258). Classifications perform part of this framing, as statisticians count this phenomenon, and ignore that one. By the third decade of the nineteenth century, when a general shift in the work of social statisticians took place, from “mere counting to increasingly minute classifications of the people counted” (Hacking 1990: 134), the introduction of new

classifications generated questions about their adequacy and accuracy. They make apparent the discretion used to devise new categories, and generate questions about those making the categorical distinctions: who are they, and what are their interests?

Figurative language, whether factual or fictional, was imprecise. When focused on individuals and individual incidents, words did not necessarily suffice to represent general cases and causes. Abstract reasoning was prone to logical fallacies and led to wrong-headed speculations if not moored to the evidence of experience. Numerical descriptions served as a check on the slipperiness of words. But statistical descriptions also suffered from a lack of clarity over which causes produced what effects, and readers often drew diametrically opposed inferences from the data. Further, it was questionable whether to even represent some forms of conduct with statistics. If novels could corrupt behavior, statistics, derided by contemporaries as dry and unconvincing, could, too (Poovey 1993). Numbers could reveal the presence and prevalence of immoral acts. Visibility aided reform by giving readers an idea of the magnitude of a social problem; on the other hand, many believed that literature could contaminate the minds and conduct of readers. Works meant to warn readers of the folly of certain courses of action could have the perverse effect of leading them to imitate the very behavior the authors meant to proscribe. Readers could learn the wrong lesson.

Our families, our selves

What lessons do I seek to impart to readers of this book? Family stands in many possible relations to economy and to the economy. The chapters to follow indicate the fissures and contradictions created by the fluidity of the category in nineteenth-century debates on population. Latour calls for a critical stance that examines issues of representation, politics, and epistemology to analyze hybrids such as the population debate. This necessitates traversing disciplinary lines. As should be evident from this introductory chapter, I try to do just that. Yet I initially took up this project in order to gain some perspective on Malthusian theories of the family in present-day economics, a topic I address briefly in chapter seven. Economics participates in producing knowledge about the family and representations about the past help construct “family” for the discipline in the present. By discipline, I mean a certain way of knowing, and the process of defining subject matter, methods, and evidence. I argue that an exhumation of what was once considered valuable, far from constituting antiquarianism, is in and of itself valuable. It reveals sources of our current theoretical difficulties and opportunities, our various ways of knowing the family in economics.

Our conceptions of the economics of the family appear in a different light when we note various epistemological tensions that recur over time, tensions which arise from defining and classifying the very objects we wish to study. I do not suggest that the category of family lacks any stable meaning; nor that the term is devoid of any but ideological content and that we therefore should get rid

of the (idea of) family altogether, as some in literary and social history have recently suggested, or that economists should pack up their tents and vacate the field. While definitions of family, because multiple and susceptible to change, are open to the charge of abstraction, immateriality, and political manipulation, family does take material form in real, flesh-and-blood individuals. Family, in theory at least, can be stabilized for analysis and policy. Thus, for those who might be anxious to read an anti-empirical intent into my analysis, I do not advocate that we abandon statistical work. Rather, I indicate that we can choose new classifications to describe family and its economic relations, being careful to keep in mind what we leave out as well as what we include.

We continue to define and redefine family. Anyone can tick off a few instances of the consequences of this classification work for social measurement and policy, and notions of justice and ethics – you don't have to be an economist (or sociologist, or anthropologist, or family law expert) to do so.⁷ For some, this may offer a model, then, for rethinking the ties between academic economics and the public on family issues. As economists cast about for ways to address the discipline's renewed concerns about economic education, we should, at the least, relinquish our exclusive claim to economic knowledge, and admit that we might learn something not only from observing behavior in real life but listening to what people believe real life is, as well. This demands a widening of the family "facts" considered as evidence in the economics of the family. Hence, no privileged epistemological or discursive position allows us to do our taxonomic work. To answer the classification question – what *is* the family in economics – entails the adjudication and weighing of evidence, and our inevitable involvement in the contested processes of defining what family *should be*.

2 Family and the domestication of passions

In Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722), Moll, age fourteen, recounts the following observations on marriage, made by her mistress's daughter to her younger brother, who is in pursuit of Moll:

"I wonder at you brother," says the sister. "Betty wants but one thing, but she as good as want everything, for the market is against our sex just now; and if a woman have beauty, birth, breeding, wit, sense, manners, modesty, and all these to an extreme, yet if she have not money, she's nobody, she had as good want them all, for nothing but money now recommends a woman; the men play the game all into their own hands."

(Defoe 1978: 44)

The marriage "game" is against women in general, and against Moll in particular because "she have not money." Moll, however, occupies an uncertain position in her mistress's household, one that indicates the relationship between money and a woman's marriage prospects was not necessarily so straightforward. As both charge and servant, she is under the family's protection, is indeed part of the family; she also has to be managed as an employee who might wish to move up in society through marriage to one of the family's sons. So Moll is not simply prey to the household's sons, defenseless because of her subservient position and lack of wealth, but a sexual agent herself. Moll does become the mistress of the older son of her own mistress. Yet she eventually marries the younger son, moved in part by the prospect of saving her reputation, and, in part, by a payment of £500 from the elder brother for her consent to the marriage. This is just the first instance where Moll finds and exploits possibilities for economic gain by feigning respectability while engaging in economic and sexual activity beyond the vision and scope of the law. Moll's search for her true identity and her desire for economic independence, constants amidst her whoring and thieving, leads her to contract a series of sexual relationships and marriages so fraught with ambiguities and deceptions that she lands, at one point, in an incestuous union.

Moll Flanders, while fictional, reflects a pervasive concern among Defoe's contemporaries with the problem of defining what a family was, who belonged

to it, and what that entailed for identities and economic relations. Moll's position illustrates how the rules of the marriage market and the requirements of economy, or household management were both negotiable, and potentially in conflict. The novel suggests that a proper marriage could end Moll's quest to find her place in a family and establish equilibrium between her desire for love and money; in doing so, the novel also mines a theme that was central to legislative efforts throughout the century, and to educational efforts in the beginning of the nineteenth century in Britain. That is, the family played a critical symbolic and functional role in controlling individuals' passions and in providing the resources for the wealth of individuals, families, and the nation. Politicians and writers believed the passions encompassed evidently anarchic principles – desire for sex and desire for wealth and status – that held sway in British society. Love and property were each capable of attaching themselves willy-nilly to any person or object. Each therefore, alone or in combination, retained the capacity to level ranks and upset the status quo. Family stabilized economic relations endangered by potentially disorderly passions: an orderly family could harness commercial and sexual interests and meld them into a harmonious and virtuous whole. *Moll Flanders* makes it clear, however, that achieving equilibrium in the family and, by extension, society at large, was no easy task.

Moll's case also reflects the concern, in particular, with the role played by passions in aristocratic marriages, mores, and politics during this period. Marriage contracts were most often designed to stabilize love and property within the aristocratic family. This concern underscored the parliamentary debate over Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, the subject of the first part of this chapter. The act changed the definition of a marriage, and therefore affected the definition of a family for all ranks of society. Supporters of the act, "one of the most controversial and divisive measures passed into law [in England] during the eighteenth century" (Lemmings 1996: 340), and the basis of state regulation of marriage in England to this day, sought to control the circulation of capital by limiting the circulation of love. In the parliamentary debate on its provisions, which set off a flurry of pamphlet-writing, inspired satirical verses and plays, "considerations of love and marriage were embedded in those of money and property" (Harth 1988: 133). State regulation of marriage was designed to create a set of visible family facts that would remain unchanged and unquestioned over time and space. The act distinguished two classes of marriages, one visible and sanctioned as a legal contract, the other invisible and thus no longer legally binding. Civil contracts, publicly acknowledged, were certified as legally recognized marriages, while verbal promises, a form of marriage popular among those who lacked property and which required no witnesses, were now categorized as no marriages at all. Henceforth, in theory, questions of family provenance would no longer cloud intergenerational transfers of property among men, so long as one's marriage fell in the former rather than the latter category.

The marriage act attempted to control passions and property among the upper classes by specifying the process by which family formation was legally recognized. Not all such legislative attempts to make visible and regulate passions and

their effects on property in the eighteenth century became law. I next examine the debate over a bill to enact an annual census, originally attached to the marriage act, which failed to win passage in parliament in 1753. English political arithmeticians, who wished to expand the knowledge and power of the state, pushed the census proposal, as well as a proposal, which failed five years later, calling for mandatory registration of births, deaths and marriages. As discussed below, their legislative failures prompted a shift in philosophy and tactics by political arithmeticians. They now focused their efforts on private data-gathering, publication of their results, and the reduction rather than enhancement of central government authority (Buck 1982). And they emphasized self-government of passions and their effects, rather than state control of individual and family behavior.

The marriage act was designed to produce and make visible standardized facts about love and property, and to produce a couple that embodied an ideal form of love; the proposed census would count individuals and families and make it easier, supporters claimed, for the state to design policies to increase and strengthen England's families. The question of whether individuals who governed their actions could aggregate up to a virtuous whole was also the theme of contemporaneous debates among political philosophers about managing political passions, and about the sources of knowledge and authority after the revolution. Some political philosophers conjectured not only that stabilizing individual identity, within a lawful marriage, stabilized wealth, but that this type of family-based subjectivity formed the basis of individual political agency. According to the precepts of civic republicanism, landed property was the sign and guarantee of political virtue and autonomy for the individual male, and his passport to disinterested civic participation. Later in the century, moral philosophers and political economists also weighed in on this debate; and, as they too attempted to describe and explain how individuals regulated their conduct and controlled desire, they commented on the sources of knowledge, virtue, and political authority as well. Like their contemporaries, they speculated on these questions in order to promote their visions of social equilibrium. Smith's ideal man in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) regulated his conduct, and, through the operation of sympathy, modified his behavior with regard to its effect on others and their approbation. Smith believed that, like women, the merchant, as a representative type in commercial society, lacked certain characteristics of the perfect man of virtue outlined in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The self-regulating actions of individual merchants were consistent, however, with lesser virtues of prudence, industry, frugality, and so forth, attributes also associated with women and family "economy." These actions, in turn, produced the self-regulating society Smith sketched in *Wealth of Nations*.

Political economists also referred to models from genres other than political and moral philosophy when they broached the subject of self-rule and the role of the family in the production of social order. Family governance as a metaphor or metonym for social stability or instability was a trope central to the development of the English novel in the eighteenth century. In *Theory of Moral Sentiments*

Smith discussed conduct associated with sentiment, and its relationship to commercial virtues, staples of novels and conduct books of the last half of the century. These virtues were consistent with the representations of virtue in action in a work by one contemporary author cited by Smith: in Samuel Richardson's sensationally popular *Pamela: Or Virtue Rewarded* (1740–1) the leitmotif – a delayed marriage – was the ideal of a purer love, also called virtuous love. The marriage act also legislated a waiting period, one between the couple's announcement of their intention to wed and the actual wedding itself, for a similar reason, to promote prudential marriages.

Initially, virtuous love evoked a mixed response from Malthus, despite the fact that it encapsulated, in fiction, what was later to become the concept of moral restraint. Not coincidentally, these ideals, also embedded in property laws and estate and settlement practices enacted in this period, placed the material and political interests of families and fathers ahead of those of mothers and children (Lemmings 1996). One of the questions contemporaries asked was, "Who are we, and who embodies these ideal attributes in real life?" Though political economists asserted that commercial society could not sustain itself without awakening, producing and maintaining desires, and that the family was the site where this process initially took place, they acknowledged that there was no guarantee that desires, once aroused, would find proper modes of expression. The invisible hand could fail to coordinate production and consumption, and society could end up producing too many goods or too many children. The work of Malthus on population focused attention on the need to understand the family behavior of the poor: political economists had to concern themselves with real not just ideal conduct. They had to concern themselves too with not just the artificial wants conjured by man's imagination, but his irrepressible bodily desires as well. Concerns over the corrosive effects of commercial society and the division of labor on the individual psychologies of workers led Smith to call for education which promoted moral virtue (Alvey 2001: 9–15); concerns over the awakening, multiplication, and sharpening of sexual desires, and the effects on population and national virtue and health led to a similar call by Malthus and his contemporaries, didactic measures which I explore more fully in the next chapter.

"To secure property and succession"¹

The tumultuous state of marriages in *Moll Flanders* mirrors the loose contractual nature of marital bonds in the period. In London, for instance, banns had been the most common form of marriage in the early seventeenth century (Earle 1989). Banns, the spoken or published announcement in a church of an intended marriage, were called on three occasions, and the wedding ceremony was held in open church. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, marriages of mutual consent – marriages by a simple exchange of vows – rose in popularity and significance, and had supplanted banns as the most common form of marriage among artisans and the poor. Unfortunately, unless the rites were

solemnized by the church, one could not have “any Interest or Property in the other’s Lands or Goods or . . . legitimate their Issue” (Earle 1989: 178, quoting Thomas Salmon, *A Critical Essay Concerning Marriage* (1724)).

So-called clandestine marriages, which often took place in jurisdictions claiming exemption from ecclesiastical oversight, had become increasingly popular in this period as well. The area around the Fleet prison in London in particular was notorious for these marriages, which were performed by rogue clergymen. Clandestine marriages, which included those based on the simple exchange of vows between the couple, were quick, often (but not always) cheaper than public weddings, and, most importantly, private. They violated canon law because they involved neither the publishing of banns, parental consent, marriage within the parish church, nor the presence of witnesses. Clandestine couples filled out licenses improperly: some backdated their licenses in the case of premarital fornication; others, unsure of the degree of their commitment, filled out part of the registrar’s certificate or completed only part of the ceremony, and were said to be “half-married.” Likewise, in cases of desertion, couples could opt for “self-divorces,” where they obtained consent for marital dissolution before witnesses (occasionally including a payment, a kind of “divorce settlement”), rather than trying to get a formal divorce, which required shepherding a bill through parliament, a near impossibility for most couples (Gillis 1985: 98–100, 190–228).² Estimates of desertion by husband or father in the second half of the eighteenth century, based on poor law examinations, desertion being one of the criteria for relief, range from 5.8 percent in rural districts of southern England and Wales to over 12 percent in St Martin-in-the-Fields (Snell 1985: 360–1; Kent 1990: 29). The true magnitude of the phenomena, however, is unknown since, by their nature, these types of breakups went mostly unrecorded.

Similar vagueness plagues estimates of the number of common-law and clandestine marriages, though by the early eighteenth century an estimated one-third of marriages were “irregular” – clandestine marriages, marriages of mutual consent, and marriages by license – rather than the “big weddings” of the established church (Gillis 1985: 84); Boulton estimates that in the decade preceding the act anywhere from a half to three-quarters of London marriages could be categorized as irregular (Boulton 1993: 202).³ State regulation of the marriage market along the lines of the marriage act had long been debated, with several parliamentary bills mooted, by both houses, between 1717 and 1753. The mid-century push for reform of marriage legislation came from aristocrats who feared that clandestine marriages were becoming more popular, if not more respectable, among members of their own ranks. Their worries stemmed from a perceived increase in the number of misalliances, and the consequent erosion of patriarchal authority. Clandestine marriages could create legal problems for the couple, since the appearance of an unacknowledged spouse put family identity and the intergenerational transmission of property at risk. Simply put, they jeopardized inheritances. Aristocrats especially feared heiresses marrying footmen, because such marriages resulted in a decline in prestige for the woman, and, by

extension, her family; heirs marrying beneath their station, even marrying servant girls, was perceived as less of a threat because it entailed no loss of social status for the men (Langford 1992: 113). Such lopsided incentives produced a sizeable number of “failures” of another sort in the marriage market, the class of spinsters. A further concern was an increase in the number of lawsuits contesting inheritances based on the revelation of a clandestine marriage after death. Despite the relative rarity of misalliances among aristocrats (marriages like Moll’s were rarely realized in practice and most clandestine unions were among the lower middling sorts), clandestine marriages conjured up visions of family wealth and property inexorably draining away.⁴ If clandestine marriages weren’t bad enough, abuses such as trick, predated, forced, and fabricated weddings, and the weddings of minors without parental consent, sent shudders through an aristocracy already anxious over an increase in bachelordom among their ranks (Stone and Stone 1984: 276–7).

The push to reform marriages reflected a belief that the marital status of an individual needed to be established, truthfully, as a publicly verified fact recognized by the civil authorities. Marriage ceremonies needed to be certified by witnesses under oath, above all else, as evidence of that fact. This is not to say that the desire for privacy, rather than publicity, in state-sanctioned weddings lacked adherents. Marriage by license from the diocese was a form of private marriage, with no banns called in church. A license required a sworn statement that, if either party were under the age of twenty-one, they had the consent of parents or a guardian. Though more costly in its initial outlay than banns, marriage by license could, in the end, prove less expensive. Public banns encouraged people to press for invitations to the ceremony. Banns also encouraged the poor to congregate outside the house where the couple was consummating their marriage until they were paid off. The privacy of a license wedding thus served to further gentility – it allowed the middle classes to literally distance themselves from the poor. On a less savory note, the stealth of a license wedding provided cover if the marriage was not a love match but a pure money match (Earle 1989: 179).

In the face of the growing popularity of clandestine marriages, proponents of stricter regulation of marriage called for ecclesiastical action. But the Church of England failed to rein in the wayward clergymen who performed clandestine marriages. Part of the reluctance of the established church had to do with canon law, which supported the sanctity and indissolubility of the marriage vow, even that made between two individuals before God only, with neither witness nor clergy present; part had to do with the profitable trade in marriage licenses, which contributed not a little to parish officials’ incomes (Outhwaite 1995: 66). Parliamentary supporters of the marriage act maintained that the government should regulate marriages like any other contract, for “the good of society” (Cobbett 1813, XV, col. 6).⁵ The act, effective March 25, 1754, voided future clandestine marriages, and “changed England and Wales from a nation where marriage was based on consent alone to one based upon a public contractual identity – that contract to be sealed in a minutely prescribed manner” (Barker 1978: 245). Under the provisions of the act, parental consent had to be obtained

if either party were under the age of twenty-one. Banns had to be read in the parish church of both parties for three Sundays. Marriages, except those of Quakers and Jews, the royal family, or those performed in Scotland and overseas, were invalid unless performed in a parish church of one of the parties, according to the established rituals of the Church of England, and in the presence of a clergyman and at least two witnesses. Failure to adhere to the provisions of the act would result in severe penalties – long prison terms or transportation in some cases, and death for instances of forgery or alteration of parish records – in addition to the nullification of the marriage.

The literature on the parliamentary debate often portrays the legislation as a triumph of patriarchal interests that increased the economic and political strength of fathers and first-born sons against the interests of women and other children (Lemmings 1996). Parliamentary opponents also saw the legislation as an effort to entrench aristocratic power by restricting family alliances, and as a blatant infringement of religious liberties. Other recent commentators note how some parliamentarians who opposed the legislation expressed their concern for the love interests of women, and cast such speeches as proof of the progress of the principle of affective individualism and the ideology (if not the fact) of love matches (Stone 1977: 241–2). Some contemporaries felt that, as a result, the act, if passed, would encourage rather than discourage vice. The authors of the parody, “Spinsters Remonstrance against the Marriage Act,” for instance, noted that their prayer books

did not find that matrimony was instituted for the pleasure of their parents, but that it was ordained for the procreation of children, and for a remedy against fornication. That the petitioners do humbly conceive those ends will not be answered by this act. St. Paul says, *It is better to marry than to burn*; but, if they burn for one, and are compelled to marry another, how will their flame be quenched? Nor will it, they apprehend, answer the purpose of procreation near so well as if they married the men they like; tho’ perhaps, it may tend to hinder fornication, by substituting in its room adultery.

([Anon] 1753d: 602, emphasis in original)

There is no way to determine the act’s effect on this form of vice. Much contemporary concern had, rather, focused on the act’s nullification of pre-contracts, and the prospect that, if pregnant women no longer had leverage to compel marriages, the rate of illegitimate births would increase. Women who were pregnant no longer had a legal claim as “wives,” and children who formerly would have been classified as “legitimate” were now “illegitimate”; neither class could count on the father for support. The act, through its reclassification of families, did in fact effectively raise the measured amount of illegitimacy in England: as measured, illegitimate births more than doubled from 1753 to 1800. As a result, the act probably contributed to a decreased standard of living for women and children in the latter half of the century.⁶

What follows details how both sides of the parliamentary debate voiced fears

of the “passion of love” and the “passion of pride or avarice” (see also Harth 1988). As they jockeyed for economic and political advantage, both sides voiced a desire to control these passions through the regulation of marriage and the resultant redefinition of family. The bill had sailed through the Lords, with broad support from the bishops in the House, who were apparently willing to override the fundamental precept of the canon law on marriage – consent – to the necessity for civil order (Outhwaite 1995: 89). Attorney General Ryder opened the debate on the second reading of the bill in the House of Commons by citing the ruinous effects the passions of love and avarice had on family relations: “we often find the passion called love triumphing over the duty of children to their parents, and on the other hand we sometime find the passion of pride or avarice triumphing over the duty of parents to children” (Cobbett 1813, XV, col. 2). Ryder insisted that

the ruin of young persons, and the distress of families is not the only evil . . . that is brought upon society by this sanctity and indissolubility that has been added to clandestine marriages: every gentleman that has been conversant in the law knows, what a number of expensive law suits are thereby occasioned about the illegitimacy of children; and how difficult it often is to determine whether the parents were married or no: nay, sometimes a clandestine marriage is set up after a man’s death, which was never heard of in his life time, and by an incontestable proof, which by ways and means may be obtained, his whole effects are carried away from his relations by the children of a woman he never acknowledged as his wife.

(Cobbett 1813, XV, col.7)

As the law stood, marriages could impair property relations. Cases of dubious marriage, uncertain parenthood, and bigamy rendered uncertain the legally and morally right distribution of property between generations. How could parliament stabilize property over time and space, while balancing sexual passions and money interests? Opponents of the bill, such as the Duke of Bedford, pointed out that whole classes of people would be severely affected by the bill’s residency provisions. Soldiers, sailors, servants, and migrant agricultural laborers would all be hard put to meet the requirements put forth in the bill: they were all people who moved, and who had no fixed abode (Outhwaite 1995: 87).

Proponents of the legislation asserted that it would increase the concentration of wealth in aristocratic circles and preserve families by easing the barriers to arranged marriages. John Bond felt that the legislation was necessary to ensure equilibrium in the aristocratic marriage market. The act would guarantee that needy peers could support their titles: “I think we should contribute to a poor lord’s being always sure of matching himself with some rich heiress, and thereby restoring the lustre and independency of his family” (Cobbett 1813, XV, col. 46).

Opponents feared such an increased concentration of riches, and espoused a greater, though still quite limited, dispersal of wealth throughout the social body. Robert Nugent, leader of the opposition to the bill, declaimed:

At present, indeed, our nobility are not quite so squeamish as those of France or Germany: they do not think, nor do our laws render it beneath them to marry the daughter of a tradesman or merchant, if she be one whose father has heaped up, by whatever means, a large sum of money, and has no child but her and if the father was to become rich before or soon after she was born, she is generally bred up to be as good for as little, and to be as proud, expensive, and whimsical as any lady of quality whatsoever.

(Cobbett 1813, XV, col. 16)

Money, not love, or sexual desire, is the great leveler here. To Nugent, money, “heaped up,” is the sole requirement for marriage between a man and a woman of lower social status. The possibility that mixed marriages, between families of different stock, could erase individual family identity through the dispersal of its foundation, property, was a mirage. On the contrary, in England a “large sum of money” allowed a family to mimic quality perfectly, and allowed one to forgo distinctions and ranks. To suggest otherwise would require that the English begin to ape the manners of the French and Germans. Nugent evokes a vision of stable English national identities and character – masculinity based on an interest in money, and femininity devalued save for how much money and property a woman could bring to a marriage – as a counterweight to the fears that aristocratic identity will be lost in an expanded marriage market.

As Nugent’s jibes indicate, the act enshrined the economic power of aristocratic fathers and the dependence of women. Nugent calls for unity among certain men who represent different interests – the nobility and fathers from the trades or merchant classes – based on their common interest in the latter’s daughters. Their differences could be erased by the exchange of equally interchangeable money and women. Beyond the marriage contract, the legal system increasingly protected the interest of fathers and eldest sons against women, as well as against younger sons. The developing body of property law, for example, included the increased use of strict settlement. Strict settlement, that is, a provision to set aside capital to guarantee sums for younger children, could be seen as a device to strengthen primogeniture, by limiting the other heirs’ interest in the eldest son’s property rights. When an alternative, contract law, was briefly applied to women’s rights to own and dispose property in the mid-eighteenth century, the results were socially intolerable. Courts quickly reverted to patriarchal legal strictures, depriving married women full ownership of property (Staves 1990).

Nonetheless, as in the case of the eighteenth-century legal innovation of the separate estate, a prenuptial agreement to provide for children which, inadvertently, allowed female independence (unless funds were stolen or procured by abusive husbands), women were often provided the means and access to independent sources of income (Hunt 1996: chapter 6). Tax records in this period indicate that women – heiresses, daughters, widows, and wives – owned between one-sixth and one-fifth of all property through arrangements such as marriage settlements (Langford 1992: 110). And women leveraged other legal

rights in ways that weakened the effect of the marriage act and other legal strictures on women's property. As Finn notes, women's extensive use of their "vicarious consumer rights" – derived from the law of necessities, which allowed women (save for those expelled from home for adultery) to make contracts for their necessities as agents of their husbands – as credit instruments that eased marital separations from their husbands, made the marriage bond a casual affair in the period 1760–1860 (Finn 1996: 709–10).

If supporters of the marriage act saw it as a means to stabilize property, they also saw it as a set of measures that would stabilize love. The parliamentary debate contributed to the construction of the concept of virtuous love, which had been championed by Richardson in *Pamela*. In the novel, the servant Pamela keeps her virtue as she fends off the advances of her employer, Mr. B: she forces him to wait until he agrees to a respectable marriage. As we will see later in this chapter, Malthus referred to this concept as he elucidated his ideas on marriages in *Essay*. Supporters of the marriage act maintained that love married to prudence allowed virtue and sentiment to tame the passions, and fixed love upon a firm and lasting foundation. The Earl of Hillsborough avowed that the waiting period included in the bill's provisions would, as a break on the passions, facilitate prudential love, and that marriage

ought to be gone about with discretion, with deliberation, even with religious awe and reverence. A mutual love between the two parties contracting marriage, is, I shall grant, a very proper ingredient; but then it ought to be a sedate and fixed love, and not a sudden flash of passion which dazzles the understanding, but is in a moment extinguished: the happiness of a marriage founded upon such love can never be lasting, and accordingly we find that it seldom proves so . . . [W]hen mutual love is fixed upon a solid foundation, that is to say, upon the beauties of the mind, as well as the charms of a person, a month's preparation can be no ways grievous to either of the parties, but is in a manner necessary for convincing the world, as well as the parties themselves, that their choice of each other is founded upon judgment and discretion.

(Cobbett 1813, XV, cols 62–3)

The waiting period would encourage the ideal marriage, which united passion and reason, "the charms of a person" and "the beauties of the mind." The act would also serve to keep parents blinded by love for their children from conferring their blessings on secret marriages undertaken against their wishes. That is, the act would protect the interests of the family against the love of parents for their children.

The act effectively halted Fleet marriages and dramatically reduced the number of clandestine marriages. But its early life was precarious, as the Commons voted to repeal it on at least two occasions, in 1765 and 1781 (Outhwaite 1995: 112–16). And it failed to secure the stability and certainty of "succession and possession," even for those of property. Indeed, over time, the

provisions imperiled the certainty of inheritance of every propertied person, and threatened individual identity and family status. There were two major sticking points. Robert Nugent had warned that,

in the next age, several gentlemen may perhaps be ousted of their estates, because their grandfather and grandmother were not married according to all the forms prescribe. For there is no time limited for commencing such suits; so that one would think that the Bill was designed for multiplying law suits.

(Cobbett 1813, XV, col. 23)

Because there was no time limit on legal challenges to marriages, couples who had no way to prove, for instance, that witnesses to their grandparents' weddings were credible, were placed in a potential legal limbo. The Marriage Act Amendment of 1822 repealed the nullity clause for minors who married without their parents' or guardians' permission for precisely this reason – the 1753 act was being used to challenge marriages of long standing.⁷ In the parliamentary debate leading up to the repeal, Lord Holland posed the rhetorical question, “Was a young lady, just entering the church door with an admiring lover, to ask about the contract of his grandmother?” (Hansard 1822, VII, col. 1145).⁸ The potential embarrassment to the bride and groom was hardly the point: the lack of a secure foundation for marriage threw the security of property into doubt. The Earl of Westmoreland lamented, “The existing law destroyed all security of all kinds of property” (Hansard 1822, VII, col. 1138). Lord Ellenborough opined, “Men were bereft of the property to which they expected to succeed, and made bastards, by an operation of the law which was contrary to the original intention of those who framed it.” The law, he stated, set into motion the “basest motives of self-interest,” which were “injurious to society” and which would “incite brother against brother, and husband against wife” (Hansard 1822, VII, col. 1129). Rather than tame the passions, the 1753 act had unleashed them. Self-interested behavior is, in this case, antithetical to the interests of family and, by extension, society. The dead weight of the family's past called into question the sanctity of marriage and the security of property.

A second conflict produced by the passage of the marriage act hinged on differences between English and Scottish marriage law. Scottish law, derived from civil law, allowed mere consent of the parties to constitute a marriage (and continued to allow such marriages until 1949). Those in England who failed to meet the requirements of the English marriage act could simply cross the border and join in a union that was then recognized in England as a valid marriage. While assuring his readers that this was not a major nuisance in practice, Henry Brougham noted that in principle the Scottish loophole gutted the marriage act and its penalties. Commenting on *Wakefield v. Wakefield*, a highly publicized divorce case brought on behalf of Ellen Turner, an English girl whisked off and married in Scotland under fraudulent circumstances, Brougham noted, “The law of England, by allowing the validity of Scotch marriages between its own

domesticated subjects, plainly renders that law quite nugatory” ([Brougham] 1828: 109). This situation created a class of recognized (legal) marriages outside the strictures of English law. This also created classes of people who stood in ambiguous family relationships, such as those who were bastards on one side of the border, and legitimate on the other. Brougham’s suggested solution was to insist on an extended period of residency for marriage in Scotland, and, to be consistent, a like period for bringing a divorce in that country. Foreign subjects needed to establish a domicile, a home in Scotland, in order to be covered by Scottish law.

With an implicit nod toward Malthus, Brougham acknowledged that these time and location provisions would also prevent a number of improvident marriages ([Brougham] 1828: 116–18). Brougham’s proposed solutions rely on effectively converting “foreigners,” that is, the English, into Scots so that they could be legitimately covered by Scottish law. Thus transformed, they would be unable to evade English marriage and divorce law simply by crossing the border.⁹ As the laws stood, however, different national conceptions of family, reflected in different laws, could result in multiple, overlapping, and conflicting national identities for a “British” subject: an English couple marrying in Scotland would be subject to Scottish laws even upon return to and with residence in England. They would be English *and* Scottish. The marriage act was designed to secure and stabilize English property by making family relationships visible, as known and legally certified facts. The act became, instead, the agent of family and societal instability because it turned family facts into national questions, and family laws into national frictions.

The debate over the 1753 Marriage Act highlights the anxiety of the nobility, landed gentry, and wealthy merchants over the capacity of passion and interest to jeopardize the orderly transmission of property from one generation to the next. Clandestine marriages created uncertainty about family identity and property. In doing so, they undercut the status of those facts as guarantors of autonomous political participation. In short, they threatened social order. While parliamentarians focused on the families and interests of England’s propertied classes, they did not neglect the possible effects of the act on the nation’s poor, and on the growth of its population. *The Gentleman’s Magazine* of September 1753 listed nine objections to the act. One was the public nature of banns and marriages:

Proclamation of banns, and publick marriages are against the nature and genius of our people. A young girl cannot, without extreme confusion, suffer it to be proclaimed thro’ the whole parish, that she is going to be married, a young fellow is always unwilling to suffer the jeers of his companions so long before hand

([Anon] 1753a: 400)

The publicity that supporters touted as constituting a reasonable break on ill-considered passions could actually lead a couple to act against their own true feelings. In practice, however, the use of banns allowed many poor couples to

escape parental control. They could make use of “crowded metropolitan parishes, where they could be married in relative anonymity after banns were read, since their families were remote and the clergy too overworked to check places of residence, age and other personal details in every case” (Lemmings 1996: 342, note 11).

The act was opposed on the grounds that it would reduce the number of the common people; proponents and opponents also debated whether the disincentive effects of fees and waiting periods would weaken what Nugent called “the most useful . . . of our people” (Cobbett 1813, XV, col. 17). *The Gentleman’s Magazine* summarized this objection as follows:

That it will discourage the marriage of the poorer sort, among whom marriages, however necessary to political purposes, is generally an imprudent step with respect to themselves, and, as by this act, they will be prevented from doing it without great deliberation, many will not do it at all. . . . The consequence of this will be the decrease of the people, and the increase of those vices, which the passions, not legally gratified, would produce.

([Anon] 1753a: 400)

This lays out a formula that Malthus was to stand on its head forty-five years later: weak individual bodies, the offspring of imprudent behavior, added up to a strong social body. No matter their improvidence, unless marriages among the poor were allowed to proceed, and the population was allowed to grow, passions would be misdirected and vice would multiply. Supporters countered that the vagueness of the current laws promoted vice rather than the sanctity of marriage, the notorious Fleet marriages being only the most obvious case in point. And the Earl of Hillsborough spoke in support of the bill when he contested the simple equation opponents made between a nation’s population and its strength. He claimed that “The prosperity and happiness of a country does not depend upon having a great number of children born, but upon having always a great number well brought up, and inured from their infancy to labour and industry” (Cobbett 1813, XV, col. 63).

The debate over state regulation of marriage at mid-century dovetailed with another attempt to make families visible, and thus easier to use as an instrument to control the passions. Provisions of what became the marriage act were originally included in a bill that called for an annual census. The “Bill for Registering the Number of the People” would provide for a record of the annual number of marriages, births, and deaths, and the total number of poor on relief. The bill was promoted by political arithmeticians, who sought to use the information in the census to increase the knowledge of the central government, which would then use this knowledge to enhance the power of the country. Although it passed in the Commons, the House of Lords rejected the census bill. Much of the debate on the census bill centered on whether it was possible or even desirable to make statistics about population visible. A census, supporters argued, would help resolve the uncertainty over whether the population in England was declin-

ing or increasing, and the state could then design policies to remedy any deficiencies uncovered by the count. The debate focused on three questions: what was the population of Great Britain?; had it increased or decreased since the Glorious Revolution of 1688?; was it increasing or decreasing at the present? Some argued that the rise in commercial activity during the previous century had led to a comparable rise in population; others, notably conservative agricultural interests and radical politicians, lined up in support of the depopulation thesis. Members of this latter coalition accused the Whig government and the rising commercial classes of weakening the moral fiber of the population through a combination of political corruption and rampant commercialism. In their view, the growth in alienable property had contributed to moral laxity and sexual debauchery, which had fostered a decline in population. Fears of depopulation had engendered its own family policy, the mid-eighteenth-century establishment “of a spate of maternity hospitals designed to cut the mortality rate among the childbearing and infant poor” (Colley 1992: 86).

Supporters of the bill cited several additional benefits. Census data would facilitate raising an army – the initial, ineffectual opposition to the incursion of the Pretender and his rebellious Scots into England in 1745 was still a fresh and painful memory. Most important for the political arithmeticians, however, a census would remedy the defects of parish registers, and provide a firm basis for managing property relations, including emigration, tax policy, and poor relief. In the view of one enthusiast, government could then be run on the principles of police:

an annual register of the people would . . . ascertain the collective strength of the nation. That by pursuing this measure, we should gain a *police*, or a local administration of civil government, upon certain and known principles, the want of which has been long a reproach peculiar to this nation, the discouragement of industry, and the support of idleness.

([Anon] 1753c: 499)

Police, also known as statistics, was the science of government that flourished in much of Europe from the end of the Middle Ages until well into the nineteenth century (Pasquino 1991; Walker 1999).¹⁰ Police “took for granted populations were political creations, dependent on assertions of sovereign authority for their existence as aggregates open to statistical study” (Buck 1982: 28). The principles of police attempted to reproduce the order and stability of a regime of ranks and orders, where custom and sumptuary legislation ruled (or were supposed to rule) behavior.

The professed goal of police was to promote the “happiness of all.” Household management, especially the regulation of individual conduct within the family, played a crucial role in achieving the goals of police:

police originally involved answering the question of how to introduce economy – that is to say, the correct manner of managing individuals, goods

and wealth within the family (which a good father is expected to do in relation to his wife, children and servants) and of making the family fortunes prosper – how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father toward his family into the management of the state.

(Foucault 1991: 92)

Under police, the art of government consisted of three types of governance at three different levels of aggregation: self-management (morality); household management (economy); and the rule of state (politics). A ruler must first learn to govern himself, then his estate, and only then could he rule the nation. The science of police, which could be openly coercive, transmitted “to individual behavior and the running of the family the same principles as the good government of the state. The central term of this continuity is the government of the family, termed *economy*” (Foucault 1991: 92, emphasis in original).

Though this form of economic government became synonymous with good government from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century in Europe, in the eighteenth century the focus of police shifted. Rather than a family-based model, police now placed preeminence on the problem of population. Supporters suggested not only that certain aspects of the wealth of nations could only be attributed to aggregates much larger than family, such as population, but that some aspects of population movements themselves were irreducible to family behavior. Yet, while household management was no longer strictly synonymous with state management, family remained a critical instrument in the regulation of population and wealth.

English political arithmetic, the systematic study of social numbers developed by John Graunt and William Petty in the 1660s, was controversial from its inception because of its ties to police, and its practitioners’ support of the minute examination and manipulation of the household as a means to expand state power. Petty, in *A Treatise of Ireland* (1687), for example, had proposed to resettle all save a few Irishmen to England, replacing them with Englishmen, and forcing those Irish who remained to adopt English names and the English language. Petty reasoned that since an English life was far more valuable than an Irish one, transforming the Irish into English would enhance the wealth of the state (Porter 1986: 19–20). In fact, the fate of the 1753 census bill was sealed by the very lack of state power its supporters wished to augment. The imposition of police was politically infeasible in England in the wake of the flight of James II, and the consequent absence of the absolute power and authority of the king (Poovey 1998: 147). If the political arithmeticians failed to make family a blunt instrument for regulating population and the well-being of the state, it nonetheless became a crucial indicator of both. The wealth and strength of a people depended on the number and character of its people, and population size or its rate of growth was the best indicator of a prosperous and well-governed country. Political arithmeticians and their opponents in the census debate took family size, structure, behavior, and happiness both as indicators and determinants of population growth or decline. Yet all observers lacked the family facts to

confirm their conjectures that the nation's population was increasing or decreasing. Available poor law records, birth registers, life tables, and bills of mortality all remained imperfect well into the first decades of the nineteenth century. These were administered at the local parish level, and, without central collation, it was unclear what geographical area could stand in for the nation as a whole.

Proponents of the census felt it would settle questions about population; opponents criticized the government intrusions into family life and freedom called for by its provisions. They maintained that political arithmeticians, by meddling in family affairs in order to determine the size of the population, risked weakening the very population whose strength they wished to measure and augment. They warned against the prospect of police, especially the threat it represented to the stability of landed property, and, by extension, political liberty (Glass 1973). William Thornton of York, leader of the opposition to the bill, recounted the excesses of French police, particularly policies that, he maintained, discouraged rather than encouraged trade and industry. He cautioned that the provisions of the bill placed no curbs on the power of the officers of the state to "molest and perplex every single family in the kingdom" ([Anon] 1753c: 500). Thornton acknowledged the deficiency of parish registers, and was willing to grant that "some good purpose may be answered by the knowledge of our numbers," but maintained that, on the whole, making public this knowledge would be tantamount to strengthening the nation's enemies: "An annual register of our people, will acquaint our enemies abroad with our weakness, and a return of the poor rate, our enemies at home with our wealth" ([Anon] 1753c: 500). For Thornton, if the census were successfully conducted, the next step was easy to predict:

If these powers and penalties should prove effectual for the purposes for which alone they can be appointed, the next question to every individual will certainly be, What is his property? and then the great work of will be complete, and our government will be established en police.

(Cobbett, 1813, XV, col. 1326)

These fears had some basis in fact. The political arithmetician James Dodson proposed placing all freehold property under government regulation. Linked to information gathered under the census, Dodson's plan would have placed government annuities under rational governance. Opponents saw the plan as a threat to property and liberty; if put into practice, the nation's subjects would revert to vassalhood, groaning under the burden of unjust and arbitrary taxation.¹¹

The failure of the census proposal prompted a shift in emphasis in political arithmeticians' perceptions of who statisticians were and what they measured. Their proposals that followed on the heels of the census debate were characterized by a notable absence of state involvement, in fact a reduction of state power rather than its expansion (Buck 1982: 28). They sought to legitimate their practice as an enumeration of autonomous individuals, citizens who constituted the state, rather than as a form of knowledge that embodied the sovereign's gaze,

and which constructed the state and its subjects as a political entity. Among the political arithmeticians, dissenters, who lacked political power commensurate with their economic wealth, now focused on stabilizing mobile rather than less alienable landed property, an emphasis less likely to arouse aristocratic fears of encroachments upon private property. Richard Price, for example, sought to construct a system of annuities based on data privately gathered and voluntarily given rather than coerced by the state. These annuities, by being “rational, equitable, and permanent,” would mimic the principles of primogeniture and strict settlement in the landed gentry (Buck 1982: 42).¹² Mobile property would remain stable over generations, just like landed property. Stabilizing mobile property and making it as inalienable as landed property would also confer political legitimacy upon the commercial classes. If their property resembled landed property, they too should qualify as autonomous political actors (Buck 1982: 35–8).

Political subjects and economic types

The debates over the marriage and census bills hinged on efforts to make desires for sex and property visible, measurable even, in order to legitimate and preserve families and property, and ensure national prosperity. The proposals of the political arithmeticians were contemporaneous with work by political philosophers and theorists who, reflecting on the experiences of civil war, restoration, and the Glorious Revolution, as well as commercial expansion, sought to reconstitute the bases of knowledge and governing authority in England. They asked how the English and, after the union of 1707, Britons were to mediate the potentially murderous clashes of political and economic interests and aggregate to a governable and virtuous whole. The question generated a series of other questions. Just who were the English and British? Were knowledge and authority generally or universally shared? If not, in which group or groups did they reside? If government were to be conceived of as ideal family life realized, in the flesh, which group or groups of subjects embodied these ideals – who were the individuals, families, and communities who were both representative and could represent?

The past quarter century has seen an efflorescence of works analyzing the debates on political philosophy and practice in eighteenth-century England that grapple with these questions. Pocock and others who have followed in his wake have mapped the importance and variety of the rhetoric of classical civic humanism, theories of natural and contractual rights and jurisprudence, questions of national identity, and the place of Anglican and dissenting church doctrines in these discussions (see, for example, Pocock 1975, 1985, 1993; Phillipson 2000; Clark 2000; Colley 1992). Some have traced the shifting meanings of words such as civility, sensibility, politeness, and sociability through their association with virtue (see Carter 2001 for example), as well as their relationship to material changes such as shifts in consumption patterns, including consumption of domestic and foreign luxuries. Others have detailed how, as the century drew to

a close, Edmund Burke and Malthus invested charged meanings to words such as “custom” and “experience” in opposition to radical claims for “reason” as the basis for knowledge and authority (Herzog 1998).

Roughly speaking, English writers in the civic humanist vein reinterpreted classical republican writings, and judged economic and political relations in moral terms. They identified ownership of land by the male of the household as the prerequisite for full political participation and integrity. Male landowners were identified with public interests because ownership of land allowed them the autonomy and independence vital to nurture virtue; thus they, even in seeking to advance their own private interests, would advance those of the nation. Commercial and financial wealth, on the other hand, because it was alienable and mobile, constituted a possible threat. If owners could move their wealth and themselves, their interests did not necessarily coincide with those of the nation as a whole; and, even if they did wish to defend the nation, they would find it more difficult than would landowners to leave their productive activities. Therefore, landed wealth was synonymous with a particular form of masculinity, one synonymous with public virtue, while other forms of wealth were not necessarily so (Pocock 1975: 462–505).

The civic humanist tradition had numerous variants. Discussions about virtue and political authority had become grist for a wide writing and reading audience, especially after the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695 left the press relatively unfettered. The journalists Defoe, Addison and Steele, for example, while accepting the basic moral premises of civic humanism, adopted a more positive view of the role of commerce. They argued that, at the very least, “economy” and the other commercial virtues possessed by merchants and the middle classes were principles conducive to the increase of the nation’s wealth, riches that underwrote the aristocratic benevolence that the civic humanists were so quick to vaunt (Copley 1984: 6–7; Poovey 1998: 144–5).¹³ They also wrote on credit and, especially, the burgeoning national debt, which was formally instituted as a financial fact distinct from the monarch’s personal debt in 1693. The debt, a means to finance foreign wars, and the emergence of what’s been called the “fiscal-military state” (Brewer 1988) – of which the establishment of the Bank of England in 1694 is another key moment – posed new challenges to the belief that virtue and political authority and order rested on landed property and the men who held it. The debt was financed by groups of (court) Whig merchants, speculators, and financiers, men without land but with money and, as a result, influence with the king.

The national debt converts property into not just a mobile, but an imaginary form, based on promises to repay at a future date that most everyone acknowledges will never arrive. Paper credit, the agreement to loan money to be repaid in the future, is based on an investor’s belief in the stability of government and the probity of commercial relations at present. If credit was essential to commercial expansion, for early eighteenth-century observers it shared with fiction an unnerving unreliability in its textual forms – stock certificates, bonds, bills of exchange, and all those other pieces of paper with writing on them all held out

the prospect of not delivering on their promises to pay some time in the future (Sherman 1995). This uncertainty poses challenges: how could one stabilize credit, make it transparent, and, thus, convert promises into honest commercial behavior by individuals? In Pocock's interpretation, Defoe proposed that the experience and confidence of prudent merchants would be able to convert imaginary property into a more stable form, by transforming credit and speculative passions into "opinion" (Pocock 1985: 98–100; Pocock 1975: 440–1, 454–6). Each party in a transaction based on credit believes that "promises would be performed and expectations fulfilled" (Pocock 1985: 113). Thus, Defoe, Addison, and Steele depicted credit as a feminine and unstable figure; for Pocock, in Defoe's case, credit operated like the classical figure of the goddess Fortuna, fickle in her passions, and driven to speculative hysteria in her booms and busts, which placed politics and trade at her mercy (Pocock 1975: 453; Pocock 1985: 99).

Yet Defoe's "Lady Credit," subject of a number of his political essays in his *Review* early in the century, was a mere mortal. She embodies both sexual dishonesty and impossible narrative turns. Defoe's historical account of credit's role in recent English history traces an (allegorized) sexually perverse subject who is, by turns a "Coy Mistress" and a "Coy Virgin," chaste, whorish, a victim of rape, and chaste again, chary or gluttonous, a bodying forth of the open-ended narratives, and uncertain epistemological state of credit itself (Sherman 1995: 187–90). Faith in the power of "opinion" to stabilize credit was badly shaken by the collapse of the South Sea Bubble; Lady Credit was denounced. Paper credit had in fact created new possibilities for women – they constituted some 20 percent of the investors in the South Sea Company – but it also produced anxieties about the foundations and stability of value, qualms expressed in pamphlets through representations of femininity. Thus, the "economic man" who emerged in the literature written about the crisis is a feminized male (Straub 2000: 305; Ingrassia 1998). How did Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, whose three-part adventure played out in print during the crisis, fit into these discussions? Present-day economists, who often cite Crusoe as "economic man," make much of the fictional merchant-speculator's ability to master his environment with a few tools and his wits, and his rational division of his own time between production, consumption, leisure, and entrepreneurial activities. Many readers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had a similar response to the narrative; in *Emile* (1762), Jean Jacques Rousseau used Crusoe as a model to shape Emile's education and socialization. But Crusoe proved a problematic masculine exemplar for other eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century readers. He truly came into being as economic man in the mid-nineteenth century, the result of no little work by Jane Marcet and Martineau, who, in rewrites of the tale, helped refashion Crusoe into a rational calculator. What is important to note is that in their texts, the management of desires becomes a detail of family and household management: male and female characters modeled after Crusoe shed his passion for travel, his propensity to dominate others, his Puritan moral anguish, and his struggle with excessive speculative desires, and instead participated in a set of family dramas

played out against a backdrop of Malthusian population pressures (White 1982, 1987; Cooper 1997).

The novel itself can be read as the unfolding, in narrative time, of Crusoe's spiritual education, as he struggles to control his speculative desires, and his propensity to flee from his homes and families. Crusoe lacks one of the attributes that would confer political authority in the civic humanism tradition – he does not stay at home (at least, until he has no means of escape from his island). Impelled by an irresistible desire to travel, Crusoe initially follows his “rambling thoughts,” refusing to heed both the dictates of patriarchal, parental, and providential authority, and what he terms “loud Calls from my own Reason” that counsel him to stay put in York. If both the power of “opinion” and the conversion of the passion of avarice into calculable interests can result in social order (Hirschman 1977; Daston 1994: 192), Crusoe also appears disruptive to social cohesion precisely because he is neither sociable nor so accurate a calculator of probabilities and risks (McKeon 1987: 322). His island shipwreck is occasioned by one of his periodic fits of speculative fever, brought on by the success of his plantation in Brazil: “now increasing in Business and Wealth, my Head began to be full of Projects and Undertakings beyond my Reach; such as are indeed often the Ruine of the best Heads in Business.” In order to make a quick fortune on the plantation, he plots with his neighbors to trade for Guinea slaves. “Opinion” does not check his speculative desires: though he need not accompany the ship in order to secure his share of the potential profits from the venture, he decides to join the voyage anyway, an effort he describes, retrospectively, as “pursu[ing] a rash and immoderate Desire of rising faster than the Nature of the Thing admitted,” and obeying “blindly the Dictates of my Fancy rather than my Reason” (Defoe 1994: 4, 12, 29, 31).

Crusoe's desires are not, however, unalterably fixed. Two years' experience on the island, he relates, “chang'd both my Sorrows and my Joys; my very Desires alter'd, my Affections chang'd their Gusts, and my Delights were perfectly new, from what they were at my first Coming, or indeed for the two Years past.” On his island Crusoe tries to exercise “Prudence” and to make “a Judgment of what I ought to have done, and not to have done” (Defoe 1994: 31). Crusoe attributes this new attitude to the work of God (Defoe 1994: 82). A lack of society affords leisure time and time to reflect, necessary conditions for sharpening the intellect. His experience on the island produces something else: not just an alteration and moderation, but a lack of desire in Crusoe. His wants diminish to the satisfaction of mere physical needs and his “confm'd” desires are settled desires: “I had nothing to covet; for I had all that I was now capable of enjoying . . . I had enough to eat, and to supply my Wants, and, what was all the rest to me?” Put another way, his desires were almost totally sated, and his values were almost totally reduced to use values: “I had no room for Desire, except it was of Things which I had not, and they were but Trifles [tobacco-pipes, a hand-mill, turnip and carrot seeds, a bottle of ink, and the like], though Indeed of great use to me” (Defoe 1994: 94).

Crusoe's voyage of self-discovery affirms the ability of an individual to transform, even lessen one's desires, and to become more adept at reckoning risks,

at least temporarily, through education or a change in the environment. Defoe contrasts the risks associated with Crusoe's travels to the opportunities available to those who choose to confine their desires *within* English families and society. The benefits of sociability are the spiritual and material rewards Crusoe would have earned by remaining comfortably nested in the "middle State, or what might be called the upper Station of Low Life." Crusoe's father describes "the middle State" as an ideal, the "State of Life which all other People envied," and which "was calculated for all Kind of Vertues and all kinds of Enjoyments" (Defoe 1994: 5–6).

Crusoe dampens and manages desire. His spiritual awakening, abetted by a good dose of violence, enables Crusoe to establish his household and assert patriarchal authority over Friday and the others who eventually reside on the island. In effect, Crusoe temporarily converts his commercial speculations into landed wealth, settling into the life of a country gentleman, complete with town and country "estates." Moral philosophers such as David Hume, writing later in the century, avoid such conversion narratives. They too stressed that England was a commercial society, but maintained that the republican ideal, where virtue resided in the landowning aristocrat, was increasingly anachronistic. They focused, instead, on an expanded set of virtuous private actors which included, naturally, the intellectual classes, as well as self-interested merchants and laborers, whose private actions created social good (Bellamy 1998: 2–4). Frances Hutcheson and Hume, in particular, articulated an emerging view that an individual's happiness and sociability, sensitivity to others, were the ends of social life (Kaufmann 1995: 43–6). As Hundert notes, all these views on individual autonomy and moral agency in commercial society were complicated by the satiric vision put forth earlier in the century by Bernard Mandeville (Hundert 2000). In the *Fable of the Bees* (1723 and 1728), Mandeville argued that society was bound together by greed, envy, and competition among individuals rather than moral probity or shared commitment to civic ideals. For those who confronted the paradox that Mandeville presented between visible outcomes and invisible passions – the assertion that private vices bred public virtues – the stage actor became the best metaphor of the self who balanced sociability and self-love in commercial society. As representative types, actors and spectators captured the tension inherent in a figure whose inner motives, whether venal or virtuous, could not be determined by her or his actions. Smith, who had been Hutcheson's student in Glasgow, Hume and Adam Ferguson all concluded that character is not an expression of individual, innate moral virtue, but a malleable social "construct," determined in part through the play of passions and the demands of the "audience" in the stage of public life (Hundert 2000: 32, 41–6).

In 1790, Smith addressed these concerns in the sixth and final edition of *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. In a new section, on propriety, that concluded the first part of the book, Smith wrote that economic inequality activates self-interested behavior, and thus provides the necessary stimulus for commercial activity. But this "is, at the same time, the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments," because applause is proffered for wealth

and power, in contradistinction to poverty and weakness, which people are too often prone to despise (*TMS* I, iii. 3, 1). If the “great objects of ambition and emulation” are to “enjoy the respect and admiration of mankind,” two different paths and the actions of two different types of people, lead to this result:

Two different roads are presented to us, equally leading to the attainment of this so much desired object; the one, by the study of wisdom and the practice of virtue; the other, by the acquisition of wealth and greatness. Two different characters are presented to our emulation; the one of proud ambition and avidity; the other, of humble modesty and equitable justice. Two different models, two different pictures, are held out to us, according to which we may fashion our own character and behaviour; the one more gaudy and glittering in its colouring; the other more correct and more exquisitely beautiful in its outline: the one forcing itself upon the notice of every wandering eye; the other, attracting the attention of scarce any body but the most studious and careful observer. They are the wise and the virtuous chiefly, a select, though I am afraid, but a small party, who are the real and steady admirers of wisdom and virtue. The great mob of mankind are the admirers and worshippers, and what may seem more extraordinary, most frequently the disinterested admirers and worshippers of wealth and greatness.

(*TMS* I, iii, 3, 2)

This is a startling passage. Smith distills almost fifty years of study on the intricacies of human nature into a judgment that commercial society is a moral and aesthetic universe inhabited by only two types of people. When combined with his declaration that persons seeking their fortune in commercial society “too frequently abandon the path of virtue,” we have a portrait of Smith apparently souring on the possibility that the virtuous type will prevail in commercial society.

According to Smith, most observers would have difficulty discerning true beauty, or virtue, and were deceived by the qualities of wealth and power, which society deems admirable. Yet he maintained that men, in the main, were virtuous. The middle-class path to fortune was almost always identified with attitudes and behavior that typified the virtuous character:

In the middling and inferior stations of life, the road to virtue and that to fortune, to such fortune, at least, as men in such stations can reasonably expect to acquire, are, happily, in most cases, very nearly the same. In all the middling and inferior professions, real and solid professional abilities, joined to prudent, just, and temperate conduct, can very seldom fail of success. . . . Men in the inferior and middling stations of life, besides, can never be great enough to be above the law, which must generally overawe them into some sort of respect for, at least, the more important rules of justice. The success of such people, too, almost always depends upon the favour and good opinion of their neighbours and equals; and without a tolerably regular conduct these can very seldom be obtained. The good old

proverb, therefore, That honesty is the best policy, holds, in such situations, almost perfectly true. In such situations, therefore, we may generally expect a considerable degree of virtue; and, fortunately for the good morals of society, these are the situations of by far the greater part of mankind.

(*TMS* I, iii, 3, 2)

“The greater part of mankind” is constrained to virtuous behavior by respect for the law, and by sociability. The capacity for and use of language was key to the latter. In Smith’s account of the development of human nature in the course of history, the play of language in commercial society enabled not just the basis for the exchange of an increasing volume of goods, an augmentation of the wealth of nations, but also the increased circulation of the sentiments and sympathy. Increasingly sophisticated and complex conversations would establish “a sense of propriety that would socialize and individuate simultaneously.” Propriety, or self-approval, served as a firmer foundation for individual contentment and virtue than the approbation of others (Phillipson 2000: 80).

To Smith, agents in commercial society were riven by a fundamental tension, and, though fundamentally optimistic on the point, he believed there was no guarantee that virtuous action will win over the audience in the end. Moral philosophers were also involved in discussions about what has been variously designated reason of state, government rationality, or, governmentality. Reason of state, the “conduct of conduct,” consisted of activity aimed at regulating the conduct of people (including oneself), and could involve overt regulations in civil society and markets, such as that of police. But in England, after 1689, it increasingly involved regulating one’s psychology – as exemplified in Crusoe’s struggles to domesticate his desires – and of the image the individual projected to the rest of the world. The shift toward self-regulation had political ramifications. Authority and rule increasingly became a function of voluntary compliance, self-rule “through mechanisms of discrimination and emulation essential to rule by fashion” (Poovey 1998: 147). For example, British gentlemen in the immediate post-revolutionary period embraced modesty and simplicity in dress, prior to its adoption by men of the middle classes. Inconspicuous yet expensive consumption was a marker of political legitimacy; it expressed manly virtue, and reflected taste freed from the corruption of luxury that some contemporaries maintained “effeminated and impoverished England” (Kuchta 1996: 63). This “great masculine renunciation” excluded men of other classes from political power, as well as elite women, who were seen as conspicuous consumers of luxury goods.

Thus, while, generally speaking, knowledge about desires became the preserve of political economy, and knowledge about discrimination and emulation became the province of fashion, taste, and aesthetics, the two domains overlapped. The ideal political subject was also recognizably an economic subject:

Administering self-rule in a market society involved understanding human motivations, including the desire to consume, rather than simply measuring

productivity or overseeing obedience. As a consequence, the knowledge that increasingly seemed essential to liberal governmentality was the kind cultivated by moral philosophers: an account of subjectivity that helped explain desire, propensities, and aversions as being universal to humans as a group.

(Poovey 1998: 147)

Moral philosophers assumed self-rule and a universal human nature. These assumptions allowed them to theorize from and about individuals, often the moral philosophers themselves, who could represent humankind as ideal types. As a result, there was no aggregation problem: moving from observations about individuals (the philosophers, that is) to claims about families, communities, and populations caused no trouble, even in the absence of complete information. The theories of government that resulted, deductive abstractions from a priori assumptions, were used to describe and predict human behavior.

What has this to do with the family? The visions of social life just described were based on universalizing the characteristics of particular classes of men, moral philosophers on the one hand, and merchants, on the other. Though Smith's impartial spectator is a theatrical figure, a "fiction generated by rhetoric, language and the imagination . . . to serve [the] primary moral needs [of moral agents]" (Phillipson 2000: 82), Smith makes no claims for his occupational status, other than that of regulating the conduct of his man of virtue in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The same mechanisms that define a man of virtue for Smith, however, are those that also define the bases of success in commercial affairs. And, crucially, it is the conjugal family that first inculcates both these virtues and the capacity for individual boys and girls to regulate their conduct and modify their self-interested behavior (Rendall 1987: 70–2). The impartial spectator is the governor of the self who enables the ideal man to counteract the "strongest impulses of self-love" with the gentleness of "sensibility":

The man of the most perfect virtue, the man whom we naturally revere and love the most, is he who joins, to the most perfect command of his own original and selfish feelings, the most exquisite sensibility both to the original and sympathetic feelings of others. The man who, to all the soft, the amiable, the gentle virtues, joins all the great, the awful, and the respectable, must surely be the natural and proper object of our highest love and admiration.

(*TMS* III, iii, 3, 35)

Sensibility combined the masculine and feminine virtues of reason and sentiment. Smith claimed that knowledge of sensibility was the special preserve of poets and novelists. He asserted that

the poets and the romance writers, who best paint the refinements and delicacies of love and friendship, and all other private and domestic affections,

Racine and Voltaire; Richardson. Marivaux, and Riccoboni; are, in such cases [of sensibility to the misfortunes of others] much better instructors than [the Stoics] Zeno, Chrysippus, or Epictetus.

(*TMS* III, 3, 14)

As we will see in the next chapter, women, in their role as educators within the family, also claimed “sensibility both to the original and sympathetic feelings of others” as an area of expertise within the provinces of domestic and political economy.

Still, it appears men alone (and only a few at that) could become the “man of the most perfect virtue” in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; women lack the courage and capacity for command over their passions necessary to “acquire the virtues of public life” (Rendall 1987: 59–60; Alvey 2001: 7–9). Only men, therefore, can qualify to be the “hero, the statesman, or the legislator.” Yet, by exercising command over the less violent and turbulent passions, both men and women could achieve the “amiable virtue of chastity,” and the “respectable virtues of industry and frugality.” This (lesser) combination of self-command and sensibility, which characterized the “conduct of all those who are contented to walk in the humble paths of private and peaceable life,” constituted commercial virtues for Smith (*TMS* VI, iii, 13). As Justman and Alvey note, men are at their most effeminate, relatively speaking, in commercial society, the stage of civilization where patriarchal rule is at its weakest (Justman 1993: 25–6; Alvey 2001: 5–6); thus the exercise of Stoic self-command may preserve commercial man’s masculinity in the face of the rampant consumerism and effeminating luxury of his day (Justman 1993: 12–14). The goal of the “Author of Nature” is “the happiness of mankind, as well as of all other rational creatures” (*TMS* III, 5, 7). This is confirmed by the confluence of these virtues with the distribution of material rewards,

the general rules by which external prosperity and adversity are commonly distributed in this life. . . . [E]ven here every virtue naturally meets with its proper reward, with the recompense which is most fit to encourage and promote it; and this too so surely, that it requires a very extraordinary concurrence of circumstances entirely to disappoint it. What is the reward most proper for encouraging industry, prudence and circumspection? Success in every sort of business. And is it possible that in the whole of life these virtues should fail of obtaining it? Wealth and external honours are their proper recompense, and the recompense which they can seldom fail of acquiring.

(*TMS* III, 5, 8)

Maximum self-command and command of the respect of others maximize individual virtue. Individual virtue, in turn, merits its own material reward.

As many readers have noted, there is no inconsistency between virtuous individual behavior as sketched in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which combines a mastery of self-love and sensibility in dealing with others, and the (resulting)

self-interested behavior, which includes capital accumulation, that furthers one's own and one's nation's wealth in *Wealth of Nations* (see, for example, Fitzgibbons 1995: chapter 10; Winch 1978; Brown 1994; Teichgraeber 1986; Alvey 2001). In *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, commercial society produces virtues such as punctuality and probity; in *Wealth of Nations* Smith adds another economic mechanism to the lesson that virtue meets its own reward. While eschewing an analogy between economy and political economy, he indicates that the accumulation of capital improves individual behavior. Accumulation, previous to and a precondition for the division of labor, promotes good conduct or "industry"; good conduct, in turn, promotes additional capital accumulation. Smith distinguishes between those funds set aside for replacing capital and for the maintenance of productive labor, and those "constituting a revenue either as rent or profit," which tend to maintain unproductive labor. When Smith places the opposition between these two types of funds in comparative historical and national perspective, he concludes not only that the size and proportion of the former is greater in rich than poor countries, but that the opposition marks two distinct types of behavior:

The proportion between these different funds necessarily determines in every country the general character of the inhabitants as to industry or idleness. We are more industrious than our forefathers; because in the present times the funds destined for the maintenance of industry, are much greater in proportion to those which are likely to be employed in the maintenance of idleness, than they were two or three centuries ago. Our ancestors were idle for want of a sufficient encouragement to industry. . . . [In manufacturing towns,] where the inferior ranks of people are chiefly maintained by the employment of capital, they are in general industrious, sober, and thriving; as in many English, and in most Dutch towns. In those towns which are principally supported by the constant or occasional residence of a court, and in which the inferior ranks of the people are chiefly maintained by the spending of revenue, they are in general idle, dissolute and poor; as at Rome, Versailles, Compeigne and Fontainbleau.

(*WN* II, iii, 12)

The progress of commercial society, promoted by capital accumulation, leads to an accumulation of virtue in the "inferior ranks." It does the same for the middle classes. Smith concludes: "The proportion between capital and revenue, therefore, seems everywhere to regulate the proportion between industry and idleness. Wherever capital predominates, industry prevails: wherever revenue, idleness." Smith's system produces a virtuous social outcome, plenty and order, and virtuous individual behavior. In turn, capital depends on good conduct, as part of self-interested behavior: "Capitals are increased by parsimony and diminished by prodigality and misconduct" (*WN* II, iii, 13–14).

Thus frugality and good conduct are critical cogs in Smith's system. In the vast majority of individuals and their undertakings they prevail over the

“passion for present enjoyment” and bad conduct (*WN* II, iii, 28). Frugality stems from the innate and universal (“uniform, constant, and uninterrupted”) “desire of bettering our condition, a desire which, though generally calm and dispassionate, comes with us from the womb, and never leaves us till we go into our grave” (*WN* II, iii, 31, 28). As for good conduct, Smith simply assumes that “the number of prudent and successful undertakings is every-where much greater than that of injudicious and unsuccessful ones.” National progress and improvement devolve from the desire for self-improvement, which results in frugality and good conduct. And, though “public prodigality and misconduct” may impoverish great nations, private frugality and good conduct are generally sufficient to “compensate [for] . . . the public extravagance of government” (*WN* II, iii, 29–31). The degree of capital accumulation helps determine the degree of virtue in a society: the more you accumulate, the more prudent you and those around you become, and the more you and they accumulate. A virtuous, self-reinforcing cycle ensues.

Many have focused on “interest” as a key determinant in the relationship between individual behavior and the social state in *Wealth of Nations*, noting that, as an unintended consequence, the vice of self-interest leads to social virtue. Contemporaries, in this account, failed to embrace Smith’s vision as a basis for ethics because of the lack of connection between individual intentions and social results.¹⁴ Others have pointed out that contemporaries believed interests, when converted into calculable, thus predictable economic interests, fostered social order (Daston 1994). Here, I’ve offered another variant on the unintended consequences story: when self-interested individuals mobilize capital, they mobilize other individuals. This process produces less idleness, and more orderly, and more sociable behavior among the middle and inferior ranks. *Wealth of Nations* stresses the self-regulating nature of a system that results from the accommodation of “altogether endless” desires, where the sole end of production is consumption (De Marchi 1999). The infinite desires of commercial civilization were governed by prudence, foresight and economy in consumption, and a consistent effort at production. The social system no longer needed much overt regulation of individuals to produce order. A minimal level of self-regulation of self-interested individual behavior, where man equivocates between and equilibrates public opinion and self-government, would suffice to produce social order.

Wealth of Nations has been closely linked to the work of French Physiocrats such as Francois Quesnay, whose *Tableau Economique* (1766) also illustrates a method to enrich the social system based on self-equilibration. But *Tableau* also offers the ideal of complete knowledge for the king and his advisers; Smith, in contrast, asks readers of *Wealth of Nations* to observe that the defining characteristic of social life was that it escaped the gaze and effective control of the state, any individual, or group. The decentralization of economic and analytical power, however, came at a price. If the sovereign was no longer the repository of social information and the source of order, who held this position – merchants, political arithmeticians, moral philosophers – and how was one to

adjudicate their claims? That is, who in real life could simultaneously observe and represent the principles of this new science of political economy? Though the philosopher's trade was "to observe every thing," and thus invent new machinery or new systems of knowledge, this did not imply the ability to observe, understand, and therefore possibly regulate every transaction. The philosopher's vision, while more far-seeing than those of previous observers, guaranteed only imperfect knowledge: philosophers "are *often* capable of combining together the powers of the most distant and dissimilar objects," and even the spread of the division of labor among them ensured only "more expert," not perfect work (*WN* I, i, 9, emphasis added).

The position of the man of trade at the center of the world of private transactions conferred expertise akin to, if not equivalent to, that of the eighteenth-century moral philosophers. Smith, however, did express qualms about the effect of commercial civilization on the ability of other subjects to recognize their own interests. Neither landlords nor workers knew where their own economic interests lay, and were therefore susceptible to schemes of men of trade. The division of labor bore some responsibility for this state: a worker whose tasks were reduced to a "few simple operations . . . generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become," and lacks martial spirit in the bargain (*WN* V, i, Part III, Article II, 50).

Sociability underpins self-regulation and can ensure orderly conduct in this situation. We can be assured, Smith writes, that a "man of rank and fortune" regulates his conduct because society attends to "every part of his conduct," and

his authority and consideration depend very much upon the respect which this society bears to him. He dare not do any thing which would disgrace or discredit him in it, and he is obliged to a very strict observation of that species of morals, whether liberal or austere, which the general consent of this society prescribes to persons of rank and fortune.

(*WN* V, i, Part III, Article III, 12)

To Sir James Steuart, manners, not laws, help establish confidence, the basis of sentimental community between men (Skinner 1999: 60). Confidence between men, in turn, forms the basis of credit in commercial society: writing in *Principles of Political Economy* (1759), Steuart maintains that, "By laws the execution of formal contracts may be enforced; manners, alone, can introduce that entire confidence which is requisite to form the spirit of a trading nation." For Smith, however, an education in ethics and political economy would also help temper and redirect the passions of men of the upper classes: the former tends "both to establish and confirm the best and most useful habits of which the mind of man is susceptible"; the latter would render him less warlike, and instill in him the sense that the real interests of the nation lay in commerce and international trade, rather than war (Alvey 2001: 14).

Smith was even less sanguine about the manners of a "man of low condition." His situation afforded roles for religion and the state in ensuring good

conduct. Rural circumstances may constrain his behavior: if “he remains in a country village his conduct may be attended to, and he may be obliged to attend to it himself. In this situation, and in this situation only, he may have what is called a character to lose.” Once he moves to a “great city,” however, the anonymity it affords him allows him “to abandon himself to every sort of low profligacy and vice.” Membership in a small religious sect may rescue him from such a fate; close observation by members of one another’s conduct guarantees that in such sects “the morals of the common people have been almost always remarkably regular and orderly; generally much more so than in the established church” (*WN* V, i, Part III, Article III, 12). But Smith concludes that, “The morals of those little religious sects . . . have been rather disagreeably rigorous and unsocial.” Smith’s unease on this point led him to advocate frequent “public diversions” for the “inferior ranks” of people, as well as both private and state-supported education, the latter especially in science and philosophy. A basic understanding of the principles of science formed “the great antidote to the poison of enthusiasm and superstition” (*WN* V, i, Part III, Article III, 14).

For Smith, education of the inferior ranks in “civilized societies” would repair the damage wrought by the division of labor on their intellectual, social, and martial virtues (*WN* V, i, Part III, Article II, 59–61); for others, education would produce economic man and his faithful companion domestic woman, both of whom embody quintessentially middle-class values. This identification assumes we have a good handle on what the middle class is and what its values are. Historians have struggled to determine both the outlines of this social group and the experience of class formation in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. What they have developed in the last decade and a half is an understanding of the instability of middling identities in this period, and the crucial role gender played in stabilizing and destabilizing these identities. The language of class did not gain widespread currency until the late eighteenth century in England, and it did so by overlapping with and eventually replacing an earlier set of discussions about orders, ranks, situations, sorts, and stations. As for middle-class values, both vices and virtues come to mind when we talk about economic man – individualism, self-interest, calculation, and profiteering, on the one hand; prudence, frugality, and foresight, on the other.

While economic man and domestic woman were models to tinker with and emulate, they were not the only economic types available in this period. And, even if we allow that real people may have embodied these ideal characteristics, the capacity for economy and economic calculation only partially described the British. Dress was one characteristic that could signify masculinity and femininity or the lack thereof. Carter, for instance, maintains that the “fop,” who in his too gaudy adornment failed to conform to social conventions of manly attire and British as opposed to French consumption, was just such a social type, “the predominant eighteenth-century [literary] image of unmanliness” (Carter 1997: 40). The British used other markers of difference – based on regional and religious differences within Britain, for example – to describe themselves and others and to establish their identities. The different races of Britain were said to behave

differently: foreign visitors noted that, in contrast to the Scottish and Welsh, the English were reserved, favored silence in public settings (especially at meals), and insisted on privacy. If the English fashioned themselves polite, that is polished and virtuous, Burke, an Irishman, summed up their reputation as that of “a sullen, unsocial, cold, unpleasant race of men,” and maintained that a love of liberty and independence lay at the heart of much of their behavior (Langford 2000: 226). Also, as was evident in the conflict between English and Scottish marriage laws, institutional differences between the three kingdoms, and between England and Ireland, further hampered the consolidation of “Britishness,” the sense of a British national identity shared by a wide swath of people in Great Britain in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The sense of oneself as British hinged on various groups’ abilities to identify themselves, among other things, as not Catholic but Protestant, not simply Protestant but Anglican, as well as making class and gender distinctions (Clark 2000). And at the turn of the century much of the sense of common national identity of disparate groups as “British,” a category that included acknowledgement of sectional (English, Irish, Welsh, and Scottish) identities (Clark 2000: 275), resulted from a shared sense of what they were not. They were not French, and recoiled from the shock of the French Revolution, the ongoing battles with their continental neighbors, and the very real fears of invasion by Napoleon’s armies (Colley 1992).¹⁵

The presence of these multiple and shifting identities creates difficulties for social classification and social policy. Another complication lay in the fact that, if the English of the second half of the eighteenth century were a commercial people, they were thus also a people increasingly guided by sentiment, where behavior encompassed true feeling, as opposed to politeness, which carried with it the ever-present possibility of deception. Sentiment, which gained prominence in England in the 1770s through the writings of Rousseau (especially *Julie, ou La Nouvelle Heloise*, translated into English in 1761), Laurence Sterne (*Tristram Shandy*, which appeared in nine volumes, 1759–67), and, later, Goethe (*Werther*, translated into English in 1779), held myriad meanings. The most straightforward definition was the ability to feel deeply. The sentimental movement was allied to the growing religious conservatism of the evangelical revival; thus, acting on sentiment was considered consistent with moral virtue (Langford 1992: 470). In the estimation of some devotees of sentiment, spiritually grounded apprehension of the world through the immediacy of feeling and the senses left little room for reason. For the Blue Stocking Elizabeth Carter, writing in 1807, “Revelation agrees with the part of nature which we best understand, our own: the dictate of unsophisticated reason, and the genuine feelings of the human heart” (quoted in Langford 1992: 470). Mrs Barbauld, noted author of devotional works for children, went further, maintaining that there was no room for reason in the triumph of religion: “Its seat is in the imagination and the passions, and it has its source in that relish for the sublime, the vast and the beautiful, by which we taste the charms of poetry and other compositions” (quoted in Langford 1992: 471).

If rational calculation was seen as typically male, and too often hard-hearted, sentiment was seen as quintessentially feminine, characterized by meekness, submission, dependence, and gentleness. Any man adopting sentiment as a guide to action was said to possess a feminine heart. Sentiment could also be dangerous. An excess of feeling in women or men, detractors feared, could lead one to such profuse charitable giving that the benefactor would go bankrupt. Or, such excess could lead to a lack of benevolence by leaving one too sensate, so overwhelmed by feeling as to be rendered inert and ineffectual. Sentimentalism was not, however, necessarily opposed to rationalism or scientific inquiry; based on sense experience, it should be understood as a form of moral empiricism, and eighteenth-century philosophers considered moral sentiment a form of calculation (Motooka 1998: 19; Daston 1994: 185, 192). Yet, since experience is ultimately private and subjective, sentimentalism could lead one to conclude that there exists no basis for universal principles or knowledge. And if sentimentalism formed the empirical basis for moral authority, the process of moral judgment was therefore, essentially private and subjective, irreducible and incommensurable.

Sentimentalism thus highlights the problem of aggregation, from particular subjective judgment to general social virtue. In fact, sentimentalism brings into stark relief the same problems of knowledge and authority that plagued political economy. Smith assumed almost universal good conduct, self-interest tempered by sympathy, by various types, such as the impartial spectator and the speculative philosopher. Good conduct could solve the aggregation problem: it stabilized the relations between the particular and the general, between individual and the social good, in his version of political economy. Yet these types are not universal, but specific to a given time, a given place, and a given set of social relations (ranging, for Smith, anywhere from imperial China to ancient Greece, to the streets of contemporary Edinburgh), determined by what we would term cultural difference. Here, too, as with sentimentalism, moral judgment will be relative. According to Smith, we gauge our conduct to that of our compatriots.

The different situations of different ages and countries are apt . . . to give different characters to the generality of those who live in them, and their sentiments concerning the particular degree of each quality, that is either blameable or praiseworthy, vary, according to that degree which is usual in their own country, and in their own times.

(*TMS* V, 2, 7)

Virtue is relative. The impartial spectator and speculative philosopher ensure that, if one could not derive universal truths according to their models of behavior (observations and actions), one could at least assent to their general vision of moral truth.

Thus the contrast between sentiment's insistence on the primacy of feeling, and its emphasis on generosity and benevolence, and commercial calculation based on unfeeling, reason-based self-interest can be overdrawn. Again, sensi-

bility joined rationalism and sentimentalism to produce a compassionate, sensitive social subject with moderate desires (Brissenden 1974: 22, 24; Baumrin 1964), but finding the proper mix required learning. As a result, children became a special object of concern with regard to sentiment and the proper conduct of charity. Marcet notes that the form of her influential *Conversations on Political Economy* (1816), Socratic dialogues, is devoted to addressing questions arising from the sentimental tendencies of the young:

[the questions in the text] are in fact such as would be likely to arise in the mind of an intelligent young person, fluctuating between the impulse of her heart and the progress of her reason, and naturally imbued with all the prejudices and popular feelings of uninformed benevolence.

(Marcet 1816: ix)

Marcet's work details Mrs B's efforts to temper with reason the unguided enthusiasm – the press of feeling – of her young charge, Caroline. The passage reflects the long-lasting reverberations of the literary vogue for feeling and sensibility that began in the 1760s and 1770s, where sensibility entailed a heightened sensitivity to the moral, economic, and social problems of the day. Women's influence, like that of the fictional Mrs B, far from functioning as a moral force only within the family, and a limited one at that, could operate outside of the domestic sphere as part of self-same family responsibilities. If women could educate, they also needed to be educated in order to teach children the proper course of action. This explains, in part, the desire among political economists to educate everyone, not just men, in the principles of political economy.

Many believed that sentiment and business know-how went hand in hand, joined in a combination of sensibility that conduct book writers called commercial virtues. In conduct books, discussed more extensively in the following chapter, as in sentimental novels of the 1760s and 1770s, this combination was chiefly found in the character of working women (Skinner 1999: chapter 6). That is, sentiment could be tempered by the exercise of economy. This union was not, however, restricted to women. As noted above, when Smith traced out the virtuous circle that linked commerce and manners, he most often referred to "men"; the conjectural historian William Robertson makes the link directly in *View of the Progress of Society in Europe* (1769), where he insists that commerce "wear[s] off those prejudices which maintain distinctions and animosity between nations. It softens and polishes the manners of men" (quoted in Skinner 1999: 117).

Excessive sentiment could lead one to focus on feeling, not acting. Sensibility manifested itself in outward-directed sympathy and benevolence rather than in self-interested behavior. Yet sensibility called for caution about what knowledge was transmitted to impart reason. Political economy could be tempered by sensibility too. Women's moral sensibility could soften the harshness of market life and a propensity toward excessive self-interested behavior among traders.

Sensibility demanded a spiritual and rational engagement with the world. As Bentham noted, “By this means we arrive at the seat of the error. Sentiment excites to reflection, and reflection detects the impropriety of the law” (quoted in Langford 1992: 485). In practical terms, sensibility underlay a new “age of benevolence” in England in the second half of the eighteenth century. Rather than rely on individual, aristocratic beneficence, which was all too prone to waste and corruption, organizers of charitable endeavors increasingly based their efforts on joint philanthropy. Group efforts, typically undertaken through subscription were, in theory at least, conducive to better administration and a more effective check against waste and corruption. This new type of benevolence went hand in hand with a good deal of self-interested behavior by the merchants and tradesmen, who redirected charitable efforts toward the efficient delivery of services to the poor. After all, they constituted the bulk of ratepayers for parish relief, and increases in such expenditures in the 1770s and 1780s whetted their appetite for cost-saving measures.

These new philanthropists belonged to the middle or middling sorts of people. Starting in the sixteenth century, contemporaries began to refer to the richer and poorer sorts, the landed gentry and laboring poor, and, lying in between those two groups, the middle sort.¹⁶ The middle sort, which included Crusoe’s family, covers a wide range of incomes. If some of its members displayed good manners and fashionable and tasteful patterns of consumption that were “genteel,” others were “ungenteel.” The middle sort also included many occupations, merchants and shopkeepers, farmers and lesser gentry, craftworkers, and members of administrative, medical, and legal professions. Proportionally more men than women were members, because women earned less and had less wealth. Its ranks were characterized both by splits within the group and myopia without, a doggedly local vision on the part of its members. Though these fissures helped fuel the growth of voluntary associations, especially in urban areas, which produced communities of interest at the local level (Barry 1994), they also inhibited the development of a realization of affinities of position, outlook, and interests that went beyond the local context. This has led historians to narrow their analyses of the definition and workings of the middle sort in specific local and regional studies. Within these contexts, the middle sort is defined both by wealth and social boundaries, its income-generating capacity, and its group behavior, values, and beliefs. In the absence of detailed statistical enquiry, wealth has been measured by looking at probate records and the like, with key markers £40–50 annual income, roughly twice that necessary for subsistence for a family, and the ability to pay the poor rates;¹⁷ social boundaries have been inferred from membership in specific trades, parish and other leadership positions, clubs, and associations, as well as pamphlets, diaries, and prescriptive literature.

Attempts to locate the middle sort of the eighteenth century by correlating wealth and social position have been hampered by the scarcity of data. And the very lack of definitiveness of the social categories, whether defined by legal and fiscal or economic considerations, complicates the picture. Langford estimates

that in 1750 one in five belonged to the category if £50 annual income constituted the minimum required for inclusion; two in five if the minimum were £40 (Langford 1992: 62–3). Users of contemporary observers' own social taxonomies, such as the tables developed by the political arithmetician Gregory King in 1695, recognize that accounts of the superior moral attributes of the particular group in question, and of the middle sorts as a whole, are often self-serving and polemical idealizations. King's scheme mapped out a vision of the economy based on the household, listing twenty-six different types of households by levels of income and expenditure in order to determine which of these households contributed to the increase of wealth in the kingdom. Male membership in groupings other than the household, such as clubs and associations, local offices and parish leadership roles, aside from being read as evidence of how gender differences are established and maintained, have been taken as a means to consolidate common male middling identity (Kent 1999: 42). Local voluntary associations also allowed many merchants, tradesmen, and men in the professions to play an active role in the politics of civic improvement in the latter half of the century, whether in combination with aristocratic interests, or opposing the same interests in the name of greater openness and accountability in government (Rogers 1994: 165–6). But these roles also allowed wealthier and more powerful members of the middle sort – the “chief” inhabitants of a locale – to accentuate differences in rank within the middle sort itself (Smail 1992: 195–6). Through dress, conversation, and consumption habits, these men distinguished themselves from the poor, as well as from other, less wealthy members of their own sort.

By the later eighteenth century, these self-described “gentleman” had fashioned a new, more meritocratic notion of gentility (French 2000: 292). The meaning of the term “gentleman” was in flux throughout the eighteenth century, and it engendered a proliferation of descriptions, even whole new categories. Originally the term designated a man entitled to bear arms, but the definition became looser by the early eighteenth century, encompassing all who looked and behaved as gentlemen, that is, those who did not work with their hands. It embraced older, rural notions of gentility where aristocrats and squires drank, hunted, and whored, traditional manly acts of dissipation. It also described gentry who followed a sober lifestyle based on benevolent, paternalistic relations. It embraced as well the townsmen's broader definition of the gentleman as one who has money. In yet another permutation, which appealed to evangelical conservatives who wished to find stability in the increasing tumult of public life, gentlemen could cultivate the manners of male domesticity such as those promoted by the poet William Cowper (Davidoff and Hall 1987:112). Cowper advocated walks through the countryside, the cultivation of gardens, and engaged yet deferential political behavior. And Cowper's model of masculinity was later attacked itself by Thomas Hazlitt and others, as decidedly effeminate, utterly devoid of the manliness of the heroic Romantic gentleman. These multiple, shifting meanings were accompanied (and accomplished) by the intermingling and intermarriage of sons and daughters of the country gentry with those

of the merchants in towns. Inter-marriage served to raise the status of the trades rather than lower that of the gentry, whose males were still called gentlemen.

Thus, while it still implied some idea of birth, manners, and dress, “gentleman” increasingly became a self-appellation. The widening of meaning of the term led to the extension of the form of address “sir,” to include almost anyone of any rank or position. But there are limits to the process of individual self-fashioning: a laborer could call himself a gentleman only at the risk of ridicule. Objects that end up in places they “shouldn’t” be, so-called category “mistakes” (Douglass 1966), define and enforce epistemological, social, and moral orders. Boundary cases also define classification systems, and their ambiguous status can lead people to create new categories. “Gentleman” did not universally apply to those men with money, and early in the century Defoe designated “this land-water thing called a gentleman-tradesman” an “amphibious creature” (Defoe 1978: 78); by the 1780s, others called such strivers “half-gentleman.” Nor was the creation of new categories of “gentlemen” restricted to boundary cases; humorously, a personal servant was sometimes denoted a “gentleman’s gentleman.”

The term “gentlewoman” and the accompanying honorific “madam” signified imprecise categories as well. “Gentlewoman” nominally designated a woman of good birth or breeding, or an attendant on a woman of rank, but “madam” was also (and remains) the title for a procuress. In *Moll Flanders*, young Moll conflates the meaning of the terms because the categories of legitimate and illegitimate work for women overlap: sexual service is also “work.” Her hope of economic independence and desire to avoid going into service leads Moll to consider as equivalent the different classes of women who are designated “madam” – aristocratic ladies (or ladies of the gentry), and prostitutes. She is initially confused at reaction to her innocent misunderstanding at the meanings of the term “gentlewoman:”

all this while my good old nurse, Mrs Mayoress, and all the rest of them did not understand me at all, for they meant quite one sort of thing by the word gentlewoman, and I meant quite another; for alas! all I understood by being a gentlewoman was to be able to work for myself, and get enough to keep me without that terrible bugbear going to service, whereas they meant to live great, rich and high, and I know not what.

(Defoe 1978: 38)

Moll eventually reveals that she will be “such a gentlewoman” as the woman who mends lace, a woman that “they call . . . madam.” The old nurse informs her that this woman is, in fact, a “person of ill fame,” a phrase which has no meaning for the young Moll. Moll has made an understandable category mistake, but in doing so reveals that social classifications are anything but natural: they have to be learned, continually reaffirmed, and are subject to change. As the eighteenth century progressed, the middle ranks sought to appropriate this term, which Defoe indicates is applicable to those with the greatest and least social status, as a sign of respectability.

Thus the middle sort, partly defined by its relationship to the groups above and below it, was hardly a homogeneous category. What is clear is that the family took a central role in the middle sort's self-definition, self-government, and social mobility.¹⁸ It did so in two ways. First, the marriage market was of prime importance. Marrying up, either within the middle sort or with members of the upper sort, helped provide money for family businesses. Yet mobility within the group, which was characterized by a split between "clean" (distributive) and "dirty" (manual) trades, was limited, despite the possibilities offered by marriage. Earle's evidence for London indicates that there was minimal interchange between the two ends of the middle sort, which he defines by wealth between £500–10,000 at time of death (Earle 1989: 36). Within marriage, many women ran their own businesses or, if they didn't, provided crucial assistance, willingly or no, to their husband's enterprises (Hunt 1996: chapter six). Apprenticeships were another way in which family connections could provide a leg up in business.

In addition, the middle sorts were ambivalent about how to comport themselves, and this ambivalence could manifest itself in two different but not necessarily competing visions of household management. A family could copy the conspicuous consumption of the gentry in order to distinguish themselves from others, just below them in the social strata; or, they could extol the solid domestic virtues of industry and thrift. These latter were necessary for success in business and enabled individuals and households to secure human and financial capital. These were not necessarily conflicting idealizations – one could work hard in order to assume a level of consumption that distinguished a family from its inferiors – and they extended to the behavior recommended for men and women. Men could draw on models that called either for emulation of aristocratic promiscuity and excessive drinking, or the cultivation of gentility, with its emphasis on expensive yet refined tastes in dress and equipage. Women were not expected to stray far from their domestic responsibilities. Yet even in these roles they embodied a set of contradictory manners. They were counseled to be modest and dependent, yet were also taught to be active in their pursuit of the virtue of economy, based on an intimate knowledge of a household's finances.

By the late eighteenth century the language of sorts, increasingly imprecise and stereotypical, had become inadequate to the task of describing social groups, and was replaced by the language of class (Corfield 1987: 38–61; 1991: 101–30). Drawn from scientific usage, particularly Linnean classification, class was used to portray a social order that was as natural and harmonious as the natural order, with everyone in his or her place. The term had been applied to the lower orders as early as the 1730s, and "lower class" had become commonplace after the 1750s, as had the "upper classes" by the 1770s. References to "middle classes" were of slightly later provenance. Because class was a term most often used by those who possessed wealth and/or property to describe those who lacked it, marking gradations within the body of those who possessed both was a tricky proposition. Class was defined by horizontal social affinities, and the perception of common interests across occupational groups. While

hardly homogeneous, the middle class was composed of a body of people united in their wish to be identified as “upper” as opposed to “lower class” (Langford 1992: 652–5).

Contemporary accounts on sorts and classes should be understood as social descriptions rather than analyses of social identities, *per se*. The descriptions of what came to be identified as middle-class values overlapped with those used to describe the middle sort, even in the wake of major occupational changes, a surge in population, and the frenetic pace of urbanization during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As the language of class emerged at the beginning of the nineteenth century, two models of the family’s role in governing individual behavior and in mediating the relationship between sex and property came to the fore in Great Britain, social paternalism and domestic or separate spheres ideology. In social paternalism, society patterns itself after the hierarchical principles of the patriarchal family. The male-dominated household becomes a metaphor for society, and upper- and middle-class men attempt to extend the family hierarchy into public spheres: “elite men sought to control women’s independence as well as the independence of the working class in imagining the world as a patriarchal family with themselves at the head” (Newton 1989: 161). Social paternalists, including advocates in the Tory press, those opposed to Malthus and the New Poor Law (especially Michael Sadler), as well as Robert Southey and the Lake Poets, sought to reinvigorate and recast rural benevolent paternalism, which had weakened as rural labor had been transformed into wage labor, and as rural laborers increasingly lived out rather than in as part of farm families. It had ebbed too because noblemen and rural gentry focused more and more of their social activities in London and resort towns such as Brighton and Bath. Women and children, the first employees of the large-scale factories that began to dot the English landscape, were ideal subjects for testing out this ideology in practice. More generally, the social paternalists supported the individual’s natural right of support from the state, as one would expect support from the family. This led them to call for more rather than less government intervention in the economy, to oppose the New Poor Law, and to seek expanded relief for rural and urban poor. They supported policies that would guarantee employment at high wages in the belief that this would lead, in turn, to a healthy population growth rate. Thus Southey claimed “the true policy of governments is not to prevent their subjects from multiplying, but to provide uses and employment for them as fast as they multiply” (quoted in Lawes 2000: 17).

The new paternalism movement had little practical effect on politics in England. Some mid-Victorian employers, however, embraced a vision of paternalism that, while supportive of the principles of political economy, tempered their operation, and sought to collaborate rather than simply compete with their workers. The evangelical businessmen animated by such concerns represented the essence of Christian political economy, as they sought to balance commercial prowess and Christian virtue, and put religious belief into practice (Searle 1998: 268–73). Similar cautions apply to attempts to weigh the impact of the

other main model of patriarchal authority, domestic spheres, as an organizing category for historical analysis. Domestic spheres ideology posits not a metaphoric but a metonymic identification of family with society: men and women inhabit public and private spheres, respectively, realms that are separate but complementary, and not necessarily hierarchically ordered. Yet, even within works that articulated this ideal the boundaries between the spheres are unstable. Industrial novels in the 1830s, for example, often described and prescribed women's daily life as a solution to and not simply a haven from the stresses introduced by industrialization. In truth, domestic spheres ideology offered potentially unlimited scope to the activities of women. These activities were based upon an ideal of femininity that rejected passivity and weakness; indeed, each member of the ideal couple was expected to embody a mix of "masculine" and "feminine" attributes. Modesty and gentleness were favored for females, yes, but women required a degree of steel, too, to deal with the critical passage points of life – courtship, marriage, managing a household, the inevitable deaths of family members and friends. The virtue of self-command that men were prevailed upon to demonstrate was also demanded of women: servility was reserved for servants, over whom genteel women exercised power (Vickery 1998). Men were also expected to display a certain degree of self-effacement and modesty in cultivating politeness – which included probity, urbane manners, and material acquisitions – and, if they failed to do so, women were quick to censure their vulgar behavior. The cultivation of middle-class men's domesticity in early and mid-Victorian England, where masculinity was bound up with the possession of a wife, children, and a house, also offered a release from the stresses of the marketplace. It allowed middle-class men to express the tender, more feminine aspects of their nature toward their children, as well as to express their religiosity in a domestic setting (Tosh 1999). This, however, produced its own fears about effeminate sons; thus, the mid-century witnessed a shift toward the education of sons outside the home, in public schools (Tosh 1996). Where women's influence, even in the household, would be limited under the ideal of social paternalism, women who exercised influence under the banner of domestic duty and benevolence could go out of doors, and, in some instances, travel to the ends of the earth, for instance, to exercise charity. It thus allowed a space for women to play a role in politics, where the interests of upper- and middle-class men and women could clash.

Women's charitable endeavors have been much studied. But in recent essays that implicitly or explicitly adapt Habermas's concept of the public sphere to consider a disaggregated and expanded vision of politics – public spheres if you will – historians have also explored how aristocratic and middle class women exploited family names, family connections, social functions (through their considerable power as hostesses),¹⁹ and formal political networks to exercise informal power and influence in politics during the late eighteenth through to the nineteenth century (see the essays in Vickery 2001, for example). Then too, the concept of separate spheres suffers from the problem of periodicity. Clearly women's economic and political opportunities were much more limited than

men's, but this state predominated for centuries, and there is no clear evidence of a sharp change in gender roles to which we can comfortably mark as the moment when the idea of separate spheres took hold. Some scholars date the rise of this model to the seventeenth century, others to the early eighteenth, and still others to the late eighteenth century; local studies, when combined, offer implausible accounts of the changes associated with separate spheres occurring centuries apart in conjoining districts (Vickery 1998). Again, in real life there was no dramatic shift in propertied women's role in economy, the responsibilities attendant on household or estate management over the course of the centuries; nor was there an appreciable narrowing of formal occupational opportunities for women in the period 1700 to 1850 (Vickery 1993 and 1998: 4–5).

Women took advantage of the opportunities afforded by their roles as guardians of virtue to exercise power in the household and in the realms of politics. The attributes that signify virtuous individual behavior within the models of family behavior described above are much like those that characterized the language of sorts. The middle classes were a calculating people, sober, competitive, profit-oriented, and guided by the “commercial spirit,” consistent with divine order. So stand the caricatures. But just as there was no monolithic middling sort and middling-sort values, neither was there a single middle class or set of middle-class values. What appears, rather, is a motley assemblage of shopkeepers, tradesmen, housewives, financiers, and so on, most of whom exalted charitable service and frowned on getting and spending. Others, however, more actively strove to ascend to the status of gentry by marrying into their families or aping aristocratic conspicuous consumption. Nor was there a single aristocratic class or model of aristocratic behavior. Many cherished disinterested public service, abhorred the taint of commercial dealings and shrank from the bustle of competition; still others favored excess in consumption and fashion. On the other hand, many aristocratic men and women practiced economy, restoring, maintaining, and enlarging estates by astute accounting, and investments in improvements and commercial ventures. In Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Lord Bertram insists on strict domestic propriety, reflected both in firm management and control over his estates at home and abroad, and in his efforts to manage the marriage of his eldest daughter, Maria.

At the opposite end of the scale of wealth, many poor families subscribed to the belief that one should work hard, be frugal and sober. And, like many of the middle and upper sorts and classes, they cherished the values of domesticity, especially “quiet,” or a married life undisturbed by outbreaks of passion and domestic violence (Bailey 2003: 1). What distinguished the poor from their betters was their inability to translate this ideal of conduct, even if realized, into economic independence or success. The marriages of men and women of the working classes in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries might be better characterized as co-dependent rather than either companionate or patriarchal (that is, highlighted by the subordination of women), simply because laboring men struggled to achieve economic independence. Marital break-up, so often

associated with driving women into poverty, whatever their social class, also imposed significant costs on men, irrespective of rank (Bailey 2003: chapters 4, 5, and 8). Still, the symbolic role of poor women and men shifted through the course of the eighteenth-century, despite the evident complexity (diversity) and flexibility of marriages in the flesh. Late eighteenth-century observers began to portray women of the working classes, whose labor had previously been seen as a source of the nation's strength, as drunk, dissolute, and idle consumers. Able-bodied males registered as a menace, too, when they gave up their independence and freedom to take up parish assistance. Their example contaminated the rest of the working classes, and eroded incentives to work. Rising poor rates and expenditures were also deemed a threat to the independence of ratepayers. By this account, failure by the poor to govern their behavior threatened local parish and national governance. It did so in two ways: the increasing burden of the rates threatened to eat up capital, and the weaknesses of local parish administration presented an invitation for more centralized, even national administration of relief. In this, the Methodist example, with its emphasis on self-denial and the satiation of desires, and the censure of earthly pleasures of the poor such as drink, and games, if not seen as a godsend (because its strictures applied to everyone), became an important component of polite society's hopes for the control of the unruly poor.

Radicals among the poor used respectability, founded on sobriety, industry, and virtue, as a rallying point in their political struggles for political agency, and against aristocratic corruption. The mainstream working-class movements for economic and political reform eventually embraced the ideals of masculinity and femininity enshrined in the notion of separate spheres. The making of the working class was bound up in the efforts by radicals to universalize this class-bound notion of gender and gender roles. But, like the other sorts and classes, the poor were no monolithic block. And, like their betters at the beginning of the nineteenth century, different segments of the working classes drew on competing models of work and family behavior. These models generated tension between different occupational groups and between men and women. One source of dissonance between working-class men and women consisted of the following conundrum: how could male working-class radicals ask for womanly submission at the same time as they called for democratic reform, and how could these same women assist their men in participating in mass politics while conforming to domesticity? The "struggle for the breeches" depicted in popular literature the bitter wrangling within the family over these questions, with women portrayed as threatening men's masculinity by threatening to overthrow their control (Clark 1995). The question of equality between men and women could be as vexed among enthusiastic yet politically quiescent Methodists as it was among working-class radicals. Methodists pronounced that women were equal under God; yet, in practice, they condoned and advocated women's subordination. Methodist women were eventually banned as preachers in 1803, and were restricted to the exercise of influence within doors.

“Virtuous love” and other “manners and customs”

For political economists the struggle for breeches was also a struggle for the minds of women and men. If desire was effectively out of any one person’s control in Smith’s vision of political economy, this uncertainty was not to be feared. Even as he noted the pervasiveness of deception and self-deception in exchange (Gerschlager 2001), Smith believed open discussion in society would produce the “unfrightened mind,” that is, individual men and women characterized by “mildness and thoughtfulness,” whose self-interested behavior would be softened by the demands of decorum (Rothschild 2001: 1, 156). But for those who promoted it as a science post-1793, political economy was not only unable to perfectly represent all private conduct in commercial society, but it was also possible that it would fail to even adequately represent the effects of such conduct. What would ensure universal self-regulation of a form that properly channeled the desires of Smith’s conniving capitalists, ignorant landlords and apathetic workers? Each group, in expressing their passions and interests (or in displaying a conspicuous lack of interest), continually threatens to chip away at the very systems of manners, justice, and property that constrain behavior and sustain natural liberty in *Wealth of Nations*. A double myopia, of the observer and the observed, could result in policy failure, even in the negative sense of where to apply the principle of *laissez faire*. Social disorder could ensue.

If political and economic passions could be ungovernable, so too could sexual passions. In the first edition of *Essay*, Malthus, less confident than Smith about the possibility that individual actions would add up to a harmonious whole, concludes that the actions of individuals were often fundamentally contradictory:

The voluntary actions of men may originate in their opinions, but these opinions will be very differently modified in creatures compounded of a rational faculty and corporeal propensities from what they would be in beings wholly intellectual . . . A truth may be brought home to his convictions as a rational being, though he may determine to act contrary to it, as a compound being.

(EPP 1, XIII, 2: 85)

Individuals were animated both by rational thought and bodily desires, and the demands of the latter are irreducible to the former. Nor could they necessarily be checked by discussion or social “opinions.” The presence of “corporeal propensities” necessitates the modification of opinions guiding voluntary action: “the decision of the compound being is different from the conviction of the rational being” (EPP 1, XIII, 3: 86).

The “compound nature of man,” and it is *man* Malthus talks about, was the principal determinant of the operation of the law of population. This law did not originate with Malthus, of course. His innovation was not only to elevate this principle to a set of mathematical and statistical formulae relating man’s nature

to “nature” (the geometric growth of population outstrips the arithmetic growth of food production), but to maintain that population pressures were a present rather than a past or future concern. And, in order to discern the operation of the population principle in the here and now, Malthus insisted on the need to gather facts. These included the real and nominal prices of labor, marriage rates, and comparative infant mortality rates, but, more generally, the observer would have to take account of what was heretofore not discussed: “the manners and customs of that part of mankind [the lower classes] where these retrograde and progressive movements [in population] chiefly take place.” Drawing the reader in as an assistant in the search for truth, Malthus notes that “we” would be “assisted in our review by what we daily see around us, by actual experience, by facts that come within the scope of every man’s observation” (*EPP* 1, II, 25, 26: 24–5; IV, 1: 30).

Knowledge of these “facts,” however, is and always will be incomplete for the observer. This was especially true for observations of other societies. Though sexual desire had been proven by the evidence of history to be an unchanging universal drive, “so nearly the same, that it may always be considered, on algebraic language, as a given quantity” (*EPP* 1, VII, 12: 51), its expression varied by society. Thus, for example, in considering the “rudest state of mankind” where “gentlemen” are scarce (“one in a hundred”), Malthus repeats, as fact, a set of travelers’ observations on sexual desire among natives of North America. They are nomadic, and as a result of all this restless activity, “It is said that the passion between the sexes is less ardent among the North American Indians than among any other race of men” (*EPP* 1, III, 1, 3: 26–7). Yet settled life, civilized life, allows for an increase in population among these same people:

It has been frequently remarked that when an Indian family has taken up its abode near any European settlement and adopted a more easy and civilized life, that one woman has reared five or six, or more children, though in the savage state it rarely happens, that above one or two in a family grow up to maturity.

(*EPP* 1, III, 1: 26)

The travelers’ narratives testify to the fact that the influence of civilization produces an increase in family size, and are consistent with the observation that civilized states are more densely populated than uncivilized ones. Reduced mortality regimes account for the probability that civilized states are threatened by overpopulation, but a more settled, civilized life also activates an increase in the “passion between the sexes.” These observations lack attribution, but are obvious and uncontroversial; they represent plain matters of fact.²⁰ Further, they can be applied across societies, which attests to and reinforces their objectivity, as well as their status as evidence of an underlying universal human nature: “The same observation has been made with regard to the Hottentots near the Cape.”

Malthus recounts anecdotes about the passions of North American Indian families who adopt a freer, easier, and more sedentary life as they come in contact with civilization; he also considers the workings of sexual desire in British families of different ranks. Here he recasts the struggle, posed by Smith, between self-love and the regard of others. The desire for status, which Smith in places termed frivolous, could, Malthus reasoned, direct sexual desire away from the lawful outlet of marriage toward vice. A man's social aspirations and concern over one's ability to support a family put a brake on early marriages, but the manner in which this preventive check operated depended upon one's social position. Domestic servants work under conditions least conducive to marriage; with skills and knowledge that limit their employment outside of service, many perform their duties under strict orders not to marry at risk of termination. In the ranks just at or below that of a gentleman, the realization that a loss of prestige would ensue for both men and women also prevents early marriages. For the sons of farmers and tradesmen, exhortations to delay marriage until they acquire a farm or establish a trade, combined with a scarcity of farmland and the prevalence of fierce business competition, tend to delay marriages. For laborers who marry, neither foresight nor frugality offers much protection from a bleak family future:

The labourer who earns eighteen pence a day and lives with some degree of comfort as a single man, will hesitate a little before he divides that pittance among four or five, which seems to be but just sufficient for one. Harder fare and harder labour he would submit to for the sake of living with the woman that he loves, but he must feel conscious, if he thinks at all, that should he have a large family, and any ill luck whatever, no degree of frugality, no possible exertion of his manual strength could preserve him from the heart-rending sensation of seeing his children starve, or of forfeiting his independence, and being obliged to the parish for their support.

(*EPP* 1, IV, 13: 34)

Laborers jeopardize their own independence when they support dependent family members. This risky behavior results from a failure of foresight, sympathy mistimed, if not misplaced. Female economic agency, much less independence is all but absent in this account. A woman's fertility gives her some power, as does her consumption, even if in the negative sense; still, if women's tastes and economic dependence act as preventive checks on sexual passion, the "effects of these restraints upon marriage are but too conspicuous in the consequent vices that are produced in almost every part of the world, vices that are continually involving both sexes in inextricable unhappiness" (*EPP* 1, IV, 15: 35). Men's and women's desire for goods and the status they confer can lead to a vicious misdirection of the desire for sex.

When Malthus stressed the importance of determining "to what extent vicious customs prevailed in consequence of the restraints upon matrimony" (*EPP* 1, II, 24: 25), he did not neglect the relationship between love and mar-

riage. In particular, he took up, in the passages just cited, the topic of virtuous love, which had been the theme of Richardson's *Pamela*. The epistolary novel, published anonymously in November 1740, concludes with the marriage of Pamela and her master, Mr B., and speaks to the aristocratic anxiety about servant girls seducing heirs that eventually led to the passage of the 1753 Marriage Act. The opening and closing of the book make a claim for novel reading as a respectable activity in its treatment of the subject of passion and "virtuous love." To support his claim, however, Richardson had to distinguish his text from certain unsavory aspects of other novels of the time: thus, the text pronounces, on the title page of the first edition, that it is "intirely divested of all those Images, which . . . tend to inflame the Minds they should instruct." This disclaimer, which anticipates the language of conduct books that proliferated at the close of the century (Warner 1998: 209), is reinforced when the novel addresses "The reader" at the close of the letters. It asks her or him to "indulge us in a few brief observations, which naturally result from the story and the characters; and which will serve as so many applications of its most material incidents to the minds of YOUTH OF BOTH SEXES" (Richardson 1958: 530). Chief among observations is the case of "the GENTLEMAN [Mr B.] . . . , who allowed himself the free indulgence of his passions." Through Mr B.'s reform of his behavior, the reader "may be taught, by his example, the inexpressible difference between the hazards and remorse which attend a profligate course of life, and the pleasures which flow from virtuous love, and benevolent actions" (Richardson 1958: 530).

Contemporary readers found the novel's promotion of a new standard of household behavior, in which Pamela's feminine virtue domesticates desire rather than being overwhelmed by Mr B.'s assertion of aristocratic privilege, both fascinating and controversial. While the idealization of Pamela set off a Pamela "craze," the idea that virtuous love served as a brake upon unbridled passion or unions of mere interest did not go uncontested. It found its most vociferous critic in Henry Fielding, who thought the proposition that Pamela could fend off Mr B's advances by the dint of mere virtue alone absurd enough to publish two novels in reply, including the parody *Shamela* (1741). Nor were political economists deaf to the clamor about the concept of virtuous love, its promotion of virginity, and its counsel to remain unmarried until the appropriate time: Smith, as noted earlier, included Richardson in his list of experts on sentiment.

Malthus, not surprisingly, initially expressed doubts that virtuous love could forestall unhappy and unfortunate marriages. He claimed that

it would be hard indeed, if the gratification of so delightful a passion as virtuous love did not sometimes more than counterbalance all its attendant evils. But I fear, it must be owned, that the more general consequences of such marriages, are rather calculated to justify than to repress the forebodings of the prudent.

(*EPP* 1, IV, 11: 33–4)

Yet Malthus also penned an extended endorsement of the concept in the same edition. Asserting the urgency of bodily desires, he writes:

the pleasures of pure love will bear the contemplation of the most improved reason, and the most exalted virtue. Perhaps there is scarcely a man who has once experienced the delight of virtuous love, however great his intellectual pleasures might have been, who does not look back to that period, as the sunny spot in his whole life, where his imagination loves most to bask, which he recollects and contemplates with the fondest regret, and which he would most wish to live over again.

(*EPP* 1, XI, 1: 74)

Malthus attributes imprudence to virtuous love, the exact opposite characteristic its supporters give it. Yet he also rhapsodizes that it epitomizes virtue. This is an inconsistency, perhaps. But it also indicates just how unstable this stabilizing concept is.

In the 1803 edition Malthus introduced moral restraint, which he also called “virtuous restraint,” as a version of virtuous love (*EPP* 2, I, V, 23: 56).²¹ In that edition, as well as in the (final) 1826 edition, Malthus prefaces the passage cited with the following:

After the desire for food, the most powerful and general of our desires is the passion between the sexes, taken in an enlarged sense. Of the happiness spread over human life by this passion, very few are unconscious. Virtuous love, exalted by friendship, seems to be that sort of mixture of sensual and intellectual enjoyment, particularly suited to the nature of man, and most powerfully calculated to awaken the sympathies of the soul, and produce the most exquisite gratifications.

(*EPP* 2, IV, I, 10: 90–1)

Here Malthus has thrown off the ambiguity of the first edition with regard to virtuous love. Whether the passion between the sexes is more or less “vivid” and the consequent effect on manners more or less pronounced, however, depends on conditions specific to a given time and place: “observations on the human character in different countries warrant us in the conclusion, that the passion [between the sexes] is stronger, and its general effects in producing gentleness, kindness, and suavity of manners, much more powerful, where obstacles are thrown in the way of very early and universal gratification” (*EPP* 2, IV, I, 4: 92).

Already in his appeal for facts in 1798, Malthus implies that they will apply to “one people, and of one period” (*EPP* 1, II, 24: 24). For his people and his period, many felt that the best way to contain the anarchic possibilities of sexual passion and passion for property was through legislation. The proposed census of 1753 would have made families, their property, and population visible; the Marriage Act of 1753 sought to reveal and control the formation of (monoga-

mous and heterosexual) families. The debates over the census and marriage acts formed part of a wider set of discussions in England that relegated the control of desire largely to the rule of self-regulation. Moral philosophers, novelists, and political economists, all participants in these discussions, proposed that certain feminine and masculine types embodied virtues that regulated the passions, and possessed knowledge of society that conferred authority. These discussions took on added urgency at the close of the century in the wake of the excesses of the French Revolution and Malthus's reworking of sexual passion into the specter of overpopulation. In the next chapter I discuss how political economists in the first third of the new century sought to address these concerns through their advocacy of educational programs, which explained how ideal types behaved, and how they aggregated into families, and an orderly society. No matter what their position in society, people had to govern their desires in order to understand and act on their interests, and to further society's interests. And, to understand their interests, they not only needed to understand the principles of political economy, they had to act like these ideal types.

3 Family, the manners of the people, and political economy

The highest advantages, both religious, moral, and political, may be expected to result from this general ardour for the instruction of the poor. No great or decided improvement can be effected in the manners of the people but by the education of the rising generation. . . . [Y]outh and innocence may be moulded into any form you chuse to give them.

(Jane Marcet, *Conversations on Political Economy* (1816: 159))

The 1753 Marriage Act represented an attempt to legislate lawful desire by regulating family formation. Laws were certainly important to political economists as checks on desire, as attested to by their obsession with the security of property, a requisite for the progress of commercial civilization. Indeed, Malthus called the institution of marriage and the security of property the “two fundamental laws of society.” Yet morals and manners mattered, too. For Malthus, conduct could, in principle, manage sexual desire. Formally introduced in the second edition of *Essay*, in 1803, the check of moral restraint – delayed marriage and the resulting smaller families – represents the manifestation of “our obligation to regulate our conduct” in accordance with what is “most favourable to the happiness of man” (*EPP* 2, IV, I, 4: 88). More generally, Marcet indicates the close connection between education, the improvement “in the manners of the people” and the operation of the natural laws of political economy. This chapter investigates how contemporaries perceived the relationship between morals and manners, economy and political economy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Political economists were interested in morals and manners because they wished to describe and change individual and group behavior, or, in the language of the period, conduct. Since family was the primary social group that shaped individual subjectivity and constrained individual agency, this meant political economists had to define family, describe its behavior, and prescribe changes. Thus, political economists in the early nineteenth century saw a need to educate people in the principles of both economy and political economy to produce subjects and agents closer to their ideals. Before Malthus, the so-called revolution in manners gave impetus to efforts to educate people in both spiritual matters and matters of refinement. After Malthus, teaching legislators,

men, women, and children proper conduct gained greater currency as a policy tool among political economists since proper family behavior, especially prudential marriage among the working classes and the education and rearing of children, was seen as the primary mechanism to control population growth.

This chapter examines several aspects of the relationship between morals and manners and political economy, a relationship already apparent, as noted in the previous chapter, in Smith's work and the first *Essay* of Malthus. First, I look at how the emergence of the language of "class" and of new representative types in literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain mixed real and ideal attributes. Economic man was one of these types, but his characteristics, like those of other types, were subject to debate. British political economists in the first half of the nineteenth century helped shape images of masculinity and femininity by writing about feminine and masculine conduct in these debates; they contributed not only to the formation of economic man, but domestic woman as well. Malthus's *Essay*, for example, provided "one of the earliest and clearest expositions of [what were to become] the nineteenth-century notions of separate spheres" (Valenze 1995: 1370). This concern over manners and conduct applied to both their theoretical expressions and public policy pronouncements. As Robert Torrens wrote in the *Edinburgh Review*, "Political economy has a connection more or less intimate, with almost every question of politics and morals . . . whether with respect to the conduct of private life, or to the administration of public affairs" ([Torrens] 1819: 453–4).

Manners and conduct talk by political economists did not take place in a vacuum. Their writings on the importance of instruction in moral as well as economic principles form part of an outpouring of literature – religious and secular – on the subject of morals and manners in this period. This places political economy in company with the likes of Edmund Burke, who, in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), famously lamented the passing of "the age of chivalry," and its succession by "[t]hat of sophisters, economists; and calculators." Burke considered manners, the outward manifestation of morals, more important than laws in keeping desires at bay and holding society together. The second part of this chapter examines the relationship of political economy to several other forms of writing – conduct books, travel writing, educational texts, and devotional literature – that explored the relationship between masculine and feminine types, their morals and manners, and economy and political economy. Like their counterparts in other genres, the men and women in the works of political economy were more or less virtuous. Despite the apparent separation between forms of writing associated with domestic and public spheres in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they shared a vocabulary – emphasizing prudence, economy, foresight, industry, diligence, abstinence, and so on – and a belief in the identity of these indicators of moral health with economic well-being.

Since many of these forms of writing deal with the quotidian, this examination enriches our understanding of how contemporaries squared the abstractions of political economy with descriptions of real world behavior, viewed as

deviations from the ideal. Political economists participated in discussions of everyday life when they acknowledged the necessity of education to achieve their goals. Malthus, in 1803, noted that, of the Swiss peasants he had encountered, there were

many who, though not sufficiently skilled in the principle of population to see its effects on society . . . yet saw them clearly enough as affecting their own individual interests, and were perfectly aware of the evils which they should probably bring upon themselves by marrying before they could have a tolerable prospect of being able to maintain a family.

(*EPP* 2, II, VII, 48: 228)

He concluded that, “I should by no means say that it would be a difficult task to make the common people comprehend the principle of population, and its effect in producing low wages and poverty.” In fact, Malthus embraced a more general education of the masses in the principles of political economy. Commenting on Smith’s conception of a system of parochial education, Malthus asserted that

The parochial schools would, by early instruction and the judicious distribution of rewards, have the fairest chance of training up the rising generation in habits of sobriety, industry, independence, and prudence, and in a proper discharge of their religious duties; which would raise them from their present degraded state, and approximate them in some degree to the middle classes of society, whose habits, generally speaking, are certainly superior.

(*EPP* 2, IV, IX, 17: 155)

Education, of the right kind, would produce men, women, and children whose conduct was consistent with the ideals of classical political economy. They would also be taught those principles: Malthus, in the same passage, endorses parochial education in “a few of the simplest principles of political economy.” The debates over what kinds of literature on political economy were most appropriate to the tasks assigned to them – whether factual or fictional, practical or entertaining – indicate careful attention to the potential audiences for works on political economy. They thus indicate how political economists were concerned not just with matters of legislation and the governance of the state, but with matters of self-regulation, too.

Those who extolled the benefits of didactic literature believed such instruction provided the means for both self-regulation and group regulation. Instruction in political economy – understood as covering both “domestic woman” and “the conduct of private life,” and “economic man” and “the administration of public affairs” – would turn real people into ideal (economic) beings. Its absence, Malthus asserted in the second edition of *Population*, was a positive evil: “Political economy is perhaps the only science of which it may be said that ignorance of it is not merely a deprivation of good, but produces great evil” (*EPP* 2, IV, IX, 11 (note): 152). Thus, the necessity to teach principles of polit-

ical economy was grounded in a belief that what you read could lead you to change your attitudes and behavior. Francis Place and John Fielding, for example, attributed at least some of the transformation of manners, and the resulting transformation of London into a cleaner, healthier, and less violent metropolis from 1750 on, particularly in the period from 1780–1820, to the salubrious effect of didactic literature (George 1965: 17).

But there was no consensus among political economists, or anyone else, on who should be taught, what they should be taught, and whether education would change either attitudes or behavior for good as opposed to ill. John Locke, for instance, whose empiricist writings on the science of human development and the importance of the education of children, especially in *Some Thoughts concerning Education* (1693), most influenced eighteenth century children's books, believed that such education would produce individuals, not types (Pickering 1993: 52). These individuals fluctuated between independence and conformity, that is, they developed an indeterminate and improvisational subjectivity as they negotiated their way through the experiences of social life (Barney 1999). If they shared a vocabulary with the political economists, many contemporaries at the beginning of the nineteenth century evinced concern about what constituted a proper emphasis on the regulation of the passions. Mary Wollstonecraft, in *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), gave short shrift to the cult of sensibility, which, with its emphasis on modesty, chastity, virtue, and even education, did not fit out women as moral beings who might be "expected to govern a family with judgement." Rather, contemporary instruction rendered women erotic objects: "insignificant objects of desire – mere propagators of fools" (Wollstonecraft 2001: xxiv–xxv; Buchan 2003: 268). She judged the differences between the education of girls and boys a signal factor in the continuing inequality between men and women, and asserted that

The regulation of the passions, is not, always, wisdom. On the contrary, it would seem that one reason why men have superior judgment, and more fortitude than women, is undoubtedly this, that they give a freer scope to the grand passions, and by more frequently going astray enlarge their minds.

(Wollstonecraft 2001:107).

Others fretted that the nostrums of political economy were merely moral, and not sufficiently religious. Still others indicted Malthus himself for promoting immorality and an increase in vice, especially after Place, in 1823, produced his "diabolical handbills" which offered practical knowledge of contraception. And one regular correspondent to *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* railed that education aimed at instilling the prudential check would enjoin men and women from reading novels, and would lead to the destruction of the fine arts, lest a stray glance at a painting or sculpture inflame the "passion of love" (Ham 1833: 318).

Historians may have assigned the grander generalizations of Weber's Protestant ethic to the dustbin, but several recent studies on Christian political economy explore the connections and strains between religious belief, economic theory,

education, and behavior in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Britain. These range from works on how political economists, starting with Dugald Stewart, worked to separate the ethical and moral principles of *Wealth of Nations* from “scientific” analysis in order to promote an autonomous discipline (Fitzgibbons 1995: 148–52; Winch 1983: 512), to an examination of Malthus’s role as a “political moralist” intent on remoralizing political economy (Winch 1996b, especially chapter four), to the connection between clericalism and the institutionalization of political economy in British universities (Brent 1993; Waterman 1991; Young 1996, 1998, 2000), to more general work tracing the pervasive influence of moral and religious concerns in political economy in the first half of the nineteenth century (Berg 1980: chapter 6; Brown 1993; Dentith 1983; Claeys 1986; Himmelfarb 1985; Kuchta 1994 and 1996; Pullen 1981; Searle 1998; Waterman 1991), especially the influence of evangelicalism on political economists’ conceptions of the mind of economic man in the nineteenth century. Here, competition and trade in free markets serve to promote economic education rather than economic growth; the constant exposure to temptation and suffering would stimulate the development of conscience rather than self-interest, and lead individuals among all classes to choose a course of moral rather than immoral or amoral conduct (Hilton 1988: 69–70).

The early nineteenth-century preoccupation with education was more than of academic concern to Malthus. Despite grooming them for company positions mostly unconnected with trade, Malthus felt it necessary to mold his East India College students (and their parents) after the fashion of moral restraint, in order to forestall future beastly behavior on their part in India. Malthus’s efforts, however, were spectacularly unsuccessful (Alborn 2000). Other historians of economics have noted how political economists after Smith linked the desire for self-interest and improvement to the desire for status (Kern 2001); a few have detailed how classical political economists, after Smith and up to John Stuart Mill’s classic statement on economic man, worked to reduce economic man and domestic woman to mere shells, or types, in part to mimic the logic and precision of mathematics and the physical sciences (Oakley 1994; Levine 1998a and 1998b);¹ and some have indicated that women, domestic and otherwise, are all but invisible, and certainly lack agency in the works of classical political economists until placed in view by Harriet Taylor Mill and John Stuart Mill (Pujol 1992; Bodkin 1999).

Still others have examined the continuing presence in the early nineteenth century of notions of moral economy, the regulation of economic conduct by moral law (Thompson 1971). Evidence of English jurisprudence invoking the language of moral economy dates back to at least the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when “economic” pertained to the household, and economic activity was seen as simply “one among other kinds of moral conduct” (Tawney 1926: 20). Appleby and others hold that moral economy had to decline before political economic analysis and the economy itself could advance (Appleby 1978). In this view, with the rise of political economy, the management of the household and moral affairs became increasingly identified with domestic woman while market

activity was left to economic man. Each sphere became associated with different forms of writing: treatises, pamphlets, and journal articles with economic man; conduct books, morals and manners literature, and polite novels with domestic woman.

Debates about subjectivity and agency, if relatively absent from canonical works in political economy, nonetheless went on furiously in other writings of its champions and critics. Contemporaries were aware that political economists and Christian philanthropists, while sharing an interest in the “philosophy of human affairs,” had maintained “an unfortunate distance from each other,” in the words of Reverend Thomas Chalmers, the individual who, by dint of tireless lecturing, preaching, publishing, and lobbying, worked hardest in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century to ensure that moral concerns, especially the concept of moral restraint, remained at the forefront of political economy.² Chalmers alludes to this split between philanthropists and political economists in the introduction to an earlier work, *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns* (1821–6). His efforts in the early 1820s to put his principles into action in his parish of St John’s in Glasgow included a reliance on household visitations, and voluntary rather than mandatory assessments as a way to avoid dependence on the part of the poor. Chalmers hoped that this policy, which he believed simultaneously cut assessments and poverty, would serve as a model for reform of the English poor laws, which he considered too generous and too likely to encourage immoral behavior.

Though neither successful nor much emulated (Mitchison 2000), Chalmers touted his experiments in *Christian and Civic Economy*. There he wrote that Smith and the political economists who followed in his wake concerned themselves with commerce and legislation that, if enacted or repealed, would foster free trade. Material, not spiritual, desires and rewards lay at the heart of their work. Chalmers locates the reenchantment of political economy with the “moral habits of the labouring classes” in the work of Malthus on population (Chalmers 1821–6, I: 4, 8–9). Echoing Malthus, who writes in the introduction to the second edition of *Principles of Political Economy*, “the science of political economy bears a nearer resemblance to the science of morals and politics than to that of mathematics” (Malthus 1836: 1), Chalmers maintains that legislation, such as the repeal of the poor laws, will be insufficient to check the tendencies to excessive population, without a change in the conduct of the “people”:

So long as there is generally a low and grovelling taste among the people, instead of an aspiring tendency towards something more in the way of comfort, and cleanliness, and elegance, than there is to be met in the sordid habitations of a rude and demi-barbarous country, they will rush, with precipitation, into matrimony, and care not how unable they are to meet its expenses, and forfeit the whole ease and accommodation of the future, to the present ascendancy of a blind and uncalculating impulse. . . . The tendency of excessive population, can only find its thorough and decisive counteraction, among the amended habits, and the moralised characters, and the

exalted principles, of the people themselves. . . . To bring the economy of [a country's] population into the best possible condition, it is right to go up to the legislature, and beg that she may recall the mischief of her own interferences. But it is further necessary, to go forth among the people, and there to superinduce the principles of an efficient morality, on the mere principles of nature – and there to work a transformation of taste and character – and there to deliver lessons, which, of themselves, will induce a habit of thoughtfulness, that must insensibly pervade the whole system of a man's desires and his doings; making him more a being of reach, and intellect, and anticipation, than he was formerly – raising the whole tone of his mind, and infusing into every practical movement, along with the elements of passion and interest, the elements of duty, and of wisdom, and of self-estimation.

(Chalmers 1821–6, I: 8–10)

Moral education, the inculcation of foresight, prudence and the like by an evangelical clergy will allow men and entire families to check their desires with reason. In Chalmers's ideal, society functioned as an "extended family" (Goodlad 2001: 606). And a ministry that ties teacher to family, and binds, more loosely, "contiguous families" in large towns together need not even reference political economy. Merely conducting family life on Christian principles will suffice: "a Christian family is almost always sure to be a well-conditioned family" (Chalmers 1821–6, I: 59, 14).

The evangelical revival, whose adherents had exuded an air of hope and renewal in the eighteenth century, had been transformed in the nineteenth century into a movement more focused on combating sin and weaknesses of the spirit and flesh. Commerce was one aspect of life ripe for opportunism, and writers responded to the presence of commercial misconduct by penning works chockfull of recommendations and warnings for businessmen. What Searle has termed "business evangelism" is further evidence of the strength of Christian political economy in this period, but it was hardly a unified movement (Searle 1998: 22). Some, like Chalmers, who wrote *The Application of Christianity to the Commercial and Ordinary Affairs of Life* in 1820, felt that commercial activity should be extended only if it were possible to conduct business in accord with Christian principles. Others, like Richard Raikes, an evangelical divine, were more enthusiastic about the insight afforded by political economy, yet still staked out limits to the reach of self-interested behavior. In *Considerations on the Alliance between Christianity and Commerce* (1806), for instance, Raikes maintained "Christianity, without Commerce, could not attain its purpose, or duly influence the minds of man," (Raikes 1806: 19), but also asserted that no true advantage could be gained in business unless one hewed to Christian and moral principles (Searle 1998: 13–14).

The business evangelism literature, while not exact counterparts to conduct books discussed below – they tended to cover only selected aspects of daily life – could be seen as companion pieces, a specialized branch of the genre. For others, including the political economist Henry Brougham, even a secular educa-

tion will produce good habits, as the discipline of reading produces good conduct: "The habits of reflexion which are inseparable from reading, are plainly, and we think confessedly, favourable to orderly conduct. . . . We believe it may be laid down as a general rule, that knowledge begets prudence" ([Brougham] 1825: 244). Education need not even be directed at the parents to produce a change in the conduct of mothers and fathers: parents may emulate their children's good behavior. When he considers the question of whether religious instruction at infant day schools actually imbues children with religious sensibility, Brougham demurs. He concludes, "That an infant of two or three should be capable of any religious tuition at all, seems inconceivable" ([Brougham] 1823: 451–2). Yet he acknowledges that there are gains to be had from the day schools for both the students and their parents:

It is not the least advantage derived from the improvement of the children at these seminaries, that it is reflected upon the parents. The sight of infants so young as to cause no possible jealousy, framed to decorous habits, and behaving with tempers uniformly unruffled, naturally imposes a certain restraint upon the parents, and disinclines them to indulge in those excesses, whether of debauchery or violence, which too many of them have but little scruple in displaying before children who never saw purer examples. Any restraint, however temporary, is salutary; for it leads to habits of self-command immediately, and to those of reflexion and self-condemnation in the end. All who have gone much among the poor, agree in describing the good effects, in this way, of any education and moral improvement communicated to children. But there can be no doubt that, in proportion as very young children engage more of the parents' affections, among the poor especially, their improvement will operate the more powerfully upon his own conduct and feelings.

([Brougham] 1823: 453)

A moral but not necessarily religious education for children will result in good habits being passed on to parents, an effect which is dependent upon the love of the parents for the child. Brougham notes that the transmission of habits from children to parents also depends upon the degree of trust that schools engender. Schools can cultivate trust by allowing parents to monitor schools; if they regularly meet the "Masters and the patrons of the schools," parents can be persuaded that pure and disinterested benevolence, rather than private and selfish interest motivates the teachers of their children ([Brougham] 1823: 453).

For Brougham, a well-behaved child can induce good behavior on the part of parents; for Chalmers, such a "well-conditioned family" would produce a well-regulated society. Smith had acknowledged that conduct plays a role in regulating the social system in *Wealth of Nations*: virtuous individual behavior maintains commercial civilization. In the main, Smith acknowledges the presence of prodigality and misconduct in commercial society, only to dismiss their effects as trivial. Smith's followers were not so sanguine about the workings of

individual passions, and their relationship to conduct, commerce, and national progress. Chalmers detects dangerous desires in the manners of the people; Marcet, on the other hand, cites a dangerous lack of desire among the people. She characterizes savage life as indolent, where man exerts himself only to satisfy the most basic of bodily wants. Comparing the indolence of savages with the activity of civilized men, Mrs B, in Marcet's *Conversations on Political Economy*, contrasts those desires that merely satisfy immediate wants, and the insatiable desires called forth by education:

Men are naturally disposed to indolence; all exertion requires effort, and efforts are not made without an adequate stimulus. The activity we behold in civilized life is the effect of education; it results from a strong and general desire to share not only in the necessaries of life, but in the various comforts and enjoyments with which we are surrounded. The man who has reaped the reward, as well as undergone the fatigues of daily exertion, willingly renews his efforts, as he thus renews his enjoyment. But the ignorance of the savage precludes all desires which do not lead to the immediate gratification of his wants; he sees no possessions which tempt his ambition – no enjoyments which inflame his desires; nothing less than the strong impulse of want rouses him to exertion; and having satisfied the cravings of hunger, he lies down to rest without a thought of the future.

(Marcet 1816: 31–2)

Like conduct books of the period, economic discourse attempts to civilize readers by properly directing their desires. These desires, if deceptive in Smith's view, are nonetheless natural and keep "in continual motion the industry of mankind." Emulation, however, requires the discipline of education. For Marcet, as for Smith, banishing ignorance is the key to this process. Sympathetic emulation of our fellow men and women, especially our betters, sets in motion our attempts to improve our station in life.

Both Marcet and Chalmers believed, as did Smith, that the misdirection of desire or its lack could be corrected through education. Smith's followers recognized that children and the lower classes needed to be taught the moral attributes and reasoning skills necessary to achieve economy. If they practiced economy, and thus became economists, the triumph of political economy would follow, provided, of course, legislators removed barriers to its operation. W.R. Greg, reformer, Manchester manufacturer, essayist, political economist, and erstwhile friend of Martineau, issues a similar call for education at mid-century. Greg considers the attitudes and skills of economy "within the reach of all who will take the due means for their attainment." The ability to choose to take up these attitudes and skills, however, is contingent on the ruling and guiding classes doing their part, that is "bestowing on the poor a really serviceable education," which includes "not merely the rudiments of book learning, and instruction in the moral law and its religious sanctions, but an acquaintance with the laws whether economic or physiological, which govern their material well-being" (Greg 1854:

188–9, 183). For Greg, education in both morals and political economy, and emulation by workmen of their employers will solve “the great social problem,” the social and political condition of the working class:

all he [the working man] needs in order to become as prosperous and comfortable in his sphere as the employers and merchants whom he assails and envies are in theirs, is that he should imitate their prudence, their abstinence, their sense, their habit of always living within their income, their customary postponement of marriage till marriage becomes safe and wise.

(Greg 1854: 183)

The goal is to obliterate differences in political and social (but not economic) position between the working classes and their betters. The purpose of education and changes in choices available and made is not only to achieve “independence, property, comfort, leisure, and mental cultivation” for the working class but “polished manners” and “righteous and rational desires” (Greg 1854: 188–9, 183).

Education and wise choices will produce Greg’s ideal working-class male. This type resembles an earlier type, the prudent man possessed of the qualities of economy as well as good conduct of *Wealth of Nations*. His attributes, in turn, are identical to those necessary for the development of the impartial spectator in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (see also Heilbroner 1982: 427, 434; Oakley 1994: 63). The identity between the impartial spectator and “economic man” was not lost on Smith’s followers, who wished to educate readers in the middle and upper classes on economy, and who often noted its link to political economy. Writing in *Essays on Practical Education*, Maria Edgeworth – who, at the tender age of fourteen, had been handed a copy of *Wealth of Nations* to read – asserted that education is based on emulation where, like a budding impartial spectator, a youth exchanges position with an adult woman or man. This leads the youth to take a more reasonable point of view; this process, which repeatedly tempers sympathy with reason, results in the individual becoming a “young economist” (Edgeworth and Edgeworth 1996, II: 276). Likewise, a youth became a “young economist” when she or he could avoid “the excesses of extravagant passions,” and derive a Smithian “steadiness of calculation” for her or his actions (Edgeworth and Edgeworth 1996, III: 270, 280).

Greg’s ideal type is male. Indeed, the common vocabulary listed above was typically associated with males, and treatises and pamphlets in political economy rarely mentioned women at all. Smith had noted in *Wealth of Nations* the lack of “public institutions for the education of women,” but had concluded

There is accordingly nothing useless, absurd, or fantastical in the common course of their education. They are taught what their parents or guardians judge it necessary or useful for them to learn; and they are taught nothing else. Every part of their education tends evidently to some useful purpose; either to improve the natural attractions of their person, or to form their

mind to reserve, to modesty, to chastity, and to economy; to render them both likely to become the mistress of a family, and to behave properly when they have become such. In every part of her life a woman feels some conveniency or advantage from every part of her education. It seldom happens that a man, in any part of his life, derives any conveniency or advantage from some of the most laborious and troublesome parts of his education.

(*WN*, V, I, III)

The passage has been cited as an indicator that political economists were comfortable with a relative lack of female agency in British society (Bodkin 1999). Women are to be educated in order to take up their roles in the family, no more and no less. The statement, however, contains an ironic twist. The class of people who received the “best” education, that is, an education most fitted to their needs, were those who had no public funds devoted to that effort. And Smith’s endorsement, immediately after this paragraph, in gender-neutral language, of the use of funds for the public education of “the people” indicates that daughters, too, indeed women of all ages, could derive “conveniency or advantage” from public educational institutions.

True, the promotion of contemporaneous “feminine” characteristics such as meekness, submission and dependence, and gentleness increasingly occupied another written world altogether from that of political economy. Even the call for greater and broader education of women could have its limits. Hannah More, in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education* (1798), described a fairly strict separation of education between men and women: “Their [women’s] knowledge is not often like the learning of men, to be reproduced in some literary composition, nor ever in any learned profession; but it is to come out in conduct” (More 1798, I: 1). But, again, the Edgeworths’ “young economist” is of either sex; and the educational process espoused and practiced by the Edgeworths was one of mutual enlightenment, where all the children played an active role, testing what they read against experience, teaching one another, and learning to think and act (Myers 1999: 227). And many of the “passive” female virtues listed by More in *Strictures* (1798, I: 149–50) – “fortitude, temperance, meekness, faith, diligence, and self-denial” – are identical to the “active” male virtues of the period. The factual analyses of conduct books and the fictional verisimilitudes of sentimental novels realized the possibility of combining, in their female and male characters, what were deemed the masculine and feminine attributes of economic ability and sensibility, respectively (Skinner 1999). They were also designed to produce a person who would join belief to action. More, writing in *Essays on Various Subjects, Principally Designed for Young Ladies* (1777), pronounced “Sentiment the virtue of ideas, and principle the virtue of action. Sentiment has its seat in the head, principle in the heart” (quoted in Pickering 1993: 128). One crucial variable that helped determine whether such a pair could be successfully combined was an individual’s independent access to property. Conduct books and sentimental novels, unlike

canonical works in political economy, acknowledged that, while their occupational opportunities were quite limited, women worked for money; they also acknowledged that other women had money, and many could dispose of it as they saw fit.

Malthus's *Essay* made such a large impact because of the explosive growth of a reading public in Britain during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Literacy spread among all ranks in this period. It rose more slowly among the poor (Houston 1982; Schofield 1972–3), though more quickly in the first decades of the nineteenth century. By 1800, in the wake of the Sunday School Movement, 200,000 children regularly attended Sunday schools in England and Wales, and by 1830 this number had grown to 1,400,000. Further, the number of day schools providing cheap or even free education for children of the poor increased dramatically (Laqueur 1976). Often cited as an indicator of increased social control, these schools did seek to improve the spiritual well-being of the poor, and inculcated the virtues of self-discipline in students. They served denominational needs first, however, and this requirement more than occasionally clashed with employers' demands for child labor (Snell 1999). Recurrent scandals of maladministration or morally offensive behavior produced considerable unease among those concerned about a shift of the locus of education from family to school. While the middle classes desired a more practical education than that offered in the classical tradition, which was still largely restricted to the male gentry and aristocracy, both middle and upper class families faced similar anxieties as they too labored to instill the proper attitudes in their own children.

Educational efforts were colored, particularly after the French Revolution, both by a suspicion of what forces knowledge and rationality could unleash (which generated strong conservative aversion to teaching women and the lower classes), as well as sensitivity to the hazards of unguided sentiment. Conduct books, educational treatises, and devotional texts of the period moved away from an endorsement of sentiment's unreflective feeling toward properly directed, religiously motivated sensibility. If the outlines of proper conduct were clear, and were clearly placed in the context of ideal family behavior – one should act with economy – solutions to the classification problem, the description of what one was in real life, whether close to or distant from this ideal, were often multiple or indeterminate. This reflected the fact that the meanings of family were dependent upon context, and were always in the process of formation and reformation.

There are two issues here, the classification of literature, and the classification of social facts represented in literature. First, the growth in the reading public fostered an increasing demand for books and magazines for both educational and recreational purposes. An education through books yielded uncertain effects because of the divide between knowledge gained from the written word and action in the world outside the page. Students not only had to learn, they had to choose wisely on the basis of their education. Contemporaries fretted over the pernicious effects of literature, which was thought not only to fail to supply useful knowledge but to foster bad habits (Brantlinger 1999). They therefore

attempted to divide literature into good works and bad. Brougham, for example, asserted that books, rather than ephemera, placed knowledge on a solid foundation, as if the very materiality of a book, as opposed to the flimsiness of a broadside or newspaper, produced fixed, stable information ([Brougham] 1824: 101). And, again, within the domain of books, certain literature, such as novels and romances, were deemed conducive to bad conduct. In the same essay, Brougham noted a division of knowledge, between the laboring classes and everyone else: the former lacked the time and money to read the then available material. The costs of publishing – due to taxes, the use of expensive paper, and the determination of authors and publishers not to crowd the page – all contributed to make the acquisition of knowledge through reading prohibitively expensive in England. Brougham ticked off a set of remedies for this situation, including book clubs and reading societies, as well as reading at work, where laborers could divide their hours in order to allow each of them to read at their place of employment ([Brougham] 1824: 98, 101–2).

Brougham sought to reach all classes through the SDUK, which was modeled, in part, on the work of the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). He was sensitive to time and cost constraints among readers from the laboring classes, as well as differences in tastes among readers. On this last point, resistance among the working classes, who expressed a desire for more secular education than that pushed by the SPCK and other organizations, fostered a shift toward more secular reading material in their schools by the 1840s. Contemporary concerns among reformers over the content of texts were driven in part by the increase in leisure time among the middle and upper classes, caused by an increase in wealth through the eighteenth century.

Conduct books offered suggestions on how to manage this time. Many other forms of writing and performance – broadsides, chapbooks, privately (and later, state) sponsored statistical studies of hospitals, prisons and workhouses, songs, and plays – conveyed suggestions on how to behave. Writing did not completely represent real life, of course, nor did it completely determine the possibilities of British subjects and subjectivities. Contemporaries, especially urban dwellers who had more opportunities for association than their rural counterparts, hashed out their ideas and acted out their beliefs about morals, manners, and political economy not only in print, but also by attending church and chapel, soaking in the news (and much else) in coffeehouses and alehouses, joining guilds, starting clubs, circulating libraries, and debating societies, by gaming, by placing money into savings banks and friendly societies, by attending street performances, theaters, balls, masquerades, concerts, assemblies, and public lectures, by making parliamentary speeches, by subscribing to charitable efforts, by dreaming about and sometimes organizing utopian communities, and participating in demonstrations, combinations, and strikes. Eighteenth-century civic associations helped forge a sense of stability and permanence, hence a collective identity among disparate individuals. They promoted and practiced virtues such as benevolence, thrift, and industry, and thus helped regulate potential conflicts in an environment characterized by flux and mobility, where the key “associations” remained

the family and household (Barry 1994: 89–99). Legislation such as marriage acts and the piecemeal tinkering with poor laws codified this recognition that family lay at the foundation of economic and political life. They had an effect on conduct, too, by marking the boundaries of legal and illegal family behavior.

Yet contemporaries also believed that people based actual conduct, in part, on what they read. Here too the family and household were seen as the sources of emotional and financial stability and social order. The literature on morals and manners serve as an appropriate context in which to consider the ideas of classical political economists on family and family behavior: both moralists and political economists were trying to describe and change behavior. Representations of masculinity, femininity, and family behavior in texts on political economy influenced and were influenced by other models depicted in British literature in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As conduct book writers, sentimental novelists, educational writers, and political economists tried to develop vocabularies and analytical methods to represent the meanings of family and its relations to society, and, using these representations, pressed for changes, they borrowed from and critiqued one another (Bellamy 1998; Motooka 1998; Skinner 1999). Malthus's discussion of poor law policy in *Essay* itself can be read as part of a general reevaluation of philanthropy that was touched off by the sentimental revolution in mid- and late eighteenth-century England. The new age of philanthropy sought to place charity on a more efficient, cost-effective basis. Like the legal discourse of the previous chapter, the texts discussed below both reflected and helped shape this reality. They both described real economic behavior, and prescribed ideal economic behavior.

Contemporaries found that putting their ideas on the relationship between government of self, government of family, and government of the nation into practice could be tricky, even impractical. This is attested to by the history of failed utopian and cooperative communities in this period (Taylor 1983: chapter seven). The failures were sensational, if minor affairs. Yet, in one instance, dissonance between beliefs about family and the facts of real life threatened national calamity. Public debate over what only later became identified as a typically middle-class notion of separate spheres and female domesticity crystallized in the public reaction to a crisis in the royal family, the Queen Caroline affair in 1820. The Prince of Wales, the future George IV, and Caroline of Brunswick had married by arrangement in 1795. They took an instant dislike to one another, and separated after the birth of their only child, Princess Charlotte, in 1796. The prince continued his drinking and womanizing; the princess was rumored to be involved in a number of sexual dalliances. In 1813, to avoid further embarrassment, the government, with the added sweetener of a pension, persuaded Caroline to go abroad. Scandal followed nonetheless, in the wake of Caroline's relationship with her Italian chamberlain, Bartolomeo Pergami, with whom she was said to have had an affair. When George III died in January 1820, and the regent became George IV, Caroline returned to Britain at the beginning of June of that year to claim her position as queen. George IV resisted strenuously. After negotiations for a compromise failed, the government, at the

king's insistence, introduced a "Bill of Pains and Penalties" in the House of Lords in order to air evidence against the queen. Passage of the bill, in a proceeding like a trial, would lead to a divorce, strip her of her titles and force her to leave the kingdom.

The queen's arrival in England provoked a nationwide campaign on Caroline's behalf by men and women of all walks of life. They vociferously argued for her rights as a wife and for the stability of the royal family; they signed petitions, avidly took in songs, pamphlets, prints, and broadsheets, demonstrated, harassed the government's witnesses, and stoned its ministers' and supporters' residences. At one point prior to the trial, in mid-June, the loyalty of elements of the army was called into question – one battalion was marched off in disgrace from London – and supporters of the king, the Duke of York (commander in chief of the army) and the Duke of Wellington among them, feared revolution (Fraser 1996: 390–2).

What had provoked such a reaction? George IV's dissipation was tolerated, even expected as manly behavior by those in his own circle. His sexual incontinence was deplored by many others, however, some of whom questioned his fitness, as the symbolic embodiment of family virtue, to lead the Church of England. His accession to regent in 1811 had clashed with the image of domesticity cultivated by George III. Referring to himself, George III had asserted as a schoolboy: "The prince . . . will be feared and respected abroad, [and] adored at home by mixing private economy with public magnificence" (quoted in Colley 1992: 207). Public details of George III's private economy and sober domestic life with his wife, Queen Charlotte, certainly contributed to widespread public support for the later years of his reign, as did the numerous occasions marked by pomp and ceremony, which he used to burnish his public image as the national father figure.

Manners matter. But George III also resorted to legislation to impose his patriarchal version of domesticity on the life of the nation. In 1772, stung by the behavior of several of his siblings – the Duke of Gloucester had clandestinely married in 1766; the Duke of Cumberland was put on trial for adultery in 1770; and Princess Caroline Matilda of Denmark was forced into exile in 1772 when her lover, the chief minister of the Danish court, was ousted – George III pushed the Royal Marriage Act through parliament. The act stipulated that no member of the royal family (that is, any descendant of George II) under the age of twenty-five could marry without the permission of the reigning monarch. Like the Marriage Act of 1753, where opponents pointed out that the law would promote rather than constrain lawsuits, critics of the royal act feared that the unintended consequence of attempting to control sexual passion would be adultery and promiscuity: the daughters of commoners would only be fit as royal mistresses, not wives (Langford 1992: 580). Despite the opposition provoked by the legislation (it only carried by a narrow margin), the king and queen established and were known for their domesticity. By 1809, the jubilee anniversary of his rule, *The Times* identified George III as "Father of his People," and likened the nation to a great family (Colley 1992: 231).

The ill treatment of Caroline at the hands of her husband thus threatened the symbolic order of the nation as family, with the king and queen at its head. Many of her supporters entertained severe doubts as to Caroline's virtue even before the damaging testimony of the government's witnesses. Yet even those who questioned Caroline's character took umbrage at what they saw as an attempt to legitimize the double standard. With Peterloo, which had occurred a year and a day before the start of the trial (August 16, 1819), and passage of the repressive Six Acts still fresh in their minds, opponents compared the king's attack on the queen's rights to the insecurity of their own rights. James Mill defended the queen, finding the legal procedures of the trial unacceptable. Tyranny in the royal family was akin to tyranny in the national family. The controversy involved more than the facts of the royal persons – the true facts of the case did not even matter to many observers. As Caroline remarked on the proceedings in the House of Lords, "Nobody cares for *me*" (Fulford 1967: 243, emphasis in original). Indeed, few did. Though the king withdrew his bill, Caroline's victory was shortlived, as testified by the chilly reception afforded her attempt to attend the king's coronation on July 19, 1821. The symbolism of the events mattered as much if not more so than the identity of the individuals involved.

To rephrase Smith's statement regarding the effects of private and public profligacy, what tolerance was there for deviation from ideal conduct in the (royal) family? The crisis can be seen as both a problem in governance and representation. Ricardo, in a September 1820 letter to Malthus, questioned whether the issue was in fact a "state question" (Sraffa 1952, VIII: 230). But in a December 4, 1820 letter to J.R. McCulloch, he used the trial to launch a critique of an aristocratic model of virtue as a basis for governance:

Although I am very far from agreeing with Cobbett in most of his opinions, I have long been convinced that our security for good government must rest on the institutions themselves, and the influence under which those who govern us act, and not on the more or less virtue of our governors. The conduct of two different sets of men educated nearly in the same manner, acting under the same checks, and with the same objects in view, as far as their own personal interest is concerned, cannot be materially different.

(Sraffa 1952, VIII: 317)

For Ricardo, creating (near) homogeneity among different individuals, a coincidence of conduct to be brought about both by the proper structure of institutions and a uniform education, would yield tangible benefits to the nation. For the nation, the issue was not only what behavior should serve as the model for family and social rule, but how this could best be represented and taught in real life. Conduct books, which provided a guide to daily living for those living in less rarified precincts than the royal household, were one forum for answering these questions.

'Virtues of a commercial character'

In the Queen Caroline crisis, family affairs provoked national instability. Conduct books answered the demand for codes of behavior that would forestall private crises, with the presumption that, if enough people read the texts and acted as they prescribed, social order would ensue. The books promoted private economy, the virtuous behavior so assiduously cultivated by George III; crucially, they, like the business evangelism literature discussed above, also broached the subject of commercial conduct. The heyday of conduct books in Great Britain was 1770–1830, roughly contemporaneous with the rise of the notion of separate spheres, and the shift in middling-rank sentiment against the emulation of the libertinism of gentlemen as a model of social and political virtue. The latter was exemplified by the reaction against the debauchery of Charles James Fox in the election of 1784 (Rogers 1994: 177–8). The vogue for conduct books is commonly attributed as a reaction to another expression of gentlemanly behavior, that laid out in the Fourth Earl of Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son* (1774), which shocked contemporaries in its aristocratic assertion of calculation, self-interest, contempt for matrimony and sexual immorality as opposed to any sense of the public good (Curtin 1987; Langford 1992: 586–7). Courtesy books like Chesterfield's had been in existence for centuries, and were formerly aimed almost exclusively at aristocratic men. Defoe, for instance, composed an unfinished and unpublished manuscript, *The Compleat English Gentleman*, in which he called for the careful education of gentlemen, in order that they properly govern themselves and their households (Defoe 1972). While the authors and readers of conduct books in the period covered here, on the other hand, consisted primarily of females of the upper and middling classes, the books were addressed to all people of all ranks, and included texts to guide parents in the education of their children. Designed to inculcate proper morals and produce proper social behavior among their readers, the texts enunciated universal principles and precepts, and prescribed the attitudes necessary to deal with daily life and special occasions over the course of a lifetime, including how to reconcile commercial activity with benevolence (Morgan 1994).

Conduct books initially promoted what they described as middle-class values which, derived from scripture, stood in contrast to aristocratic codes of conduct like those of Chesterfield (Wahrman 1995). Conduct books stressed the belief that proper conduct would further the progress of civilization, and, more importantly, lead to happiness in the hereafter. The books were designed to counter the corrosive effects of economic and social change, which diminished the significance of family and local knowledge as the basis of personal character and mutual trust in economic relations (and, if trust were misplaced, the source of recompense and shame). Easier travel within Britain, facilitated in the late eighteenth century by turnpike and coach service improvements and the canal boom, the influence of fashion, the growth of journals and newspapers, and the rise of cities all fostered contact and communication with unknown others (Morgan 1994). This represented the acceleration of a process already noted by writers on

economics in the 1620s, such as Thomas Mun and Edward Misselden, as they sought to understand the apparent complexity of new commercial relations, with its bases in networks of credit and social obligation (Muldew 1998). One hundred and fifty years later, as increasingly anonymous commercial transactions continued to chip away at fixed social distinctions and relations based on blood ties, and diminished the importance of distinctions based on dress and comportment, the necessity to establish credit and reputation became even more pressing. By fashioning ideals to emulate, conduct books helped individuals sort through the increasing number and anonymity of encounters, and to recognize others like them. Conduct books would render interactions between readers trustworthy and safe, assuming they were on the same page.

If economic man's home was in economic treatises, he also found a comfortable abode in conduct books. Conduct book writers dealt with the mundane economics of everyday life – how men and women were to conduct business with the butcher, the brewer, and the baker, as well as with servants, employees, and customers. Where Smith did not put a name to the attributes of good conduct in *Wealth of Nations*, conduct book writers did not hesitate to cite trust, loyalty, duty, and morality as its elements. Good conduct led to good credit, and good business practices, and would afford families some protection from the uncertainties of the market. It would also protect them from the disordered desires, including what Smith noted as the “passion for present enjoyment,” and resulting bad conduct of family members – chiefly profligate sons, and relatives who failed to repay loans.

Conduct book writers, like Christian political economists, had no sympathy for the exercise of naked self-interest. Nor did they like the utilitarian emphasis on the consequences as opposed to the motives of action. Emulation, for instance, which was the motive force behind the shift from the fulfillment of physical needs to the fulfillment of psychological wants in political economy, and which carried an ambiguous charge for political economists, was also both a positive and a negative attribute for writers of conduct books. They cautioned against emulation, competition, and luxurious habits for the middle classes. Yet writers recognized that emulation and self-interest formed the basis of education. As exemplified in the work of the Reverend Thomas Gisborne, however, their unlimited application was generally frowned upon as hostile to sympathy and benevolence, and inconsistent with Christian principles of service and charity (Gisborne 1974: 66–7, 72–3).

The lack of coherent clusters of values identifiable as either the sole property of the middle classes or aristocracy was reflected in conduct books, which presented readers with a myriad of ways to square commercial conduct with Christianity (Morgan 1994: 5). Again, they did help establish the outlines of a domestic ideal, a form of domesticity for men and women to cope with the stresses of worldliness. They thus “helped to generate the belief that there was such a thing as a middle class with clearly established affiliations before it actually existed” (Armstrong 1987: 66). In Armstrong's view, their idealizations produced masculine desire for a domestic woman whose attributes were

psychological, and who was available to and attainable by any man, regardless of religion, region, or political faction (Armstrong 1987: 3).³ This ideal, the fiction of domestic woman, helped unify diverse groups of men that were neither “very powerful” nor “very poor;” it allowed the struggles of the marketplace, and the increasingly untenable fiction of the social (political) contract (which was meant to prevent the clash of interests between men), to be sublimated and replaced by the sexual contract (Pateman 1988), the marriage game, and the management of the household. By constructing this virtuous woman, rather than wealth or goods, as the proper and principal object of desire, these works helped mediate the conflicts of the market for males of the middling classes in Britain. The desirable woman became a focal point around which diverse interests could coalesce precisely because she was a creation apparently devoid of political interest. Belief in this ideal type and the fact that in some real sense they could obtain or had already obtained her, helped lay the foundation for political cohesion within these classes against the interests of the laboring classes.

The didacticism of conduct books and other how-to guides on household management helped establish late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century female identity for the middling sorts and middle classes through the establishment of comparative (intra and interclass) distinctions. It also helped establish a form of masculine domesticity. The clash of interests in the marketplace, where men of different families, occupations, regions, and sects all came together, could be glossed over and resolved within the domestic sphere. A table of recommended household budgets in the anonymously produced handbook, *The Compleat Servant* (1825), reprinted by Armstrong, exemplifies the codification and reproducibility of this ameliorative process (Table 3.1).

According to Armstrong, the table delineates the relationship of commerce to domestic economy, and thereby “translates the economic contract into a sexual one.” The first column reflects the increasing anonymity of commercial exchange, with the quantitative sign of money, a single indicator of value, replacing the traditional, qualitative, and hierarchical status markers of birth. Money both signified and effaced the details of strife in the marketplace generated by occupational specialization and competition. The remaining columns indicate the degree to which women, as household managers, transform income into an idealized domestic life. Consumption, monotonic within and across cat-

Table 3.1 Recommended household budgets

<i>Net annual income</i>	<i>Household expense</i>	<i>Servants and equipage</i>	<i>Cloths and extras</i>	<i>Rents and repairs</i>	<i>Reserve</i>
1,000	333	250	250	125	42
2,000	666	500	500	250	84
3,000	1,000	750	750	375	375 ⁴
...
10,000	3,333	2,500	2,500	1,250	420

egories, thus indicates the degree to which, regardless of income levels, different households could attain an exactly homologous (relative) standard of living (Armstrong 1987: 84).⁵

Of course the homology is absurd, a statistical representation of desire channeled into well-ordered rows and columns. But it signifies that, whatever their source of income, and, above some minimum, whatever their income level, men had a common interest in women's household management, and a collective masculine identity could be forged out of economic fragmentation. If women's sphere was often depicted as separate, and identifiable with different written forms of representation than political economy, here was a precise, accurate, and disinterested representation of the fact that it was a site where men, regardless of their status in the market, could find interests common to all. The homology erases difference in another respect. Women and men played important roles in both spheres by contributing resources to "Net Annual Inc.," and by managing those resources. And families of the middle classes often intermingled household and business accounts through the first half of the nineteenth century. Again, women's financial capital and skills in husbanding their own and their husbands' incomes were both crucial elements in establishing the necessary capital for businesses and for maintaining middling- and upper-class households in the early nineteenth century (Davidoff and Hall 1987; Hunt 1996). Further, the table ignores the fact that not all income of the family was necessarily included in the "Net Annual Inc." of the household. Wives in the early nineteenth century were able to exploit loopholes in the legal concept of strict coverture in order to claim and keep separate property (Finn 1996).

Numbers matter. Yet the statistics in the table assign value to relationships among people and between things with a precision that political economists in fact found debatable. For political economists, too, woman, specifically the domestic woman paired off with economic man in the ideal family unit, the 'Malthusian couple,' constituted the focus of male desire. Whately, in *Easy Lessons on Money Matters; for the Use of Young People* (1837), touches on these ideal elements as he echoes the language of morals and manners literature. In Whately's formulation, virtuous family behavior would enhance economic health. But, if health and wealth could be represented in money terms, money was nonetheless not the true source of value. Whately concludes the chapter "Of Value" with the following lines: "It is not, therefore, labour that makes things valuable, but their being valuable that makes them worth labouring for . . . [F]ew of the things that are most desirable can be obtained without labour" (Whately 1837: 32). Two illustrations bracket the chapter, depicting "the necessaries, comforts, and luxuries of life," those things which "are obtained by labour" (Whately 1837: 33) (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2). The illustrations portray two young women surrounded by an array of goods. The text, which limns the distinctions between use value and exchange value, traverses the same distance as that of the portraits, between the agricultural provision of mere "necessaries," and the self-perpetuating desire for "comforts and luxuries." Formerly, women's labor had been valued, as in the first figure. Now women,



Figure 3.1 The agricultural provision of mere “necessaries.”



Figure 3.2 The “comforts and luxuries” of life.

especially middle-class women as in the second figure, represent that which is “most desirable” for “man” in society: they sit, passively, at the literal center of things “Of Value.”

In her long ascent up the pedestal, this woman apparently became not only an object of desire but, like land, a fixed point of value. Certainly economic values, such as those that fill the columns and rows of the table above, were relative. Use, exchange, and natural values, and nominal, natural, and exchange prices, all recognized as having distinct meanings, were often unstable; money and the commodities it could purchase were mobile, liquid, alienable, changeable in value, and valued only in relation to other commodities. In theory, the ideal woman was not only of value but valuable, a perfect wedding of money and desire. Yet, as was the case with “sensibility” and other eighteenth-century constructions of character, including Smith’s “sympathy,” the cluster of attributes that composed the virtuous, hence desirable woman of early Victorian Britain, could also be seen as a theatrical façade, or a mere matter of fashion. At the least, the meanings of these gendered attributes – aesthetic and political economic – were matters of dispute (Poovey 1994a). And, however they were construed, they provided a weak bulwark against the depredations of men: if men could not take advantage of her virtue, they would take advantage of her economic dependence. If women were the principal objects of value, at the beginning of the nineteenth century they were nonetheless increasingly portrayed as producing nothing of economic value, and worthy of relegation to a sphere where they simply consumed and managed others’ consumption. In recognition of the unfavorable status of women, conduct books and educational treatises referred to women’s prospects in the marriage market in language that hinted at the irrationality that accompanied the seeming order of economy and political economy. For women the marriage market was akin to a financial market in the grip of a speculative fever: it was a *lottery*.

Whately’s slim little volume was designed for children as young as eight of both sexes, “as well as adults, of all classes.” Published under the auspices of the SPCK, it comprised in fact a reprint of his articles in *The Saturday Magazine*, and presented a simplified version of his *Introductory Lectures on Political Economy* (1831). The book sold at the reduced price of 9d, but that doesn’t account for its enormous and long-lasting diffusion. Whately used his position as an Irish commissioner of national education to push the use of *Easy Lessons* as part of the textbook series in Irish schools; in England, the volume began to appear in schools in the late 1830s, and “virtually every advanced reader published by religious bodies from the late 1830s to 1880 had its quota of Whately,” though its influence on teachers and students is questionable (Goldstrom 1966–7: 137, 141–5). Whately believed that economic man was not born but produced, that all – women, men, and children – needed to practice economy, and that local differences did not matter with respect to the application of the universal principles of political economy. For Whately’s work in Ireland, this meant making every student “a happy English child.” This would fulfill the premise of the Act of Union that England and Ireland, and, by implication, the

English and the Irish were essentially the same; it would also put into action Whately's belief that there was no need for anything but an English political economy (quoted in Vance 2000: 192–3).

Education for all was even necessary to activate individual self-interest, the key to individual and national improvement. This required a shift from the satisfaction of mere needs to insatiable desires and to producing those desires in others. At the turn of the nineteenth century, however, the audience for instruction in political economy was largely limited to the educated middle classes and their children, including some young middle- and upper-class women. For these women, understanding political economy was seen as necessary to manage the household and maintain social equilibrium. Like manners and morals literature, writings on political economy most often answered the questions of how and what to teach young women in order that they approach the feminine ideal in terms of paternalistic and separate spheres ideologies. But these texts also struggled to portray women as the ideal figure in Figure 3.2, in middle-class comfort and at leisure, indoors, not laboring as a public presence, as in Figure 3.1.

Conduct books, unlike economic treatises of the period, generally did not ignore the facts of women's work. In real life, conduct books acknowledged, women's frugality at home freed up capital for family enterprises. But the term "charity" also provided conduct book writers with the justification to investigate and call for women's direct interventions in the market, particularly on the behalf of distressed women workers. Explanations of how best to do the work of charity, the daily and lifelong exercise of sympathy and benevolence, lent a realistic cast to the ideal types sketched in conduct books. Thus conduct books reveal the presence of women in the market as managers, producers, keepers of accounts, and owners of their own enterprises, and made these roles consistent with domesticity.

Gisborne, an admirer of Adam Smith, composed conduct books for both men and women in which he addressed the roles of women in the market as part of the more general issue of virtue in commercial life. He wrote of a world where "moral purpose overrode issues of pecuniary gain" (Davidoff and Hall 1987: 112). In *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1797), a popular work that influenced Jane Austen, Gisborne expresses a common sentiment when he advises women to exercise moderation and sobriety in domestic management. If economy governs daily activities, charity is the ultimate earthly goal (Gisborne 1974: 309–19). He cautions married women to manage their "consumption of time," and keep weekly account books so that they could contribute to charity: "Be frugal without parsimony; save that you may distribute" (Gisborne 1974: 274). Gisborne and others applied an elastic notion of charity as they described the roles of women: they could exercise charity as business managers, not just household managers. Tradesmen and their wives, charged with the responsibility for the moral and physical health of their employees and employees' families, especially the children, were to exercise benevolence. Further, women were to cultivate commercial virtues in dealings with customers:

If a woman has herself the superintendence and management of the shop, let industry, punctuality, accuracy in keeping accounts, the scrupulousness of honesty shewing itself in a steady abhorrence of every manoeuvre to impose on the customer, and all other virtues of a commercial character which are reducible to practice in her situation, distinguish her conduct.

(Gisborne 1974: 359)

Gisborne also recognized that women owned and ran their own businesses. He therefore called for a form of benevolent maternalism when young women fell under the supervision of businesswomen: they were to “watch over their principles and moral behaviour with the solicitude of a mother” (Gisborne 1974: 359).

But the chief object of charity was the relief of female distress. Families, conjugal and otherwise, could not provide for all women. Gisborne readily acknowledges the reality and necessity of most women’s paid employment, as well as the scarce opportunities for legitimate work that paid anything more than a meager recompense. As a result, he encourages readers to purchase articles produced by women, in order to lessen the evil of prostitution, the last resort of women who have no other means of support. He even endorses the transfer to women not just of individual businesses but whole occupations heretofore identified as male. He asks, “Why has the indelicate custom of ladies employing hair-dressers of the other sex been tolerated for so long?” (Gisborne 1974: note, 319). Gisborne’s comments are unexceptional. Calls to open or reopen occupations to women even applied to the middle orders of society. As the number of occupations open to or dominated by women shrank in the face of competition from men, including the respectable occupations a lady or gentlewoman could pursue (milliner, mantua-maker, staymaker, embroiderer, seamstress, peruke-maker, and, in medicine, dentist, oculist, and midwife), the cleric and essayist John Moir was moved to lament, “the middling order of women are deprived of those stations which properly belong to them, very often to their utter ruin, and always to the detriment of society” (Moir 1785: ii, 65, cited in Langford 1992: 111).

Travel, travel writing and the conduct of trade: who is “economic man” and where can we find him?

The connections between conduct, family, and the structure of the economy were also a preoccupation of Hannah More. More wrote major portions of *Cheap Repository Tracts* for the Bishop of London in order to fan loyalist sentiment among the masses. The stories centered on the theme of how individual responsibility and virtue – faith, prudence, and hard work – brought spiritual and, less often, material rewards to members of the working and middle classes. The writers of *Tracts* insisted on making the distinction between merely moral and spiritual behavior, where Christianity provided a firm basis for conduct. This was not merely a semantic difference. The 1795 story, “The Wonderful

Advantages of Adventuring in the Lottery!,” for instance, relates the downfall of John Brown, who,

like many others, thought religion rather an unnecessary thing for a man who made it a rule to be sober, and honest, and diligent, and kind. Besides the other very important considerations against which he shut his heart, he did not reflect that without religion his good conduct to his family and his master stood on no solid foundation.

([Anon] 1795 [1851?], II: 42)

More was a conservative on men’s and women’s roles, as evidenced by her attack on Mary Wollstonecraft in *Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education*. In More’s view, women’s education was to be quite limited: “Their knowledge is not often like the learning of men, to be reproduced in some literary composition, nor ever in any learned profession; but it is to come out in conduct” (More 1798, II: 1). Yet her life as a prominent single woman, the first in Britain to make a fortune by writing, and her writings on manners illustrate the wide scope of public action that women of means could claim in the name of “conduct,” the exercise of influence within the family. In *Moral Sketches of Prevailing Opinions and Manners, Foreign and Domestic: With Reflections on Prayer* (1819), More turns conventional cautions on emulation into a meditation on the dangers of travel and contact with foreigners and foreign goods, while staking out a crucial public, economic role for women. Written for English women of the higher ranks during a period of commercial distress, *Moral Sketches* indicts the middle classes for emulating the worst aspects of the upper classes’ behavior – they travel too much. But More also warns against the contamination of English life by imports of French morals, manners, and goods. *Moral Sketches* explores what it is to be English, that is, truly Christian, as it addresses religious concerns and domestic duties, including the meaning of charity toward women. Mixing in a healthy dose of anti-French chauvinism, More develops her tocsin about travel into an argument against free trade, and imagines a world where rich and middle-class women, and their money, do not travel to foreign shores; instead, women’s purchasing power, directed toward the consumption of domestic goods produced by poor English women, will further the cause of domesticity at home.

When not citing the pernicious effects of French lessons on the daughters of upper- and middle-class households, *Moral Sketches* indicates that even adults can learn lessons, for good or ill, from foreign contact. For More, these lessons are about English domestic arrangements, and, by analogy, national life. She ties the fear of travel’s effects on desire to the long-standing debate in England on the consumption of foreign luxury goods on economic and political order, national character, and national masculinity and femininity. More praises domesticity based on the ideal of a “country gentleman of rank and fortune” who does not travel too far, and keeps within his rural ambit. The farther this paragon of masculinity strays out of his circle, the less cohesive are his own sense of self and the

larger moral order. His influence, importance, usefulness, and dignity all diminish “in proportion to the distance he wanders from his proper orbit” (More 1819: viii). The adoption of foreign habits and manners by those who do wander too far afield, part of the “contagious intercourse” of “excess foreign associations,” threatens religiosity, especially in the “domestic arrangements of the great,” and thus puts national character at risk (More 1819: 10).

More speaks to the gap between the desire of some contemporaries for a revival of paternalism, and its absence in practice. In place of the probity of the traditional middle class and the paternalistic rule of the now absent country gentleman, More imagines a form of economic maternalism, economic solidarity between women of the highest and lowest ranks, as the bond that will hold England together. This solidarity rests on two significant assumptions. First, upper-class women had independent command over money and exercised spending power. Second, they could use this spending power to purchase goods produced by the waged work of English women. If More believed that women needed little education beyond that on “conduct,” their conduct as educated consumers was vital to the nation. Thus feminine influence on national character is not simply a psychological attribute; nor is women’s consumption simply frivolous activity bordering on the immoral. Rather, women’s consumption translates duty into action. It can effect what More had earlier declared a marriage of virtues, that of sentiment, “the virtue of ideas, and principle the virtue of action. Sentiment has its seat in the head, principle in the heart” (quoted in Pickering 1993: 128). Women’s positive moral influence – based here not on the emerging ideal of homebound domesticity but on wealthy women’s purchasing power – could extend the boundaries of women’s sphere from family to the ends of the earth, or, at least, in a negative sense, across the channel to France.

More conducts an extended reverie on “home economics” in her reflections: “We only refuse to imitate our continental neighbours, in the very point in which they are respectable: *They stay at home*” (More 1819: xv–xvi, emphasis in original). Rambling and spending on articles other than those produced in the home country dissolves national character. These activities also directly threaten the virtue of many poor women, and, through them, endanger English families. More notes that imports affect female workers in domestic industries, a “subordinate class” of women who, while overlooked, have “been bred to no other means of gaining their support.” Women’s paid employment is a natural fact in More’s moral economy. To deny that fact, and consequently fail to purchase English goods, will force poor women to offer their own bodies for purchase, and throw this “meritorious class” into the unnatural role of prostitutes (More 1819: 13–16). More thus extends Gisborne’s argument on the reality and necessity of women’s paid employment. She endorses a buy-English campaign, in order that money stay at home, aid these women, and preserve English womanhood and the English family.

The ideal subject in *Moral Sketches* was a woman who stayed at home, yet was actively engaged with the world. An inability to turn a house from a mere

place of lodging into a home, supplied with items produced in the home country, resulted in sexual behavior at odds with virtuous family behavior. The linchpin of this inexorable economic logic, which ties together class, gender, family, and nation, is, again, the acknowledgement of women's paid employment and purchasing power. Fluctuations in overseas commerce make visible the class of poor yet economically independent women in manufacturing industries affected by trade. This ideal of aggressive domesticity, where wealthy women extended Christian charity toward these poor women, realized through the consumption of their products, ran counter to the doctrines of free trade, at least in the short run. The harmony of interests between women of all classes was a moral issue that called for an active policy of discernment in consumption. It did matter where and how women spent their money.

If conduct books and devotional literature helped construct the image of the ideal female, they acknowledged that she took an active role in ensuring the economic health of the household. She did so through the management of time and money and through an amorphous yet pervasive influence that could encompass the world. Thus conduct books sketched not rigidly separate spheres but considerable interaction and overlap between domestic woman and economic man in their daily conduct. If the books created desire for a woman whose attributes were psychological, she nonetheless had a palpable physical presence, and an economic one. She not only helped manage consumption at home but could ensure, through her own purchases, orderly and virtuous production in the shops and factories which generated the livelihood of the poor, not to mention the comfort and ease of many in the middling and upper classes in England.

Travel and the experience of national difference, between the English and the French, provided More with the framework for her models of masculinity and femininity, and economy and political economy in *Moral Sketches*. Travel, and travel writing played a similar function for contemporaneous texts on political economy. The influence of travel and travel writing on questions of identity, economy, and the sources of national wealth was already well in hand in the eighteenth century, as travel literature took its place alongside devotional literature and histories as preferred reading material for the middling sorts in England. Writing up the facts of travel, whether as memoirs, journals, or fictional accounts, became a genre the middle sorts actively wrote in, too. Defoe patched together *Crusoe* with the aid of the facts of the celebrated case of Alexander Selkirk, who, while on a privateering voyage commanded by William Dampier, had been marooned on the uninhabited island of Juan Fernandez from 1704 to 1709. Defoe apparently relied, as well, on long-established conventions of travel writing and the realistic details of provisioning on deserted islands provided in works such as Dampier's two-volume *A New Voyage Round the World* (1697 and 1699). Writers in this genre exhibited a penchant for considering all foreign places as potential profit zones. This commercial vision, articulated as well in records of domestic travel, attracted Adam Smith, whose library held many works in the genre, and who borrowed copious evidence from travelers' accounts to support the conjectural history framework of *Wealth of Nations*

(Hunt 1993). Malthus cited passages from Alexander von Humboldt's record of his travels through New Spain in the years 1799–1804, and Mungo Park's in Africa in later editions of *Essay*. And he undertook his own travels, most notably through Scandinavia and Russia in 1799, to gather evidence that would support his arguments in revisions of *Essay* (Malthus 1966; Dolan 2000a and 2000b).

More echoes the ambivalence felt by writers on political economy about the impact of travel and travel literature on individual and family identity and behavior. On the one hand, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century travel and travel literature by and for the middle classes affirmed and reinforced among its readers an appreciation of difference from others. They helped establish and consolidate the sense of what it was to be British (Hunt 1993). Ruminations on difference could easily reinforce readers' sense of British superiority. These reflections ranged from the belief that the improved treatment of women was a marker of the advance of civilization, to the belief that the British were less indolent and economically more rational than the rest of the world. Further, the frequency with which travelers repeated the same observations meant that they were often accepted as unbiased evidence, and afforded social scientific inquiry something akin to scientific objectivity (Cooper and Murphy 2000: 27).

On the other hand, travel still carried many dangers for travelers. Some were physical – Captain Cook's death in Hawaii in 1779, for instance. Others were psychological. Smith, in *Wealth of Nations*, attacked the Grand Tour of the continent on the grounds that it had deleterious effects on the conduct of young aristocratic males who took it. He felt a youth, typically sent in the period between school-leaving and university for "improvement,"

commonly returns home more conceited, more unprincipled, more dissipated, and more incapable of any serious application either to study or to business, than he could well have become in so short a time, had he lived at home. By travelling so very young, by spending in the most frivolous dissipation the most precious years of his life, at a distance from the inspection and control of his parents and relations, every useful habit, which the earlier parts of his education might have had some tendency to form in him, instead of being rivetted and confirmed, is almost necessarily either weakened or effaced.

(*WN* V, i, Part III, Article II: 36)

Travel loosened domestic bonds and parental control over sons' conduct. Travelers' encounters with peoples overseas could also put British identity and sense of superiority at risk – More's fears of the effect of French manners on British sensibilities form part of a long train of often titillating reports of travelers going "native." Capital, too, was endangered by the mental changes wrought by travel, as the calculations of a "commercial people" could and did go wrong in overseas' investments. For example, in the aftermath of the domestic commercial panic of 1825–6, which was linked to failures of British investments in Central

and South America (Dawson 1990), mining companies sent representatives to South America. These representatives not only questioned whether British investors acted rationally, but, in the published exchange between Francis Bond Head and William Andrews, questioned their fitness to assess the future profitability of mining schemes in the region (Cooper 1998).

Nonetheless, the number of travelers, whether for commerce, tourism, or science, expanded, and the volume of information produced rose exponentially. If political economy was indebted to travel and travel writing, travelers in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century borrowed from theories of conjectural history and political economy to organize their observations (Cooper 2003: 165–70). Not just Malthus but other early nineteenth-century British travelers – tourists, businessmen, missionaries, sailors, army officers, colonial administrators, and scientific travelers including, later, the theorists of evolution, Charles Darwin and Alfred Russell Wallace – devoted themselves, quickly, to classifications of the population in these efforts (Dolan 2000b: introduction and chapter 2). Much has been made of the gathering of statistical facts in these efforts, a topic I will return to, briefly, in Chapter 6. But this process also involved revisiting the fictions of travel. *Crusoe* enjoyed a new popularity at the beginning of the nineteenth century, thanks to adaptations directed toward children. Conduct book writers and educators, however, warned that *Crusoe*'s excessive desire to travel constituted a threat to domesticity and set a dangerous example to follow. Priscilla Wakefield, in *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex* (1798), issued a warning to readers that *Crusoe* possessed qualities unrepresentative of his class and unfit for emulation. Wakefield divided the female population of Great Britain into four classes, and, directing the bulk of her remarks to the third class, lower middle-class women (“those, whose honest and useful industry raises them above want, without procuring for them the means of splendid or luxurious gratification”), who would become wives of tradesmen, called for “a thorough acquaintance with figures,” and a “methodical system of book-keeping,” traits associated with *Crusoe*. Yet Wakefield included *Crusoe* as the only novel in her recommended reading list because it was a cautionary tale: too much freedom, too little education (in a trade), and disobedience toward his parents produced in *Crusoe* both idleness and a rambling disposition (Wakefield 1798: 63, 142–8; quoted in Pickering 1993: 61–2).

Likewise, the Edgeworths were certain that *Crusoe* should not be part of the educational curriculum for young men and women of the middle and upper classes because of the effect the novel would have on their desires. The Edgeworths, in *Practical Education*, issue a warning that fictions, popular novels, and travel adventures, including *Crusoe*, inflamed the imagination and interfered with the formation of proper economic subjectivity (Edgeworth and Edgeworth 1996, II: 110–11). Parents needed to oversee the literature their children read. The effect of reading materials on readers was conditioned by gender. The Edgeworths presume that young males who read the story might be tempted to go off to sea, rather than pursue more fitting careers; young women, they note, would more realistically conclude that they could not run off to sea, even if they so desired.

The Edgeworths, while dubious about the value of Crusoe and the traveling life as a model of behavior, nonetheless borrow piquant yet well-known details from life abroad to illustrate some of their most important observations about economic subjectivity and agency, and domestic economy and national economy in *Practical Education*. They use travel literature as a handy reference to demonstrate that the middle classes, at home in England, not the lower or upper, possess the proper economic subjectivity and the right sort of economic agency. To do so, they reason, as did the conjectural historians, that rank, race, and gender are relational and relative categories, determined by family behavior, which itself is determined by the influence of the security of property on conduct. As Malthus wrote in the first edition of *Essay*,

The true points of comparison between two nations seem to be the ranks in each which appear nearest to answer to each other . . . I should compare the warriors in the prime of life with the gentlemen, and the women, children, and aged, with the lower classes of the community in civilized states.

(*EPP* 1, III, 3: 27)

The Edgeworths employ evidence garnered from travel writing to indicate the influence of slavery on racial differences in economic language and action, and to map class differences at home. In the final chapter of *Practical Education*, “Prudence and Economy,” Maria uses evidence gathered in Bryan Edwards’s influential *History of the West Indies* (1793) to identify the source of imprudence, extravagance, and speculation among West Indies planters and slaves.⁶ Both transplanted groups, English and African, suffer from “uncertainty as to the tenure of property, or as to the rewards of industry.” Edgeworth concludes that only the stability and certainty of property – which characterizes not the highest, but the middle ranks and those aspiring to such ranks – allows one to develop the habits of economy. If the planters’ behavior was deranged by uncertain prospects for staggering wealth or abject ruin, the ability of the planters to seize the property set aside for their gardens deprived slaves of the capacity to even imagine and speak of economy. Quoting Edwards, a Jamaican planter, who writes that “Prudence is a term that has no place in the negro-vocabulary. . . . The idea of accumulating, and of being economic in order to accumulate, is unknown to these poor slaves, who hold their lands by the most uncertain of all tenures,” Edgeworth asks the reader, “Is it wonderful that the term prudence should be unknown in the negroe-vocabulary?” (Edgeworth and Edgeworth 1996, II: 406–7).

Edgeworth immediately relocates the example from the West Indies to London, noting that the “very poorest class of people in London,” who “are it is said, very little disposed to be prudent,” constitute the chief consumers of certain seasonal luxury goods (“oysters, crabs, lobsters, pickled salmon, &c”) when they first appear on the market (Edgeworth and Edgeworth 1996, II: 408). According to Edgeworth, unlike the middle classes and those immediately beneath them, the very poor cannot wait until prices moderate to purchase

goods. They lack foresight and self-discipline, prudence and economy. Despite their avowal that the illustrations are “far-fetched,” by equating the behavior of West-Indies planters and slaves to that of the poorest in the metropolis, the Edgeworths literally bring home the empire, placing it in the streets of London. The final lesson to be drawn from these examples is clear. Charity is the final object of “economy.” But, rather than have benevolent desires directed purely by sentiment, parents must ensure that children cultivate habits of foresight and prudence which will, in turn, produce more money for charity. Again, only the stability and certainty of property, an attribute belonging not to those with the “greatest affluence” but to the middle ranks (and those aspiring to such ranks), allow one to develop the habits and the very language of prudence and economy. Hence, the text concludes, “the little *revenue* of young people ought to be fixed and certain “ (Edgeworth and Edgeworth 1996, III: 289, emphasis in original).

Political economists on domestic and political economy

The evidence from the West Indies serves as a guide to parenting in Britain. The actual experience of travel, through its effects on family and domestic economy (women’s consumption and occupations in the case of More, and “prudence and economy” in the Edgeworths’ case), can affect whole classes of people, the nation even. Edgeworth’s reminder of the presence of empire in everyday life is a fleeting one; likewise, Jane Austen mentions only in passing the Antigua plantations that form an integral part of *Mansfield Park* (1814). In the novel, order and stability, the result of proper household management can only be restored to the Bertram estate concomitant with its establishment at the Antigua property that financially underpins it. Austen easily references, yet distances (by studiously brief, casual allusions) the facts of empire. The text typifies the power of writers and readers to acknowledge and simultaneously place at a distance the unpleasant aspects of an empire that were inextricably bound up in everyday domestic life (Said 1993: 80–97).

Despite this link between household and nation, and the evident need to educate readers on the importance of practicing economy to the furtherance of political economy, detailed investigations into the overlap between the two realms rarely make an appearance in the canonical texts of political economists in this period. Writers allude to the relationship in introducing readers to the basic idea of the science of political economy, but drop it in favor of a focus on the public activities of men in the paid labor and goods markets. Families recede into the analytical background, as political economists focus on Smith’s three constituent orders (landlords, capitalists, and workers) and the relations of production and distribution, with an underlying set of assumptions that, under uniform conditions, individual behavior will be uniform.

In these texts, however, it is men who are depicted as economic subjects and agents. Smith famously devotes little space to women’s paid labor, as factory workers or managers of shops or even as prostitutes in *Wealth of Nations* (Pujol 1992: chapter one). Malthus, too, allows little room for women’s agency in

Essay, even in the marriage market. In Armstrong's view, idealizations about women reduce the bodily qualities of the female to psychological attributes. For political economists the psychological attributes of women as mothers are nonetheless determined by women's all-too present biological nature. Often they were classified as dependent bodies, reliant on natal or conjugal families for support, rather than as a class that has varying degrees of purchasing power. As a consequence of this state of dependence, J.S. Mill maintained, single English women deserved a subsistence wage less than that of men, one that met the bare minimum for biological maintenance: "[they] must be equal to their support, but need not be more than equal to it; the minimum in their case is the pittance absolutely required for the sustenance of one human being" (Laughlin 1884: 214).

Married women fared no better in many of these texts. Married women counted as mothers, and mothers counted too often as absent maternal presences. A standard complaint was that poor women neglected their maternal duties and natures when they worked outside the home, and thus contributed to the poor outcomes for their children. And, if married women remained at home, they were helpless, dependent on their husbands' earnings. When, in the first edition of *Essay*, Malthus conjures up a vision of foresight on the part of the laboring poor male who wishes to marry and raise a family, his example rests on the assumption of a male family wage, a "pittance" that produces the hesitancy about forming a family that Malthus eventually names moral restraint (*EPP* 1, IV, 13: 34). What of the women and children of the family and their earnings? They are hardly present. Men and men alone needed to earn enough to support their families. Even if barely sentient, men are independent creatures. But, if they earn too little to care for a family, they either suffer "heart rending sensation" at their ill fortune or are reduced to a state of womanly dependence.

Even if women were most often present in no guise other than their reproductive functions, given the population question, political economists believed that this function could represent a real threat to human society. James Mill devotes several pages of *Elements of Political Economy* to elucidating the point that "the physiological constitution of the female of the human species" contributes to the "natural tendency of population to increase" (Mill 1826: 46). This is the only appearance of women in the text. Mill states his case not with direct reference to women's bodies but by inference, relating their physiologies by analogy to "other animals, whose anatomy and physiology resemble those of the human species" (Mill 1826: 47). Despite their bodily absences, Mill determined that women's fecundity was the prime determinant of the level of wages, as the natural rate of population increase tended to outstrip the growth rate of capital. Controlling women's fecundity therefore becomes the "grand practical problem" for securing human happiness (Mill 1826: 65).

Mill was typical of classical political economists who ignored "woman" except for references to her central yet marginal maternal function. Rather than praising the positive psychological value of the moral influence of mothers in securing human happiness, however, Mill chooses to highlight the negative effect of their physiology on the level of wages. Yet if we shift our gaze from

canonical works such as *Wealth of Nations*, we see that political economists engaged with the manners and morals of British subjects do acknowledge the scope of women's economic activities and, in fact, seek to expand it. Brougham, in an 1823 essay in support of day schools for infants, "Early Moral Education," writes that the provision of education for a couple's children would lead to more provident marriages among the poor. It did so through its positive effects on women's earnings. With the children off at school,

The mother, whose time would be occupied by the care of two or three children, so as to be necessarily kept from all gainful work, is wholly set free by having them taken off her hands during the entire day. . . . This is a profit to the married pair, no doubt, and, in so far, may be supposed to contribute towards maintaining their family; but it is only profitable by affording time for labour; and therefore it is a legitimate aid to their means, and no more tends to encourage improvident marriages than any increased demand for labour, or any improvement on its productive powers. In truth, if it tends to promote marriages, it tends to make them less improvident; and whatever stimulus it may give to population, it is of a nature wholesome, and not burthensome to the community.

([Brougham] 1823: 441)

Day schools for infants increase the choices available to women and allow them to act as self-interested economic subjects; they allow mothers to work for money as opposed to devoting their time to maternal cares. This benefit to the family occurs even in the absence of the improvement in adult habits that an increase in an adult's knowledge was thought to bring about. While the provision of what is essentially cheap childcare may promote population growth, Brougham expresses confidence that the increase is more than compensated for by women's additional earnings.

To Brougham, women may not only have a taste for money over children, they may be presumed to have the capacity to act on opportunities that allow them to express that preference. Working for pay may involve piecework at home, or it may mean factory work: Brougham is not specific on this point. In the case of the latter, women were present in one of the public spheres. And volumes by women appeared at this time that asserted that, even at home in the private sphere, women played a critical role in disseminating the doctrines of political economy. Further, these women maintained that women's (and anyone else's) ignorance of the principles of political economy could hamper their operation, and injure prospects for prosperity and harmony at home and in the nation. An ideal woman, therefore, both exercised economy and was educated in the principles of political economy. Before political economy could become part of anyone's educational curriculum, however, its proponents had to struggle against its novelty. The initial efforts at spreading its largely unknown doctrines to the general public, in the first two decades of the new century, appeared mainly in university lectures and journal articles, particularly in the *Edinburgh*

Review (Fontana 1985). Progress was slow. George Pryme, in *A Syllabus of a Course of Lectures on the Principles of Political Economy* (1816), for instance, laments that, “the many important truths which Dr Smith has established and their application to subsequent events are alike neglected and unknown due to a failure to realise the utility of their widespread dissemination” (Pryme 1816: 1).⁷

Marcet’s *Conversations on Political Economy* appeared in the same year Pryme voiced his complaint. In *Conversations*, the instructress Mrs B responds to her student Caroline’s query as to whether political economy should be taught to children when she asserts: “I would wish that mothers were so far competent to teach it, that their children should not have anything to unlearn” (Marcet 1816: 12). She approvingly cites the example of Maria Edgeworth’s story of the cherry orchard, a tale on the division of labor. The story, Mrs B claims, proves that “no one, I should think, would esteem such information beyond the capacity of a child” (Marcet 1816: 12).

Marcet explicitly foresees teaching political economy to the working classes in *Conversations on Political Economy* (Marcet 1816: 158). Yet she does allow that conversations of a different sort will lead to an increase in the knowledge of political economy among these same classes. As towns and cities grow they “[bring] men together in society,” and their reading and discussion help create a type closer to the ideal of political economy: “mechanic[s]” with minds “more active and accustomed to reflection” than a “ploughman” (Marcet 1816: 77–8). The rise of manufactories will especially lead to the diffusion of knowledge. Conversations at work will produce changes in tastes and conduct through the process of emulation:

[T]hey become acquainted with the comforts and conveniences which have been acquired by the more skilful and industrious; they learn to appreciate their value, and are stimulated to acquire the means of obtaining them; a mode of instruction which we have observed to be the most essential step towards dispelling ignorance and exciting industry.

(Marcet 1816: 78)

Increased social intercourse rather than any formal education produces better conduct through a stimulus to “industry” and changes in tastes, as workers emulate the conduct of those who are “more skilful and industrious” in order to acquire similar goods and services. Workers’ talk diffuses knowledge of political economy, and the correct principles at that. Consequently, this serves to produce greater virtue (Marcet 1816: 79). The increase in virtue is offset, Mrs B admits, by all the vices that cities and towns give rise to. Further, knowledge of these virtues is private: they are almost invisible, particularly in comparison to vices, which are subject to laws and are publicly known. The operation of virtues was limited to families and friends, “known only to those who enter into their domestic concerns” (Marcet 1816: 79). Mrs B concludes that, in sum, the division of labor increases virtue because it makes more materials available to more people and promotes the diffusion of knowledge among all classes.

By the late 1820s and early 1830s, however, sentiment had changed with regard to teaching the lower classes political economy. Notwithstanding Mrs B's confidence in the ongoing spread of the division of labor, and the consequent advance in the diffusion of knowledge among the working classes, political economists feared that social intercourse among workers had led to some workers learning the wrong sorts of principles. In a review of lectures by Nassau Senior, Whately lamented that,

There are so many crude and mischievous theories afloat, which are dignified with the name of Political Economy, that the science is in no small danger of falling into disrepute with a large portion of the world. But this is not the only, or perhaps the greatest evil to be apprehended. Not only may just views of Political Economy be neglected, but false ones may obtain currency; and if the cultivation of this branch of knowledge be left by the advocates of religion, and of social order, in the hands of those who are hostile to both, the result may easily be foreseen.

([Whately] 1828: 170–1)

The result Whately referred to – rick-burning, machine-breaking, and violent agitation for political reform – was conduct that hardly fit most political economists' definition of virtuous behavior and social order. Thus the political economists and their supporters sought to cultivate the working-class reading audience. In 1833 Marcet compiled *John Hopkins's Notions on Political Economy*, a collection written expressly to instruct rural laborers on the common interests between the rich and the poor. As mentioned, Whately, in his capacity as one of the national commissioners of education in Ireland, saw to it that large portions of *Easy Lessons* were incorporated into the school readers in Ireland; these lessons were, in turn, copied and adapted for English school readers in the 1840s and 1850s. By 1859, of the nearly two million readers in use, most contained material on political economy composed by Whately (Goldstrom 1978: 133, 137–8).

This shift toward educating the working classes was part response to rural labor unrest, and part response to criticism leveled at political economists, including the emergence of a radical working-class press opposed to their doctrines (Thompson 1984). Political economists and their supporters had to contend with the suspicion that the science was cold, dry, and abstract, that it assumed exactly those aspects about human nature that it should study. Many critics felt that Malthus tended to blame the poor for their predicament – in the 1803 edition, Malthus cited the need to stress to lower classes their “real situation . . . as depending almost entirely upon themselves for their happiness or misery” (*EPP* 2, IV, IX, 17: 154–5). Many concluded that his population principles led to results that were, at the least, hostile to charity, at the worst, immoral. Propagators of political economy faced the additional charge, penned in both the working-class presses and Tory journals, that they were only mouth-pieces for the interests of capital, which were inimical to those of the working and landed classes. Works pumped out by individuals such as Marcet and Mar-

tineau, and by organizations such as the SDUK, were premised on the idea that the working classes needed an education in the true principles of political economy. The falsehoods uttered in the radical presses, and the paternalistic nostrums offered by conservative Tories would, in this view, only foster dependency among the poor and decrease capital accumulation among the ratepayers.

Supporters of political economy were at pains to point out that they too wished to see the sufferings of the working classes alleviated, and that the interests of the different classes were not opposed to one another: Martineau named one of *Illustrations*, an anti-socialist tract, “For Each and For All” (1833). But again, political economists and their supporters asserted that working-class females, males, and children had to meet certain behavioral standards – prudence, restraint, foresight, and desire tempered by reason – in order to meliorate their conditions and achieve a state of social harmony. These virtues were opposed to ignorance and profligacy, which, in aggregate, dictated failure for the masses. Crucially, whether one measured up to these standards of true economic subjectivity or not, and whether one changed, through education, the environment or not, the capacity to achieve success or failure would remain individualized, a matter of self-regulation. Malthus’s work on population implied that few of the individual poor, much less the poor as a group, could escape the vise-like grip of natural forces, and improve their lot in life. Critics were only partly mollified by the fact that Malthus lay some blame at the feet of the “higher classes” for deceiving wage laborers as to the means for best achieving their interests (*EPP* 2, IV, III, 5: 106). Though Malthus supported a measure of tariff protection for domestic agricultural interests, he acknowledged that free trade in grain would certainly help the poor, as would removal of the restrictions on the free movement of labor. But the key method of reform, education, was meant to lead to better private behavior – as in Malthus’s moral restraint – in order to achieve the desired unity between human behavior and the natural laws of political economy. Thus the “fact” that Malthus believed the working classes had only themselves to blame (or congratulate), as individuals and as a mass for their condition, had become the focal point of the vociferous attacks on classical political economy in the working-class press by the early 1830s.

At least the working classes were learning their political economy. In an 1825 *Edinburgh Review* essay, Jeffrey issued a called to manufacturers to educate themselves about political economy. Citing the “rapid and remarkable progress which the lower orders are making in this and in all other branches of knowledge,” the reviewer warned of the revolutionary consequences if employers remained ignorant:

Of all the derangements that can well take place in a civilized community, one of the most embarrassing and discreditable would be that which arose from the working classes becoming more intelligent than their employers. It would end, undoubtedly, as it ought to end – in a mutual exchange of property and condition – but could not fail, in the mean time, to give rise to great and unseemly disorders.

([Jeffrey] 1825: 11)

Thus, when Senior contended, in one of the lectures reviewed by Whately, that the principles of political economy had to be “diffused throughout the community; [they] must attract the notice of the mechanic and the artisan and penetrate into the cottage of the labourer,” he also stressed that the chair of political economy he occupied at Oxford afforded an opportunity “of innoculating the minds of a class, whence, in after-life, a great portion of the governing body in this country is drawn, with the principles of so beneficial a science” ([Senior 1827]: 183, 189).⁸

To Malthus and his supporters, an education in political economy for all classes – actually reading rather than simply discussing Malthus’s work, for example – would help promote social order by healing the division of interests between classes. An education in political economy would also help reconcile divided interests within households and within individuals, divisions apparent in the political economists’ rhetoric about desire. The economic subject evidently teetered on the brink of schizophrenia – prudent, self-disciplined, and abstemious in production, yet insatiable in consumption (Buck-Morss 1995: 453–4). To solve this dilemma, political economists devised a number of solutions. One solution split the economic subject into two, economic man and domestic woman, who were joined together as the ‘Malthusian couple,’ where economic man was responsible for production and domestic woman for consumption. This solution also gave observers some purchase on the emerging split between the household and the firm, and the geographic divorce between consumption and production, which had formerly been combined within the household. Ricardo and others, however, assigned consumption to one set of households (landlords) and production to the rest. Regardless, a division within or between households reduced but did not solve the problem of desires, and the coordination of consumption and production for political economists: Malthus wondered whether the social state would be able to consume all its production or fall into a general slump (Malthus 1820: 348–9, 352–5, 370). If sexual desire, unrestrained, could check a society’s progress, commodity desire, momentarily sated, could halt progress as well.

In the third edition of the SDUK tract *The Working-Man’s Companion* (1831), Charles Knight offered a solution to the problem of desire, and its coordination and aggregation that focused on relations within the working classes. The text acknowledged that the individual economic subject was a divided subject. It referred to the working man as a “double character . . . both a producer and a consumer” ([Knight] 1831: 186).⁹ Education, which would lead to changed conduct, lay at the heart of Knight’s solution for controlling desire and coordinating production and consumption within the working-class household. Despite its title, the text recognized that women too played a special role as both producers and consumers. Due to their employment in the clothing industries, women were adept at producing new tastes and fashions, and, in conjunction with their spending, they could therefore help coordinate the limitless wants of society with its means:

We have shown you that there is no limit to the wants of society; and that whatever increases the quantity of productions also increases the number of consumers. It is the duty of females, especially, to apply that ingenuity which peculiarly belongs to them, to the produce of articles which may add to the stock of human comforts. Some of their old domestic labors are almost entirely displaced by machinery. There are infinitely more females, certainly employed in conjunction with machinery; and as there are more clothes worn, there is more employ for the female makers of clothes. But still, females are greatly affected by changes in fashion; and the only way to meet these changes is to the constant habit of exercising their taste and ingenuity, to create new changes, and therefore new employment.

([Knight] 1831: 196–7)

To Marcet, the talk of working-men channels their desires into prudent, virtuous action; Knight recognizes the similar role women play, as paid labor, in producing and managing desire. “[I]ninitely more” women work as paid laborers “in conjunction with machinery,” and these women produce new tastes alongside the clothes they work up. These new duties accompany a reconceived domestic sphere, one made necessary by the displacement of household production by the machinery system. Nor does the text minimize women’s influence, as arbiters of taste, and as producers and consumers of new products, on patterns of employment. New tastes, changes in fashion, determine women’s paid employment, create new employments, and transform society’s limitless wants into additions “to the stock of human comforts.”

The family is not so neatly divided into separate and exclusive spheres in *The Working-Man’s Companion*. The text, however, does divide working-men into two types, in two types of households. In its solution to the problematic nature of desire in men, the text echoes Malthus’s developing hope, enunciated in the third edition of *Essay* in 1806, that, as luxuries became necessities with the growth of markets, moral restraint would diffuse to the lower classes. The practice of moral restraint did not simply manifest itself in anxiety about the fatal consequences of an improvident marriage, but in a healthy desire to achieve and maintain a higher standard of living. Malthus took a more favorable view of manufactures over time, because he believed they spread better goods, which, in turn, helped diffuse better conduct among the working classes. England exemplified his position: “throughout a very large class of people, a decided taste for the conveniences and comforts of life, a strong desire of bettering their condition . . . and, in consequence, a most laudable spirit of industry and foresight, are observed to prevail” (*EPP* 2, IV, VIII, 18: 145). As expressed in the 1817 edition of *Essay*, the consumption of luxury goods worked “unquestionably to improve the mind and elevate the character” (Gilbert 1980: 94). *The Working-Man’s Companion* suggests that the good workman determined his consumption such that “his comforts were in his home and he was determined that his home *should* be comfortable,” whereas the bad workman spent as much time as possible away from his filthy, disorganized hovel, presumably drinking rather than

purchasing goods that would increase his household's level of comfort ([Knight] 1831: 202; emphasis in original). For the good workman to attain the ideal household, desire should operate as a pure and purifying aesthetic. The workman needs to develop "lawful desires" into a "standard of enjoyment" that could be pursued through consumption that was neither too frugal nor too spendthrift ([Knight] 1831: 202). The text devotes several pages to a recitation of the merits of frugality and the evils of dissipation, bracketed by paeans to the intelligence and consequent moral restraint (Malthusian, yet unnamed as such) of the ideal workman as he goes about establishing a happy household:

In a word, he was an intelligent man, and he was a prudent man. He saw what was good, and he applied himself to obtain it, and to preserve it when it was obtained. He saw, for instance, that it was good to marry; but he also saw, that if he married before he had saved something against an evil day, he should not only put his own happiness in peril, but he should endanger the happiness of other beings. He would not marry to lower his standard of enjoyment; he did not marry, till he had taken care that the wants of a family did not lower him in the scale of respectability.

([Knight] 1831: 205)

Knight presents the reader with two genera of workmen, one situated in an ideal Malthusian household, one in a slovenly domestic nightmare. The conduct of each type was close kin to the genera presented in conduct books of the era, and to the two genera that Martineau was soon to present readers of *Illustrations*. Prudent behavior was the key to achieving "and preserving respectability," and enhancing one's "standard of enjoyment."

Security allowed the good man to be prudent: "But what he knew that it was as necessary for him to make himself *secure*, as far as human beings can obtain security, that what he acquired should not be taken away from him" ([Knight] 1831: 204, emphasis in original). Security, as an economic concept, was used in a variety of ways from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries in Europe (Rothschild 2001); and nineteenth-century British authors consciously punned on its different senses (Alborn 1998). The text plays on at least three meanings of security, where security is at once an object to obtain, a state of mind which allows you the freedom to obtain that object, and, implicitly, the knowledge and comfort that the legal system guarantees lawful title to property, and thus allows you to indulge in your "lawful desires." *The Working-Man's Companion* advocates a bootstrap form of self-advancement for working-men and their families that devolves from these meanings. A workman desires a "standard of enjoyment," especially domestic comforts, a little beyond his means, which leads him to save, and then gain (secure) it, and preserve (secure) it once obtained, in order that his desires can once again securely fix on objects equivalent to a "standard of enjoyment" just beyond his means. A virtuous circle of saving and consumption ensues in which desires are no longer dangerous but secured and productive of lawful pleasures. The third meaning, that of the secur-

ity of property established by law, secures the same connection between conduct and law for the working-man that proponents of the Marriage Act of 1753 sought for the upper classes: *The Working-Man's Companion* ultimately traffics in the knowledge of how "to secure property and succession" for the lower classes, and, as with their betters, this knowledge centers on the family.

Concerns over passions for sex and money in Britain, and the ability of families and individuals to regulate them, key elements in the debates over the marriage act and census in 1753, became the focus of conduct books in the period 1774–1834. Conduct books directly address the question of what women and men should do as economists. While they reflected a shared belief that what you read could change your behavior, conduct books spelled out a variety of ways to interpret the relationship of morals and manners to political economy. The heyday of conduct books coincided with a flurry of writing on political economy, and, beginning in the 1820s, a concerted push to educate people of all classes on the principles of the new science. Political economists believed education was fundamental to the continued growth of commercial civilization. Education fostered self-regulation; it aroused and cultivated desires and led people to behave more like the ideal types of the political economists. In theory then, a woman and a man could form a Malthusian couple, stabilize desires, and thereby ensure that private conduct could add up to public virtue, and a prosperous commercial society.

Like the conduct book writers of the period, political economists who wrote on the effects of education on behavior dilated on how it contributed to ideal family life and social order. The overlap between the rage for political economy and the rise of literature on morals and manners is not coincidental. As Torrens noted, political economy had an "intimate" connection with "the conduct of private life." Conduct books form part of the context in which family behavior, the crucial element in Malthusian population principles, was debated. Torrens's remark, however, glosses over the problems that political economists faced with observation, representation, and aggregation when they examined the relationship between "private life" and "public affairs." If the workings of families and households were partly invisible, how did the visible and invisible facts of "private life" add up to a coherent whole in "public affairs"? This was a question tied to the problem of induction in political economy. As more observations of heterogeneous particulars came into view, could these facts be assimilated under the assumption of human psychological uniformity? Or, were differences unalterable, as More presumed in her critique of English and French conduct? One solution lay in recognizing differences while assuming one human type, and imputing differences, including those of morals and manners, to different environments, institutions, and individual choices. Again, political economists and many travelers used conjectural histories to organize their observations and representations about the role of the growth of knowledge and morals in the rise of civilization. Increasingly, too, Malthus's work on population offered analysts a useful set of classifications with which to order their observations. The explosive growth in foreign travel and travel literature in the late eighteenth and early

nineteenth centuries offered a field test for these theories, but, obviously, the problems of observation and representation were just as apparent when domestic families came under the gaze of political economists.

The Working-Man's Companion highlights the crucial role of classification in identifying the influence of morals within contemporary British commercial civilization. Still, words about families, whether fictional or factual, were imprecise in depicting real life and ideal types. And numerical representations of family facts – statistics on births, deaths, and marriages, population size and growth – served only as summary indicators of the desires for sex and for property. These facts raised questions about the ability of observers to accurately classify family, and to infer how social effects were produced by the operations of desire within households. Yet political economists and other social analysts observed and represented, and tried to take into account the invisible facts of family life. In the next chapter, we will see how Martineau and segments of her reading public debated the fictional representations of family life in *Illustrations*. Contemporaries questioned whether the identities and actions of men and women in the tales truly coincided with both the facts of real life and ideal notions of family life. In their struggles over the representation of family in fiction, Martineau and her readers raised the question of whether the Malthusian couple was an ideal in fact.

4 Harriet Martineau's "embodied principles" of political economy

Whose bodies, what principles?

The Working-Man's Companion presents the reader with two types of people, one prudent, one imprudent. Both working-men and working-women occupy these Malthusian categories, and they both play a part in managing desires and cultivating more refined tastes. But these types hardly exhaust the number of social categories that readers in the 1830s and 1840s could imagine. Edgar Allan Poe quipped in 1843, for instance, that, "gentlemen of elegant leisure are, for the most part, neither men, women, nor Harriet Martineaus" (Poe 1984: 1003). Poe's jest about the English novelist, social scientist, and journalist reminds us that for her contemporaries Martineau's own gender and occupational class were as much an issue in how they classified Martineau as was the status of her work. The two were in fact inseparable as signifiers of her place in the social hierarchy. Poe's "for the most part" also reminds us that for men and women neither these signifiers nor the (boundaries of) categories themselves are pellucid. Reviews of *Illustrations*, the texts that made Martineau famous and economically independent, demonstrate that the conversations on the characteristics of ideal economic beings and family behavior, and the extent to which real individuals measure up to these outlines, are ongoing and uncertain. Martineau's own position as a financially independent unmarried woman, with a publicly influential, paid occupation, marked her as belonging to a category apart.

This chapter examines some of the philosophical and literary currents that influenced Martineau as she wrote *Illustrations*. It also examines how the tales work, especially how classifications of individuals according to a Malthusian view of the world were crucial to her efforts to observe the facts of social life and represent them as fictions. The text and the debate provoked by "Cousin Marshall" (hereafter referred to as *CM*), the eighth tale of the series and the focus of the second part of this chapter, testifies to the impossibility of locating whole classes of women within theories of political economy that represented women's interests as identical to men's. Women writers seized and created new opportunities afforded to them in the burgeoning print media as agents of moral authority within the family, which they represented as the crucial regulator of love and money. As a result, English women had work and influence beyond the scope of the conjugal family, and some were financially independent, not dependent. This category included Martineau, whose own life forms the basis of

part of the action of *CM*. The category problems in the tale also allow us, in the last part of this chapter, to read as contrasting strategies the later efforts of the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell to depict the private, rather than public reconciliation of economy to political economy.

Illustrations, which established Martineau as someone familiar yet out of place, themselves occupy an equivocal place as literary productions. They are fictions used to illustrate scientific truths, both "political economy to be read as literature" (Blaug 1958), and literature to be read as political economy. This chapter explores the implications of literary form for economic content and the implications of economic content for literary form in *Illustrations*. Martineau and her contemporaries debated the literary qualities of *Illustrations* in the same terms – the verisimilitude of the plots and characters – used to discuss the quality of her representations of the principles of economics.¹ We could also read the short novels as economic allegories or extended parables. Martineau designed the stories as primers on proper economic behavior; readers were to take the lessons as guides for individual and institutional reform. To reduce the complexity of social relations to fit the demands of realistic fiction and deductive political economy, Martineau embodies principles, good and bad, in representative types, characters who would act out these principles in plots derived from real life. *Illustrations*, as with much political economy of this period, are a literature of morals and manners, the subject of the previous chapter. The tales read like economic conduct books, with instructions for readers on how to comport themselves as economic, that is, moral beings.

Martineau sought to construct readers' subjectivities along the outlines of Malthus's prescriptions for moral restraint. Essays by economists on *Illustrations* presume the tales and the worlds they create present unambiguous meanings even to readers who did not know they were reading works of political economy (Blaug 1958; Thomsen 1973; Polkinghorn 1982; O'Donnell 1983 and 1989; Webb 1987).² Blaug hints at the insidious nature of narrative knowledge, insisting that most "who read the tales were struck by their literary quality . . . rather than by their doctrinal content; but it is precisely for that reason that the economic ideas which they conveyed entered so deeply into the minds of the readers" (Blaug 1958: 139). The premise that *Illustrations* are anodyne for the middle classes and that ideas are easily swallowed and absorbed under the guise of the narrative has found some resonance outside economics (Freedgood 1995). Literary historians have also described *Illustrations* as Martineau's way of deferring to her male economist "fathers." In this view she occupies the acceptable female role of moral instruction by preaching an identity of interests, championing the virtues of reason over passion and political economy over domestic economy, endorsing and prescribing a middle-class ideology of education, sobriety, thrift, and foresight for the working class, as well as reinforcing such norms for the middling classes (David 1987).

These interpretations of *Illustrations* – as uncritically reflective of the doctrines of political economy of the time and as promoting the cause of middle-class norms and prescriptions – rest on the assumption that the narratives deliver

univocal meanings.³ But both the structure of the stories and readers' varied responses to the tales should give pause. The process of world and subject-making through didactic literature is obviously not one-way: people react to what they read. Oražem makes a similar point in her recent study of how Martineau's early stories function as both literature and social theory. Oražem emphasizes the need to see her tales as both indebted to and as a radical departure from previous work, pro and con, on political economy by essayists and poets such as Robert Southey, Thomas Macaulay, Thomas Carlyle, and didactic authors such as Hannah More and Jane Marcet (Oražem 1999: chapters one and two).

Here I look at *Illustrations* in the light of contemporary interest in social classifications. Martineau's readers debated categories in political economy and of political economy, as a form of knowledge, as they tried to make sense of new forms of observations and representations of society. People responded to Martineau's classifications as if they themselves were being classified, and, as they characteristically do, sought to classify the classifier. This is evident in the contrast between the comments of those like Malthus who, Martineau relates, supported the tales as illustrative of the "blessedness of domestic life" (*Auto*, I: 254), and those who, outraged by the same Malthusian depictions of family life, expressed their criticism in attacks on Martineau's own family status.

CM, a story on the provision of poor relief and charity in England, makes it clear that the narratives do not render unambiguous meanings. Conflict within the tale arises from wedding notions of female domesticity and dependency within the family to the theoretically universal principles of liberal individualism. Martineau does not directly confront these contradictions and speak out against paternalism and separate spheres in *Illustrations* in the way she does in later works, even when political economists would be the likely target for a rebuke (Pichanick 1980; Sanders 1986; Hobart 1994). She did not contest, for example, James Mill's famous pronouncement, published in his "Essay on Government," which appeared in *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1825, that public life was to be governed by equality between men: the interests of women, children, and idiots would be represented by adult male relatives, fathers, husbands, and brothers. While members of the political mainstream contested this assertion, pointing out that, practically speaking, whole classes of women lacked adult males who could represent their political interests, the Reform Act, passed the same year as the appearance of *Illustrations*, included provisions that for the first time formally excluded women from the suffrage. The publication of the series also coincided with the first stirrings of the family wage debates, and the enactment of the first of the factory acts, which further restricted occupational opportunities for women and children. One of the first calls for the exclusion of "females of any age" from factory employment appeared in the *Examiner* in 1832. To this appeal came the reply from *The Female Operatives of Todmorden*:

For thousands of females who are employed in manufacturing, who have no legitimate claim on any male relatives for employment or support, and who have, through a variety of circumstances, been early thrown on their own

resources for a livelihood, what is to become of them? . . . [They] have been forced, of necessity, into the manufactories from their total inability to earn a livelihood at home. . . . As we are a class of society who will be materially affected by any alteration of the present laws, we put it seriously to you, whether, as you have deprived us of our means of earning our bread, you are not bound to point to a more eligible and suitable employment for us?

(quoted in Pinchbeck 1981: 199–200)

On the political fringe, Owenite socialists such as William Thompson, and Anna Wheeler in *Appeal of One-Half the Human Race* (1825) rebuked Mill and called for action – education, and, eventually, socialist communities – to promote equality between the sexes. Thompson and Wheeler drew on evidence from a wide range of sources, including “Physiology, anatomy, sensationalist psychology, phrenology, Lamarckian evolutionist theory,” and ethnographic data (Taylor 1993: 25–8), to support their belief that women’s inferiority was produced, not natural. Like many others, they took the improvement of women’s position within the family as the primary index of humanity’s progress from savagery to civilization. Other utopians argued, not unlike Godwin and Condorcet before them, that the dissolution of marriage and family would occur naturally as mankind reached its perfect state.

Martineau waited until the publication of *Society in America* (1837) to respond to Mill’s essay at length. Generalizing from her observations in America, she openly disparaged his contention that men can represent the interests of women. She asserted that men and women have different interests, and that so “long as there are women who have neither husbands nor fathers, his [Mill’s] proposition remains an absurdity” (Martineau 1837, I: 202). Efforts to make the real world fit an ideal of complete female dependence, where women were lumped into one all-encompassing category, inevitably failed. But, like the unsuccessful attempt to definitively classify “poor” and “pauper,” such classification work did circumscribe the options of women, not the least by setting the terms of debate about the limits to their economic and political roles. *CM* employs the same category as the women of Todmorden, “women who have neither husbands nor fathers,” to implicitly refute arguments of liberal political theorists and classical political economists like Mill who held that independent economic status (and thus political representation) were to be restricted to adult males, while women were to remain dependent within the family. This chapter explores some of the strains that result from Martineau’s attempt to realistically represent the lives of poor women, while simultaneously claiming that they should enjoy all the rights and responsibilities of a liberal political subject.

The classification problems associated with the category “family” also call into question the designation of *Illustrations* as straightforward normalizing texts. In the preface to the series Martineau explains the objective of *Illustrations* by referring to the nation as “that larger family” (“Life in the Wilds” (1832), I, 1: v). Her formulation recalls the common trope, where family types, compounded, make up the nation. But Martineau admits that, at present, the

analogy does not hold in practice: "We wish we could go on to say that civilized states are managed like civilized households" ("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: vii–viii). If reform is predicated on precise definitions of an ideal family form (and deviations from this norm), as a basis for self-government and national government, the inability to say exactly what family is and where its boundaries end defeats this purpose. In *CM*, Cousin Marshall calls for the redirection of all charity toward education, against the claims for a right to material support among the families of the poor as part of the larger "family," the nation. The reform of charity along these lines would both free up capital and produce a laboring population with the proper work incentives. *CM* highlights problems of classifying individuals and families as good and bad, assigning causality to their operations, and specifying their relationship to society. The lines of responsibility for an individual's welfare are not clearly defined precisely because, over time and space in the narrative, an individual may act in morally contradictory ways. The failure to explain contradictory actions – a failure to both classify and specify a causal theory – may be more realistic but it leads to a less than seamless economic narrative and undercuts the logic of reform.

The relationships between individuals and family, and family and society remain problematic in *CM*. Readers, including reviewers in the Tory organs *Quarterly Review* and *Fraser's Magazine*, found an unmarried woman declaiming against marriage and charity provoking. Critics also pointed out that both the premises and the conclusions of Malthus, which were echoed by Martineau in *CM*, were contradicted by the combined facts of population statistics and actual family behavior. For these critics the status of facts as arbiters of truth was not necessarily elevated above that of fictions. Rather, the refutation of Malthus and Martineau served to place in sharp relief the position of political economy as a speculative enterprise, ungrounded in experience.

The tale also depicts women as individuals capable of self-support. By the conclusion, the title character occupies a category denied to her sex in the domestic ideologies of the day: she's a financially independent, if desperately poor, woman who, contrary to the wishes of her family, represents her own interests. Cousin Marshall, however, like the overwhelming majority of her real-life counterparts, garners meager financial and social rewards, little political influence and certainly no political agency for her assertion of individualism. Literary realism wedded to economic realism portrays neither a pretty picture of female domesticity nor of the workings of political economy. This representation simply highlights the limited occupational opportunities available to women in real life in England in the 1830s. The example of Cousin Marshall demonstrates that one could be a paragon of domestic virtue and an avatar of political economy yet still not come to a good end. *CM*, in fact, rewrites the facts of Martineau's own family relationships. It illustrates Martineau's inability to comfortably reconcile her individualistic, public work with her family life. This conflict, a central paradox of the scientific principles she espouses, forms the real life plot for "Cousin Marshall's end," the final chapter of the tale. Martineau's determinism and her own family life produce principles at odds with one another: the lesson fails.

What is "real life" and where do we find it?

Martineau was born in Norwich in 1802, the sixth of eight children of Thomas and Elizabeth Martineau. Her father imported wine and manufactured and sold textiles.⁴ She was well educated for a girl of her time, studying Latin, French, composition, and arithmetic, first at home with siblings and then in school and private study. She began writing for the *Monthly Repository*, the principal Unitarian organ, in 1821. Her father died in 1826, as her family struggled to recover from the financial crash of 1825–6. She became engaged the same year, but her fiancé, John Hugh Worthington, soon went mad and died of brain fever in 1827. In 1829 her family's bombazine business suffered its final collapse, forcing her to search for paid employment. Due to her hearing problem – she was deaf from the age of twenty – she could not perform the duties of governess, the standard occupation for females of her station and circumstances. She did float a proposal, which met with no response, to teach girls who had left school through correspondence. Sewing and paid reviews for the *Repository* – the publisher, W.J. Fox had agreed to pay her £15 a year for her contributions – were her chief sources of income before *Illustrations*.

Martineau's early writings had focused on religious concerns. What led her to write about political economy was her belief in the doctrine of necessity, the principal doctrine of causality in the nineteenth century, which denied the existence of free will and posited the "invariable action of fixed laws" (Pichanick 1980; Gallagher 1985; *Auto*, I: 112).⁵ With the Necessarian doctrine, Martineau later wrote, she "held in [her] hand the key whereby to interpret some of the most conspicuous of its mysteries" (*Auto*, I: 110). The "mysteries" she would be able to interpret were human actions. She conflated her providential beliefs with the doctrines of political economy, and wrote in 1829 that the science of political economy, with its claim for universal and invariable laws governing human action, was an "apt and beautiful" example of the Necessarian doctrine.⁶

Martineau recalled that part of the process of composition for *Illustrations*

was to embody each leading principle [of political economy] in a character: and the mutual operation of these embodied principles supplied the action of the story. It was necessary to have some accessories, – some out works to the scientific erection: but I omitted these as much as possible; and I believe in every instance they were really rendered subordinate.

(*Auto*, I: 193)

This aspect of her method was read by some as incredibly reductive. In its generally favorable review of the series, *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, for instance, lamented that her method robbed the series of variety in its characterizations: "for the most part her characters are divided into two great *genera* – the one character is prudent, honest, and enlightened – the other is reckless, embruted and criminal." While the essay noted that Martineau shared this division of humankind into "well regulated labour, and shiftless

indolence" with Maria Edgeworth, the reviewer felt that Martineau's style, unlike Edgeworth's, produced characters lacking the peculiarities necessary to mark them as individuals rather than representative types (Lytton 1833: 148). In fact, the division of human subjects into two types resembles nothing so much as the classification of working-men used in *The Working-Man's Companion* (1831), as discussed in the previous chapter. The review concluded its "catalogue of complaints" by attributing "the greater part of the defects we have spoken of, not to a want of capacity of the writer, but to the nature of the work," by which the reviewer meant the design of the tales, their brevity, and, especially, the push and pull of the representation of "general attributes" as against "individual and unmistakeable traits" (Lytton 1833: 150).

Despite the unrealistic characterizations detected by *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal*, the journal concluded that she was, "as a writer of moral fiction . . . entitled to considerable station." While the journal had offered to judge Martineau's series on its literary merit alone, it went on to deem her unworthy of "high estimation" as a political economist because of the "exceedingly small compass" of her efforts. True, this was work of "great merit . . . [but] the merit is that of a writer, not a philosopher": she had not added to the stock of truths; she had popularized "known truths." The structure of the series limited her to depicting these "known truths":

it is only the most generally acknowledged axioms which she has ventured to embody in her tales; – this, indeed, with obvious wisdom; for if she had illustrated the more equivocal and less settled principles, the merit of the illustration would have become exceedingly questionable.

(Lytton 1833: 147–8)

How, in fact, did she propose to put her design into action and render "known truths" in an unambiguous fashion? That is, if individuals endowed with "embodied principles" were to carry the narratives of *Illustrations*, where did Martineau get her stories? Noting her difficulties in plotting the tales, Martineau writes, "creating a plot is a task above human faculties." It is beyond the human mind to comprehend all the "antecedent" causes of human action – the details are too numerous, the effort too vast. What is left to the fiction writer "is to derive the plot from actual life, where the work is achieved for us: and, accordingly, it seems to me that every perfect plot in fiction is taken bodily from real life" (*Auto I*, 238). Martineau derived perfect fictions from "real life"; she culled "real life" from "facts, witnessed by myself, or gathered in any way I could" (*Auto I*, 239). These facts were drawn from her own observations, government blue books, the Norwich library, and material supplied by friends and informants.

The "embodied principles" and their human vessels need to be stable and transparent enough so that the reader can learn the lessons without a loss of meaning. An assumed identity between objective experience – facts – and subjective belief would ensure truthfulness and transparency as one moved from

underlying economic principles to their workings in real life, to Martineau's embodiment of them in fiction, to an understanding of those principles by the implied reader of *Illustrations*. We might therefore assume the following set of perfect correspondences:

Economic principles → Life → Martineau → *Illustrations* → Reader

If we relax our insistence upon perfect correspondences (mimesis is after all only a more or less perfect representation, not the real thing), we might look instead for consistency in the tales.

But neither characters nor whole texts ever do exactly what an author wishes them to do. Though each story was based on the theme of chapter headings of James Mill's *Elements of Political Economy* (third edition, 1826), Martineau's process presents multiple opportunities for readers to miss or misunderstand the principles she sought to teach. Despite reviewers' judgments that the series represented only settled knowledge in political economy, for example, Martineau claimed, in a letter to M. Maurice, who translated the tales into French, that she wrote "each tale in the month before it is printed, in order that I may have the advantage of the newest discoveries upon the subject of which I treat" (reprinted in [Anon] 1834: 147). And Martineau wrote each of the twenty-four monthly installments quickly, in about two weeks, with hardly a revision. No one, not even her beloved older brother James, vetted her work; the quick transformation from pen to printer cut out the possibility of editing via correspondence:

No one but myself sees them before they are given to the printer, and no one has ever helped me in their compilation. My brother, the only individual whose assistance I could accept, lives at Liverpool. I cannot therefore consult him.

(reprinted in [Anon] 1834: 147)

Even if we assumed that Martineau achieved the clear and unambiguous inclusion of settled principles of political economy in fiction, this view overlooks the reading practices of audiences who, for example, read the tales and not only did not know that they were reading political economy but failed to absorb the lesson. Others read the tales and skipped the summary of principles and the chapters with extensive discussions of political economy. Some enjoyed the tales for their literary qualities and explicitly rejected the underlying principles; still others read the tales and rejected the lessons because of what they perceived as their *lack* of literary quality. Louis Philippe stopped reading her work after "French Wines and Politics" (1833) suggested the monarchy served no productive purpose. The czar banned her works in Russia after she took up the cause of Polish nationalism in "The Charmed Sea" (1833), and the Austrian emperor soon followed suit.

The series, with its mix of fiction, facts, principles, and politics, also presents

readers with a literary classification problem: what genre or genres did it belong to? *Illustrations* even contained something more than a hint of that most heterogeneous genre, the travel narrative. The tales are ethnographic visions, which, in the preface to the series, Martineau links to a "stages of civilization" narrative. She set the stories, "pictures of what those [political economic] principles are actually doing in communities," in the here and now, where they most seemed to fit in developmental terms: "As society is in widely different states of advancement in various parts of the world, we have resolved to introduce as wide a diversity of scenery and characters as it might suit our object to employ" ("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: xii, xvi). The geographic sweep of the tales included the Cape Colony, Australia, slave plantations in the Americas, the South Seas, the Hebrides, France, and the factories and streets of Manchester.

As the novelist and soon to be Registrar General T.H. Lister noted in an 1830 *Edinburgh Review* essay, literary production should be subject to the same division of labor as manufacturing, or else the products that result will be of a "heterogeneous and deceptive class":

Division of labour is a principle scarcely less commendable in literature than in manufactures; and the attempt to combine many objects, is often productive of a failure in all[W]e prefer . . . that a work should be solely and completely of the class to which it professes to belong.

([Lister] 1830: 444)

Martineau later admitted that some principles of political economy simply didn't make for good fiction: "some portions of doctrine were more susceptible of exemplification than others" (*Auto* I: 235). Nor were the outlines of which subjects pertained to political economy clear to its practitioners or the reading public at this time. Martineau herself relates how "Mrs. Marcet[']s . . . 'Conversations' had revealed to me the curious fact that, in my earlier tales about Wages and Machinery [published in 1827], I had been writing Political Economy without knowing it" (*Auto* I: 233).

Yet another complication Martineau had to contend with in addressing her audience was the fact that political economy was, by definition, political and, according to some, scientific as well. Both attributes made it potentially excludable from the acceptable sphere of activities by women. Thomas Gisborne, for example, doubted whether women could even comprehend the doctrines of the new science. He insisted that, while the influence of female character – permanently nourishing "like the dew of heaven" – would lead to constant, small improvements in society, differences in "mental powers and dispositions" between men and women meant that "close and comprehensive reasoning," including that necessary for the science of political economy, were reserved by God for men (Gisborne 1974: 11–12, 19ff). A later critic of political economy, Peter Gaskell, while mum on the question of whether women could come to understand its doctrines, asserted that women did not need such knowledge.

Women and their influence, he wrote, "exercise a most ennobling impression upon his [man's] nature, and do more towards making him a good husband, a good father, and a useful citizen, than all the dogmas of political economy" (Gaskell 1836: 165). Gaskell's statement reflects the belief that women were by nature instinctively fitted to the task of softening the harshness of the marketplace. A woman could mold men into "useful citizen[s]" for the public realm; she had no need to venture outside her limited sphere and into the precincts of political economy.

Yet the limit to women's public role as moral influence was indefinite. For some, the role gave women license to know and discuss "all the dogmas of political economy" and its relation to economy. Thus, for Hannah More, economic analysis was fundamental to women's ability to act as Christians. More and others opened a space for women to exercise influence through writing, and Martineau acknowledged as much. In her first published article, "Female Writers on Practical Divinity," Martineau recommended More's *Practical Piety* (second edition, 1811) for its emphasis on Christian conduct, and its example of teaching by writing. She cited the work's demonstration of "the significance of humans' influence upon one another in soliciting virtue in others or in setting a virtuous example," even while expressing deep misgivings about some of More's doctrines (Hoecker-Drysdale 1992: 22). Martineau took More's example to heart: she confided in a November 1832 letter to Lord Brougham that "though 'Political Economy' stands at the head of my title page, it is not the principal subject of my work" (quoted in Sanders 1986: 2); rather, as she wrote to the publisher William Tait in the same month, "the grand object of making known the moral character of the poor . . . [is] almost the primary object of my series" (Sanders 1990: 38).

Martineau, in *Illustrations*, sought to legitimate and then transcend the objects of Malthusian population principles, and political economy in general. The principal means of securing this goal would be education. Christian Johnstone, reviewing "Berkeley the Banker" in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, exclaimed, "If it were in our power, we would compel every living being in our land to take the lessons of our excellent instructress" ([Johnstone]1833: 92). All women were responsible for moral education. But it was clearly debatable whether they needed instruction in political economy to carry out this task. Martineau meant to make "useful citizen[s]" precisely through the process that Gaskell devalues, as the national "instructress" teaching "the dogmas of political economy." Mrs Marcet addresses this question directly in *Conversations on Political Economy*. The young student Caroline intones that

ignorance of political economy is a very excusable deficiency in women. It is the business of government to reform the prejudices and errors which prevail respecting it; and as we are never likely to become legislators, is it not just as well that we should remain in happy ignorance of evils which we have no power to remedy?

(Marcet 1816: 11)

Caroline asks whether women's lack of political agency doesn't obviate the need for women to acquaint themselves with knowledge of political economy. The reply of her teacher, Mrs B, does not challenge the separation of public and private spheres. But she asserts that, even within the confines of the family, women retain influence, and the capacity to do good or ill in the public sphere. As a result, women must spread proper ideas of political economy else women's "happy ignorance" of it cause harm. Charged with the responsibility of "inculcating . . . truth" rather than "propagating errors respecting it," women play key roles in social, not just biological reproduction (Marcet 1816: 11). While women may not act in public, as legislators, to change economic policy, their private roles as educators demand that they know and teach the true principles of political economy.

Marcet implicitly acknowledges the tension that could arise when women wrote and their exercise of influence became a public act. She attempts to defuse it by adopting a deferential tone: she presents her public role as author as one sanctioned by her male intellectual superiors, a kind of "dutiful, daughterly work" female intellectuals could safely adopt (David 1987). Marcet hints at the novelty of her exercise in the first edition of *Conversations on Political Economy*, where she indicates that there were no men to guide her. She writes in the preface that she

was in a great degree obliged to form the path she has pursued, and had scarcely any other guide in this popular mode of viewing the subject, than the recollection of the impressions she herself experienced when she first turned her attention to this study.

(Marcet 1816: vi)

Marcet reassures her readers, however, that "she has subsequently derived great assistance from the kindness of a few friends, who revised her sheets as she advanced in the undertaking" (Marcet 1816: vii). Her "few friends" included David Ricardo and Nassau Senior, occasional dinner guests at the Marcets. *Conversations on Political Economy*, though an innovative text, is nonetheless consistent with the advice given by these intellectual "fathers." By invoking the traditional feminine function of support, Marcet could reassure her reading public that her role as a female public intellectual was palatable.

Marcet laid out her bona fides to take up the topic of political economy in *Conversations on Political Economy* even though she was already a famous author, having won renown for *Conversations on Chemistry* (1805), the most popular book on chemistry in the first half of the nineteenth century. *Conversations on Political Economy* employed the same method as the earlier book, conversations or dialogues, to popularize a new scientific subject. Readers of her previous work on chemistry could anticipate renewing their acquaintance with Mrs B as she guided her pupil, and the reader, through the principal doctrines of Smith and his followers. Martineau, in contrast, though a prize-winning essayist, was little known outside her Norwich circle of friends and family. In 1829, she

arranged to spend three months a year living and writing in the London household of W.J. Fox. Her time in London, where, under the wings of Fox and his wife, she began to circulate among influential Unitarian circles, proved of little use in easing her path in publishing the series. In 1831 even proven authors had difficulties getting works in certain genres, such as theology, into print because of the economic uncertainty that accompanied debates about political reform; many publishers were reluctant to sign on to anything but a certain success (Topham 1998: 241). Martineau did float her proposal to the SDUK, and negotiated changes which the publisher, Charles Knight, approved. But her idea died in committee. Fox came to her aid by steering Martineau to his brother, Charles, who was just starting out as a publisher. Charles was reluctant to take on such an ambitious project; James Mill, as well as several publishers Fox consulted urged him to insist on a didactic, non-fictional series. Sticking to the original proposal, Martineau was forced to drum up subscriptions to *Illustrations*, with the understanding that Fox would discontinue the series after the second number if less than 1,000 copies were sold within the fortnight.

The series was a spectacular success, averaging 10,000 copies monthly, with its devotees including the young Victoria. Who else read the books? Even though the habit of solitary reading was taking hold among the British, families of all classes still often read aloud to one another. Circulating libraries for the middle classes were another venue for the series. As for the laboring classes, the duodecimo books were relatively cheap but their price – eighteen pence a month for two years – was still out of range of many of their ranks. Still, *Mechanics' Institutions* did circulate copies, as did some manufacturers, and it is clear that they were read by the poor, endorsed by some and criticized by others. This implies some tens of thousands of readers, given the customs of the day.

Martineau sought readers from all classes. She addresses her audience in a preface to "Life in the Wilds," the first story of *Illustrations*:

We do not dedicate our series to any particular class of society, because we are sure that all classes bear an equal relation to the science, and we much fear that it is as little familiar to the bulk of one as of another. . . . When, therefore, we dedicate our series to all to whom it may be of use, we conceive that we are addressing many of every class. . . . If it concerns all that the advantages of a social state should be preserved and improved, it concerns them likewise that Political Economy should be understood *by all*.

("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: xiv, xv, xvi; emphasis in original)

Martineau admitted that those who wished to acquire knowledge of political economy "complain, and justly, that no assistance has been offered them which they could make use of . . . because the works which profess to teach it have been written for the learned and can only interest the learned." This is the state of matters when a science is new, but when "truth is laid hold of, it is easy to discover and display its beauty; and this, the last and easiest process, is what remains to be done for Political Economy" ("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: xi).

That is, she assures readers that she plays a secondary role, neither developing systems or theories of political economy, but merely illustrating their operation. Martineau places herself in an intermediary class between theorists of the new science and the lay public. While she uses the pronouns "us" and "we" in her discussion of what the public "want" from political economy, she also wishes to explain political economy to the public. Thus, she offered not to involve the reader in "discussions of disputed points" or to "teach the science systematically as far as it is yet understood," because those

do not give us what we want – the science in a familiar, practical form. They give us its history; they give us its philosophy; but we want its *picture*. They give us truths, and leave us to look about us, and go hither and thither in search of illustrations of those truths.

("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: xi, emphasis in original)

The universal truths of political economy were to be found at home and abroad, in action and in talk; *Illustrations* juxtaposed chapters of domestic and public scenes, with conversations on specific principles of political economy. Not only was the science new, but the method she used to teach it was too. The preface offered justification for the novel form of the series:

The reason why we choose the form of narrative is, that we really think it the best in which Political Economy can be taught, as we should say of nearly every kind of moral science . . . [W]e have chosen this method not only because it is new, not only because it is entertaining, but because we think it the most faithful and complete.

("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: xiii)

The depiction of principles in operation, in a fictional form, is not a narrative trap. Rather, a narrative teaches the same truth as lectures or "a chapter of moral philosophy" but in a "more effectual as well as popular form." This may have been a sly reference to the fact that, while the tales contained a strong endorsement of Malthus's principle of population, the themes covered in the series followed, topic by topic, the chapter headings of James Mill's *Elements of Political Economy* (1826, third edition). In fact, sales of *Illustrations* dwarfed those of *Elements*, a rather dry textbook designed for youths, principally boys, which sold only a few hundred copies altogether. Martineau concludes that her series will dispel "the excuse that these subjects cannot be understood" ("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: xiv).

The preface assures readers that political economy is not altogether unfamiliar, because its truths operate in daily life. To illustrate this point and further ease a reader's introduction to the science, "Life in the Wilds" rewrites a familiar tale, *Robinson Crusoe*. The story sketches the travails of an outpost of the British Cape colony in South Africa after a raid by natives wipes out their village. Consistent with the "Summary of Principles illustrated in the first

Volume," the tale highlights the productive powers unleashed by "human intelligence" and the division of labor as the villagers seek to rebuild their settlement ("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: xix–xx). Women, men, and children all exploit the division of labor to ease their tasks, and thus demonstrate that anyone could embody and act according to the principles of political economy, regardless of gender, age, or class. In the course of the narrative the colonists move through modes of production that mirror the stages of growth of conjectural histories, concluding with the resumption of trade with the outside world that marks commercial civilization. No less important to the narrative are the changes in household definition and composition that imbricate this movement through the stages of civilization. The colonists spend the first nights after the raid huddled together in a cave for shelter, move on to rude shelters for individual households, and, finally, by story's end, start building new, separate, sturdy, English-style houses.

Household production follows a different trajectory, with the bulk of the tasks shared until the end, when each family can finally look forward to producing cooked meals for itself once again, in their separate houses. And the story carries a Malthusian lesson, though it, like the rest of the series, fails to mention Malthus by name. A marriage marks the return of the village to commercial civilization. Katie and Robertson have prudently waited to wed until it's clear that they can support themselves by their own labor. Like a good Malthusian couple, and consistent with the strictures of the marriage act, they also actively seek the community's approbation before going ahead with the ceremony. The community gives its approval and more: after the ceremony the settlers build the couple the first new house in the new village, and outfit it with "ornamental luxuries" ("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: 122–3).

"Life in the Wilds" demonstrates that real life, in fiction at least, can be lived according to the principles of Smith and Malthus. But let's step back a little to determine just whose life is "real." Condorcet and other Enlightenment philosophers relied on the work of the eighteenth-century associationist psychology of David Hartley and Joseph Priestley to posit a correspondence between objective experience and subjective belief. Condorcet believed that only "children and the people" were capable of error and that truth was available to an elite possessed of "good sense." Martineau drew on this same tradition to conceive the plots for *Illustrations*, having studied in Bristol in 1818–19 under Lant Carpenter, a disciple of Priestley. Martineau nonetheless inverts the hierarchy of knowledge that Condorcet, for one, erected upon these principles. Martineau held not only that truth, real life, was to be found in the lower classes, and that the lower classes – men, women, and children – were capable of grasping the truth of their lives, but that the higher one ascended in society, the more one encountered artifice as opposed to reality.⁷

This regard for the plain speaking of ordinary people drew on the work of William Wordsworth, and regional novels in the first two decades of the century such as *Castle Rackrent* (1800) and *The Absentee* (1812)⁸ by Maria Edgeworth, and *Waverley* (1814), by Sir Walter Scott. These novels piqued interest among

the middle and upper classes in the realistic depiction of lives of the poor and of those in other regions of Great Britain. The footnote "*Fact" in *The Absentee* may, in fact, be the model for Martineau's own footnote in "Homes Abroad," the citation of which opens this book (Edgeworth 1999 [1812]: 100). This concern with realism and "facts" was reflected in Martineau's theory of fiction writing. In 1832 she wrote that Scott

knew not that all natural movements of society, that he has found in the higher, exist in the humbler ranks; and all magnified and deepened in proportion as reality prevails over convention, as there is less mixture of the adventitious with the true.

(Martineau 1836, I: 43)⁹

Martineau repeats the claim in her series that real life is the property of the poor. In the anti-socialist tale, "For Each and For All" (1833), she gives truth a physiognomic interpretation:

The true romance of human life lies among the poorer classes; the most rapid vicissitudes, the strongest passions, the most undiluted emotions, the most eloquent deportment, the truest experience are there. These things are marked on their countenances, and displayed by their gestures; and yet these things are almost untouched by our artists; be they dramatists, painters or novelists.

("For Each and For All" (1833), IV, 11: 127)

Truth is stamped on individuals' features. The people and their bodies, rather than *savants* and their minds, are fitting subjects for founding sciences of society based upon "truth."

Children too are capable of reflecting and grasping the "true" as opposed to the "adventitious." In *CM*, the character Mr Burke proposes public assemblies as forums to explain policy changes to all: "It is so plain a case, and as capable of illustration, that I see no great difficulty in making the most ignorant comprehend it . . . [T]he whole might be conveyed in a parable which any child can understand" (*CM*: [171]). A parable is a didactic narrative, a short allegorical story designed to convey a truth or moral lesson. Martineau appears to be paying an oblique compliment to her own *Illustrations* here.

Martineau writes that realism may lie in the lives of the poor, but they are almost powerless to act due to their poverty. The upper classes won't act because they are blinded by convention; it is the middle classes that can most effectively act, indeed, must act on knowledge of the real.

The lordling knows nothing of reality . . . As for those who have only to do with what is real, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water, they are too generally unprepared to make use of reality. Their power, as far as it goes, is superior to the lordling's; but it is a scanty and unfruitful power. They are

for ever laying a foundation on which nothing is seen to arise. This is better than building pagodas of cards on a slippery surface like the lordling; but it is not the final purpose for which the human intellect was made constructive . . . [G]enius is as rare in the one class as in the other; being in the one, overlaid with convention; in the other, benumbed by want. The most efficacious experience of reality must be looked for in the class above the lowest, and in individuals of higher classes still, fewer and fewer in proportion to the elevation of rank, till the fatal boundary of pure convention be reached, within which genius cannot live except in the breast of one here and there, who is stout-hearted enough to break bounds, and play truant in the regions of reality.

(Martineau 1836, I: 3–4)

Illustrations marks a departure for Martineau in terms of how she conceived of and addressed her audience. As she states in the preface to the series, the acquisition of knowledge about political economy will serve to benefit the "many millions of our population, and for other nations through them." This will not "be achieved till the errors of our national management are traced to their source, and the principles of a better economy are established. It is the duty of the people to do this" ("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: vi). Again, all (the "people") are capable of understanding and acting according to the principles of political economy, not just the middle class.

Realistic representation for Martineau was not merely descriptive but instrumental realism infused with moral import, for her "words [were] nothing distinct from life" (Chapman 1877: 283). Depicting the lives of the poor would not only represent a more authentic version of life but would open up new territories for literature. Martineau proposes that a writer could create a realistic romance of the times by following such principles.¹⁰ An examination of the "humbler ranks" opens up for examination

no less than the whole region of moral science, politics, political economy, social rights and duties . . . for there has yet been no recorder of the poor; at least, none but those who write as mere observers; who describe, but do not dramatize humble life.

(Martineau 1836, I: 52)

Martineau proposed to go beyond observation and description, and dramatize, to produce a moral effect. In an October 11, 1832 letter to Marcet, whose *Conversations*, a more modest experiment in using fiction to teach science, inspired Martineau to write *Illustrations*, she described an organic origin for the stories: "Instead of preparing my doctrine and my fiction separately, and tacking them together, I digest my doctrine first, and then allow my characters to grow out of the doctrine, and the events out of the characters" (cited in Polkinghorn 1993: 102). Political economy, facts, and fiction were all of a piece, rather than a hybrid composed of elements grafted together. Yet in the same letter she also

acknowledged the limitations imposed by her method on her ability to make a seamless whole of fact and fiction:

If I had more space, I might dispense with some of the long conversations; but I can exemplify only the present, the fact of the future must be illustrated in the running commentary which I am obliged to introduce into all my stories.

(cited in Polkinghorn 1993: 102)

In her letter, Martineau wrote that the purpose of her series was that of "acquainting the common people with certain facts of the social system which they do themselves great mischief by misunderstanding" (cited in Polkinghorn 1993: 102). Martineau described a complex relationship between the aesthetics of facts and fictions in the preface to "Ireland" (originally printed in 1832), the ninth tale of the series. She defended the plot against anticipated criticism that it contained too little drama to qualify as good fiction:

As for the incidents of the tale, my choice was influenced by the consideration, not of what would best suit the purposes of fiction, but of what would most serve the cause of the Irish poor. A much more thrilling and moving story might have been made of conspiracy, and slaughter by weapon and by gibbet; but these scenes want no further development than may be found in our daily newspapers; while the silent miseries of the cottier, the unpitied grievances of the spirit-broken laborer cannot have been sufficiently made known, since they all still subsist. These miseries, protracted from generation to generation, are the origin of the more lively horrors of which everybody hears. Let them be superseded, and there will be an end of the rebellion and slaughter which spring from them.

(Martineau 1833: unpaginated)

Martineau suggests that, in the case of the Irish troubles, the "purposes of fiction" were much better served by newspapers, the purveyors of facts, than by her tale. On the other hand, the effort to "make known the moral character of the poor," and therefore advance the cause of reform, might be purchased at the cost of dramatic impact. Thus her preface turned the usual attributes of facts and fictions on their head. Fictions are only able to reveal the inner causes of human behavior if they forfeit some of the dramatic scenery that makes for good fiction; and the facts of the newspapers, so true to life that they resemble good fictions, register only surface effects.

The privilege of observing, and of selecting fictions, facts, and doctrines, of turning all these into writing as a form of social action, resided in the middling classes. Martineau made it clear, however, that women, children, and men of the poor and the rich had other forms of action available to them consistent with principles. Like Marcet, she believed that action based on ignorance could lead to harmful effects. In the seventh tale, "A Manchester Strike" (1832), based on the

Manchester labor struggles of 1829, Martineau contrasts the domestic life of the Allens with the work of the committee of the union, which is canvassing the operative spinners on the possibility of an action against the factories: "Mrs. Allen was so full of interest and curiosity about little Hannah Bray, that she had no thoughts to bestow on public affairs, as the transactions of the Union were commonly called" ("A Manchester Strike" (1832), III, 7: 17). Despite Mary Allen's thoughtlessness, the sentence does not portray the proper interests of domestic woman as confined to maternal concerns, in contrast to the "public affairs" of economic man. The qualification that the union's transactions are "commonly called" "public affairs" gives the lie to the fiction of separate spheres.

The Manchester women are quite interested in the affairs of the union and express their general opposition to the turnout. Mary Allen, wife of the union secretary and spokesman who is the voice of reason in the tale, soon enough becomes aware of and entangled in the "transactions of the Union." The friction between the Allens over questions of duty and honor involving their family and the union during the strike neatly illustrates the close connection between manners, economy and political economy, and gift and monetary exchange. The Allens' marriage contract sits uncomfortably with union contracts, union gifts, and union duties. Mary, unlike their daughter, who sells her pet bird to help scrimp on household expenses, is not convinced of the need to exercise economy during the strike. Further, she "thought it very cruel [of Allen] to talk of honour, and very absurd to plead duty, when he knew that his family were in want." Mary refers to terms often invoked with reference to the obligations imposed by gifts. In fact, her subterfuge regarding a suit, voted to Allen by the union committee in lieu of compensation, provides a tragic exclamation point to the conflict between the couple, and underlines the inability of his fellow union members to correctly infer his character from his wife's behavior: even though they are legally one person, they retain their separate moral identities. Allen, who returned the suit due to union opposition to his negotiating positions, is accused of reacquiring it and selling it. In fact, Mary, without his knowledge, had asked for the clothes back, "in her husband's name," – as was allowed under the principle of coverture – and sold them on the way home, "trying to persuade herself that she was only doing a mother's duty in providing her children with bread" ("A Manchester Strike" (1832), III, 7: 114–15). As Finn notes in her analysis of the opportunities and constraints depicted in English fictions of debt and credit, "the retail credit that catalysed commodity exchange in consumer markets promised to free fictional characters from their mutual obligations, subverting sexual propriety, destabilizing social order and fomenting economic ruin" (Finn 2003: 51). Allen, individually blameless, yet nonetheless responsible for Mary's actions, resigns his union position, as a point of honor. Absent his steadying hand, the strike disintegrates. At tale's end, Allen, deserted by his fellow workers and blacklisted by the factory owners, ekes out a living doing odd jobs, perverse recompense for a reasonable man.

The parable of Allen's suit emphasizes the point that women and children need instruction in both "economy" and "public affairs" or else both private and

public spheres will suffer. Martineau's series, according to John Stuart Mill, was designed to "illustrate such parts of it [the science of political economy] as lead to important practical results" (Mill 1834: 319). Martineau supported reforms consistent with her belief in a determinist as opposed to interventionist providence. Reforms included, naturally, legislation, including those that fostered free labor markets. But Martineau also supported the reformation of morals and manners. This included casting off outmoded notions of duty and honor that constrained women and men, like Mary and her husband, from engaging in conversations that would lead to a rational and truly virtuous course of action, one that best served the interests of all. The Necessarian denial of free will applied to both human and divine minds, and, accordingly, no human or divine interference could change the underlying causal relations of economics. But, again, an educated individual, of any background, could learn to conform to these laws. Martineau therefore did not agree with the political theories of James Mill, who carved out whole classes of exceptions, including women and most non-Europeans, to the rights to universal suffrage and self-governance. True, she more than once expressed the sentiment that men and women were different, and were thus fitted for different occupations. She avowed in *Society in America* that, "No one in the world questions . . . that masculine and feminine employments are supposed to be properly different" (Martineau 1837, III: 115). But Martineau maintained women's civic duties and political responsibilities were not derived as a simple reflection of their womanly, principally maternal duties. Rather, they were based in fundamental human equality, as were economic and political rights for all workers, men, women, and slaves (Hobart 1994).

The "serious temper of the times" demanded that a writer take seriously her moral responsibility to society. Literary realism in the service of education could effect political change and, at the same time, do moral good. Not surprisingly, many readers commented on the realism of *Illustrations*, especially its depictions of working-class subjects. Despite the attacks leveled at her by the radical press for her Malthusianism, some working-class reactions to her tales applauded her realism. On the hero in the fact-based tale "A Manchester Strike," Martineau notes, "In spite of all I could say, the men of Manchester persisted that my hero was their hero, whose name however I had never heard" (*Auto* I: 216). And the trade-union leader John Doherty praised the tale, claiming "Every incident of the tale is drawn from real life, the characters are accurate and striking, and the whole plot of the story, or rather history of the 'strike' is natural and easy" (Webb 1960: 122). On the other hand, *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* concluded its critique of Martineau's method with the comment that she violated the cardinal rule of fiction, because "her dialogue lacks verisimilitude." And many middle- and upper-class readers complained that *Illustrations* unrealistically endowed working-class bodies with the attributes of their betters.

These attacks reflected something other than the possibility expressed by Brougham and others that the laboring classes might, in fact, know more about political economy than the middle and upper classes. The criticisms touched on

an epistemological problem in political economy – much of the information needed to establish facts and systems was private, not public. For example, in “Weal and Woe in Garveloch,” a story about an island’s responses to a collapse in its fishery, Martineau intimated that women were *in vivo* experts on the population question. The heroines, Ella and Katie, look back on the food shortages that distress the island’s inhabitants and conclude that the stalwart Ronald would be better off not marrying Katie, even though the two desire each other and meet every criteria for a prudent love match:

Ella and Katie, sensible and unprejudiced, and rendered quick sighted by anxiety for their children, were peculiarly qualified for seeing the truth when fairly placed before them. Their interests in Ronald, as well as in their own offspring, gave them a view of both sides of the [population] question.
 (“Weal and Woe in Garveloch” (1832), II, 6: 104)

The domestic position of the women, and their interests “on both sides of the [population] issue” made Katie and Ella unprejudiced observers, able to see and act on the “truth when fairly placed before them.” So unprejudiced were Katie and Ella that they concurred in a decision which appeared to go against their own (and Ronald’s) bodily passions and financial interests. The *Quarterly Review* saw otherwise. When its reviewer, the geologist and political economist George Poulett Scrope, a member of the London Statistical Society (and brother of Poulett Thompson, head of the Board of Trade), considered the discourses on population between the fishing-village heroines, he objected that Katie and Ella were unbelievable, not unprejudiced observers: “the notion of such dialogues, on such subjects, being held under such circumstances – between a couple of Highland queans, on the shores of the Hebrides, and . . . in the Erse dialect, was never surpassed in the dreams of Laputa” (Scrope 1833: 142).

“Cousin Marshall”: poor relief and the “want of proper distinctions”

Even supporters in periodical reviews found Martineau’s method of intertwining fiction and political economy aesthetically jarring. As William Empson, friend and colleague of Malthus at the East India College, admitted in his generally favorable *Edinburgh Review* essay, “an apparent violence and incongruity in her transitions from picturesque description and pathetic anecdote, to what are as yet almost technical discussions, are among the severest conditions of her undertaking” (Empson 1833: 4). Empson was willing to overlook the “improbability” of conversations on political economy taking place among “people and under circumstances where it was never talked before.” He opened his review with the caution, however, that a woman who ventured into the realm of political economy must do so in a manner consistent with her role in domestic economy and the strictures of benevolence. Women who trespassed into the public realm, without expressing a “deep sympathy with the precarious situation of their

poorer neighbours, and an active benevolence in relieving the distressed, and in encouraging the virtuous," became "the Amazons of politics" (Empson 1833:1).

CM produces a leading character and an author who, in some readers' eyes, were "Amazons of politics." In *CM*, Martineau portrays the effects of poor relief policies as almost uniformly evil. Increased expenditures on relief loosened the indirect, familial bonds among the inhabitants of the nation; it severed any direct relation between ratepayers and recipients, through increased resentment on the part of the former, and decreased gratitude and deference on the part of the latter. Like Malthus, she argued that poor relief only exacerbated the population problem through its effects on work incentives, age of marriage, fertility, and capital accumulation. And, without mentioning Malthus by name, the tale reproduces his timetable for the abolition of poor relief.

A few lessons from the story are instructive. The tale opens with widow Bridgeman and her four children seeking shelter after a fire destroys their dwelling. Citing the expense, Mrs Bell refuses to take in her sister's family, so responsibility for the care of the indigents falls to Mrs Bridgeman's cousin's family, the Marshalls. Widow Bridgeman soon dies and, because the Marshalls cannot afford to keep them all, two of the four Bridgeman children, good Ned and incorrigible Jane, are sent to the workhouse. The action of the story follows the Bells, the Marshalls, the Bridgeman children, and others as they encounter the various forms of public and private charity available in their parish. We can already see Martineau's design at work in the first chapter as she pairs off characters endowed with diametrically opposed principles: kindly and frugal Cousin Marshall with uncompassionate and improvident Mrs Bell; responsible and hardworking Ned Bridgeman with his irresponsible and lazy sister Jane, and so on.

So it is not difficult to determine which bodies embody which principles in *CM*. The Marshalls represent the perfect Malthusian couple – sober, industrious, and provident. Further, they seem to typify a working-class version of the ideology of separate spheres – John works while Cousin Marshall tends to the domestic duties. Their kin on the other hand, the Bells, represent a Malthusian nightmare. Their profligate and immoral behavior includes Mrs Bell collecting a family allowance for a deceased child. The Bell family eventually disintegrates, with individual members dispersed to all corners of the globe. By the close of the tale, Cousin Marshall "thought her own experience, and Mrs. Bell's together, might be enough to show how bad the system was" (*CM*: 103). Consistent with Unitarian belief in this period, Martineau expressed a preference for private as opposed to public charity, with the further proviso that such benevolence should be subject to stringent restrictions. Abolish the poor laws, Martineau urges, and abolish all charities, public and private, which serve to lessen capital or increase population. Except in the case of true indigence, "charity must be directed to the enlightenment of the mind, instead of to the relief of bodily wants" (*CM*: 132).

The tale depicts events consistent with the moral of the Malthusian population principle. Yet the classification system of *CM*, which, in theory, would allow readers to recognize who belongs to the good and bad "*genera*," runs into

immediate difficulties. The extended family composed of the Marshalls, Bridgemans, and Bells contains both good and bad nuclear families. Even within the Bridgemans there are good and bad individuals. If membership within the category family did not signify an individual's status as good or bad, how could one determine which of the two "*genera*" she or he belonged to? For proponents of poor law reform like Martineau, further confusion stemmed from individuals who belonged to the category of the able-bodied idle. Martineau and her contemporaries were faced with the following question: "How could the able-bodied be idle when they could and should be working?" If the able-bodied idle do not deserve public charity in *CM*, methods must be devised to distinguish them from the truly indigent. That is, reformers had to classify individuals. Miss Burke, a middle-class charity worker (and part of the other Malthusian couple in the tale – she lives with her bachelor brother), cites the necessity of proper classification in the workhouse when she

observed that the evil began out of the workhouse; and that the want of proper distinctions there made classification in the house an imperative duty. "We are too apt," she said, "to regard all the poor alike, and to speak of them as one class, whether or not they are dependent; that is, whether they are indigent or only poor. There must always be poor in every society; that is, persons who can live by their industry, but have nothing beforehand. But that there should be able-bodied indigent, that is, capable persons who cannot support themselves, is a disgrace to every society, and ought to be so far regarded as such as to make us very careful how we confound the poor and the indigent. . . ."

(*CM*: 29–30)

Martineau's taxonomies are both scientific and moral. Miss Burke concludes, "that as wide a distinction ought to be made between temporary and lasting indigence, and between innocent and guilty indigence, within the workhouse, as between poverty and indigence out of it."

CM is nearly silent as to the near-term efficacy of palliatives (such as benefit societies, savings banks for the poor, even education) aimed at addressing behavior that presumably breeds guilty indigence. What solutions the tale does offer rely on taxonomical distinctions in the administration of the poor laws. Treatment, at the minimum, requires discovering and maintaining categorical distinctions:

The necessary evils of a workhouse were bad enough; and it was afflicting to see them needlessly aggravated, – to see poverty and indigence confounded, and blameless and culpable indigence, temporary distress, and permanent destitution all mixed up together, and placed under the same treatment.

(*CM*: 29)

Poor relief ensures that an individual's material or moral status can no longer be inferred simply by name or appearance. The categories 'indigent,' 'poor,' and

'wealthy' no longer correspond to their previous rankings in moral or monetary terms. The able-bodied do not work (or do not work productively); those on relief receive more than those working; by mixing the truly needy with the truly greedy, one cannot tell them apart. If one can't keep unlike categories apart, one cannot properly treat those who need relief, and, as Mr Wilkes, the master of the workhouse, suspects, all the poor will become corrupt: "It seems to me the surest way of making the industrious into vagabonds, and the sober into rogues, to mix them all up together; to say nothing of the corruption of the children" (*CM*: 31).

CM was timely but not entirely novel in its focus on social classification as the means to reform charitable principles. The desire to maintain distinctions between poor and pauper was also the preoccupation of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws, appointed in 1832.¹¹ After the appearance of *CM*, Lord Chancellor Brougham had the commission feed Martineau reports from the field, material that became the basis for her *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* (1833–4). The series was widely seen as Whig propaganda; nonetheless, a May 25, 1833 review in *The Literary Gazette, and Journal of the Belles Lettres* praised the first volume, "The Parish: A Tale," in terms that point to an ambiguous relationship between facts and fiction, the demands of truth and literary aesthetics. To the reviewer, fictional form appears to serve as a simple, attractive veneer to plain facts: the tale "brings facts before us, with no other aid from fiction than that of giving them an attractive and dramatic form." The commission may have attempted to formalize the matter-of-fact evidence that they gathered into a reliable means of distinguishing the class of the deserving from the undeserving poor, but the facts themselves represent no special form of knowledge: for the reviewer of "The Parish" the fiction presents "but facts of actual and homely occurrence, such as all whom they may concern may verify from their everyday occurrence" ([Anon] 1833a: 328).

In their final report, issued in 1834 and which served as the template for the poor law reform that passed in the same year, the commissioners announced their task as defining the "distinction between the poor and the indigent, the indigent alone within the province of the law" as well as to create "a broad line of distinction between the class of independent labourers and the class of paupers" (Poor Law Commissioners 1834: vi). The written records of the commission illustrate, however, even if in less dramatic terms, the taxonomic uncertainty evident in *CM*. Allowance schemes muddled the issue by confusing the distinction between wages and relief. The term "poor laws" itself produced ambiguity because the word "poor" was applied to both independent and dependent labor. Many of the former felt they too were entitled to poor relief (and in fact availed themselves of it), and that any diminution of relief threatened their remuneration as well. Categories like able-bodied idleness are, as Green notes, prime examples of taxonomic scandals in the poor law report. One can describe the concept of able-bodied idleness, yet it combines heterogeneous categories. The combination, and the resultant confusion of social and moral order, produces an inability by the commission, in written practice, to place individuals or groups of

individuals in well-defined categories. These taxonomic scandals and resulting "illegible objects," by the contravention of rules, serve to simultaneously define and confuse a particular moral and social order (Green 1983: 118).

For the commissioners, paupers could be distinguished from the poor because they were characterized by moral degradation. Even if independent laborers received less in wages than dependent laborers received in relief, in "every district, the condition of this class is found to be strikingly distinguishable from that of the pauper, and superior to it" (Poor Law Commissioners 1834: 258). For Chadwick, the general workhouse violated principles of classification because it mixed unlike types of bodies, and threatened, again, to turn the poor into paupers. To maintain the distinction between pauper and poor, the commission devised the concept of "less eligibility": relief was to be less desirable than the condition of the lowest class of free labor. This would keep the poor from becoming paupers; it would also, reformers hoped, "dispauperize" the able-bodied paupers altogether, converting them into independent laborers (Poor Law Commissioners 1834: 229, 233). And commissioners claimed that, in those parishes where it was already in place, the principle of less eligibility had already had the happy effect of cutting the number of improvident marriages (which "arrested the increase of population"), part of a general improvement in the moral tone and conduct of the laboring population (Poor Law Commissioners 1834: 240, 245–58). The commissioners believed the principle should be applied as a general policy throughout England. Unlike Martineau, however, who believed that classification was necessary prior to admission to the workhouse, and that the institution "needlessly aggravated" the problem by mixing categories, the commission determined that the workhouse would act as a "self-acting test of the claim of the applicant."¹² Put another way, less eligibility, the instrument for relief, was itself the test for relief. It would ensure that each individual in a parish would be properly classified as either poor or pauper. Its use would guarantee that

the line between those who do, and those who do not need relief is drawn, and drawn perfectly. If the claimant does not comply with the terms on which relief is given to the destitute, he gets nothing; and if he does comply, the compliance proves the truth of the claim – namely, his destitution.

(Poor Law Commissioners 1834: 264)

Since the workhouse was less eligible, only the truly indigent would be drawn to it. There would be no means-testing, and no intrusive inquiries into the morals of the claimant. The onus of classification would shift from the parish authorities to the claimant for relief, from the classifier to the classified.

The ultimate unintended consequence of relief not directed according to scientific principles is the unproductive commodification of family relations. In *CM* Mrs Bell collects an allowance for a dead child. The problem extends to private charity as well. In the tale the beggar fraternity holds a sumptuous banquet at the Cow and Snuffers public house. The beggars certainly engage in

what the political economists would call unproductive labor. Nor are they what they appear to be, as they exchange their tattered garb for respectable clothing before dining. The fraternity even includes a woman, Miss Molly. She too is deceptive, and something quite unnatural, unwed mother to children not her own, whom she employs as professional beggars. When asked about her seven small children, Miss Molly complains,

It is all I can do to remember their parentage, in case of its being convenient to return them. Two of them are getting to a troublesome age now, – so impertinent! I must really get rid of them, and borrow another baby or two.

(CM: 69–70)

True, Miss Molly practices the honorable custom of putting poor children to work to supplement family income. As a result, however, private charity has sullied the clarity of the maternal bond with money.

Beggars, a subclass of paupers constantly in motion and often in disguise, are difficult to accurately observe and represent in the narrative. Beggars also illustrate how movements in narrative time and space destabilize categories. They focus attention on excess, “out works to the scientific erection,” including agents’ ineffable motivations. After the minor character Hunt is introduced to beggars’ work, it remains an open question whether he will actually embrace the life of his fellows. At the banquet, after a waiter chides the beggars for mocking the meeting of the men’s benefit society members downstairs, the gathering orders the man out of their midst. Martineau concludes the chapter and the story of Hunt with the following, temporizing observation: “but there were, possibly, others besides Hunt, who sighed at his [the waiter’s] words before they began to sing in praise of gin and revelry” (CM: 73). Will Hunt join the beggars or will he repent? Is he an irrevocably bad economic actor? Are there “possibly, others besides Hunt,” who retain the capacity to change for the better? Will they act on this possibility?

Hunt and the beggars simply recede from view. Hunt’s unfinished tale highlights a basic methodological problem with *Illustrations*. Hunt embodies exactly the “equivocal and unsettled principles” that *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* warned would render the merit of *Illustrations* “exceedingly questionable” (Lytton 1833: 147). He’s a walking taxonomic scandal, his education at the hand of the beggars having led him to be literally suspended between Martineau’s “two great *genera*.” Like many other incidental characters in *Illustrations*, Hunt is not fully realized or allegorized; that is, he is not classifiable as a representative type. The potential for change in such characters represents so many unwritten stories. They may linger with the individual reader, and, as readers imagine their own versions of the tales, violate the simple economic structure of the stories. They thus jumble the messages of Martineau’s lessons because it is impossible to determine whether characters’ “embodied principles” were essential and unchanging, or whether individual choices and (or) changes in the environment determine action in the tales and thus allow room for change.

If people simply represent the principles they embody from the start, what incentive is there for readers to change their behavior and emulate the ideal fictions? Characters do in fact change in *CM*; but they change from the good to the bad genus. And many do so by becoming rational economic actors: women, men, and children cheat a system of charities whose managers, whether trained in the principles of political economy or not, are unable to discern an individual's true moral condition. While deceitful calculation and moral backsliding fulfill the premises of literary realism, they belie the method of *Illustrations*, which aimed to clear away ambiguity, and demonstrate the positive benefits of an education in economic principles.

The problems education and its capacity to change individuals can cause for classification of both individuals and families in *CM* is illustrated in two scenes involving good, hardworking Ned Bridgeman and his shiftless sister Jane. Farmer Dale, her parish employer, dismayed by Jane's careless attitude, initially decides "to try her a little longer . . . [for] there is no knowing whether one would change for the better" (*CM*: 88). In fact, Jane has already changed for the worse because of her workhouse education. Some weeks later Ned asks after Jane who, pregnant and abandoned by the man she hoped to ensnare in a pauper marriage, has fled in disgrace. Dale, having heard of Ned but ignorant of the fact that he is Jane's sibling, mistakes him for a pauper:

Bless me, is it you? After the character your master gave me of you, I should not of thought of finding you asking after Jane Bridgeman. But you are all alike, paupers or no paupers as long as there are paupers among us to spread corruption.

(*CM*: 91)

The category "pauper" renders worthless any testimony as to an individual's good character. Without knowing the who and the why of a particular instance of social contact, Farmer Dale can only conclude that there is no category save that of "pauper." To define and explain pauperism, he is ultimately unable to articulate anything but the analogy to the theory of the spread of disease and corruption through proximity. But the analogy points to the limits to the observer's knowledge of the relationship between individual bodies and the social body. The idea of proximity as a mechanism of contagion was only one of several theories of disease transmission prevalent at this time, and one that could fit either environmental or germ theories of disease. Thus, one doesn't know whether it is interior or exterior causality, something within or without an individual (or some combination of the two), that causes "corruption" to spread from the individual to the social body.

Jane, like Molly and Hunt, does illegitimate work. Women threaten to spread corruption to and through children. The category "able-bodied woman" itself represents a classification problem. "Able-bodied" implied "manly" work or work alongside men, so "able-bodied woman" entailed a mixture of gender roles and a confusion of sex distinctions. Work by women alongside strange men in

anonymous settings was unsexing (to both sexes) and, as in Jane Bridgeman's case, loosened the moral fiber of society. A decade after *Illustrations*, Friedrich Engels, who documented his observations of Manchester in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845),¹³ recounts a story in which Joe discovers his unemployed friend Jack doing housework, while his wife is off to work in the factory. Engels bemoans this

insane state of things – the condition which unsexes the man and takes from the woman all womanliness, without being able to bestow upon the man true womanliness, or the woman true manliness – the condition which degrades, in the most shameful way, both sexes, and, through them, Humanity.

(Engels 1981: 174)

In *CM*, the taxonomical confusion about able-bodied women arises in part because the text treats seriously the possibility that women could reason, act, and work just like men. Martineau's working-class women are knowledgeable in their dealings with the market and the state, and perfectly capable of supporting themselves if given the opportunity.

The taxonomic problems evident in *CM* are related to Martineau's use of family as a metaphor for social organization. The metaphor can cause mischief. The summary of principles appended to the tale concludes:

one plea is now commonly urged in favor of a legal provision for the indigent. This plea is that every individual born into a state has a right to subsistence from the state. This plea, in its general application, is grounded on a false analogy between a state and its members, and a parent and his family.

(*CM*: 131)

The issues of individual economic responsibility and independence affect the meaning of the analogy that linked family and nation. As a designation without limits, family defies precise categorical definition. That is, it's a designation that can fit any type of social organization. It included in the nineteenth century the nuclear family, the extended family, friends, the community, the nation, the beggar society, the benefit societies, friendly societies, burial clubs, the savings banks, and the extension of credit through ordinary shops, and pawnshops of varying degrees of respectability. These different family forms mix public and private philanthropy, though in truth workers, who, until the late nineteenth century, commonly used the poor laws to tide them over in times of "life-cycle crisis, illness, and old age" (Lees 1998: 179), relied more on charity and mutual aid societies than assistance from the state (Kidd 1999). Poor relief, a healthy dollop of self-help on the part of the working classes, and heroic household management on the part of women; all these iterations of family and economy, upon which individual welfare depends, appear, reconfigure, and dissolve over the course of the narratives. Again, families are not unambiguously defined as good

or bad, and an individual composed of contradictory moral principles may belong to several different families, of differing moral rankings, simultaneously in *CM*. This leads one to ask what would constitute a true analogy between family and nation. But it also forces us to ask what family "is," and how an analyst could stabilize it as a category and thus achieve moral and scientific order in the relations between women and men, parents and children, and family and society. To make true the analogies between the family and the nation (that is, between economy and political economy), one must specify exactly how the family functions over time. Yet "Cousin Marshall" does not identify and stabilize the causal links that would enable one to categorize one type of family as irrefutably good and another as irrefutably bad. What remains, then, is an anxiety to impose categorical distinctions without a basis for making those distinctions consistent in "real life."

Martineau's definition and explication of the workings of family, however unruly its categories, is conventional in its mixing of "is" and "ought." Yet, while "Cousin Marshall" endorses the good Malthusian family, it also subtly disputes the ideology of separate spheres. Miss Burke, even while urging more careful classification within the workhouse, does not advocate rebuilding the wall formerly used to keep women and men apart (*CM*: 32). Opposition to workhouse separation has traditionally been interpreted as a cry for the preservation of the family unit and patriarchal control. Mixing men, women, and children, however, can also be read as an endorsement of a heterogeneous workforce. Miss Burke does not support separate spheres for men and women in the workhouse, but the division between innocent and culpable indigence.

Nor does Martineau have kind words for the family politics of paternalistic private charity in *CM*. She mocks the aristocratic provision of charity based upon the presumed ties of blood. While waiting in line for parish relief, the beggar Childe reveals to Hunt that, by virtue of his surname, he stands next in line to reside at "Childe's Hospital." There the "money gathers so fast that 'tis thought we Childe's shall have silver spoons by the time I enter the brotherhood." Childe also declares, "I like gentility, and I would give up a little roving for the sake of it" (*CM*: 60). Martineau links, in the person of Childe, the one class that uselessly piles up capital and the other that takes unwarranted sups from the common fund. The gentry and their capital move too little, and are devoted to activities that fail to contribute to the commercial progress of the nation; paupers embody capital that moves too much, also a detriment to the health and wealth of the nation. The sober getting, husbanding, and spending of resources of the middle classes characterizes the ideal employment of capital.

There are some unambiguously good bodies in the tale, those who act in accord with economic principles. Cousin Marshall is one. There are some unambiguously bad bodies, too, like Mrs Bell. So we can ask whether the former get their just rewards while the latter are punished. Yet even here the message is mixed. In the final chapter, Cousin Marshall, whose principled behavior and teaching helps save Ned Bridgeman and almost rescues his sister Jane, is reduced to bitter, penurious widowhood. She refuses to lodge with her own children or utilize the money Ned sends her; instead, she finds employment at

meager earnings. All the while she publicly dispenses unpopular truths and warns that those who opined that it was "more natural for the parish to give to them" rather than the reverse "would die in the workhouse" (*CM*: 126).

This is a cautionary tale of course. But given the melancholy outcome for Cousin Marshall, we might well ask, as Martineau does, whether "she was better off than Mrs. Bell" (*CM*: 126, 127). Mrs. Bell, in fact, happily whiles away her time in the workhouse. Her husband, having run off to another parish, was never heard from again; one daughter gained a pauper's marriage; "one son was an ill-doing pauper labourer; and another, having been transported for theft, was flourishing at Sydney, and likely to get more money than all cousin Marshall's honest children put together" (*CM*: 127).

Acts of God, like the fire that initiates the action in *CM*, can at least temporarily set back the most principled of characters in her tales. Further, principled actions by individuals may not always lead to good results if the masses act in ignorance of the divine laws of political economy. As Martineau notes in her October 11, 1832 letter to Marcet, she agrees with the reading that one of Marcet's friends has of her tales: "It being generally admitted that prudence ought to secure welfare; the nation should take to heart those of its errors by which virtue is robbed of its rewards" (cited in Polkinghorn 1993: 102). As in the moral tales of devotional literature, this error may also allow unprincipled characters to escape judgment on earth while leading good characters to look forward to divine judgment only in the afterlife (Gallagher 1985). Another rationalization lies in the sentiment of the period that ascribes the suffering of the innocent to the sins of others: the action in "Life in the Wilds" is motivated by the claim that the Bushmen "visit the sins of the first invaders [of South Africa] upon their innocent successors" ("Life in the Wilds" (1832), I, 1: 5). In like fashion, Janet Bridgeman's indiscretion stains the future of her relatives.

The actions of Cousin Marshall, however, are awkwardly inconsistent, and ill motivated, though not unrealistic: a character who fails to behave according to the dictates of the plot, and who retains the capacity to surprise the reader, is a staple of nineteenth-century realist fiction. She refuses to avail herself of the help of her children, and, despite their offers of help, "was positive . . . in her determination to live alone." Her own children married too young and have too many kids (are they therefore part of the bad *genus*?), and are thus "so burdened with families of their own that they could offer no further assistance than that she should lodge with them by turns." Even those who do act as good Malthusians, Ned Bridgeman and his siblings, Cousin Marshall's other "adopted" children, are unable to impress upon her the universal rule of family economic support: "Her adopted children found the utmost difficulty in making her accept any assistance, clearly as it was her due from those to whom she had been a mother in their orphan state" (*CM*: 125). Yet this is help that the preceding narrative assures us is not only her due, but the principal lesson of her life: "[it should be] as universal a rule that working *men* should support their parents, as that they should support their children" (*CM*: 42, emphasis added). Cousin Marshall supports herself, unlike the ideal, domestic women covered by this

universal, paternalist rule. Cousin Marshall's end may be unhappy precisely because it reveals, through this contradiction in the lesson, the cracks in the "scientific erection" of political economy.

Illustrations cannot be read simply as normalizing texts directed at the poor, if we take *CM* as an exemplar. Martineau's sentiments on the status of women, the problems of classifying family, the marriage of domestic to political economy, and the embodiment, in narrative, of clashing principles of political economy all undermine the "scientific erection." Again, it's questionable whether, in fact, the *Illustrations* reached or made much of an impression on the working classes (Claeys 1985, and Goldstrom 1985). Yet, like the conduct books cited in the previous chapter, they do address the need to reform the morals and manners of the middle classes. In order to effectively reform the social state, the middle classes needed to define and maintain distinctions among their own members as well as among the poor. Miss Burke, after urging more careful classification as a means of curbing the contagion of idleness in the workhouse, thought "that classification must begin among the guardians of the poor, before much reformation could be looked for. The intrepid and active among the gentlemen, if separated from the fearful and indolent, might carry the day against the ill-conducted paupers" (*CM*: 32).

Classification begins at home: "Cousin Marshall" and the facts of Martineau's real life

The response to *Illustrations* in the mainstream periodical press was mixed, and fell out, predictably, along party lines. The *Edinburgh Review*, and the *Westminster Review* endorsed the tales as suitable educational efforts by a young woman; *Fraser's Magazine* and the *Quarterly Review* strenuously objected to the premises, analysis, and conclusions of Martineau's work. The November 1832 *Fraser's Magazine* review, probably by the founder of the journal, William Maginn, formed part of a series on political economy which touched on the debates on population, the relationship between theories and facts, and facts and fictions, as well as the status of political economists as a class of observers who sought to represent the social state and recommend reforms for its ills. The first review of the series, in August, on Chalmers's *On Political Economy*, opens by comparing political economists with alchemists, deeming each a "class of dreamers and pretenders."¹⁴ The political economists, a "gentry," were guilty of adhering to a method of "abstract theory, constructed in perfect disregard of the facts" ([Maginn?]1832a: 113). As a result of this method, the review insisted, Chalmers's book contained only three facts, on family behavior and population, all of which were refuted by the evidence.¹⁵ Chalmers's family facts, based on a slavish devotion to theory, were "mere fictions."

While *Fraser's Magazine* dismissed Chalmers's work, it was careful not to call the "mere fictions" it contained falsehoods. Such a charge would impute dishonesty, which would be an attack on the character rather than the work of Chalmers. Rather, it found "the word 'fiction' insufficient to express our

meaning. The fact is that Dr. Chalmers has . . . said 'the thing which is not'" ([Maginn?] 1832a: 115, emphasis in original). Nor was fiction sufficiently strong enough to express the *Fraser's Magazine's* attitude toward Martineau's *CM*. Certainly it proposed that, compared to the tale, the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments are dry matter of fact" ([Maginn?] 1832c: 406). Looking back over the estimates of population from the late seventeenth century onward, the essayist trotted out statistics to prove, contrary to the alarums raised in *CM*, that the proportion of paupers to the size of England's population was decreasing over time. Thus, the reviewer charged, her claim, and those of the political economists,

Like all their other statements of fact . . . turn out to be nothing but fiction; the real truth being, that these gentry find it far more easy and convenient to invent the facts required, in their closets, than to search for them in historic or statistic records; where, indeed, they would never find anything to answer their purpose.

([Maginn?] (1832c): 407)

Not all critical reviewers were so quick to dismiss the value of fictions. In his discussion, in the *Quarterly Review*, of the treatment of rent in the fifth tale of *Illustrations*, "Ella of Garveloch," George Poulett Scrope points out the "droll inconsistency" of Martineau announcing the Ricardian definition of rent and then violating it in the operations of the "she-farmer" Ella: "This is illustrating a definition in an odd fashion. But thus it is – when the axioms and definitions of these political economists are tested by an application to facts, they are found not to fit above one in a hundred" (Scrope 1833: 139). Scrope applauded Martineau's realistic discussion of rent as opposed to the abstractions of Ricardo's theories. Yet, as he pointed out, in an inversion like that implied by Martineau in the preface to "Ireland," the realistic "facts" were drawn from a work of fiction.

If Martineau's fictions and facts came under fire, so too did her logic, and, by extension, the theories of political economy. *Fraser's Magazine* noted the inconsistency between the principle of moral restraint and the principle that children should support their elderly parents. The operation of the former would negate the latter: if the class of men unable to support a wife and children choose to remain unmarried, they (unintentionally) create a class of elderly men with no one to support them. Principled action in one time period not only leads to the violation of the principle of support in the next, celibacy robs men of their masculinity. That is, it deprives them of the emotional pleasure and support that help define male domesticity:

They must not marry – they are debarred all connubial and paternal pleasures and feelings – they are to labour in helpless, hopeless solitude, till old age comes upon them, and then, they are to find the poor-laws abolished, the alms-houses pulled down, and are to be told, in grave and serious mockery, that their children ought to support them!

([Maginn?] 1832c: 411)

Similarly, the poor law reforms advocated by Martineau are inconsistent with the operation of the principle of economic support – they will only leave a category of men bereft of family support, whether family be considered conjugal family or the nation as family. Critics pointed out that, in reality, the principles of moral restraint and the dependence of elderly adults on their children were not necessarily at odds with one another. Whether they were or not was an empirical question, to be determined by the facts. *Fraser's Magazine* asserted that both population and living standards were rising so that, for the moment at least, there was no conflict, no need for moral restraint, even for the poor ([Maginn?] 1832c: 411).

Public concern about the indigent usually evoked visions of a class of widows, bereft of any independent means of support, shorn of agency save for their ability to appeal for relief. But *Fraser's Magazine* notes that men too are liable to fall into the category of the indigent. The review focuses on the bodies and psyches of men to attack the logic of Malthusian family behavior. Their sensibilities and passions with regard to wives and children – “connubial and paternal pleasures” – are not to be trifled with. To do so calls into question the “compassion” of a political economist ([Maginn?] 1832b: 411).

To critics, neither the experiences of fictional women and men, nor those of real ones, supported the principles of political economy; rather, they clearly indicated its inconsistencies. As a result of these inconsistencies, *Fraser's Magazine* maintained that Martineau was ill suited to the category of educator. While the review itself was unclear on whether Martineau herself could be counted as one of the political economists (or was merely a member of their party), it attacked the analysis in *CM* as a “tissue of reasonings, which would disgrace the third class of any ladies' boarding-school of decent character, in these days of improved female education” ([Maginn?] 1832c: 403). And it criticized Martineau, as it had Chalmers, for advancing theories that were contrary not only to the facts but to human nature:

[T]he grand mistake committed by both the young lady and the reverend divine in this matter, as in all other parts of the question, is this, – that they theorise instead of consulting facts and human nature. In this way they seem to take for granted, that if they can but stop marriages from going on, all will be right; whereas, no more speedy or effectual method can possibly be adopted for demoralizing and breaking up a community. The natural appetites and passions of men are not to be extinguished, or placed under ban, by an act of parliament.

([Maginn?] 1832c: 413)

The passage suggests the futility of legislation to halt too early marriages. Is this a sly reference to the various marriage acts? The passage also recalls Malthus's first *Essay*, where any voluntary effort to thwart the demands of the body is also futile, and results instead in immoral behavior. In Maginn's view, moral restraint should be placed in the same class as any other preventive check: it too breeds vice.

The reviewers also included the facts of Martineau's own life as pertinent to the evaluation of the theories of political economy. These facts supply part of the "perfect plot in fiction" for *CM* and help produce a contestable illustration of the principles of political economy. In the extended discussion in *Autobiography* on her inability to plot fiction, Martineau recounts how "Berkeley the Banker" (1833) "was, in a great degree . . . our own family history of four years before," that is, her family's financial ruin. In the tale one of her relations is "presented as Berkeley, – (by no means exactly, but in the main characteristics and in some conspicuous speeches)" (*Auto* I: 239–40).¹⁶ Martineau clearly tailors the evidence of her own life to retrospectively indicate in her autobiography the rise of a woman who is increasingly able to rein in her passions and rule by reason (Peterson 1986). Martineau's statements to the effect that she and her family serve as models for other stories in *Illustrations* are self-fashioning and self-serving. This does not, however, totally negate their status as evidence that Martineau's own life serves as a basis for part of the action of *CM*.

Contemporaries were also quick to identify Martineau as one who embodied not only the ideals but the very person of some of her characters. Working-class operatives considered her "one whom they supposed to have 'spent all her life in a cotton-mill,' as one of their favourite Members of Parliament told me they did" (*Auto* I: 216).¹⁷ Such a realist position, however, could be and was used against her. When the *Quarterly Review* referred to the title character of "Ella of Garveloch" (1833) as "Martineau of Garveloch," it meant no compliment. Her support of Malthusian population theories in "Weal and Woe in Garveloch" (1833), and stance against the provision of charity for the poor in *CM*, incensed the reviewer, and led him to remarks that generated a near scandal. He tweaked her for ignorance of "knowledge which she should have obtained by a simple question or two of her mamma," and thundered in outrage that Martineau was "a female Malthusian. A woman who thinks child-bearing a crime against society! An unmarried woman who declares against marriage!! A young woman who deprecates charity and a provision for the poor!!!" ([Scrope] 1833: 141, 151, emphases in original).¹⁸

The ability to accurately observe and represent the body of economic knowledge is intimately related to Martineau's (and readers') knowledge of her own and others' bodies. By dint of her membership in the class of unmarried and childless women she, in the *Quarterly Review*'s opinion, lacked the education, the knowledge to delve into the ticklish subjects of sex and reproduction. The November 1833 *Fraser's Magazine* "Gallery of Literary Characters" expressed similar sentiments. It compared her to "Mother Woolstonecraft [sic]," and asked that Martineau "sit down in her study, and calmly endeavour to depict to herself what is the precise and physical meaning of the words used by her school – what is preventive check – what is moral check – what it is they are intended to check. . . ." But it went farther. In what was meant to be an unflattering portrait, it depicted "a delineation of her countenance, figure, posture, and occupation," and implied that her physiognomy would repel any would-be suitors. This, the reviewer asserted, was the reason for her Malthusian enthusiasms:

after proper inspection . . . it is no great wonder that the lady should be pro-Malthusian; and that not even the Irish beau, suggested to her by a Tory songster, is likely to attempt the seduction of the fair philosopher from the doctrines of no population.

([Maginn?] 1833: 576)

Apparently, her body determined her destiny in the marriage market, and her theoretical bent. And her failure to conform to the psychological essence of female nature – by declaiming against marriage, motherhood, and charity – marked her as one who crossed gender categories. She was one of the “Amazons of politics” that Empson cautioned against: to the *Quarterly Review* she was a “She Politician” ([Maginn] 1833: 151; for further examples of contemporary criticism in this vein, see Herzog 1998: 425–9). See Figure 4.1.

The “Gallery of Literary Characters” rebukes Martineau for bringing to light “the more mystical topics of generation, its impulses, and consequences,” but itself indulges in imaginative speculation in its depiction of her alone, save for her cat. The final chapter of *CM*, on the other hand, captures some of the dynamics, the facts and flavor of Martineau’s relations with her family. Biographers, including Martineau herself, have noted her vexatious relationship with her mother. Simply put, Martineau and her mother were unable to reconcile their feelings toward the fluidity in Harriet’s roles that accompanied her rise to fame. The conflict between the two was exacerbated by bad feelings left over from Martineau’s failed attempt to make her living as a writer in London in 1829. When she recalls that her mother sent her “preemptory orders to go home,” she recounts her desire for “action and independence” as opposed to the “injustice” of “obedience” to and “dependence” upon her mother and the feelings of “helplessness,” “grief and desolation” it engendered (*Auto I*: 149–50). The tension over family roles extended to Harriet’s domestic and society duties. Once in London, her mother, Martineau writes, was intent on living beyond her means. She resented her daughter’s power, entreated her to move to larger quarters, and to entertain rather than write.

In *CM* it is the mother, Cousin Marshall, who “teaches” political economy, while it is her literate daughter who writes. When Cousin Marshall decides to live alone, contrary to the “universal rule” that prescribed (elderly) female dependence, this refusal may not have been contrary to Martineau’s own principles. Martineau and her mother never settled their differences. Martineau only created a satisfactory domestic situation for herself after emerging from a long (1839–45) confinement with illness (Postlethwaite 1989). Looking back on the death of her fiancé, which left her as a self-described “widow,” Martineau reflects that her “strong will, combined with anxiety of conscience, makes me fit only to live alone; and my taste and liking are for living alone.” For Martineau, living “alone” meant a life free from marriage and maternal control. She spent many happy years surrounded by servants and nieces and nephews at Amble-side, and contrasted her life as a free thinker, with “labourious and serious occupation” to the “bondage” of her early life and the “evils and disadvantages of married life, as it exists among us at this time” (*Auto I*: 133).



Figure 4.1 Harriet Martineau.

Power and independence, which supplant emotional and financial dependence, are the key terms in Martineau's life narrative. Contemporaries conceived of power and independence as an adult male's prerogative. This makes Martineau's life a category mistake which she, in response to James Mill, later fashioned into an argument against paternalism in *Society in America*: what if there are no "working son[s]" to support elderly parents? Do the daughters then become sons? The implications of this category problem were played out in her life when she wrote *CM*. Martineau composed *CM* while making preparations

for her relocation to London, a move that took place in November 1832. Her mother and widowed aunt joined her in September 1833. Martineau penned a letter to her mother shortly after writing the number, while she was waiting for her mother to join her, in which she avows:

I fully expect that both you and I shall feel as if I did not discharge a daughter's duty, but we shall both remind ourselves that I am now as much a citizen of the world as any professional son of yours could be.

(*Auto* III: 218, emphasis in original)

Martineau occupies an indeterminate status, something less than a dutiful daughter, and something comparable but not equivalent to a professional son. As A.P. Stanley wrote in 1840, "One hardly knows what to make of Miss M., a woman so entirely in a man's position, and yet not without the quiet of a woman. It is like a thaumatrope" (cited in Sanders 1986: 168). A thaumatrope is a scientific toy, a small, circular card with images on either side, which, when hand spun by strings attached to either end, seems to meld the two images into a single image. In the case of Martineau as thaumatrope, the card would have a woman's picture on one side and a man's on the other.

Women can only play the role of dutiful dependents if there are no male relatives at their side, ready and able to support them. Martineau destabilized the patriarchal supports of the scientific structure she wished to impose on *Illustrations*. She did so by the employment of a literary method that thrust into view women who in real life didn't fit the category of dependent family members. Cousin Marshall displays self-interested market behavior, yet suffers because of the poor pay of women's remunerative work. Martineau thus endows Cousin Marshall with principles of political economy that contradict one another, and illustrates the conflict generated by doctrines that posit the independence of the individual while simultaneously endorsing the financial dependence of women.

These difficulties and indignities are real, and are embodied by Martineau herself. The attacks on her representations were attacks on Martineau's veracity as observer, as one who represents and as one who is representative of women and the working classes. As contemporaries tried to fit the characters of *Illustrations* into social categories they tried to do the same for Martineau. But this was only natural; Martineau used her family life as a source for *Illustrations*, and herself as a representative type in her plots. The analogy to a thaumatrope applies to both Martineau and her work. Designed to instruct and amuse, composed of apparently incompatible elements, sometimes at rest, sometimes in motion, the thaumatrope was based on what observers acknowledged was the subjectivity of vision (Crary 1990: 105–6). The reactions to *Illustrations* make clear in like fashion the social, subjective nature of observation and representation in political economy. Where Martineau assumed or asserted transparent vision, readers were ready to render judgment on her observations and representations by calling her subject position into account. Yet the accounts of who and what she was remain indeterminate, the classifications indefinite. With

her realist vision, Martineau took part in the ongoing play between the observer and the observed, those who represent and the represented, a process that creates subjects and objects, and identities and differences.

Regulating passions in the industrial novel: not by mere money bargains alone

Illustrations have been cited as precursors to so-called "industrial novels" by authors such as Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell that began to appear in the 1840s. Industrial novels addressed the social problems associated with the rise of manufacturing towns and the explosive growth of the urban population in England. Like the earlier broadsides delivered by the Romantic poets against political economy, the novelists' critiques of the new science in works such as Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) have long been fodder for literary analyses. Recent scholarship has shifted this focus, however, and highlights the elements in common between the novelists and political economists as both groups sought to understand and describe the changes occurring in British society (Winch 1996b).

We can contrast Gaskell's methods of fictionally illustrating how to resolve (or not) questions of individual and social virtue with the earlier treatment, by Martineau, of similar questions in political economy. The contrast makes clear the distinction between Martineau's strand of political economy and the industrial novelist concerning the stress to be laid upon public actions and private motivations of characters. It also touches upon the authors' different conceptions of femininity, masculinity, "family" relations, and influence. Gaskell uses social paternalism in *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life* (1848) to depict the resolution of a murderous dispute between labor and capital. Rather than resort to a Smithian doctrine of (unintended) harmony, Gaskell illustrates how reconciliation between workers and managers can be partially effected through a particular form of masculinity, specifically, the conscious embrace by male characters' of a common Christian brotherhood. The activation of Christian conscience on the part of characters in *Mary Barton* is no easy task: the novel portrays its main characters as atypical members of their classes. These non-representative individuals reject conventional norms by the assertion of will, and resolve social conflict privately, with the aid of divine intervention. John Barton and Mr Carson, representatives of labor and capital, respectively, must literally be born again to dissolve their differences. Their private reconciliation closes the case left unresolved by the public trial and acquittal of Jem Wilson on the charge of killing Henry Carson, the son of Mr Carson. For John Barton, who murdered Henry for his advances toward his daughter Mary, resolution in this life comes none too soon – he dies after repenting of the crime.

The cathartic confrontations in *Mary Barton* all take place in interior settings, interior in both the physical sense and the psychological. Evangelical awakening through suffering is necessary for the male characters to realize their common interests. In doing so, they also lay claim to individual subjectivities distinct

from the claims of their respective class interests. The events that end the novel are similarly private in nature. Mary Barton and Jem Wilson decamp to Canada to set up a new life, a perfect nuclear family an ocean distant from the simmering class tensions and the lingering suspicions against Jem in England. Mr Carson, while undertaking good deeds to forge bonds between worker and factory owner, operates entirely behind the scenes:

to his dying day Mr Carson was considered hard and cold by those who only casually saw him or superficially knew him. But those who were admitted into his confidence were aware, that the wish that lay nearest to his heart was that none might suffer from the cause from which he had suffered; that a perfect understanding, and complete confidence might exist between masters and men; that the truth might be recognized that the interests of one were the interests of all, and, as such, required the consideration and deliberation of all; that hence it was most desirable to have educated workers, capable of judging, not mere machines of ignorant men; and to have them bound to their employers by the ties of respect and affection, not by mere money bargains alone; in short, to acknowledge the spirit of Christ as the regulating law between both parties.

(Gaskell 1987: 457–8)

While Gaskell intentionally writes out knowledge of the doctrines of political economy as the source of social order – she introduces the work by claiming, ingenuously, “I know nothing of Political Economy, or of the theories of trade” – the above passage recapitulates themes common to works in political economy of the period. Mutual interests, the need for educated workers, and the divine presence as the regulating law fit comfortably in the political economy universe. This solution to the conflicts of labor and capital represented a critique of those doctrines of political economy that focused on “mere money bargains alone,” as well as the evangelical economics of the London Anglicans (Hilton 1988). Gaskell thus accurately represents what has been called the business evangelism or Christian paternalism of leading northern manufactures in this period (Searle 1998: 22; Price 1999: 115). Education, individual conscience, repentance, mercy, and the realization of Christian duty and brotherhood are mainsprings of a private, not public resolution of public grievances in *Mary Barton*.

In Gaskell's terms, observing only the outer life of men, Mr Carson's for example, would mislead the social analyst as to the true, Christian, inner well-spring governing relations between capital and labor. Gaskell's *North and South* (1855) takes a radically different formal approach to illustrate the clash of class interests. If the law regulating the relations between capital and labor were construed as a spiritual and not simply an economic law, then these relations also become part of women's sphere of influence. But what are the boundaries of this sphere? Much of *North and South* is devoted to extended conversations between Margaret Hale and the industrialist John Thornton over economic philosophy and practice. These conversations and the schematicism of the novel (legible in

the title) give the text a cast much closer to the method of *Illustrations* than does *Mary Barton*. But one key difference between Martineau's and Gaskell's methods, again, lies in the relative emphasis they place on public and private reconciliation, respectively. The conversations between Margaret and John are private, and her "influence" softens Thornton's harsh attitudes toward his workers. When Margaret does step into the public realm the result is catastrophic: she is struck down by a stone as she faces an angry mob of workers outside Thornton's house, an event which precipitates a riot. Clearly her work is not for public consumption.

In *Illustrations*, on the other hand, not only men, but women and children too can step outside and bridge the gulf that keeps the classes from achieving a harmony of interests. All are capable of possessing or acquiring, without divine intervention, the knowledge of political economy that will enable them to solve social problems. Public forums, not just private conversation, will guide the reader to an understanding of the laws governing human relations such as those between capital and labor. For example, in "A Manchester Strike," at an open-air, public assembly of workers and management, Mr Wentworth, a factory owner, offers a long monologue on the relationship between population and wages. He explicitly leaves out the machinations of providence as a solution to the workers' problems. At the end of the speech, the labor agitator Clack and Mr Wentworth debate the Malthusian population argument:

"the poor must raise themselves by such means as are in their own hands, and not wait for a judgment of Providence." "I quite agree with you," said Mr. Wentworth. "Providence would have men guide themselves by its usual course, and not by uncommon accidents."

("A Manchester Strike" (1832), III, 7: 60)

Clack and Wentworth fundamentally disagree about the methods by which "the poor must raise themselves." Whatever action will be taken, however, will be in accord with reasonable human action rather than capricious divine intervention. While actions by residents of Manchester should be in accordance with divine principles, they are not cause for painful, private, reflections on the meaning of Christian faith, as in *Mary Barton*. Rather, they become the focus for the public discussion of principles by men, women, and children.

Gaskell warns that the moral character of individuals in *Mary Barton* can be misjudged because observers lack information about the true, inner identity of the observed. Martineau's parsimonious taxonomic strategy in *Illustrations* aimed to reduce people to two types, agents whose outer actions accurately reflected their inner motivations. Like the categorization of the working classes in *The Working-Man's Companion*, but now generalized to the entire population, one set of characters in *Illustrations* was prudent, the other not. Martineau's method of classification could conceivably minimize the risk of readers making false judgments about characters in the tales. But it's prone to violation by the "outworks to the scientific erection" – movements of plot and narrative –

intertwined with the vagaries of readers' reading strategies. The category of family and the waywardness of the individuals who comprise it also undercuts Martineau's classification scheme: readers impute to characters the attributes of their blood relatives or, as in the case of Hunt, his associates in the beggars' fraternity. The contamination of characters by the actions of family members leads observers to misclassify or to be unable to classify the observed in *CM*.

Martineau's readers were not satisfied with her reduction of real life to just two categories. But when her audience turned to classify the classifier, many found it difficult to fit Martineau into a simple binary set of gender categories – woman and man – in part because she did not act according to their expectations of a woman's family role. Still, some sought to expand the possibilities, private and public, available for the female sex within the category "woman"; others, like Poe, were moved to expand the list of genders. Martineau's transformation of principles of political economy into family fictions also reveals not just the distance between her own life and the ideal types she and her contemporaries jostled over, but a gap in political economy between theories and facts. Political economists lacked family facts. Their ability to classify individual behavior as prudent or profligate, crucial to tests of the principles of Malthusian political economy, rests on information about the family. Private information about the family is understood to be more accurate than publicly available knowledge: whether one comprehends the consequences of the decisions to marry and have children is largely unknown to the outside observer. Readers were eager to exploit this gap in their criticisms of political economy and political economists. Critics lambasted Martineau for her apparent ignorance of what was, after all, common-sense information for any one who had had children. Yet contemporaries understood that much of the actual mechanics of the passion between the sexes, "the more mystical topics of generation, its impulses, and consequences," remained and should remain private.

In this light, Martineau's fictions did supply some family facts, and partially filled the lacunae that resulted from this presence of "invisible" things. In her attempt to illustrate how the principles of political economy operated in the day-to-day lives of families, Martineau sought to produce readers who could recognize that the causes and effects of the population problem, as well as its solutions, were located within the family. Education would make people more prudent, or at least train them to be savvy enough to discern whether individuals fell into the prudent or improvident category.

Classification occupies a space between theories and facts. Classifications can be spare, as with *Illustrations* and *The Working-Man's Companion*. But too few can cause problems for the production of knowledge. Too many categories can cause problems, too. The next chapter examines British reactions to Adolphe Quetelet's suggested taxonomic strategy for illustrating and reforming the social state. Quetelet's approach appeared to be the opposite of Martineau's reduction of real life in fictions: he would have social scientists measure and classify every possible fact of human life. We may think of this as simply one more instance of the proliferation of social categories that occurred in the 1830s and 1840s. To

advance the new science of social physics, Quetelet would and did create new classifications, and he invited his readers to do the same. His goal was to create and fully realize "average man," an all-encompassing index of the state of civilization, a representative type who is simultaneously a statistical aggregate and an aesthetic ideal. What the next chapter examines in detail is how, short of all the facts and classifications necessary to describe average man, social physics would rely on a theoretical framework borrowed from a close relative in the family of social sciences: Malthusian categories of population and family.

5 There is no place for such a family

He shows . . . that he is no theorist or system-maker, but simply wishes to arrive at truth by the only legitimate way, namely, the examination of *facts* – the incontrovertible facts furnished by statistical data.

(Publishers' Notice, *A Treatise on Man and the Development of His Faculties*, Adolphe Quetelet, 1842)

The year following the appearance of the final volume of *Illustrations*, 1835, marked the publication in Paris of *Sur l'homme et le développement de ses facultés, ou essai de physique sociale*, by Adolphe Quetelet. Like *Illustrations*, the series of texts that made up *Sur l'homme* caused a sensation “over the whole of continental Europe,” prompting “criticisms, republications, and translations,” including, in 1842, the first English edition, *A Treatise on Man and the Development of His Faculties*.¹ The “Publishers’ Notice” to this edition went on to claim that

It was the first attempt made to apply the art of calculation to the social movements of the human being, and to examine by it his moral anatomy, with the view of detecting the real sources and amounts of the evils under which he labours, and, ulteriorly, of remedying them when known.

Treatise sketched out a program of observation, representation, and reform. In fact, Quetelet, like Martineau, proposed a form of analysis, based on types, which would subsume political economy. Unlike Martineau, however, Quetelet’s methodology of representation in the new science of social physics was based on *l'homme moyen*, average man, who embodied aggregated facts of a population, not principles universally embodied by individuals. And average man was fleshed out by every imaginable measure, not simply the attributes that characterized good or bad *genera*. Yet Quetelet, in focusing so single-mindedly on this one type, and on reducing heterogeneity rather than observing distributions among classes within populations, effectively reproduced Martineau’s reduction of the social world to one ideal type.

This chapter examines Quetelet’s use of types, the roles played by family,

population, and race in *Treatise*, and contemporary responses to his classifications, especially in Britain. While composed of figures of arithmetic rather than the figurative language of *Illustrations*, the types in *Treatise* shared a number of qualities with Martineau's creations. Family exposed the statistical types of Quetelet to epistemological weaknesses similar to those created by Martineau's family fictions. In *Illustrations*, the presence and movements of family members who embody unlike principles frustrates the possibility of realizing, in fiction, Malthusian families; in *Treatise*, race-mixing, the formation of families across unlike populations, undermines the homogeneity (and thus the logical consistency) of race, the statistical aggregate which average man is supposed to represent. Average man, while a "fictitious being," represents "the facts and the phenomena which affect [man]" (*TREATISE*: 8). Yet, if families (populations) were mixed then there was no such thing as a race, and, in Quetelet's words, "average [man] is a lie".

Family plays a key role in *Treatise* because it can undo the category "race." This chapter also examines how the categories of family, population, and race link social physics and political economy. Lacking the vast amount of data needed to describe average man, Quetelet used certain family facts to signify the level of civilization in *Treatise*. Quetelet reduced observations on different races (peoples of a given time and place) to observations of the Malthusian family. This couple measures national well-being in *Treatise*: the more closely a society approached this ideal, the higher its place on the "scale of population," and the higher the level of civilization its "race" attained. The family facts confirm, unsurprisingly, the ranking of England as the leading society of its day.

Theoretically, at least, average man offers solutions to the aggregation problem and to the question of how to represent difference in political economy. Average man is both a representative type and a composite index; with him the social physicist can simultaneously (statistically) erase and measure difference. Through average man one could subject difference to statistical measurement, and calculate degrees of difference on a scale of equivalence. This chapter sketches the contemporary discussion over these issues of statistical aggregation and representation, and whether Quetelet's desire to apply probability analysis to social statistics was feasible. This discussion involved two sets of classification issues raised by both supporters and opponents of statistical reasoning. One involved the aggregation of people, where, again, the family made representative sampling, which would be based on the assumption of homogeneous populations and races, difficult to achieve. The other involved the aggregation of the causes that determined population growth.

Treatise constructs a set of human representative subjects, discernible in statistics, and determined by time and place. Was average man ready to take his place among other ideal representative types of the early nineteenth century such as great man? Apparently not. The chapter examines some of the ways in which British contemporaries of Quetelet considered his idealization of average man a category mistake. If *Treatise* sketches the outlines of average man, it also contains the outlines of the unnamed average woman. Was she an ideal type like

domestic woman, or a category mistake like Martineau's Cousin Marshall? The average boy and girl are also present in the texts, if, again, unnamed. Like domestic woman, the average people of a nation allow for international and hierarchical comparisons with other races and civilizations.

Different average men indicate not only statistical difference, but aesthetic difference as well: Quetelet fashioned average man the "true, the good, and the beautiful." The chief translator of *Treatise*, the Edinburgh anatomist Robert Knox,² takes up these issues of category stability and aesthetics in the notes and an appendix to the text, as well as in the first edition of *The Races of Men* (1850). Knox, denoted by Curtin as "the real founder of British racism and one of the key figures in the general Western movement towards a dogmatic pseudo-scientific racism" (cited in Richards 1989: 374), posits race as an unchanging biological essence. Knox also rejected, as part of the same assumption, Quetelet's belief that there is no fixed standard of beauty. Knox's assumptions solve the problem of heterogeneous races and populations- they are naturally homogeneous. Knox's concern with the difficulties of observing and representing people in (geopolitical) space does not, ultimately, allow the social scientist to detach scientific judgments of difference from aesthetic judgments. But it does signal an approach shared by a friend and follower of Quetelet's, Dr William Farr, organizer of British censuses, and the subject of the next chapter. Knox and Farr may have expressed distaste for Malthusian theories but they shared Malthus's basic desire to preserve and improve human life. To address the health of the British at home and British and native soldiers overseas alike, however, they proposed to treat domestic and colonial households rather than families. Thus, their solutions to Malthusian population pressures centered on the prospect of making domestic and overseas spaces habitable for occupation by British families.

From "useful man" to "average man": *TREATISE* and political economy

Adolphe Quetelet was born in 1796 in Ghent, Belgium. He did not start out his professional career as a social statistician. In 1819 he received the first science degree awarded by the new University of Ghent, a doctorate for his dissertation on conic sections, and began teaching mathematics at the university the same year. He was active in the arts until the early 1820s, publishing numerous poems, and, in collaboration with a former student, composing the libretto to an opera that was a critical and commercial success. In late 1823 Quetelet traveled to Paris at government expense, to learn about astronomy, an education that was meant to assist his work in establishing a new national observatory in Brussels. After meeting Joseph Fourier and, perhaps, Laplace in Paris in 1823-4, he became interested in the possibility of applying the methods of astronomical measurement and probabilistic analyses, the law of error, to social statistics.

Quetelet has been described as a statistical regularity salesman. Quetelet is credited with diligently broadening international networks between like-minded

statists, including government bureaucrats and ministers such as Rawson William Rawson, who, in his capacity as the civil secretary for the province of Canada, prodded legislative authorities to adapt census procedures based on practices in Belgium for the 1844 Canada East census (Curtis 2001: 17–22, 21). Quetelet also founded more statistical societies than anyone else in the nineteenth century. In that capacity he worked tirelessly to standardize the measurement and classification of statistics. He organized and was elected president at the first international congress on statistics in 1853, the first international scientific congress of any kind, which met in Brussels. The congress featured opening addresses by Prince Albert, whose correspondence with Quetelet on matters mathematical and probabilistic had been published in 1846, and by Quetelet himself, who urged his listeners to work toward greater uniformity in official statistics. As one example of the influence of the congresses on British practice, in the late 1850s the British Colonial Office adopted the recommendations of the census section of the 1853 and 1857 congresses as the guidelines for censuses in the colonies.

Domestically, Quetelet was appointed president of the newly established Central Statistical Commission of Belgium in 1841, and the 1846 census of Belgium, which was prepared under his direction, served as a model for population censuses worldwide, for the second half of the century and beyond. One of its widely copied procedures was the prior distribution of census forms to households. Thus, the enumeration was based not on actual observations by census officials, but on reports by and about the subjects themselves, with all the potential problems with private knowledge that this method entails. Enumerators collected the census forms on the census day, and local administrators would compile returns before sending them off to a centralized location to be aggregated.

Earlier, Quetelet helped organize the census of the Kingdom of the Low Countries (Belgium and Holland), planned for 1829. Quetelet's proposed method, which he described in 1827, would estimate the total population of the kingdom based on measures of births for the kingdom as a whole, and the annual birth rates for a non-random sample of parishes whose population had been measured in a limited census. Multiplying the ratio of population to births for this limited sample by the births for the kingdom as a whole would result in an estimate of population. This deductive method, based on Laplace's probability analysis and the "law of large numbers," assumed a uniform and stable relationship between the two variables. Laplace had described the method in the 1780s, and had actually used it in 1802 (Stigler 1986: 163–4; Desrosières 1998: 86–91). To put Laplace's method into practice for the Low Countries, Quetelet had to parse what factors were homogeneous and what were heterogeneous in the kingdom's communities. In fact, he assumed a homogeneous population, or, at least, that the heterogeneous factors would not affect the calculation. But could he assert with confidence that part of the population of the country could stand in for the whole? Baron de Keverberg, a high-ranking government official in the Low Countries, thought not. Quetelet shelved the plans for a population

census based on sampling after Keverberg pointed out in a letter to him in 1827 that he had no way of knowing whether the sample was truly representative. Keverberg expressed doubts as to whether one could generalize about the nation as a whole from that sample: the country was simply too diverse. The factors affecting mortality and births varied by location according to a number of “elements” including terrain, soil, proximity to the sea, poverty or wealth of the inhabitants,

diet, dress, and general manner of life, and on a multitude of local circumstances that would elude any a priori enumeration. . . . It must therefore be extremely difficult, not to say impossible, to determine in advance with any precision, based on incomplete and speculative knowledge, the combination of all of these elements that in fact exists. There would seem to be an infinite variety in the nature, the number, the degree of intensity, and the relative proportion of these elements. . . . In my opinion, there is only one way of attaining exact knowledge of the population and the elements of which it is composed, and that is an actual and complete census, the formation of a register of the names of all the inhabitants, together with their ages and professions.

(quoted in Desrosières 1998: 87–8)

The census Quetelet eventually planned and supervised, in 1829, was based on this desire to conduct a comprehensive count of the people. Contemporaries realized, however, that complete enumerations did not eliminate the problem of identifying and measuring causal factors.³

Classification lay at the heart of the problem. A brief explanation is in order. An essay in the April 1840 *Journal of the Statistical Society*, the official organ of the Statistical Society of London, declared that

Well-directed observation, aided by analysis, would, if pursued with vigour and judgment lead rapidly to the elaboration of important truths. By analysis in moral investigations is meant that minute classification of actions and their results, which presents each group for separate contemplation, to the end that their relative force and amount may be accurately estimated. . . . Without this process of analysis there can be no certainty as to the causes of any moral phenomenon; and daily experience presents instances of the most contradictory causes being assigned the same phenomenon, because there exist no means by which to prove the truth or falsehood of any one assertion.

([Statistical Society of London] 1840: 7)

Contemporaries were hardly sanguine as to the probability of making the proper classifications. If, as Keverberg had noted, statisticians could make classifications too broad, and districts could be made to appear homogeneous when they were not, the reverse was true as well. The philosopher, economist, and mathematician Auguste A. Cournot, in *Exposition de la théorie des chances et*

des probabilités (*A Statement of the Theory of Chance and Probabilities*) (1843), pointed out that they could be made too fine, which would make homogeneous groups, when measured by probability, appear different. According to Cournot, there were “natural” classifications, to be sure, such as male and female births. From these one could derive a precise and objective mathematical calculation of the probability that, for example, the difference in the ratio of male to total births in two different districts was due to chance.

Cournot cautioned, however, that this work involved judgments by researchers as to which categories to pick as well. For the author of the London Statistical Society piece, this involved a division of labor between observers and analysts – “those who possess the talent, cultivation, and integrity to pursue it” – who classified facts. For Cournot, the matter of judgment had mathematical, that is, probabilistic consequences. These subjective probabilities influenced the *a posteriori* meaning and usefulness of probability analysis. The problem lay in how to combine the two states of knowledge, the objective and the subjective, particularly since the latter often left no traces, and was therefore inherently difficult to measure with any confidence. After choosing a “natural” classification, there were many possible, even an infinite number of plausible ways an analyst could further classify statistical facts, *a priori*. If one lacked criteria to determine whether and how much different ways of further classifying data on births, say, by age or profession of parents, made a difference, then, Cournot declared, mathematical probability had nothing to do with social statistics.⁴

Stigler describes the cautions expressed by Keverberg and Cournot, taken together, “as a rational articulation of the reservations of many at that time and as the prime contemporary statements explaining the lack of early application of probability to the measurement of uncertainty in social science,” and notes that contemporaries had no satisfactory solution to this conundrum (Stigler 1986: 200). The following represents an unrepresentative sample of misgivings expressed by Quetelet’s contemporaries about social statistics and the ability of analysts to divine causes from statistical facts. For example, even supporters of Malthus’s call for the extensive collection of statistics – he had, from the second edition of *Essay* on, expressed the belief that “New statistical methods offer hope of achieving a clearer insight into the internal structure of human society” (*EPP* 2, I, II, 15: 21) – confessed that what was a conceptual problem for measurement within a country also represented a problem for measurement across countries. If one assumed the population principle applied to every individual at every time and in every place, how could one account for observable differences between countries in their rates of overall population growth? That was the question that J.B. Sumner posed in 1817, in his review of the fifth edition of Malthus’s *Essay*:

The first survey of the subject affords a striking problem. It presents us with a view of men essentially the same in their passions, constitutions, and physical powers, yet, in different countries, or in the same country at different times, varying in the rate in which they increase their numbers through

every degree of a very exhaustive scale. . . . How are we to account for these striking variations?

([Sumner] 1817: 371–2)

The facts Sumner sought to explain were a mix of population and family facts, and included population size and growth, and rates of marriage. But the possible explanations for the facts, if specific to each data point, could themselves be too numerous to count. This would entangle any Malthusian project that purported to offer systematic knowledge in the problems of excess and defect – as population facts multiplied, so too did the classifications and narratives that purported to explain these facts.

Those who advocated a more deductive approach to political economy than Malthus were no less forceful in their questioning. James Mill disparaged statistics as mere facts. According to Mill, while basic facts on the most pressing issue of the day, population, were at hand, absent information on causes, tables on population which showed the tendency of population to increase were almost useless. Writing in *Elements of Political Economy*, he advised:

The reasoning from these tables evades the point in dispute. I know no tables which exhibit any thing, even if we give them, what they never deserve, credit for exactness, except the mere fact with regard to the state of increase. They show, or pretend to show, whether a certain population is increasing or not increasing; and if increasing, at what rate. But, if it appeared, from such tables, that the population of every country in the world were stationary, no man, capable of reasoning, would infer, that the human race is incapable of increasing. Every body knows the fact, that in the greater number of countries, the population is stationary, or nearly so. But what does this prove, so long as we are not informed, by what causes it is prevented from increasing? We know well, that there are two causes, by which it may be prevented from increasing, how great soever its natural tendency to increase. The one is poverty; under which, let the number born be what it may, all but a certain number undergo a premature destruction. The other is prudence; by which either marriages are sparingly contracted, or care is taken that children, beyond a certain number, shall not be the fruit. It is useless to inform us, that there is little or no increase of population in certain countries, if we receive not, at the same time, accurate information of the degree in which poverty, or prudence, or other causes, operate to prevent it.

(Mill 1826: 49–50)

For Mill, numbers don't speak to causes. Although they may "pretend to show" an increase or decrease in what they measure, statistics cannot tell us how an object arrived at a certain point, nor can they tell us how it will proceed. Statistics encourage speculation. Statistics, facts that proceed from an organizing, interpretive narrative, demand that this organizing principle be explicit, after the

fact. Otherwise readers will provide their own causal narratives. As a result, statistics are subject to the same criticism that applies to mere rhetoric, “reasoning . . . [which] evades the point in dispute.”

Mill speaks to two causes of population stagnation, poverty and prudence, and statistics cannot lead us to determine what combination of the two will lead to stagnation. What of the “other causes” he refers to? When, in 1829, Thomas Carlyle, who was to earn a reputation as an acerbic critic of utilitarian political economists such as Mill, published “Signs of the Times” anonymously in the *Edinburgh Review* he claimed that these other causes were innumerable. For Carlyle, an infinity of causes produced statistical excess, and excess in the new science of political economy, too:

the wise men, who now appear as Political Philosophers, deal exclusively with the mechanical province; and by occupying themselves in counting-up and estimating other men’s motives, strive by curious checking and balancing, and other adjustments of Profit and Loss, to guide them to their true advantage; while, unfortunately, those same “motives” are so innumerable, and so variable in every individual, that no really useful conclusion can be drawn from their enumeration.

(Carlyle 1971: 31)

According to Carlyle, social statistics could not measure the subjective shadings of relations and invisible workings of sympathies of human subjects. Uncertainty as to causes or “motives” means that, while the interpretive moment in political economy eventually arrives, it never provides any definitive or even useful conclusion. Further, the same uncertainty about causes undercut confidence that natural laws, which regulated the social world, led to a benign outcome.

To critics and supporters, statistics either gave too much or too little information, therefore too little insight into causes. Interpreters inferred a multitude of causes from the same data. In France, for example, statistics collated by the lawyer André-Michel Guerry, in *Essai sur la Statistique Morale de la France* (*Essay on the Moral Statistics of France*) (1833), indicated a positive correlation between education and crimes of property. This fact caused an international sensation. British reformers such as the head of the Board of Trade, G.R. Porter, W.R. Greg, and others struggled to assimilate these and similar data to their beliefs that ignorance, not knowledge, begat crime (Brantlinger 1998: 74; Cullen 1975: 139–40). Quetelet did not entertain the possibility that districts with more highly educated students were wealthier, had more property, and therefore had more crimes against property. Rather, in language that recalls the warnings of “Cousin Marshall,” where Jane Marshall’s taste of the fruits of knowledge – her “workhouse education” – resulted in a fall from grace, Quetelet concluded that “very often the education received at school only facilitates the commission of crime” (*TREATISE*: 88), because it introduced students to ideas inappropriate to their social status. To reconcile his reforming impulse and his belief in the

progressive power of the intellect with the facts, Quetelet, like many others, deduced that education itself, unless buttressed with moral instruction, would not necessarily result in social progress.

Keverberg called for a complete enumeration; in a similar fashion, Cournot supported the proposition that “data be gathered in such enormous quantities that questions of the type he raised would become unimportant” (Stigler 1986: 200). *Treatise* represents the logical end of Quetelet’s quest for exact enumerations. Social physics would be both exact and comprehensive, since it would measure all human moral, physical, and intellectual attributes, to enable the social physicist to discover the laws of human development. The text shows Quetelet’s sensitivity to Keverberg’s argument, and, implicitly, to the classification problem that accompanied the argument against the application of probability analysis to social statistics, which was to be put forth by Cournot a year later. In a discussion on the production of dramatic works in France and England, one of the few statistics on the output of goods and services in *Treatise*, Quetelet appears to abandon classification. In order for research to be “accurate and impartial,” Quetelet writes, “we should not select, but take the works promiscuously, without classing them. This might be tedious and irksome; but would present curious and very unexpected results” (*TREATISE*: 75). He seeks to assure the reader that he will exclude all idea of system, even as he adapts systematic listings of works given in the Repertory of Picard for France and the British theatre for England. He notes that the lists, from which he produces a table on the number of works produced at different ages, lump together works of different merit:

But here, as well as in the researches into crime, it happens that the greater number of the obstacles disappear, and the ratio of works of the first order to those of the second may be considered as being essentially the same, in the groups we have formed. Besides, when examining the degrees of merit of the different works in detail, we may still in some measures meet and parry this inconvenience and difficulty. We may still deceive ourselves in such an estimate, but generally the probability of error will be lessened as the observations are more numerous. We have, moreover, the valuable advantage of being able to prove the law of development, by passing from one nation to another, and seeing how the maximum is influenced by locality.

(*TREATISE*: 75)

While the distribution of human attributes that determines the output of dramatic works may differ across different localities, Quetelet assumes a stable underlying distribution within a country, where the law of large numbers applies. To demonstrate the method a social physicist should follow, he constructs a table that divides the French works according to three degrees of merit. In doing so, he makes it clear that he does not pretend “that the classification of the French works is according to their real merit,” and, perhaps to justify his classification, or as an invitation to the reader to do their own ranking, he

includes the names of “a small number of those which [he] conceive[s] to belong to the first rank.”

Quetelet indicates what classification can do, but warns the reader and demonstrates in the text that such work is arbitrary. Thus the inference of causes that is the ultimate goal of the social physicist “requires infinite care, numerous researches, and great shrewdness of observation” (*TREATISE*: 76). The all-encompassing body of knowledge that the social physicist is charged with assembling, which includes skill in observation and judgment in representation on his own part, combines the art and the science of political economy. Historians of economic thought have accorded Quetelet, *Sur l’homme*, and its various offspring, including *Treatise*, little if any direct role or influence on political economy. Schumpeter, in *History of Economic Analysis* (1954), assures readers that “Adolph [*sic*] Quetelet’s . . . importance for our subject is small – I know of no economist of that period whose *economics* shows any traces of his influence” (Schumpeter 1986: note, 525, emphasis in original). Actually, Quetelet did exert influence on British political economists, though it was mostly from afar and mostly institutional. In his trip to England, in 1833, he provoked Tories during parliamentary testimony before the Committee on Parochial Registration when, as chief witness, he added an enthusiastic voice to the chorus of experts critical of the state of British statistics. George Taylor, for one, cast doubt on Quetelet’s expertise. In the *Quarterly Review* Taylor indicated that Quetelet himself, though a tireless promoter of consistent and careful enumeration, and a statistician of “high reputation,” had produced a statistical scandal in one of his own works.⁵ In the interest of balancing his numbers, Quetelet filled out with negative numbers the blank spaces in a table of marriages that take place at different ages. His imaginative use of statistics earned a sarcastic swipe for the category Taylor called “negative marriages,” and acid commentary at the fact that “at one period, in particular, we find the marriages of 313 negative men and 522 negative women” ([G. Taylor] 1835: 71–2).

Quetelet also helped found Section F, the Statistical Section of the BAAS, at the third annual meeting in Cambridge, during his stay in England. The political economists involved in forming Section F attempted to trade on Quetelet’s prestige to bolster their efforts to use statistics in political economy; the aura of professional expertise was necessary since the section was formed outside the bylaws of the BAAS. Not every supporter of the use of statistics in political economy had benign purposes in mind. The Reverend Richard Jones, professor of political economy at Cambridge, and his close friend Whewell – who had been invited to the BAAS conference by Quetelet – wielded both statistics and mathematics against the deductive methods of Ricardian political economy. Where Whewell used mathematics to expose the faulty logic and imprecision of the Ricardians and in order to make political economy a true science, Jones advocated gathering statistical facts in such a thorough and meticulous manner that it would leave no time for deductive speculations that, as he judged Ricardo’s work, produced “purely hypothetical truths . . . utterly inconsistent with the past and present condition of mankind” (Jones 1831: vii).⁶ And

Quetelet's early skepticism about the effectiveness of Section F helped prod Charles Babbage – who was largely responsible for the acceptance of Section F within the BAAS, – Malthus, Jones, and others to launch the Statistical Society of London in 1834.⁷

Was statistics a method, a theory, a science, or the accumulation and arrangement of facts that would banish speculation, opinion, and even theory about cause and effect? Despite its motto, *Aliis exterendum* (to be threshed out by others), which promised an exclusion of politics (Hilts 1978),⁸ the Statistical Society of London invoked all of these definitions in statements from 1833, 1838, and 1840 (Eylar 1979: 15). If some British political economists sought to parlay Quetelet's reputation into institutional and legislative changes, or, like Malthus, sought answers from Quetelet himself on questions on vital statistics (Quetelet 1869, 2: 451), Quetelet in turn envisioned a new social science based on the foundations of political economy, one that would incorporate all the meanings suggested by the Statistical Society of London. Malthus's work on population and the facts of family formation provided much of the framework for *Treatise*. In *Treatise*, Quetelet stated his desire to apply the tools of Newtonian physics to social statistics in order to make the political economists' work on population scientific. Quetelet's reliance on the foundations of Malthusian population theory was due, in part, to the relative plenitude of demographic statistics. Put another way, the tables and commentary in *Treatise* reflect the paucity of statistics that social physics demanded. Data on population, births, deaths and marriages, while of uneven quality, were at least on hand, as opposed to the yet-to-be-collected facts which would shed light on man's physical, moral, and intellectual characteristics.

The power of the Malthusian framework and the relative wealth of demographic data are reflected in the layout of *Treatise*, in both the placement and length devoted to population statistics. After the author's introduction, the first part of the work, which takes up one half the remaining text (excluding appendices), is devoted to demographic data and to Quetelet's musings on the law of population. "Book First. – Development of the Physical Qualities of Man," comprises forty pages on demographic statistics (births and mortality), and an explanation of the "Relations of Population to Social Prosperity," the determinants of which Quetelet maintains are the ultimate goals of his studies. The following two books, "Development of Stature, Weight, Strength, &c.," and "Development of the Moral and Intellectual Qualities of Man," take up only twenty-six pages. The final book, "Of the Properties of the Average Man, of the Social System, and of the Final Advancement of This Study," devoted to Quetelet's metaphysics and an examination of statistics on crime, covers some fourteen pages.

Quetelet sprinkles his narrative on demographic statistics in *Treatise* with frequent references to unnamed economists, and writes of them as social observers interested in the same sorts of questions about population as he is. He echoes Malthus's rhetoric when he refers to population as a variable determined by reason and passion, with sexual desire conditioned by social processes. Family

is the key observational unit, and “productiveness” signifies both the output of goods and services and of children. The following statement, on the influence of morality as a “disturbing” rather than “natural” cause affecting the number of births, is typical:

Habits of order and foresight ought also to exercise a considerable influence on the number of marriages, and consequently of births. The man whose condition is unsettled, if he allows himself to be governed by reason, dreads to divide with a family the vicissitudes of fortune to which he is exposed; many economists have also maintained, and with reason, that the most efficacious mode of preventing an excess of population in a country, is to diffuse knowledge and sentiments of order and foresight. It is evident that the people of a country would not seek so much to contract alliances and load the future with trouble, if each individual found a difficulty in providing for his own subsistence. The great fecundity of Ireland has been cited as an example of the influence which depression and improvidence may exercise over productiveness. When man no longer reasons, when he is demoralised by misery, and just lives from day to day, the cares of a family no more affect him than the care of his own existence; and, impelled by momentary gratification, he begets children, careless of the future, and, if we may use the expression, resigns to that Providence who has supported him, all the care of the progeny to which he has given existence.

(*TREATISE*: 22)

Note the parallel construction in the second sentence. It equates reason-governed behavior with political economists’ reasoned analysis; man, “governed by reason,” balances “many economists have also maintained, and with reason.” Education will prevent an excess of population, specifically knowledge that inculcates “sentiments of order and foresight,” and produces a well-cared-for family.

Quetelet offers a research agenda on the salutary effect of foresight on fertility. His conclusions – that fertility will fall in direct proportion to an increase in foresight and that scientific research can effect a change in the number of births through education and public policy – are unsurprising, and simply repeat what political economists had maintained since the publication of the third edition of Malthus’s *Essay*. Quetelet, however, realizes that he treads on controversial ground when he opines that fertility may even fall within marriage. He notes that “researches, undertaken with the design of elucidating this interesting point, will some day confirm these conjectures: they would be of the greatest utility to be pursued in the instruction which it is proper to give to the people” (*TREATISE*: 22).

Quetelet cites the great fecundity of Ireland as a handy, if sobering, reference point. Yet the presence of the Irish in England called into question Quetelet’s faith in the rationality of economists and, more generally, the primacy of reason over morals. The “depression and improvidence” of the Irish immigrants were

often cited in this period as having a deleterious effect on English rationality and “productiveness.” The physician and sanitarian James Phillips Kay, who early on was a follower of Chalmers, saw this as evidence of bad reasoning on the part of those economists who, for example, failed to calculate the cost of bad morals in their reckonings of the benefits of cheap Irish labor. Kay bemoaned the lack of statistics on the social body in England that might account for this effect. A founder of the Manchester Statistical Society, he faults political economy on this point in *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (1832):

The social body cannot be constructed like a machine, on abstract principles which merely include physical notions, and their numerical results in the production of wealth. The mutual relation of men is not merely dynamical, nor can the composition of their forces be subjected to a purely mathematical calculation. Political economy, though its object be to ascertain the means of increasing the wealth of nations, cannot accomplish its design, without at the same time regarding their happiness, and as its largest ingredient the cultivation of religion and morality.

(Kay [1832] 1971: 39)

For Kay, morals and religion were indispensable to the production of wealth. If bad, they could easily trump reason and physical efficiency. Not only was there a direct cost incurred in the employment of “bad” Irish labor, immigrants would inevitably corrupt the native workers: “Debased alike by ignorance and pauperism, they have discovered, with the savage, what is the minimum of the means of life, upon which existence may be prolonged. They have taught this fatal secret to the population of this country.” If the contagion spread, the “population would become physically less efficient as the producers of wealth – morally so from idleness – politically *worthless* as having few desires to satisfy and *noxious* as dissipators of capital accumulated,” and a downward spiral of desires would ensue. An exclusive focus on wealth rather than morality could endanger the former, and foster the accumulation not of capital but of a lumpen, “emasculated race . . . [a] great mass, impotent alike of great moral and physical efforts” (Kay [1832] 1971: 7, 50–1, emphases in original).

Kay, who was to exercise influence on policy on becoming an assistant poor law commissioner, indicts, in one fell swoop, theory, statistics, and mathematical reasoning in political economy. His critique invokes the fear of the proximity of unlike national (racial) types, and the uncontrollable nature of sexual desire and family formation. It speaks to the (unspoken) fear that the English will not only become like the Irish, they will intermarry and *become* the Irish, an emasculated and impotent race.

In contrast to Kay’s dismissal of “purely mathematical calculation,” Quetelet presents his project and the policies it would foster as a mathematical, hence natural, expression of the work of political economists. Quetelet notes that the “law of the increase of subsistence may appear doubtful, and the ideas of the

economists are very different on this subject”; he expresses a desire, therefore, to “[carry] the theory of population into the domains of mathematical science, to which it seems particularly to belong” (*TREATISE*: note, 48, 49). Quetelet claims to put into play this transformation in the very next paragraph of the text, when he amends the law of population by applying an analogy to Newtonian laws of motion:

the theory of population may be reduced to the two following principles, which I consider will hereafter serve as fundamental principles in the analysis of population, and of the causes which influence it. *Population tends to increase in a geometrical ratio. The resistance, or sum of the obstacles to its development is, all things being equal, as the square of the rapidity with which it tends to increase.*

(*TREATISE*: 49, emphasis in original)

The social body is analogous to a physical body, and variations between individuals are analogous to variations between observations. If the analogue were correct, the social physicist would be able to conduct probability analyses based on the law of error. Quetelet, however, does not bother to test the theoretical relationship he so boldly pronounces (Hankins 1908, 53; although see *TREATISE*: 113).

The work of economists was a useful starting point to determine how statistics on population could reflect a nation’s prosperity (*TREATISE*: 48, 55). The determinants of the limits to population, given a “certain degree of development,” and the perturbations that moved population away from a stationary state might be measurable, and, once determined, could serve as *ceteris paribus* conditions. Though population density constituted a first approximation of productive power, Quetelet insisted that some notion of subsistence, a “constant coefficient” of subsistence consumption, was necessary in order to use population densities as indicators of productive power.

Nor was a stationary population necessarily in and of itself an indicator of productive power. *Treatise* examines aggregate productive capacity through a measure Quetelet calls “useful men,” a sum equal to the non-dependent population. Quetelet proceeds to construct a life-cycle, cost–benefit model, where the costs are consumption, and the benefits are production. He assumes that children represent a net cost to the nation until somewhere between the ages of twelve and sixteen. He notes that he takes into account only the direct costs of care for those who shuffle off the mortal coil before becoming “useful men” or individuals “of the smallest utility to the state.” That is, he does not calculate the opportunity costs or calculate, in his words, “the time devoted to them” (*TREATISE*: 28).

The family, then, is a production and consumption unit. Men, women, and children both consume and produce. That is, “useful men,” unlike “economic man,” come in any gender, and any age beyond sixteen years. Children, however, are, costly items in Quetelet’s analysis for a far longer period than for

many of his contemporaries. Martineau, for instance, considered even infants as potential current rather than future earners; poor families needed to have all hands contribute to the family budget and children could be put to work. For Martineau, this was a logical extension of the freedom to contract labor, and a consequence of the logic of the division of labor, a logic that, as in the case of the children of the settlement in "Life in the Wilds," worked at a very early age. Martineau did not view the employment of children, per se, as a family "mistake." When, in "Cousin Marshall," Molly the beggar employs other mothers' infants to pose as her own children, it is the perversion of charity and the accompanying instability of the category family that occasions the author's wrath.

The class of "able-bodied children" began to appear as an officially recognized and statistically measured category mistake in England with passage of the first Factory Act in 1833. The act prohibited the employment of children under the age of nine, and limited work for children under age twelve to forty-eight hours per week. The act can be seen as part of a movement to convert youth into children: in the idealized view of childhood described in the poems of Wordsworth and the work of other Romantics such as Hartley Coleridge and Thomas de Quincey, poor children, marked by their class and economic status as enacting something other than the ideal of childhood, were no children at all but something obscene (Plotz 2001: 30ff). The debate over the move to restrict factory work by children centered not only on the merits or hazards of factory work by children, but on the relative value of statistical facts as opposed to figurative language as a means to represent the effects of factory work. The Irish journalist, historian, and statistical supporter William Cooke Taylor, in his 1835 *Foreign Quarterly Review* essay on *Sur l'homme*, expresses frustration that, in regard to the controversy over factory legislation,

The manufacturers answered the charges made against them by an appeal to incontrovertible facts . . . but there are still people in the world, who prefer the figures of speech to the figures of arithmetic, and the rules of Longinus to those of Cocker. Pathetic tales, more than sufficient to supply a whole generation of novelists, prevailed over a dull, dry parade of stupid figures.

([W.C. Taylor] 1835: 216)

Statistical facts, "a dull, dry parade of stupid figures," lack moral significance. They are simply tables full of numbers, and cannot move the reader with the force of words.

Taylor maintained that "[t]he state of our commerce and manufactures, the results of machinery, the effects of free trade, are mere mathematical problems, more or less involved, that may be worked out if correct data are obtained" ([W.C. Taylor] 1835: 207). Yet he acknowledged that problems associated with defect and excess applied to statistics (Poovey 1993) – the same few facts were subject to widely varying interpretations – and he decried the resulting general suspicion of numerical representation. Indeed, more statistical enthusiast than sta-

tistician, he acquiesced in a manipulation of statistical facts that nicely illustrates the very phenomenon he described. What facts were at issue in Taylor’s sober meditation on statistics? Taylor was responding to the outcry that arose concerning the state of child factory operatives, which led to the first factory legislation limiting the employment of children. He reproduces a table from the first 1833 Factory Report, which compared the weight and stature of children ages nine to eighteen in factory work with “non-factory children” in Manchester and Stockport. The table clearly indicates that seventeen- and eighteen-year-old factory workers, of both sexes, are less robust than their counterparts who do not work in factories. But, following the Factory Report, Taylor then appends a table that pools the data for all ages nine to *seventeen* and drops those for the eighteen-year-olds. Citing the pooled data, Taylor concludes that factory work does not have a deleterious effect on the health of children. See Tables 5.1 and 5.2.

Table 5.1 Comparative average age and weight of children employed in factories and engaged in other avocations

Age (years)	Factory children				Non-factory children			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	Weight, lbs	Size, inches	Weight, lbs	Size, inches	Weight, lbs	Size, inches	Weight, lbs	Size, inches
9	51.76	48.489	51.13	47.970	53.26	48.564	50.44	48.438
10	57.00	49.789	54.80	49.624	60.28	50.650	54.44	49.371
11	61.84	51.261	59.69	51.155	58.36	51.005	61.13	52.099
12	66.97	53.380	66.68	53.703	67.25	52.962	66.07	53.666
13	72.14	54.477	73.25	55.636	75.36	54.977	72.72	55.069
14	77.09	56.585	83.41	57.745	78.68	56.625	83.43	58.226
15	88.35	59.638	87.86	58.503	86.83	58.020	93.61	59.153
16	98.00	61.600	96.22	59.811	110.30	63.201	91.16	58.083
17	104.46	62.673	100.21	60.413	117.80	64.068	102.44	60.708
18	106.13	63.318	106.35	62.721	126.30	69.891	122.00	64.750

Table 5.2

Average in weight (lbs) of an equal number of males and females of all the ages in Table 5.1, from nine to seventeen, inclusive

Boys employed in factories	75.175	Girls employed in factories	74.739
Non-factory boys	78.680	Non-factory girls	75.049

Average in size (inches) of an equal number of males and females of all the ages in Table 5.1, from nine to seventeen, inclusive

Boys employed in factories	55.282	Girls employed in factories	54.951
Non-factory boys	55.563	Non-factory girls	54.971

Numbers weighed and measured for preparing Table 5.1

Factory boys	410	Non-factory boys	227
Factory girls	652	Non-factory girls	201

Taylor's willingness to draw such a definite conclusion contradicts his own injunction that, until the standards for the general laws of human behavior be ascertained, "all reasoning on the subject must be vague and inconclusive" ([W.C. Taylor] 1835: 215). Taylor criticizes the parliamentary commission for preferring testimony that he regards the equivalent of so many heart-rending stories as opposed to the evidence of "incontrovertible facts." But the table from the Factory Reports became the template for all sorts of statistical stories including Taylor's own, which effectively reproduces the table in order to controvert the (apparent) fact that factory work stunts the growth of children.⁹

Indeed, the discussion found a home in *Sur l'homme*. Quetelet, with the assistance of J.W. Cowell, the compiler of the observations, inserted his own version of the table (Table 5.3) in *Sur l'homme* and *Treatise*, one on height alone, conveniently converted into meters for his Continental readers (*TREATISE*: 60). More cautious than Taylor, Quetelet duly notes a number of classification issues suggested by the reworked table. He cites the "very sensible difference" between the two groups in the later ages, which he attributes to the onset of puberty. And he lists a set of questions, alternative narratives, prompted by his version of the table. One alternative asked whether factory work merely retards physical growth after puberty or permanently diminishes it, making boys and girls less "useful" men and women. Quetelet also admits he inclines toward the belief that previous parliamentary inquiries have produced "useful changes," as reflected in the "amelioration remarked for the lower ages." This suggests that the table may actually mix yet two other different classes of children, one pre-reform, and one post-reform.

Quetelet acknowledges as well that no allowance has been made for the fact that the children have been measured with their shoes on. Knox, the translator, adds his own note on the table. Knox's comments are brief, a few sentences in

Table 5.3 Average stature of children of the lower orders, at Manchester and Stockport

Ages (years)	Boys		Girls	
	Working in factories (meters)	Not working in factories (meters)	Working in factories (meters)	Not working in factories (meters)
9	1.222	1.233	1.218	1.230
10	1.270	1.286	1.260	1.254
11	1.302	1.296	1.299	1.323
12	1.353	1.345	1.364	1.363
13	1.383	1.396	1.413	1.399
14	1.437	1.440	1.467	1.479
15	1.515	1.474	1.486	1.502
16	1.565	1.605	1.521	1.475
17	1.592	1.627	1.535	1.542
18	1.608	1.773	1.593	1.645

all. Yet they raise questions about the significance and value of the following: regional differences; local knowledge; missing facts; expert observation and what has been described as “the observation of observation that concentrates on how the observed observer observes,” which includes the observation of “what and how an observed observer is *unable* to observe” (Luhmann 1990: 73); and, not least, classification. On the suggestion of “a gentleman well acquainted with the manufacturing districts of Yorkshire and Lancashire,” Knox speculates that the children wear not shoes but clogs, with much thicker soles. He concludes that, “If this class of the population wear clogs on Sundays, this circumstance may partially affect the value of Mr. Cowell’s statements.” The statistical facts of the table suggest a number of possible stories; they are governed too by any number of plausible causes, the weight of any one of which is difficult to measure. For readers of the Factory Report, neither the facts of nor the conclusions to be drawn from rereading and rewriting the commentary and statistical tables were conclusive.

Factory work may affect the laws governing human physical development at different ages. Whatever the effect of factory work and of other factors, Quetelet does not consider “useful man” the final word on the relationship of population to prosperity: “We cannot too often repeat, that the prosperity of states consists less in the multiplication than in the conservation of the individuals comprising it” (*TREATISE*: 28). Prosperity is a combination of a population’s well-being and productive power, where an “increase of well-being” or quality of life is signified by increasing per capita consumption and an equitable distribution of consumption, both conducive to happiness, and productive power by an increase in “useful men,” a “purely physical” measure (*TREATISE*: 56).

Quetelet’s analysis of the relationship between a nation’s population and prosperity pivots on a few critical assumptions about the structure of the family and the earning capacities of its members. The most important factor is the fact that, the smaller the ratio of dependent to productive individuals, the more prosperous the country, *ceteris paribus*. The “duration of the average life” and its dynamics are another factor to consider when determining the relation between population and prosperity. He concludes the first book of *Treatise* by summing up what his measures would indicate:

The average duration of life, could it be ascertained exactly, would furnish us with a measure of the prudence and hygienic state of a country: the consumption of the inhabitant would give the state of civilisation and the exigencies of the climate; and the proportional number of inhabitants, keeping in view this latter measure, would give the number which represents its production.

(*TREATISE*: 57)

Again, production is only one factor that determines the relationship of population to prosperity. A combination of “useful man,” the preservation of life, and the quality of life indicate the degree of prosperity. Quetelet writes,

It may be said that a country proceeds onwards to a more prosperous condition, when fewer citizens are produced, and when those existing are better preserved. The increase then is entirely to its advantage; for, if the fecundity be less, the useful men are more numerous, and generations are not renewed with such rapidity, to the great detriment of the nation.

(*TREATISE*: 28)

Quetelet repeats the equation between population and prosperity that pronounced fewer but healthier bodies preferable to more numerous, but unhealthy ones. He voices as well a standard formula for social reform – increase prudence and hygiene, and you increase the average duration of life. Both formulas embody a belief in the primacy of intellectual power over manual power, as well as the ascendance of morality over mere brutishness.

Measures of population and its movements, physical indexes, are necessary but not sufficient conditions for gauging the prosperity of a nation. To man's physical attributes one needed to add measures of his moral and intellectual attributes. Combined, these formed average man. Quetelet has thus justified his own inquiries into social physics. Quetelet appended a note to a passage that details the shortcomings of the construct "useful man" as a measure of the prosperity of society:

M. Chitti, who makes *social economy* consist in obtaining the greatest possible utility, with the least possible labour, has given the following measure of riches: "The degree of riches of a people, as well as those of an individual, is indicated by the ratio between the sum of the wants and the sum of the available funds which he possesses to satisfy them."

(*TREATISE*: note, 57)

Progress is measured by increases in the quality of life and the diminution in sickness and death rather than simply by an increase in the wealth of nations. Social economists, hardly a homogeneous group, had replaced "political" with "social" in their search for an alternative science of society (Procacci 1991: 153). Quetelet went a step further and postulated that "economics" could be made into "physics." Again, Quetelet had little recourse but to refer to political economy in his analysis of the relationships between individual, family, and society. How could a new social science establish itself except with reference to what it was not? Quetelet finds useful man wanting as a measure of a society's prosperity. But useful man stands as a useful rhetorical prop for justifying the creation of average man. Social physics was not political economy, but something more. What or who is average man, the centerpiece of social physics?

Average man is an idealized male subject, a unit of measurement insensitive to the vagaries of individual behavior. How does he compare with other representative types of the period, and how might he contribute to a vision of social order and harmony? Was he, or could he be "real?" Cournot felt that average man "would simply be an impossible man – at least nothing that has

happened thus far allows us to imagine him as possible"; and if a real person, he would be an unviable monstrosity (Cournot 1843: 214–15). Quetelet, while claiming that average man represents all that is "grand, beautiful, and excellent," admits that "such an identity can scarcely be realized, and it is rarely granted to individual men to resemble this type of perfection, except in a greater or lesser number of points" (*TREATISE*: 100).

Great men are also "grand, beautiful, and excellent." They are scarce, too. Quetelet's attempt to reconcile average man with great man was seen immediately as an aesthetic scandal. But average man and great man are statistically equivalent in *Treatise* in two senses. First, average man, at an advanced stage in the progress of civilization can acquire the (scientific) knowledge that will enable him to supplant manual with intellectual labor, thus becoming great man. Second, as a gauge of the relative state of one race versus another, comparisons of the average man or great man of each race are functionally equivalent. Given the assumptions of stable normal distributions, the ratio of the means (average man) and the ratio of the right-hand limits (great man) of the distribution are statistically equivalent in ranking the relative position of races across time and space. Truly great men such as Newton are produced by the same processes that produce average men: "Great events are, like great men, necessitated; and how can we be surprised at this, when we have seen that even the actions of ordinary individuals are necessitated, and when we have seen that a given social organization induces a certain number of virtues and a certain number of crimes as a necessary consequence" (*TREATISE*: 101). If generated by the same operation of necessity, average men and great men should be instrumentally equivalent, an anticipation, perhaps, of Quetelet's first application of the probabilistic error law to real variation in nature, in 1844, as the formula governing derivations from "average man."

The preliminary perusal and ranking of the literary productions of France and England in *Treatise*, measures of the relative state of civilization in the two countries, take on a probabilistic meaning in this light. The ranking of what Quetelet terms works of the first, second, and third rank is meant to establish attributes of average man. Yet it measures works produced by great men. Quetelet appears to have been thinking of establishing rankings equivalent to average man based on limits. Again, this predates his application of the normal curve to social statistics. But his use of data on literary production of different degrees of merit indicates the possibility of comparisons at points all over a distribution, anchored of course by the statistical moments of the average man and the great man.

Quetelet quotes at length from Victor Cousin to make the claim that average man and great man represent the same properties. Cousin, the most influential philosopher in France at this time, and highly popular in England as well, discerned in the character of the great man the harmonious reconciliation of the irreconcilable – the general and the particular, the infinite and the finite, the people and the individual – where the disparate elements do not dissolve or destroy one another. These were standard pairings, embodied in a Romantic

hero, the great man. According to this view, great man also possesses and acts upon disinterested and objective knowledge, a product of sympathy, of the observed. Quetelet writes:

A man can have no real influence on the masses – he cannot comprehend them and put them in action – except in proportion as he is infused with the spirit which animates them and shares their passions, sentiments, and necessities, and finally sympathises completely with them. It is in this manner that he is a great man, a great poet, a great artist. It is because he is the best representative of his age, that he is proclaimed to be the greatest genius.

(*TREATISE*: 101)

Great man's greatness lies in his gift of representing the "general mind of his people"; average man possesses the same quality. The impetus for these balancing acts by Cousin and Quetelet may have lain in their desire to see political moderation win the day in the parlous political situations in France and Belgium, respectively, following the turmoil of 1830 (Halbwachs 1913: 6; Porter 1986: 110ff.). Quetelet interprets this moral and aesthetic ideal not as a harmony of proportions – where each element has its place and function, and where the Romantic hero (ever the individualist) expresses and supersedes these bounds – but as harmony of the whole, a more democratic ideal.

Quetelet's equation of the qualities of average man with those of great man has typically been read as a case where average man supplants great man. In this view, Quetelet simply conflated the two, and identified great man with the mean of a distribution: Quetelet "resolved that the mean alone can represent the ideals of a society in politics, aesthetics and morals" (Porter 1986: 102). Statistically, perhaps this is so. Even if they were to agree in principle that he is representative of the spirit of an age (and thus equivalent to average man), social scientists may not recognize or reach consensus on just who is a great man at a given point in time. Focusing on average man avoids the need to worry about great man and the judgments of history. But structurally *Treatise* implies exactly the opposite. Following the conclusion that average man represents all that is "grand, beautiful, and excellent," he disappears, to be replaced by great man. Quetelet approvingly cites Cousin's claim that we can observe all of history in great men and their works: "thus, give me the series of all the known great men, and I will give you the known history of the human race." And great man, not average man, is the best representative of his age: "the great man, in his individuality, is the best representative of the degree of development to which human nature has attained in his times, and his works show the extent to which he himself has aided this development" (*TREATISE*: 101).

The only other mention of average man in the remainder of *Treatise* makes it clear that his status is distinct from and inferior to that of great man: "It is never sufficient for a man merely to resemble the average man in many things as much as possible, to enable him to produce great things himself; it is moreover necessary that he has occasions and possibilities for action, (*TREATISE*: 101).

Average man lacks agency, and can therefore never “produce great things, himself.” If great man possesses such agency, so too does the middle-class social scientist who could objectively observe and represent the social state, according to Quetelet. By “employing all the energy of his intellectual faculties,” an individual can overcome the operation of necessity, master causes and modify their effects, and thus attempt to improve his condition (*TREATISE*: 7). With science as the true cause of historical change, the possibility of individual agency, necessitated by time and place, is incumbent upon the division of knowledge, and the division of labor.

Social physics would replace the conjectures of political economy with mathematical and statistical certainty, and place political economy on a scientific basis. It would also replace the ideal beings of political economy, the Malthusian couple, with average man as the basis of social order and improvement. Average man may have been a measure of the ideal for the social physicist but his mediocrity and the conception of social harmony he represented were an affront to many. Even Charles Morgan, who called the work “an epoch in the literary history of mankind” in his laudatory *Athenaeum* review, which introduced *Treatise* to the periodical reading public of England, thought the attempt to endow average man with the aesthetic qualities of great man distasteful (Morgan 1835: 661). Morgan felt it necessary to recognize and maintain, even while negotiating, differences of rank, and the hierarchical distinction between manual and intellectual labor. Average man was too uniform to measure up to this standard. Morgan’s queries and caveats about the attributes of average man concern not simply the physical anatomy of an individual but the moral anatomy of a society:

In the following opinion . . . we cannot exactly agree. “If,” it is observed, “an individual at any given epoch of society possessed all the qualities of the average man, he would represent all that is great, good, or beautiful.” We question whether, in such a being, the springs of action would not be so accurately balanced as to neutralize each other. The machine, we would imagine, would want momentum, and its symmetry would want character. Our conception of the great, good, and beautiful, we rather think, contains, in a certain degree, the idea of excess; so that it is no play on words to say, that the ‘*homme moyen*’ would be a *mediocre* personage. . . . The idea of perfection, then, is not, we think, to be sought in an uniformity of individuals, but in their endless variety, and in the balancing of their several attributes in social co-operation. In this sense, there is some truth in the remark of Mons. Cousin, quoted by our author, where he says, or seems to say, “a great man is the result of an harmony between a particular and a general nature.”

(Morgan 1835: 661, emphases in original)

For Quetelet, average man’s “qualities were developed in due proportion, in perfect harmony, alike removed from excess or defect of every kind, so that, in

the circumstances in which he is found, he should be considered as the type of all which is beautiful – of all which is good” (*TREATISE*: 100). Quetelet’s aesthetic ideal and vision of harmony in the social state demands the quashing of excess even in the moral sphere: “Human qualities become virtues, when they are equally removed from all the excesses into which they may be disposed to fall, and confined within due limits, beyond which everything is vice” (*TREATISE*: 100). This aesthetic ideal is consistent with the statistical methods astronomers used to eliminate errors and deviations, a set of techniques that Quetelet wished to adapt to observations of the social state. Morgan’s aesthetic ideal, however, demands excess in virtue. Excess is no threat to representation or social order, but rather a Romantic, aesthetic valuation of the individual against the mass; the frame derived by statistical measurement for average man could not contain great man. Average man and the aggregate conception of society it represents resemble a “machine,” not a being or a social body with agency, and the “symmetry [of average man] would want character.” Morgan locates the “harmony of attributes” in “social co-operation” between classes divided by irreconcilable attributes, physical and intellectual labor. Reconciliation of the classes will be led, of course, by the possessors of intellect, great men, who not only represent but embody the knowledge of a people of a particular time and place, and can act upon that knowledge. The social division of labor is the division of knowledge.

The “scale of population” and the “scale of civilisation”

Like “useful men,” average man came in all genders (Stigler 1986: 170–1), and, as I have argued, all ages as well. Let’s look more closely at average woman, the unnamed female companion to average man. Quetelet’s earlier discussion of “useful man” implies that, when average woman reaches an age at which she can join the paid labor force, she does so and becomes the female segment of “the useful population.” That is, she works for pay, often alongside or at least in the same professions as men, and thus chips away at gender distinctions.¹⁰ Yet she is distinguishable from average man by her relative physical weakness, lesser propensity to commit crimes and so forth (*TREATISE*: 48–57). By sheer weight of numbers, the statistical aggregate average woman principally embodies the experiences and characteristics of the poor, and, like average man, suffers from a lack of agency. As a representative type, however, she, not unlike average man’s relationship with great man, also radically inverts the gendered hierarchy of value. To carry Quetelet’s aesthetic of “the true, the good and the beautiful” to its logical end, working-class women, who toiled at physical labor, would stand above rather than below middle-class women, who selflessly managed the moral life of families, in their proximity to the feminine ideal.

No doubt some quickly named and hailed or denigrated average woman. Still other representative types are present in *Treatise*. Some, like average woman, are present and absent: Quetelet also “invented but did not name the figure of the average mother, crucial to the new demographic sciences which sought ner-

vously to chart the relative numeric strengths of class against class and nation against nation” (Sekula 1986: 20). To take the measure of “average mother,” a figure ripe for Malthusian interpretation, we could, as Quetelet did not himself do in *Treatise*, construct a table of “average families” for different classes and nations. If you add average woman and the average children to average man, do you have the “true, the good, and the beautiful” family? Nowhere does *Treatise* present a vision of domesticity where a woman and children, at home, await the return of the adult male family wage-earner. Still, these statistical fictions would be both descriptive and normative. For the average family to yield anywhere near an average lifespan for its offspring, the union and resulting issue would have to fall under the category “legitimate” (*TREATISE*: 42, 45–6). Children born in wedlock, on average, stood a far better chance of surviving their formative years than did “illegitimate” children, due to the appalling mortality rates at foundling hospitals throughout Europe at this time.

Lacking the facts to complete his portrait of average man, however, Quetelet substitutes the Malthusian couple and the state of population as an index of the state of civilization. As an example of the results statisticians might arrive at, Quetelet notes that

What we have observed [in the relationship of marriages, births, and deaths] in these provinces may also be noticed in other countries, where we equally observe a great mortality and a great fecundity. Of this truth, England and the republic of Guanaxuato offer striking examples:

<i>States</i>	<i>Inhabitants</i>		
	to one Marriage	to one Birth	to one Death
England	134.00	35.00	58.00
Guanaxuato	69.76	16.08	19.70

These are, so to speak, the two extremities in the scale of population, and we may also add, in the scale of civilisation . . .

(*TREATISE*: 28)

Quetelet presents the reader with a moral aesthetic based on racial and class differences. Malthusian prescriptions for individual self-regulation – “rational habits, and more regulated passions,” prudence, and industry – constitute the ingredients of the good life for the individual and for society as a whole. The frightening fecundity and fearsome mortality of Guanaxuato can be traced directly to the preponderance of illegitimate family formation in the republic. Quetelet offers proof in the form of a table, adapted from the researches of Baumann and Süssmilch, comparing mortality rates for legitimate and illegitimate stillbirths and children, up to the fourth year. While the text notes that a higher mortality rate holds for illegitimate children up until the seventh year, it does not indicate where or from what period these facts are drawn (*TREATISE*: 42). Still, Quetelet uses the relationships indicated by the table to interpret the

evidence for Guanaxuato, drawing on assumptions that population is self-equilibrating: it is “regulated by the quantity of the products,” with the “number of births . . . regulated by the number of deaths” (*TREATISE*: 28).

Illegitimacy and the resultant train of funerals lies at the root of Guanaxuato’s placement on the low ends of the scale of population and the scale of civilization: “The fatal heritage of vice . . . explains what is observed in the republic of Guanaxuato, ‘where nothing can equal the mass of physical, moral, and political pollution’” (*TREATISE*: 42). In fact, Guanaxuato represents the limit for several distributions.

One of the most striking examples of the effects of the indolence, poverty, and demoralisation of a people, is given by the province of Guanaxuato in Mexico, where 100 births take place annually for every 1608 inhabitants, and 100 deaths for every 1970. “Some traveller,” says M. D’Ivernois, “who has observed the sad concurrence of excessive mortality, fecundity, and poverty, in Mexico, attributes it to the banana, which almost assures them an adequate quantity of food; others charge the raging heat of the climate, which begets an insurmountable aversion to labour, and leaves the inhabitants of this indolent region in a manner insensible to every other desire but that which impels the sexes toward each other. Hence the myriads of children, the greater part of whom do not live to be weaned, or only appear on the registers to give place immediately to others; and the surviving ones commence the inert and brief existence of their predecessors, like them, the victims of the indolence, apathy, and perpetual misery to which they are habituated, without experiencing the necessity of extricating themselves, any more than their parents had done. To form an idea of what takes place in this republic, we must read the report of a Swiss who visited it in 1830. Nothing can equal the amount of physical, moral, and political evil with which he has supplied his hideous account. Although he neglected to ascertain the number of births, he has guessed at it, since he calls Mexico a *barbarous China*.”

(*TREATISE*: 22, emphasis in original)

The final sentence of the passage compares the travelers’ accounts of Guanaxuato to the myriad European accounts of China, by designating Mexico a “*barbarous China*.” Adam Smith had included his famous passage on China in the section on the wages of labor, where he considers the relationship of labor scarcity and wages to family life, fertility, population growth, and national prosperity (*WN* I, VIII: 82–3). In Smith’s account all travelers agree upon “the low wages of labour, and the difficulty which a labourer finds in bringing up a family in China.” Thousands in Canton have no home and are forced to live in fishing boats. These boat people are so hungry “that they are eager to fish up the nastiest garbage thrown overboard from any European ship.” According to Smith, marriage is encouraged in China because of the “liberty of destroying [children]” by exposure or drowning, a reversal of the logic of family and national strength in

numbers, logic dependent upon the “profitableness of children.” There is even profit made in this destruction of family life: “The performance of this horrid office is even said to be the avowed business by which some people earn their subsistence.”

A little over a half century after Smith recounted travelers’ descriptions of the degradation of family life in China, Quetelet concludes his figurative and statistical discussion on the effects of morals on mortality in Guanaxuato with a similar nod toward cumulative, hence apparently objective travelers’ accounts.¹¹ By the logic of the self-equilibrating tendencies of the population, the swelling of the death registers in Guanaxuato impels the sexes, if not toward marriage, then toward each other. In recording the rapid cycle of life and death in Guanaxuato, *Treatise* reports cumulative travelers’ observations, with no attributions save that of an individual figure of authority, Sir F. D’Ivernois, and that of a nation, Switzerland, noted for its excellent demographic statistics. Quetelet also performs a rhetorical move similar to Smith, when he moves from pity based on observed, objective conditions of poverty, to censure of an inferred “physical, moral, and political evil” as a basis for (and reflection of) the poverty. Quetelet concludes his commentary on Guanaxuato by repeating (as I also do for the second time in this chapter) D’Ivernois’s observation that the unfortunate republic is a place “where nothing can equal the mass of physical, moral and political pollution.”

The contrast between the stationariness of population in Smith’s China and Quetelet’s Guanaxuato indicates the complex relationship between desire, morals, politics, and environment, and how difficult it was to disentangle the contribution of each to the prosperity or poverty of a population. Poverty in both China and Guanaxuato appears natural, resistant to change. Both China and Guanaxuato suffer from a surfeit of citizens. But China suffers from a scarcity of food, while Guanaxuato suffers from its excess. Smith attributes futility in China to laws and institutions unaltered and apparently unalterable since long before the time of Marco Polo. Quetelet defines Guanaxuato as not amenable to reform due to environmental factors that affect the relative strength of sexual desire: the banana and the heat combine to determine the republic’s position on the low end of the scale of civilization. Both China (“long . . . stationary”) and Guanaxuato (site of “perpetual misery”) are stuck in time, without, apparently, hope of the evolutionary progress achieved by Europe, which is signified by the appearance of the date, 1830, affixed to the Swiss traveler’s report. Both stand in stark contrast to England, also densely populated but prosperous and continuing to grow, the nation at the other end of the scale of population by the dint of its productivity and its political institutions.

Treatise represents Guanaxuato as the extreme case of *commercial* civilization. Travelers and missionaries lacked the demographic facts which would allow a statistical enthusiast like Malthus to insert, for example, the “wretched inhabitants of Tierra del Fuego,” in the list of civilizations, despite the common assent that this “race of savages” occupied the “bottom of the scale of human beings,” or human society (*EPP* 2, I, III, 1: 25). Guanaxuato, while barbarous,

and populated by inhabitants simultaneously anomic (“inert”) and sexually unconstrained, “insensible to every other desire but that which propels the sexes towards each other,” did present the reader with reliable population statistics, or so Quetelet assumed. That is, the mere presence of accurate statistical facts was itself a marker of (commercial) civilization. Yet the distance between states of society and states of civilization was not so great; the same checks to population underlay both. Malthus had asserted the constancy of sexual passion, but had hinted, in his example of North American Indians, that this same passion fell under limits determined by the social state. Those who followed in his wake busied themselves with concern over the propensity for commercial civilization to accentuate desires. Quetelet refers, for instance in “*Statistique morale*” (1847), to the number of marriages as a “budget controlled by the customs and needs of our social organization.”¹² Earlier in the same essay, Quetelet states that

All occurs as if a people had intended to contract annually almost the same number of marriages and divide them in the same proportions among the different provinces, between city and country, and between bachelors, maidens, widowers, and widows . . . From this point of view, the regularity which we note in the formation of marriages ought to be attributed not to the volition of individuals, but to the habits of this concrete being which we call a people, and which we regard as endowed with a volition of its own and with habits from which it frees itself with difficulty.

(Quetelet 1847: 138, 142)

Taken as an aggregate, individuals appear to have little agency in the decisions to marry. The emphasis on statistical regularities rather than the actions of individuals imputes agency to the social body instead – it’s a “concrete being” and “endowed with a volition of its own.” Thus the social state is not totally determined, as it is possible to free it from its “habits . . . with difficulty.” For instance, you can move the social state if you change the laws of its organization. In the case of marriages, the Marriage Act of 1753, and civil registration, begun in 1836, which allowed for civil recognition of marriages by dissenters and Jews, are examples of legal changes that affected the “formation of marriages” in England.

The heightened desire for sex was readily acknowledged as the counterpart to the increase in (artificial) wants for goods in commercial civilization, but no one could be sure that this would necessarily result in an increase in population. Senior had argued that the desire for goods would triumph over the desire for children. Contemporary observers noted that similar occurrences of sexual excess in similar regions were no guarantee of similar effects. In England concern over the sterile sexual activities of masturbation and prostitution had by mid-century supplanted worries of overpopulation. The specter of underpopulation haunted authorities in France: they feared that grinding rural poverty would lead to degeneration, rampant coupling, and, in turn, massive infertility; in

Silesia, on the other hand, officials felt that the cholera epidemics of 1848–9, which reportedly led people to indulge in drink and sex, would result in overpopulation (Hacking 1990: 192).

Quetelet echoes this uncertainty in *Treatise*, when he indicates the epistemological difficulty of establishing a clear link between desire and population. In introducing the section on morality that contains the description of “Mexico [as] a *barbarous China*,” he writes:

when speaking of legitimate and illegitimate births, we showed that a state of concubinage tends to produce fewer male children: the same would be the effects of all habits which enervate the powers – they also diminish the number of conceptions. It also seems to be well established, that prostitutes either produce fewer children or are barren. The too early approximation of the sexes induces similar effects, and produces children which have a less probability of life.

(*TREATISE*: 22)

This restates the conventional arithmetic of nineteenth-century sexual knowledge in Europe. It was “well established” that situations which encouraged “habits which enervate the powers”- prostitution and masturbation – served to produce fewer conceptions and fewer surviving children. Sex with too many or too few, the result of prostitution and self-abuse, respectively, added up to a loss of reproductive power.

Guanaxuato suggests that desire can defy representation, or at least, ready statistical calculation of its effects. Beyond the numbers in the table, some traveler reports uncouneted “myriads of children”; the Swiss traveler “neglects to ascertain the number of births,” and is reduced to guesswork. But the home country is also susceptible to outbreaks of passions, both legitimate and criminal, that evade description. In the first half of the nineteenth century in England both proponents and opponents of the use of statistics felt that numbers failed to adequately represent the effects, much less the presence of desire, especially sexual desire. Kay, in his representation of the working classes employed in the cotton manufactures in Manchester, concludes that, while “Criminal acts may be statistically classed . . . the number of those affected with moral leprosy of vice can not be exhibited with mathematical precision. Sensuality has no record” (Kay [1832] 1971: 38). Peter Gaskell, aforementioned critic of political economy, suggests in *Artisans and Machinery* (1836) that statistics on illegitimacy are “worse than useless” and that one must look beyond this form of representation to “discern the general licentiousness and illicit intercourse which prevails” in manufacturing districts (Gaskell 1836: 100).

The accusation that statistics failed to measure the scope of desire’s operation was part of the standard list of charges against social statistics. Numbers were also faulted for their shallowness; they measured only surface effects, rather than depths or intensities. In a passage immediately following the quote equating China and Mexico, Quetelet relates that

the criminal documents of France inform us of an equally curious circumstance, namely, that the period of the maximum of conceptions nearly coincides with that of the greatest number of rapes. M. Villermé rationally remarks, that the coincidence may lead us to think that those who are guilty, are sometimes obliged in an irresistible manner, not having the free command of the will.

(*TREATISE*: 22)

This is typical of statements on free will and statistical determinism by Quetelet, who frequently defended himself against charges of denying any role to free will (even though he assigns it to the class of “accidental causes”). Whewell, in an 1847 letter to Quetelet, qualified his approbation for Quetelet’s work by concluding that “Your statistical results are highly valuable to the legislator, but they cannot guide the moralist. A crime is no less a crime, because it is committed at the age of greater criminality, or in the month of more frequent transgressions” (cited in Porter 1986: 164). Dickens savaged British enthusiasts of Quetelet precisely on this point. In *Hard Times* (1854) he depicts the calculatingly insensitive Gradgrind children, Louisa, who dismissed the suffering of others, and Thomas, who, educated in nothing but facts, rationalized his own criminal behavior using the language of statistical determinism. Thomas, when asked by his shocked father why he robbed the family establishment, mocks his father’s show of emotion: “I have heard you talk, a hundred times, of its [the ratio of crime] being a law. How can *I* help laws? You have comforted others with such things, father. Comfort yourself!” (Dickens 1990: 209, emphasis in original)

In “Janet’s Repentance” (1858), George Eliot offers a subtler but no less damning critique of what she considers the cold comfort of statistics. They may not derange family relations, as in *Hard Times*, but they misrepresent familial bonds and the social state. And, like Charles Morgan, Eliot expresses unease at the statistical aesthetic of averages. She fashions a series of grim puns out of the terms “average,” “probable,” and “statistics” – tools of the trade for Quetelet – and their relationship to the emotions:

It was probably a hard saying to the Pharisees that “there is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.” And certain ingenious philosophers of our own day must surely take offence at a joy so entirely out of correspondence with arithmetical proportion. But a heart which has been taught by its own sore struggles to bleed for the woes of another – that has “learned pity through suffering” – is likely to find very imperfect satisfaction in the “balance of happiness,” “doctrine of compensation,” and other short and easy methods of obtaining thorough complacency in the presence of pain; and for such a heart that saying will not entirely be dark. The emotions, I have observed, are but slightly influenced by arithmetical considerations: the mother, when her sweet lisping little ones have all been taken from her one after another, and she is hanging over her last dead babe, finds small

consolation in the fact that the tiny dimpled corpse is but one of a necessary average, and that a thousand other babes brought into the world at the same time are doing well, and are likely to live; and if you stood beside that mother – if you knew her pang and shared it – it is probable that you would be equally unable to see a ground of complacency in statistics.

(Eliot 1985: 373)

Statistics, true in a mathematical and probabilistic sense, do not truly register and reflect emotional life. To Eliot, statistics engender their own aesthetic, “arithmetical proportion,” consistent with a utilitarian calculus. But, unlike the reflections on “tiny dimpled corpse[s],” contemplation of numbers will not produce thought or emotion that conforms to the aesthetics of social harmony; such contemplation engenders “complacency” rather than “sympathy” among its users. Thus instead of fostering social reform, statistics, on reflection, could produce unease over their ability to represent social life.

In fact, Quetelet’s aside, which calls into question the belief that commercial society could simultaneously unleash and control desires, raises a question similar to that posed by Eliot. That is, he lacks confidence that social scientists could easily classify and measure desires. Hence the distance between the extremes of civilization, as gauged by the venting of desire in illegitimate and legitimate outlets, may not be so vast as the travelers’ descriptions of China and Mexico imply. Desires were invisible yet ubiquitous, hence difficult to represent. They were potentially irresistible, impervious to self-regulation or regulation by the authorities. They were simply difficult to classify, as well. Contemporary statistics on the number of prostitutes in London in the mid-nineteenth century varied so widely, for example, because boundaries between respectable and illicit sexual behavior were ambiguous. Police estimates, probably closest to the true number, ranged from 5,500 to 9,500; travelers’ accounts went as high as 220,000 (Mason 1994: 77). Despite Villermé’s rational remarks, boundless desires could hinder description – classification and measurement – and interpretation in social science and stymie the efforts of reformers.

Guanaxuato finesses the question of whether unbounded desire in commercial society results in a withering away of desire or sexual anarchy: it exhibits both. In Guanaxuato desire has wound down to a bodily essence, sexual desire, and its citizens perform no labor except, unseen, sexual labor. Mimicking the travel narratives, Quetelet performs a series of logical leaps, inferences unsupported by evidence, tying his data to a metaphysics in which presumed environmental and institutional deficiencies in Guanaxuato add up to a consistent semiotic system. All signs point, in the same direction and in the same degree, toward depravity. Guanaxuato’s degradation results, again, from the operation of unbounded desire. Its effects are represented, objectively, by a series of family “facts”: the number of births and deaths per capita, and subjectively, by the assumed “fact” of the high rate of illegitimacy in the republic.

Although he has no data on it, for Quetelet illegitimate births in Guanaxuato are both a principal cause and a principal result of its deplorable conditions.

Illegitimate births, in turn, result from sexual desire operating out of its natural channels. Whether desire, in all its forms, is containable and can be focused on legitimate objects represents, for the early nineteenth-century European observer, a source of anxiety that could be projected onto another geographical space (Herbert 1991). By the late eighteenth century, many European writers had inverted or simply repudiated the model of the noble savage, which equated virtue with the savage state (Meek 1976). In the emerging view, savage society was a web of artificiality through which customs and prohibitions constrained or did not allow the expression of man's true nature. For Quetelet, this applied as well to civilized societies. Yet European travelers in the first decades of the nineteenth century presented analysts with a puzzle similar to that occasioned by their observations of desire in civilized countries: they represented savage life both abroad and in regions of Europe that had descended, at least temporarily, into savagery as either frenzied or inert. More to the point, savage life was depicted as either rife with sexual excess, or sexually quiescent, the result of either too much or too little social control (Herbert 1991). These extremes were attributed to either ceaseless, aimless activity or lethargy and exhaustion, respectively.

Family "facts," collected by travelers, and shaped and augmented by their narratives, form the basis for Quetelet's metaphysics of civilization. These facts, however, like Villermé's rational remarks on the "irresistible manner" of criminality, can never escape the specter of irrational desire at home. In truth, political economists' rhetoric on sexual desire and civilization, like that on the desire for goods and prestige, turns on civilization's multiplication of objects. Customary restrictions in savage society, combined with a lack of objects, both material and symbolic, led analysts to postulate that desire in savage life was both limited and limitless – it focused on a small number of objects or situations, yet, once applied, was boundless. As a result, savages were generally characterized as apathetic or indifferent, expressing their feelings formulaically in ritual situations, much like the keening of Irish mourners to which savage rites were often compared. But once savages' feelings were roused, their passions were limitless.

Presumably, the multiplication of objects in civilized society leads to an increase of desire and, simultaneously, its diffusion when focused on any particular object. When desire went awry in commercial society, moralists and social commentators were quick to point out that it usually did so at the top and bottom rungs of society. The poor often suffered from extreme want and thus a lack of desire for anything but necessities. On the other hand, as the Edgeworths pointed out in *Practical Education*, the poor, in an imprudent misdirection of desire, often sought out luxuries rather than practice a moderate consumption regime. For their part, the wealthy could suffer from ennui, which was characterized by exhaustion caused by satiety, a nervous condition itself resulting from a surfeit of desire.

For Malthus, passion between the sexes was stable and, like other bodily functions, satiable. Sexual passion, unconstrained by social custom, led to population pressures and the formation of the nuclear family, as couples were forced

to care for their own offspring. Whether this foundation of society was relevant for his day, Malthus locates its source in the natural passions of mankind. In later editions of *Essay*, Malthus, drawing on a wide range of travelers' facts, expressed the belief that social customs that block the operation of sexual passion lead to its stimulation. And if absolutely free to indulge, passion will decrease to "mere animal desire, [and it] is soon weakened and almost extinguished by excess." Writing of the aristocratic Areoi societies "discovered" by Cook in Tahiti, Malthus opines, "promiscuous intercourse and infanticide appear to be their fundamental laws." These "laws," he implies (quoting Cook), are designed to prevent overpopulation among the "superior classes." Here, as Herbert points out, Malthus comes close to expressing moral relativism, where Christian customs are simply one set among many possible forms of social constraint designed to cope with the stresses induced by the operation of the principle of population: like the institution of marriage in England, the practices of the Areoi societies are in some degree "natural" (*EPP* 2, I, V, 7: 50; Herbert 1991: 108–9).

Social physics, like political economy, sought to explain such heterogeneity, the different expression of the passions in different races, while retaining the assumption of homogeneity, an underlying psychological and physical unity of the human race. For both sciences, both the lack of desire and its satiation could prove fatal to the production and circulation of goods, services, and people. It could bewilder observers who tried to assimilate its myriad effects into their systematic analyses and interpret its effects in their statistics. The effect of desire on words was no less troublesome, and here it's useful to look at yet another contemporary social science that was available for discussing these questions. Ethnology, the science of human races developed by James Cowles Prichard through the first half of the nineteenth century, was still the principal framework for studying the linguistic, physical, and cultural characteristics of different "uncivilized races" in Britain in the 1850s (Stocking 1987: 47).¹³ Ethnology took as its core assumption the idea of monogenesis, the prevailing view in Britain, derived from the Bible, which held that the separate races of men had a common origin. Family and kinship ties, along with religion were fundamental objects of its study. Prichard and his followers privileged linguistic over physical evidence, with linguistic similarities implying two unlike races had evolved due not to innate physical differences, but from differences in the physical environment (Stocking 1987: 68).

Ethnology was mostly an armchair science. Prichard relied on ancient travel narratives, but increasingly on reports by missionaries, scientists, colonial administrators, and other contemporary travelers (Stocking 1987: 79). The historical and literary, not to mention the religious and humanitarian bent of ethnology slowed its acceptance as a science in the BAAS (Stocking 1987: 245). Within ethnology, the flood of new information in the 1820s and 1830s presented problems for the representation and classification, by descent and affiliation, of language (grammar), of work, and of kinship, from a presumed common origin. An expansive Malthusian framework, like the

one adapted, for instance, by Quetelet, offering a “natural history of civilization” (covering religious beliefs, kinship groups, and other “sociological” matters), may have been better adapted for including and explaining the increasing volume and variety of facts, redundancies and anomalies from overseas into a narrative of civilizations (Stocking 1987: 102–9). The Malthusian population principle eventually offered fruitful analogies for Alfred Russell Wallace and Charles Darwin as they developed their versions of evolutionary theory. But, as is apparent from the contemporary opinion offered above, the population principle also offered a vision of desire that obscured as much as it clarified.

We can see the ethnological and political economic frameworks combined in a work by William Cooke Taylor. Taylor dedicated the volumes in *The Natural History of Society* (1840), which was directed at the general public, to Richard Whately, and took up topics addressed by Whately in his 1831 lectures on political economy. Observations of family are critical in Taylor’s description of a comparative method of social analysis. Family is not only the first social organization, it is also an index of civilization:

The Family obtains a higher importance with every advance in civilization, for though family is natural to man, and essentially human, barbarism . . . raises obstacles in every direction to the development of its relations. It is scarcely possible to overrate the importance of the family in the formation and preservation of human society. . . .

(Taylor 1841, I: 70–1)

The advance of civilization is accompanied by more and more equality between partners in domestic unions. Barbarism, the lowest level of civilization, can extinguish love between a husband and wife; it can also dissolve maternal (and paternal, fraternal, and filial) feelings, resulting in infidelity and infanticide, matricide, patricide, and fratricide. These practices can account for the stationary populations of savage societies. Taylor takes these observations as commonplace; he writes that there is no need for further illustrations of female degradation and demoralization in these societies (Taylor 1841, I: 50).¹⁴

Reflecting on the state of sexual desire in savage society, Taylor writes that “domestic union [is] natural and necessary to man,” and concludes, therefore, that the barbarous state is not one where there is “promiscuous intercourse between the sexes” (Taylor 1841, I: 45, 44). That is, the savage state did not produce unbridled sexual activity. Instead, as political economists had indicated in their interest in education, civilization was necessary to activate and direct desire. Taylor nonetheless evinced a fear of limitless desire in the savage state. Taylor wrote that in the savage state man’s desire would lead to anomie – restless, undirected activity – and that these effects would manifest themselves in language. To Taylor, savage districts are prolific in the number of languages. Due to a poverty of objects, savage languages were “constantly fluctuating,” and were prolific too in the number of synonyms:

As language is the instrument of thought, the nature of language is in some degree a guide to the intellectual condition of those by whom it is spoken. All barbarous languages err in both excess and defect: by a very extravagant use of suffixes and affixes they multiply synonyms to an almost incredible and very perplexing extent, while the number of objects for which they have names is very limited.

(Taylor 1841, I: 37)

Taylor describes these “errors” of excess and defect as attributes of savage languages. But he observes that excess and defect characterize workers’ proliferating descriptions of tools in manufactories in Birmingham as well (Taylor 1841, I: 88). Intellectual poverty is apparent in the extremes of barbarism and civilization. In both it is signified by excess and defect, where inordinate attention is necessarily fixed on a limited number of objects. Neither ethnology nor political economy, with its proliferation of works such as Malthus’s *Definitions in Political Economy* (1827) that sought to stabilize the meaning of terms used in the new discipline, offered a way out of this epistemological corner.

“It is a question purely of race”

For Taylor, defect and excess defeated the efforts of travelers and social scientists, at home and abroad, to classify and thus understand how languages represent objects. They signified the weakness of the intellectual frameworks with which analysts sought to understand the different practices of different peoples. Could social physics, through its exploration of the relationships between “family,” “population,” and “race,” supply a more convincing framework than political economy or ethnology to understand and represent, through words and statistics, “civilization” and the facts of desire? In *Treatise*, uncertainty about Guanaxuato’s political status renders the status of its population on the scale of civilization uncertain: Guanaxuato is variously denoted a province, a republic, a state, and a country (*TREATISE*: 22, 38, 28, 41). Given this ambiguity, is Guanaxuato a proper metonym for Mexico and Mexico a proper analogue to China? That is, do observations on Guanaxuato allow us to state, by extrapolation, that Mexico is “a *barbarous China*”? Put another way, just where can we find average man? Apparently some measure of political independence or autonomy, and a more than fleeting attachment of a population to the soil permits inclusion of a space as a site for average man:

to take an extreme limit . . . if we consider man in the state of greatest misery and deepest degradation, it is calculated that one negro slave dies annually out of five or six . . . Governments dispose, in some sort, of the lives of the men whom they have constantly under their influence, from the moment of birth to the day of their death. I shall not speak here of the kind of governments: we know too well that those which are favourable to despotism arrest the development of the species; and, on the other hand,

how much a prudent degree of liberty, by seconding every individual industry and exertion, gives to man the means of providing for his preservation. I shall not speak of the immense distance which exists between the degree of mortality of the slave and his master, notwithstanding all the excesses to which the latter class give themselves up. . . .

(*TREATISE*: 38, 45)

Slave societies and colonial enclaves, not Guanaxuato, represent the true limits in the scales of birth and death in *Treatise*. Yet Quetelet specifically attempts to erase these societies from his analysis. He applies exclusionary principles consistent with liberal political doctrines – “I shall not speak . . .” – to omit geopolitical spaces created and dominated by European nations. This simply eradicates the blot created by the mis- or nonapplication of liberal political principles to populations abroad. The measures of the results of such illiberality – excesses, misery, and death – literally don’t count in the scale of human progress.

Average man represents a race, a people of a given time and place. But he is not yet a biological type – he only becomes one in 1845 (Hankins 1908: 64). The category of race took on a variety of meanings at this time in Great Britain. Ideas on Christianity, civility, and rank stood as important influences on British racial thought throughout the eighteenth century; it was only in the last decades of the century that the division between black and white, and the markers of skin color, hair texture, and nose shape become predominant in British racial thought (Wheeler 2000). Stages of growth theories played critical, if contradictory roles in this development. On the one hand, contact with commercial civilization was seen as promoting not just economic development but the development of character and conduct. Trade could accentuate similarities rather than “difference”: those who came into contact with the British could be transformed into people just like them. On the other hand, commercial society held out the potential to promote and accentuate ideas of “difference,” and “to depend on perceived bodily differences economically and commercially” (Wheeler 2000: 178). Even in the first half of the nineteenth century “race” in Britain could refer to, among other things, a family, an occupational group, people of a region, people of a nation, or, less often, a biological population such as “Negro.” For any analyst to use these definitions of race in practice requires a well-defined and homogeneous population, and we find ourselves facing the classification problem defined by Keeverberg and Cournot. Movements of families and populations in historical time, like movements of characters in narrative time in *Illustrations*, undercut the reliability of representatives of a “time and place” in *Treatise*. As Quetelet admitted, shifting populations and geopolitical borders made the racial classification of some European populations impossible (*TREATISE*: 89). Even if one stabilized political and national boundaries, and considered only nations run according to liberal political principles, the presence of mixed families and races, represented by hybrid average men, undercut the certainty of racial categories.

That race was in fact a stable category was the theme pushed by Knox in many of the notes and much of the appendix to *Treatise*. Knox gained practical experience in anatomy tending to casualties from Waterloo, and his dissection of natives' bodies during service as a physician in the Cape Colony, from 1817 to 1820. After his return, Knox traveled to Paris in 1821, taking additional anatomy classes. There he also cultivated the friendships of Baron Cuvier – whose *The Animal Kingdom* (1817) became the authoritative reference on the classification of animals – and Geoffrey Saint-Hillaire. Knox returned to Edinburgh at the end of 1822, and by 1827 he had become the most popular private lecturer on medicine in the city. Knox is most famous for his role in the Burke and Hare scandal in 1828,¹⁵ and the translation of *Treatise* was one of the last projects he undertook before he left Edinburgh under the weight of the scandal in 1843.

Knox has been characterized as a strong early supporter of polygenesis, a view that, contrary to Prichard's ethnology, held that the separate races of men were in fact separate species. During the 1830s and 1840s, polygenetic explanations for the diversity of human populations' skin colors as well as their "morals and manners" were rarely expressed in England due to the strength of evangelicalism, its insistence on the original unity of the human race, and humankind's sharp separation from the animal world (Stocking 1987: chapters 1 and 2). The monogenesis view had come under sustained attack by mid-century in England (more heavily so on the Continent), however, due not only to the increasing variety of data from overseas travelers, but to research in philology that called into question the assumption of connections between all the languages of man. Archeological evidence, which stretched the time span of human residence on earth beyond the biblically supported 6,000 years, further called into question the capacity of scholars to trace linguistic differences back to a common origin.

The translator's annotations to *Treatise*, on the effect of climate on mortality bear Knox's imprint in the frequent references to the formula that "blood" makes the race. They anticipate his later and more famous pronouncements on the primacy and stability of racial difference in *The Races of Men*, where he took up Quetelet's call for a moral anatomy of man (Richards 1989). For instance, the translator appends the following comment to Quetelet's enumeration of the causes of differences in height between conscripts from different departments in France in the years 1808–10:

The translator is firmly persuaded that Dr Villermé and M. Quetelet, have failed to detect the real cause of difference of stature in those two departments: it is a question purely of *race*, and not of feeding or of locality . . . The difference in stature . . . depends, in this instance, in a great measure on the difference in blood, or on the race of men: it has existed for thousands of years, and will continue so, altogether independent of locality, feeding, or government.

(*TREATISE*: note, 60, emphasis in original)

He reiterates his conviction in a note on the following page:

M. Quetelet has unaccountably omitted, in the above paragraph, the great cause productive of differences in stature of men and animals – to wit, difference in race or blood.

(*TREATISE*: note, 61)

As befits his medical training, Knox continues by detailing the implications of this definition of race for his theory of disease transmission and morbidity. Where Quetelet writes of his hopes to create a new science of social reform, and in doing so averts his glance (and stills his tongue) at colonial excesses, Knox writes in the language of imperial possession and conflict, tempered by severe doubt as to whether a race can acclimate itself to a foreign land. Commenting on a table reproduced by Quetelet on the effect of climate on mortality, Knox writes,

The numbers . . . in the above table, placed opposite Batavia, have nothing whatever to do with the effects of climate over the native Javanese, but express merely the fearful mortality which sweeps off the Saxon foreigners migrating to a climate which nature never intended they should inhabit.

(*TREATISE*: 27)

Knox's note cautions that the promiscuous mixing of unlike races can snare the unwary analyst of statistics:

the effects of climate over the migratory part of the human race, the Celt and the Saxon, should be stated apart, and not mingled up with, or rather substituted for, the natural statistics of countries which probably they can never retain possession of, whatever be the extent of their emigrations.

A statistical mistake then, this mixing of racial categories. The translator's appendix, the largest addition to the 1842 edition, concludes with a supplement to Quetelet's data on climate and mortality, and morbidity. The text draws data from one of the series of reports prepared by Alexander Tulloch on the causes and suggested remedies for the sickness, mortality, and invaliding of troops in the British army. Tulloch's numbers and deductions, produced in accordance with his belief that such investigations be conducted from the "statistical point of view," and that those should be "principally confined to such points as can readily be solved by the test of facts and figures" (cited in Cullen 1975: 46–7), were widely reprinted and favorably received. With their focus on the ability of the British army to survive in colonial service, Tulloch's work serves "as an introduction to the subject of emigration," which closes the appendix to *Treatise*. While Knox complains that Quetelet writes "as if the natives had ceased to exist," his supplementary data effectively do almost the same thing, confined as they are to British troops and "Negro or black troops in British service" (*TREATISE*: 27, 122).

Knox's account of the relationship between climate and mortality is written in terms of inevitable racial conflict over property that cannot overcome the laws of nature.¹⁶ He is doubtful as to the "permanent occupancy by the Saxon and the Celt" of "the vast regions of the earth – the most fertile, the richest" because they are physically unsuited for work in those regions (*TREATISE*: 122). Therein follows a list of battle reports (the "Saxon and the Celt" push into Mexico, California, and so forth), reminding the reader of the close connection between measurement, physical, military, and commercial strength. Knox concludes on a dark note:

Experience seems to indicate neither the Saxon nor Celtic races can *maintain themselves*, in the strict sense of the word, within tropical countries. To enable them to do so they require a *slave population of native* labourers, or of colored men at least, and, in addition, a constant draught from the parent country.

(*TREATISE*: 122, emphases in original)

Nor does the experience of the Dutch at the Cape, which Knox had observed firsthand, lessen his pessimism. They'd held possession for nearly 250 years, "but . . . they have never laboured." Spanish and Portuguese colonies, which appear to contradict this experience, are tainted to the "extent to which these [the Spanish and Portuguese] have mingled with the dark and native races" (*TREATISE*: 122, emphasis in original). The possibility of race mixing and the formation of hybrid families elicit what appears to be, again, a statistical as opposed to racial anxiety in the politically radical Knox.

Open revulsion over the possibility that English men and women might mate with "dark and native races" does surface, however, in Martineau's tale of emigration, "Homes Abroad" (1833). The story chronicles the trials and tribulations of a Kentish family, some of whose members voluntarily emigrate to Australia, others of whom are transported there as criminals. A raid by Aborigines prompts a highly charged narrative on the humanity of the Aborigines, and what Martineau saw as the loathsome consequences of mixing families across moral and racial types. The character Ellen, on what was to be her wedding day, stumbles upon what she initially takes to be "a little black pig," a creature that turns out to be a "black baby; ugly, lean and dirty; but certainly a baby" (Martineau 1833: 129). An Aborigine, perhaps the baby's father, appears, and though Ellen paints him as "lean and coarse as an ape, showing his teeth among his pointed beard, and fixing his snake-like eyes upon hers," she concludes that "this was a man, – among his deformities, still a man" (Martineau 1833: 129). Though the man is shot dead, the possibilities intimated by what Martineau paints as a horrifying domestic scene – white woman holding a black baby whose father arrives at the house – are realized several pages later when Ellen's brother Jerry reappears. Transported to Australia, Jerry has lurked on the margins of the tale as part of the criminal element of the colony. Eventually becoming the leader of a band of Aborigines, Jerry rejoins his English family on Ellen's wedding day,

accompanied by his own Australian family, an Aboriginal bride – described as more like a “tame monkey” than a person “in her appearance and gestures” – and their child. Ellen is sister-in-law and aunt to savages (Martineau 1833: 137–8).

Martineau suggests that the boundaries between the races are all too easily breached by the transgressions of family. Martineau presents us with the possibility that unlawful desire might not only be viable, but that miscegenation presents a threat to English identity and domestic happiness, as well as to the capacity for English households to peacefully occupy colonial spaces. In *The Races of Men*, when Knox elaborates on his comments in *Treatise* to the effect that races are permanently fixed types, he assumes that these boundaries are inviolable. The first edition of *The Races of Men*, published in 1850, offered readers a compilation of Knox’s lectures, some of which had been previously published in the *Medical Times* in 1848. Sloppily cobbled together and edited, the book received only lukewarm reviews from the likes of *The Lancet*; yet it contained the core of the second, expanded and highly influential second edition, which appeared in 1862. Races, Knox pronounced, are impossible to mix and alter; further, racial conflict was inevitable in the long run, with the European races regrettably destined to extinguish the darker, inferior races. Knox’s view of race-mixing flatly denies the facts of Martineau’s fiction: he writes that, “It has been reported . . . that the Australian woman ceases to be productive after intermarriage with one of the fair races” (Knox 1850: 197). His vision is also contrary to the casual use of the term “race,” as applied to Guanaxuato, in *Treatise*: “I once said to a gentleman born in Mexico, – Who are the Mexicans? . . . The fact turns out to be, that there are really no such persons, no such *race*” (Knox 1850: 53, emphasis in original). And Knox acknowledged that his use of race was also opposed to that of the “illustrious” Prichard, who, he maintains, had so long “succeeded in misdirecting the English mind as to all the great questions of race.” Although “the word, race, is of daily use,” he was using it “in a new sense,” not based on differences that might arise from “fanciful causes” such as education, religion, or climate, but on “blood,” physical characteristics unchanged since the beginning of recorded human history (Knox 1850: 591).

The ambiguities over the definition of race in *Treatise* extend to another problem – that of aesthetic judgment – that Knox takes up in *The Races of Men*. Knox’s concern was not the challenge produced by Quetelet’s equation of average man and great man; rather, it was the relativism Quetelet introduced when he assumed that there is no universal “fixed standard of beauty” (*TREATISE*: 97). Thus, if in Guanaxuato “[n]othing can equal the amount of physical, moral, and political evil,” how could its average man, even for its time and place, embody “the type of all which is beautiful – of all which is good?” In *The Races of Men*, Knox linked his fixed standard of race, through the concept of form, to a universal standard of the beautiful. This was based on his understanding of the law of the unity of the organization, the linchpin of Knox’s transcendental anatomy, his philosophy of the origin of the laws of nature. His was a realist aesthetic: “The correct mind rejects everything which is ideal, or what

never had an existence” (Knox 1850: 280). The beautiful was realized in woman’s form, rather than in landscape and the aesthetics of the picturesque, which, even when beautiful and perfect, are insufficient to satisfy the human mind: “The human form alone is beautiful; woman presents the perfection of that form, and therefore, alone constitutes ‘the perfect.’” Seeing woman’s form, man is linked to nature and eternity, thus “connecting the history of the race with the perfect” (Knox 1850: 274–5, 277, 280).

Knox melded his anatomical, anthropological, and political views into what he projected as a coherent and consistent system of thought (Richards 1989). But Knox is a rather unreliable guide on “race.” The concluding chapter of *Man: His Structure and Physiology* (1857) outlines a more circumspect view on race than those expressed in *Treatise* and the first edition of *The Races of Men*. Man formed “one great family,” as distinct from all other “natural families” (Knox 1857: 168, 167). True, “he is yet composed of a number of distinct races, which are usually called varieties, the extent and origin of which, have not as yet been determined: neither has the consanguinity of these varieties been demonstrated by direct observation.” Thus, the possibility of race-mixing between members of the “one great [human] family” remains open. While “These races differ from each other in their intellectual characters, and physical structure . . . it is probable, and as regards structure, it is certain, that the differences are to a great extent unimportant” (Knox 1857: 168). Nowhere in this work, aimed at medical students and anatomists, does Knox refer to separate species of men. Instead, Knox emphasizes the fundamental similarities between races, claiming that “Man is everywhere the same; actuated by the same feelings, passions, and desires” (Knox 1857: 171).

Unbundling Knox’s revision of social physics was critical to the rise of physical anthropology in Britain and, more generally, to the development of scientific racism. The radical, anti-imperialist racial views he expressed in *The Races of Men*, and his apparent support of monogenesis in *Man: His Structure and Physiology* were discarded by his supporters in the physical anthropology and Social Darwinist movements, to be replaced by reactionary racialist thinking (Richards 1989). James Hunt, for example, the founder of the Anthropological Society of London, and whose energetic involvement in the Ethnological Society of London included drafting Knox into active participation during 1859,¹⁷ seized on Knox’s racism – while inverting his political radicalism – to bolster the polygenist position in institutional battles against Darwinian models of anthropology.

We need, however, to add aesthetic valuation – applied to the individual, family, and population – to the discourse that Knox tried to combine into a cohesive whole and that Hunt and others discarded. Despite crafting a definition of race distinct from that of Quetelet in *Treatise*, Knox’s representation in *The Races of Men* of women’s form, the link between unchanging races and between unchanging standards of the beautiful, raises aesthetic conundrums not unlike that of assigning beauty to the average man of Guanaxuato. Like a social physician, Knox asserted that a hybrid population could not be designated a

race. The products of amalgamation, unviable in the long run, not only did not constitute a race, but “mulatto man or woman is a monstrosity of nature – there is no place for such a family” (Knox 1850: 66). Yet the flesh-and-blood realization of Knox’s universal aesthetic standard was just such a mulatto. The “only absolutely beautiful object on earth . . . the highest manifestation of abstract life, clothed in a physical form,” was embodied by women of classical Greece (Knox 1850: 33, 35). The classical Greeks constituted “a mixed race, an anomaly on earth, a thing repudiated by the organic laws of man and animals,” persons, not a race, “matchless and perfectly beautiful,” since disappeared (Knox 1850: 268). Their sculptors had “produced the Venus, a real, not an ideal form” (Knox 1850: 280). Shifting the locus from an ideal male body, average man, to Venus, a real woman’s body, did not, however, reduce the dissonance of the category “race.” Again, Hunt and others who followed Knox, jettisoned his political radicalism in the rush to use his theories to justify their racist and reactionary views. They also cast off the positive aesthetic value he assigned to racial amalgamation and the historical fact that there was indeed a place for “such a family.”

Knox ends his commentary on *Treatise*, and the appendix as well, with reference to his preoccupation with reducing morbidity and mortality in order to increase emigration from Europe. He writes that

Major Tulloch’s elaborate researches lead to the conclusion that atmospheric causes, operating on all climes in common, and modified only to a comparatively slight degree by local circumstances, form the great source of the morbid influences affecting mankind. When this point is more fully investigated, and fitting remedial means discovered, emigration will be stripped of half its difficulties, and a new lease given to civilised man, as it were, of a large portion of the globe, of which at this moment he can scarcely be called the occupant.

(*TREATISE*: 126)

Like Quetelet, Knox acknowledges that environmental factors – “atmospheric causes” – play the key role in disease transmission, despite his earlier protestations on the essential qualities of race as the determinant factor in the relationship between climate and illness. Disease mechanisms, however, remain a mystery for Knox and his contemporaries.

Environment determines all in Henry Thomas Buckle’s *History of Civilization in England* (1857). The text was the talk of the nation and beyond for the next decade.¹⁸ Buckle, who cited Quetelet’s work as his principal inspiration, galvanized readers by emphasizing a statistical determinism, based on climate and geography, which guided the destiny of nations. Buckle staked out several extreme positions in *History*. He shrugged off the classification issues that Keeverberg had raised some thirty years previously – the inability of analysts to ascertain the causes determining homogeneity and difference – problems that effectively forestalled probabilistic analyses of the differences between categories. Instead, citing statistics on suicide and crime, Buckle claimed an

absence of divine and human free will. General causes produced regularities in individual conduct, good and bad. At the aggregate level one could discern “the regularity with which the mental phenomena succeed each other” (Buckle 1857, I: 20–1, 19; Stigler 1986: 227–8), and the discipline of history could become a science simply by divining such social laws. Any particular individual or family, governed by (irregular) domestic dramas and stories, dropped out of the picture: “in the moral world, as in the physical world, nothing is anomalous; nothing is unnatural; nothing is strange. All is order, symmetry, and law” (Buckle 1857–61, v. 2: 25).

Quetelet saw no impediments to the perfectibility of man, and wished to determine statistical regularities in order to shift the limits of the social state. Quetelet’s British followers debated the possibilities and merits of reform guided by statistics. Not only did they clash over the prospect of using statistics to solve the Malthusian problem at home, they undertook comparative inquiries into disease mechanisms in the hope that science would allow “civilised man” to expand the range of the social state and occupy the globe. In the 1830s, however, statistics indicated that the European presence overseas would be limited to temporary occupation, scattered garrisons and a thin veneer of civil servants. While he foresaw the ultimate triumph of the white races, Knox expressed disgust at its inevitability and contempt for the statism of the sanitary movement in England that sought to realize colonial expansion. Buckle seemed to suggest a dead end for reform. He believed statistical regularities indicated the presence of “laws” which placed human events beyond the control of any given individual or any legislative remedy. William Farr, who organized the 1851 British census, the topic of the following chapter, took a more hopeful view. Farr’s pragmatic efforts in collecting and classifying statistics were central to work that aimed to document, stabilize, and remedy the conditions detailed by Tulloch that had evinced such concern from Knox. To Farr, these measures would help solve the Malthusian problem: they would allow English families, as households, to lease, occupy, and possess domestic and foreign soil, and to populate the world.

6 What is to be deemed a family?

[The census] had entirely failed, from the impossibility of deciding whether females of the family, children and servants were to be classed as if of no occupation or of the occupation of the adult males of the family . . . But the often recurring and unanswerable doubt, as to what is to be deemed a family? – has caused a further alteration in the mode of this enquiry.

(John Rickman, *Population Returns of 1831*: 2)

From its beginning in 1801 the British census provided a definitive answer to one of the key population questions that had puzzled commentators from the mid-eighteenth century on. That is, had the population decreased or increased since the Glorious Revolution? It had risen rapidly. The population of England, about four million at the turn of the seventeenth century, had risen to five million by 1700, then proceeded to increase, to seven million by 1780, and over 8.5 million by 1800 (Wrigley and Schofield 1981: 208–9). By 1821 and 1831, population was measured as almost 11.5 million and 13.3 million, respectively. Malthus attributed the rapid increase to falling mortality, rather than the true cause, rising fertility (Hollander 1997: 787). But his relatively optimistic interpretation of these facts begged another set of darkly pessimistic questions he had posed in 1798 – was the presence of grinding poverty for the vast majority of the population the result of the shortcomings of individuals or of the failings of human institutions? And would rapid population growth last or was it even desirable? That is, would it simply produce more bodies to be eventually struck down by war, disease, and famine, Malthus’s positive checks?

Family facts would help answer these questions. This chapter examines what role the British census commentary assigns to “family” and other, related categories, as well as contemporary reaction to the census numbers and classifications. Rickman’s doubts as to the place of women, children, and servants in the family, the classification of their work, and the more basic question of “what is to be deemed a family” in the printed abstracts and summary tables for the 1831 British census are evidence of an institution in search of clear means of enumeration and stable terms and classifications that would help answer these questions. Indeed, in the 1841 census, the number of families in England and

Wales was not correctly returned. By the publication of the 1851 census, however, the commentary assures the reader that, if violated in practice, in theory these classifications have been stabilized by a focus on property rather than people, and the substitution of “occupier” for “family” as the primary unit of classification (*1851 Census*: xxxv). Moreover, the 1851 census, directed by William Farr, draws on other discourses and everyday speech to press the case that its classifications conform to both common-sense and scientific understandings. It thereby enlists the reader as a partner in the task of defining new terms and new tools of analysis. This work makes the methods of the census office transparent and thus, as the subject of public notice and discussion, more “objective;” it also serves to drum up support for the policy goals urged by Farr and other sanitarians at the General Register Office (GRO).

The replacement of “family” with “occupier” insinuated itself into the detailed instructions for census-takers, instructions which were also reproduced in the published results. The procedures emphasized the significance of place as opposed to blood in the definition of family: the census assigned to family “visitors, and persons constantly or accidentally in the house” on census-taking day. And in the sample forms given to the enumerators for filling out the categories of “house” and “household,” “Under the last name in any *house*” the enumerator was directed to

draw a line across the page as far as the fifth column. Where there is more than one Occupier in the same house, he should draw a similar line under the last name of the family of each Occupier; making the line, however, in this case, commence a little on the left hand side of the third column.

(*1851 Census*: cliii, emphasis in original)

The definition of “occupier” is tied to a definition of a family. An occupier is the head of a household, properly understood as a family in a house. And “family” was also closely related to “house” and “householder”: as the commentary indicated, “It is so much the order of nature that a family should live in a separate house, that ‘house’ is often used for family in many languages” (*1851 Census*: xxxv). But the census officials chose occupier rather than householder as the term of reference for both the head and each individual member of a family. Occupier was consistent with legislative usages; it was also a category that captured a wider variety of living arrangements than did householder, with its specific linkage to “house”:

Where a house is occupied by a family, the head of a family is a householder; but as this term is scarcely applicable to the holder of apartments, it has given place to *occupier* in some recent Acts of Parliament.

(*1851 Census*: xxxvi)

The census commentary claims that this change in categories produces no substantive change in the census results: “That family and occupier have,

however, been used in nearly the same sense, at the enumerations of the population, is evident, in comparing the number of families in 1801–31, and the occupiers of 1851, with the population” (1851 Census: xxxvi). The essayist in the *Westminster and Foreign Quarterly Review* echoed this sentiment, and assured readers that the shift in enumeration represented no problem for enumerating the number of families: the “number of householders’ schedules filled up gave the number of inhabited houses; and the number of families was, of course, immediately ascertainable from them” ([Anon] 1854: 347).

Thus census officials, in an effort to avoid confusion over the meaning of “family,” attempted to substitute “occupier,” and, in turn, apply a narrow, specific meaning to “house.” That the census bureaucrats could neither craft nor impose univocal meanings for either “family” or “house,” and that they do indeed create difficulties for the interpretation of census results will be made clear below. But Farr, unlike Rickman, evinced no despair at this prospect. Instead, Farr’s methods of classification display his pragmatism and open acknowledgment of uncertainty and the limits of statistical reasoning. Farr, the statistical chief of the GRO from 1839 to 1879, was responsible not only for the organization of the 1851 census but for most of the commentary as well (Cullen 1975: chapter 2). Just prior to taking his position at the GRO in 1838, Farr wrote that “Classification is another name for generalisation [T]he superiority of classification could only be established by the number of facts which it generalised, or the practical results to which it led” (Farr 1837: 93). Farr, in the manner of Quetelet, sought to apply uniform classifications and measurements across the British empire and the world, in order to make universal his recommendations for remedies to preserve the population. He did not shy away, however, from exploring the consequences of differences in the definitions of family and household commonly in use within Britain itself. These differences affect not only the meaning of family facts in Scotland and England, but also any understanding of the material conditions of its subjects and the possibilities for legislative reform.

The classifications and commentary of the 1851 census thus fail to clearly draw the line between families.¹ Nor do the census procedures assuage “the often recurring and unanswerable doubt, as to what is to be deemed a family.” No doubt some of the uncertainty results from the rhetoric of the census and subsequent, associated reports from the GRO. Not only did the commentaries attempt to define statistical concepts in a vernacular the general reader could understand, they occasionally changed definitions in order to illustrate a point. Thus, the definition of a “natural family,” for instance, changes several times in the course of the commentary and tables in the 1851 census. Not that the census and Farr’s commentary satisfy the questions as to what a family *should be*, either. Higgs has cautioned against reading the censuses from 1801–81 as economic documents that faithfully reproduce normative assumptions about economic man and domestic woman. The 1851 census, for instance, veers between defining the head of the family as the husband and the two-headed entity, apparently the offspring of the legal doctrine of coverture, “husband-and-wife.”

The failure to consistently define family as a male head and dependents should give present-day analysts pause. The census hardly qualifies as an economic document, or, at least one easily ascribed to a particular school of political economy with particular normative assumptions (see, however, Folbre 1991). Rickman, a conservative Tory who served as senior clerk to the House of Commons, defined his work on the census, in part, in opposition to Malthus. True, in a November 21, 1827 letter to his close friend, the poet Robert Southey, he confessed that he believed that an increase in the poor rates had led to an increase in population, which caused an increase in poor rates, a position held by Malthus: “We cannot make the poor comfortable without making them increase and multiply, and as humanity [‘kindly feeling toward the lower classes’] is not likely to retrograde, poor rates will not diminish; perhaps we ought not to wish it . . . ” (cited in Williams 1912: 237). Nonetheless, Rickman was not disposed toward “kindly feeling” for political economists, whom he lumped together as “the school of Macculloch”; Southey wrote him that, “no man is so capable of demolishing as yourself” McCulloch’s “egregious absurdities” (cited in Williams 1912: 242). Rickman was no less scathing. In a May 12, 1830 letter to Southey, he recounted his efforts to keep the proposals of the political economists out of the 1831 census act:

The impending Popn. Act for 1831 now in Parliament has let loose upon me several of the Pol. Oeconts. besides Macculloch; their habitual insolence, (so habitual that they manifestly are unconscious of it) is amusing, but it has cost me 3 or 4 days hard work . . . to fight them by anticipation; for if once they give an opinion, judge whether I should be able, unaided by any, to keep their nonsense out of the act.

(cited in Williams 1912: 260–1)

Farr, too, took issue with the theories and remedies on population, poverty, and sickness put forward by Malthus. The census under Farr is better understood as progress toward a vast medical survey, part of a series of GRO publications that produced knowledge vital to the sanitary reform movement. Members of this movement maintained a sometimes supportive, sometimes hostile relationship to the doctrines and nostrums of the political economists of the period, as is evident in Kay’s criticisms, recounted in the previous chapter. Although in his 1832 report Kay expressed skepticism about the ability of statistics to register moral sickness (desire gone astray), the sanitarians’ imperative to record and measure family facts such as sleeping arrangements cut against the grain of political economic analyses. Political economists tended not to observe these family facts in their treatises, and relied instead on rote repetitions of maternal neglect by female wage-earners. While the text in the 1851 census supports the nurturing role of mothers, the tables on women’s marital status, like the data on the unnamed average woman in *Treatise*, do little to conform to the insistence of English political economists upon female economic dependence for the country as a whole. Unlike the unnamed and hence uncontroversial average woman,

however, the “redundant woman” of the census and the presumed threat she represented to the English family provoked a hue and cry.

Martineau, who herself fit the category “redundant woman,” tried to squeeze “real life” into just two classes in *Illustrations*; in *Treatise*, Quetelet’s social physics offered the possibility of an infinite number of statistical categories. Each described the social state using representative types, representations undone by the movement of families in time and space. Knox attempts to solve this problem by assuming fixed attributes of a people, a “race,” but his solution falters when he assigns aesthetic value to mixed races, the offspring of mixed families. Under Farr, the census stabilizes family itself by assigning it to a fixed space, a household, and by redefining the family head as the occupier of that space. Cleaning up spaces of miasmatic, sickness-inducing organic material represents the tool of choice of the sanitary reform movement. Yet, despite being displaced by occupier, the family still anchors the political and economic community of England in the census commentary. For Farr, reform over time will also center on the family. Eugenics, a selection process in the marriage market practiced by representative and presumably statistically measurable family types within populations, will operate within the population in England. Farr envisions a future where this form of eugenics, in conjunction with emigration, solves the population problem across populations as well: these family types of the nations of Europe reach ever more perfect forms, and, aided by sanitary measures, occupy colonial, and imperial spaces, win the competition of races, and, eventually, people the world.

Families, “natural,” “normal” and otherwise

Farr, the chief protagonist in this chapter, played an important role in the development of Victorian social medicine and social statistics.² Born in 1807 in Shropshire and raised in humble circumstances, he was the son of illiterate parents, both of whom worked for a retiree. From this beginning Farr, with the support of the master of the household, an old bachelor who adopted him at age two, was able to train as an apothecary and travel to Paris in 1829 for further medical training. There he attended lectures on surgery, observed the treatment of the wounded from the 1830 revolution, studied typhoid fever with other English and American students, and developed an interest in hygiene and medical statistics. On his return to England he went into practice as an apothecary, but found the rigid social and political hierarchy of the medical profession stifling, and a barrier to advancement. To supplement his income he wrote for *The Lancet*, edited other medical journals, and even, briefly, published his own, all the while advocating the cause of statistics as an aid to public health reforms. When he assumed his post in the GRO he helped develop and institutionalize methodologies for fields ranging from demography, to epidemiology, to vital statistics – his work in nosology, for instance, helped establish the systematic classifications of the way we die. Using a machine based on Babbage’s design for a difference engine, Farr was also “the first person to calculate and print

a table of numbers with a computer,” the English Life Table No. 3 (Small 1998: 118).

Farr gained a reputation as an authority on statistics with the publication of “Vital Statistics,” which appeared in J.R. McCulloch’s *A Statistical Account of the British Empire* (1837), and he became a member of the Statistical Society of London in 1839, the same year he joined the GRO.³ A friend of Quetelet, and, in turn, mentor to another one of Quetelet’s friends, Florence Nightingale, on the use of medical statistics,⁴ he occupied a position, as civil servant, that partly insulated his work from the criticism that met his friends’ social analyses. At the GRO, he assumed the post of compiler of abstracts before he became superintendent of the statistical department and helped organize the 1841 census. The primary function of the first four British censuses (1801, 1811, 1821, 1831), which were directed by Rickman, had been to count people, families, and houses. These censuses, based on parish registers, were conducted by the Overseers of the Poor or “other fit persons.” The 1841 census was the first to rely on civil registration, put in place in 1837,⁵ which was one of a series of Whig reforms that incrementally broadened political participation in England. For dissenters and other religious minorities, civil registration was recompense for their political support of the Whigs. In 1833, John Wilks, head of the faction of dissenters in the House of Commons, called for and chaired the Select Committee on Parochial Registration, which elicited Quetelet’s testimony on the abysmal state of British statistics. Following prompting by his questioner, Samuel Bowring, Quetelet, the committee’s star witness, expressed disbelief that England, “a country so wealthy, wise and great,” lacked a system of vital registration; he added that the consensus of “several distinguished persons” gathered at the BAAS meeting “was a general complaint of the imperfection of the elementary population documents” of England, and that, as a result, England lacked the “very basis” of “good legislation” (PP 1833, XIV.505, 669, 997–8: 119–22). The committee pushed for the establishment of a system of civil registration in order to redress several glaring deficiencies of parish registration. First, the church records of dissenters had no legal status. Prior to civil registration, some members of religious minorities had listed themselves in Anglican parish registers because they were the principal guarantor of genealogy and the legitimacy of property transmission and inheritance claims. Second, the 1822 Marriage Act Amendment notwithstanding, the provisions of the 1753 Marriage Act meant that the legal status of many marriages was called into question. As a remedy, the 1836 Marriage Act, which accompanied the General Registration Act of the same year, allowed dissenters and others to marry in their own places of worship, provided they obtained licenses and certificates from the newly established civil registrars. The change constituted radical reform of the 1753 act: more types of marriages were now possible in England and Wales.⁶

The GRO, established in 1837, was charged with the responsibility for collecting returns on births, deaths, and marriages, though the registration of births was not mandatory. The GRO exploited the new system of vital registration to retool the 1841 census into a production more comprehensive and detailed than

its predecessors. The 1821 occupational classifications, derided as “exceedingly defective” because they lumped “a superannuated beggar, and, a rich fundholder, in the same class,” were slightly broadened in 1831, and underwent a wholesale revision for 1841 ([McCulloch] 1829: 8–9).⁷ The new schedule included considerably more detail than the original three general categories of “agriculture,” “trade, manufacture or handicraft,” and “other.” The principal occupational unit, which had shifted from persons (1801), to families (1811 and 1821), to families and persons (in 1831, the occasion of Rickman’s puzzlement at “what is to be deemed a family”), finally shifted back to persons in 1841.⁸ The degree to which Rickman shaped the 1841 census is unclear. He died that same year, and the government accepted procedures put forward in a report by the London Statistical Society for the 1841 census. This was unsurprising, since the committee responsible for the report included a number of the government’s own statisticians, including Farr (Cullen 1975: 96–7). Rawson William Rawson had suggested these procedures at the urging of Quetelet, with whom he maintained a steady correspondence (Curtis 2001: 20). Cullen points out that the GRO would have conducted the census in much the same manner even without the society’s recommendation. The Registrar General, the novelist T.H. Lister, had insisted that the census should enumerate only within the parameters of common knowledge: it should, Lister argued, collect only “a few simple facts,” in order that “any sensible man who could read and write,” would qualify as an enumerator (Cullen 1975: 97).

Farr succeeded Rickman as director of the censuses. Looking back, Farr wrote of the census occupational classifications that

The classification by families is of some use in simple populations, where labour is not much divided; but in England the members of the same family – the husband, wife, and children – are often engaged in different occupations, even when the children are home. Our classification is in principle a *classification of each individual under his principal occupation on the Census day.*

(*Census Report*, 1871, vol. IV: xxxviii, emphasis in original)

The extension of the division of labor demanded a finer division of occupational classifications, one that allowed the census a peek into the operations of a family and each of its individuals. The focus on individuals is central: the 1841 census was the first in which names of individuals were recorded.

Farr’s remarks may warrant the interpretation of the census as a relatively straightforward economic document. The occupational classifications focus on persons rather than families or households, albeit they embody not only some idea of “economic man” but also “economic woman,” and “economic child.” His comments also testify to the international influence of Quetelet. Farr, following Quetelet, devised a “system of reporting and analysis of the incidence of birth, life and death [which] became the model for the world,” and, as the motive force in the GRO, he also “set up an organization and methods that pro-

vided a template for all nations” (Hacking 1990: 53, 128). In anticipation of an empire-wide census in 1851, for example, the British Colonial Office distributed to all colonial governors an outline of procedures for the counts, which included copies of English enumeration schedules and instructions to census administrators. The outline had been put together by Farr, and was modeled after Quetelet’s suggestions (Curtis 2001: 21–2).

Nonetheless, Farr’s reminiscence elides the practical difficulties the statistical section and users of the census had in realizing this vision of standard procedures and centralized knowledge. Some of the problems were institutional, and reflected the failure of administrators in England and abroad to carry out their instructions. Further, given Farr’s efforts to link the census to the annual reports of the Registrar General, the British censuses should be seen not as social or economic but, again, as medical surveys, based in part on a “medico-demographic” model of the social state (Higgs 1991; see also Eyler 1979; Bellamy 1978; Tillott 1972; Armstrong 1978).⁹ This too was an incompletely realized vision, with the GRO devoting much of its staff and resources to simply ensuring that registers were complete. Advocates hoped a sound system of civil registration would solve the problem that had bedeviled reformers of the marriage laws since 1753: it would provide certain proof of family lineage and therefore security of title to property in legal cases. In addition, initially at least, the actuarial role of the GRO dwarfed its medical preoccupations. Edwin Chadwick, for instance, believed that information collected by the GRO would lend support to the development of friendly societies, which would reduce morbidity, mortality, and poor law expenditures (Higgs 1996).

In the mid-1850s, members of the London Statistical Society who wished to examine the census’s occupational classifications, with an eye toward reshaping them into more useful forms, also encountered difficulties. This was due, in part, to the relatively lowly status of classification in the institutions of the statistical movement; taxonomy had evidently fallen from grace since the debates over method in the 1830s (see Chapter 1). For instance, Thomas Welton, a member of the society, published several papers on the occupational classifications in the 1851 census at his own expense in 1860 after failing to place them in the society’s journal. Welton admits that his articles were too lengthy to publish in the journal; but he took issue with the editors’ selection criteria, which deemed his papers to be “not on a pressing topic,” and consequently favored papers before them on “Works in India, Metropolitan Railways, Metropolitan Poor Law, Indian Revenue, Prices in 1857, and so on” (quoted in Welton 1860: vi). After all, Welton complained, the census commissioners themselves had not only considered their classification scheme provisional, and called for work toward a final set of occupational classifications, they had maintained that such classification work would be of practical and scientific value: “Such an inquiry would in many ways be useful, and tend at once to extend science, to promote production, and to dissipate subversive theories” (quoted in Welton 1860: title page and vii).

Welton bemoans the emphasis in the society on “*new and applied statistics*” as opposed to what he characterized as “the scientific investigation of statistics

already gathered.” He calls for a share of the journal’s space to be devoted to both branches of statistics, else the journal “discourage a valuable class of contributors“ (Welton 1860: xv–xvi, emphasis in original). In language reminiscent of the earlier debates within the society on classification and epistemology, Welton maintains that there are those who “are in some respects specially fitted *to apply* the knowledge they have gathered,” and these “required other abilities and experiences than those of the mere statist, using the word in a restricted sense.” Welton does not, however, take a stance in favor of a strict division of labor between the scientists, or statisticians, and everyone else. He ascribes to the periodicals a critical role, a “connecting link” between daily newspapers and “Transactions of scientific societies,” as the “preferable vehicle for applied statistics.” The periodical press thus serves as the ideal meeting ground for practical men, politicians, and theorists alike:

Contributions to it, emanating alike from political or philosophical statisticians, and from statistical philosophers or politicians, would have the double recommendation of fitness in the class of writers for the tasks assumed, and fitness in the arena of disputation, from its nature admitting the contributions of the practical and active part of the community, and thereby subjecting to a severe test those of the learned.

(Welton 1860: xv, emphasis in original)

By allowing practical men a say, periodicals vet the contributions of politicians and statisticians. Welton assumes shared knowledge on the part of his statisticians, philosophers, and practical men, and these common points of knowledge and interest rest on the fact that there is not “too broad a distinction between the theoretical and the practical man. We all participate in both characters.” Still, like the science and art of political economy, the two types of men are not identical: Welton concludes, “there is, nevertheless, a well-recognised distinction in this respect between man and man, which should neither be exaggerated nor ignored” (Welton 1860: xv).

Malthus, too, had wished to dabble in “applied statistics,” and subjected his insights to the often exasperating criticism of both theoretical and practical men in periodical essays, not to mention pamphlets and books. With respect to medical statistics and his population principle, Malthus and both practical and theoretical medical men had the same goal, preservation of life, in mind. But he was skeptical about the efficacy of state intervention in medicine. Meddling legislation by the state misdirected philanthropy and fostered dependence. In the medical realm, such legislation eroded the incentives for family to obtain their own health care. Malthus was particularly critical of founding hospitals, but, in the second edition of *Essay*, he used facts he himself had collected in Sweden during his Scandinavian tour to attack lying-in hospitals as well: “Lying-in hospitals, as far as they have an effect, [have a] tendency . . . to encourage vice. Foundling hospitals, whether they attain their professed and immediate object or not, are in every view hurtful to the state” (*EPP* 2, II, II, 22: 164–5).¹⁰ The hospitals hurt the state; they

hurt the children themselves, increasing their morbidity and mortality and, as did the poor laws did with the poor, they created the very problem, the sick, that they were designed to address (Dolan 2000a: 56). In sum, Malthus concluded, these hospitals constituted a wasteful expenditure for the rest of society.

The British did not adopt the Continental policy and establish a widespread system of foundling hospitals. Still, the majority of British medical opinion in the first decades of the nineteenth century opposed the medical views of Malthus. The reasons ranged from a belief that Malthus erred by blaming nature and, by implication God for man's plight, to the anti-capitalist view that politics were responsible for the economic conditions that beset the poor (R. Porter 2000). Farr was scornful of Malthus's population principle, and endorsed a number of sanitary interventions by the state. The definitions of the family in the 1851 census were proposed with the goal of disease prevention in mind, and indicate a shift in disease models from those inspired by natural theology that placed the onus on the individual, toward environmental medical models that analyzed and treated aggregates to preserve families and the population as a whole. Aggregation, as Quetelet constantly reiterated, allowed the observer to overlook the vagaries of individual and family life such as sex, love, and desire, and concentrate on the measurable facts of a population.

Yet, for the sanitarians, treating the social body meant suggesting reforms for aggregates smaller than the population, such as families and neighborhoods. The census commentary on population densities, the number of persons and families per house, reflects this biomedical preoccupation: "it may be inferred, as the family is on average composed of five persons, that some of the families in towns are imperfectly constituted, and have less than the normal number of members" (*1851 Census*: xxxviii). The census marks the passage from the language of "natural" social behavior to "normal" social functioning. It also echoes, in its reference to "imperfectly constituted" families, the confluence of Quetelet's averages and the aesthetics of the normal. The statistical concept of the normal had only recently been borrowed from medicine to be applied to social phenomena such as family structure. Although the words "normal," "abnormal," or even "pathological" were beginning to replace consideration of the "natural" as the basis for quantitative and qualitative judgment of social units such as families (Hacking 1990: 160–4), the use of the term "normal" in the census commentary does not imply a normative judgment. Here, normal is simply a quantity equivalent to the average. For example, the text notes that "The English population, owing to its rapid increase, contains an excessive number of children and young people, and will live longer than a population normally constituted" (*1851 Census*: xxx). The sentence jars, for two reasons. First, what is understood as the natural family, itself variable, may not be normal: a family of husband, wife, and children may not be average in attributes such as size, occupations, type of dwelling, and so on. Second, the normal state may not correspond to the healthy state, and may not be the ideal state, or the norm to which to aspire. Rather, a healthy population consists of more children and young people than a population "normally constituted." The reduction of

child mortality did raise the specter of future overpopulation, however, a problem to which I return to below.

The official statistics of England and Wales, which served as the model for the world, bear Farr's imprint, and reflect his penchant for tinkering with classifications to promote "practical results" of a medical nature. Some of the results that ensued were no doubt unintended. The GRO's revisions of the occupational classifications from 1841 until 1881 promiscuously mixed members of both sexes and of all social classes, including the unemployed and retired, under the same occupational headings. Census officials opted to focus on the occupation of adult males, thus apparently enshrining the accepted sexual division of labor (Davidoff and Hall 1987: 230). The 1851 census, for instance, which recorded general female occupations for the first time, introduced the occupational category of "wife, mother and mistress of an English family." New census categories soon enough move from novel to "real" attributes of a population (Hacking 1982). Yet, even as we realize we're trafficking in fictions, census numbers retain the capacity to surprise us, and to make us rethink our categories. To contemporaries, the 1851 census also revealed the shocking facts that one in four wives and two out of three widows were "engaged in some extraneous occupations," and 42 percent of women aged between twenty and forty were unmarried. Martineau, in her famous *Edinburgh Review* essay, "Female Industry," read the census data as an indicator that women's place was in paid employment. Taking a swipe at patriarchal theories of the family, she expressed the belief that women should be considered as workers, not as family members, when it came to their remuneration:

We go on talking as if it were still true that every woman is, or ought to be supported by her father, brother, or husband: we are only beginning to think of the claim of all workers, – that their work should be paid for by its quality, irrespective of the status of the worker. . . . We are (probably to a man) unaware of the amount of the business of life in England done by women; and if we do not attend to the fact in time, the knowledge will be forced on us in some disadvantageous or disagreeable way. A social organization framed for a community of which half stayed at home, while the other half went out to work, cannot answer the purposes of a society of which a quarter remains at home while three-quarters goes out to work.

(Martineau 1859: 297)

Martineau counted "no less than half" of Great Britain's six million women over the age of twenty as "industrial in their mode of life," and two million of these as self-supporting. On the basis of this, she argued for recognition of the reality and extent of women's paid work. She also argued for the extension of women's educational and occupational opportunities as a proper, not wasteful utilization of the nation's resources (Martineau 1859: 335).

The numbers in the occupational classifications of the 1851 census represented a new set of facts, a new sense of the "real" magnitude of the class of

“redundant women.” These single, economically independent women deviated from an ideal of a domestic sphere, where women were defined as mothers or sisters or daughters, but did not work for pay. What sort of work did these women do? Hannah More had argued in the second decade of the nineteenth century for the paid employment of poor women in legitimate domestic industries as a bulwark against destitution and prostitution. More considered this behavior natural – the “young women . . . [had] been bred to no other means of support” – and necessary, as a Christian duty, for the upper classes to support. By mid-century the debate had shifted to arguments for and against the paid employment of women of all ranks. Martineau saw the existence of the class of working women not only as real, but vital to the manufacturing spirit of the nation. Others deemed it unnatural and abnormal. W.R. Greg argued in 1862 that the 1851 census indicated “an enormous and an increasing number of single women in the nation, a number quite disproportionate and quite abnormal . . . [and] proportionately most numerous in the middle and upper classes.” The disproportionate number Greg referred to were the number of unmarried women over and above the always present, natural excess of female-to-male births. The women making up the “abnormal” excess, lacking “the natural duties and labours of wives and mothers” were “compelled to lead an independent and incomplete existence of their own” (Greg 1873: 276). Greg concluded that the life as a wife is a woman’s natural occupation. He meant this in a normative sense: everywhere and at all times “marriage, the union of one man with one woman, is unmistakably indicated as the despotic law of life. This is *the* rule. . . . [Those] *who remain unmarried constitute the problem to be solved, the evil and anomaly to be cured*” (Greg 1873: 279, 281, emphases in original).

Farr’s practices, which mixed the sexes and classes in the occupational categories, frightened some readers by revealing the state of the English family. They also reveal some of the difficulties present-day readers of the census encounter as they seek to derive information about the work experiences of family members in this period. The census routinely undercounted the participation of women in the paid labor force, even when the census shifted to the individual rather than the family as the basic occupational unit. Men, counted as the “householders” in the 1851 census, frequently neglected to tell enumerators of their wives’ paid employment. In addition, enumerators were enjoined to inquire only about the occupations of those who were “regularly employed”; instructions on how to record the status of part-time, casual, or seasonal employment, where women performed much work, were lacking. The strategies enumerators took to record women’s work varied by district; some left the space for occupation blank, which led to the unrealistic result that more than half of London’s women were listed as unoccupied. Men were probably also undercounted in many occupations. While they tended to report one occupation, a great deal of instability remained in men’s employment, as many held multiple jobs, or jobs that were irregular or seasonal in nature (Patten 1977: 301–3; Berg 1993: 29). And though the 1851 census included, for men only, space for additional occupations, the summary statistics included data for one occupation only.

Farr's practices also annoyed later census officials. Charles Booth, who helped revise the occupational categories into classifications by "class" after the 1881 census, complained that in the returns up to and including the 1881 census "skilled and common labour are inextricably mixed" (Booth 1886: 336). Booth tried to rework the occupational categories and data going back to 1841 into a consistent framework, one based on what he considered to be the principles of political economy. Booth shifted housewives from the "Domestic Class" – which included scholars, paid domestic workers, and those who performed personal services – into a new category, "Unoccupied Class." In practice, his efforts decreased the number of women counted as "occupied" (Folbre 1991: 471–2).

The undercount and apparent misclassification of men's and women's occupations in the 1851 census thus appear to be cases of technological breakdown. The census enumerators, lacking clear guidelines on how to count and classify on the census forms, passed on flawed information to the compilers of data, who compounded the problem by failing to acknowledge the diversity of individuals' employment experiences. The census officials could be said to be "unprincipled," too, as they failed to live up to an announced shift in the basic occupational unit away from the family and toward the individual. On the other hand, the census categories exemplify Farr's medical rather than strictly economic approach to occupational classifications. Farr wished to gauge the morbidity and mortality effects of occupations and of the different materials worked up in different production processes (Higgs 1991: 471–2).¹¹ As a result, Farr included wives who worked at home, without pay, in the occupations of their husbands, reasoning that even if they were not employed as waged workers they handled the same materials, shared a similar work routine, and therefore incurred the same mortality regime.

Farr held that occupational differences accounted for the different mortality experiences of the sexes; women's paid occupation also had a discernible effect on children's mortality rates. While the stress the census commentary placed on the harm to children that resulted when mothers abandoned their natural occupation appeals to the maternal ideal, it was also meant "to provide the positive correlation which was expected between the incidence of working mothers and the level of infant mortality" (Higgs 1991: 475). Using the data on occupations for these censuses without an awareness of their medical bases can seriously skew calculations: if many women were not counted, many wives who held their own occupations were counted twice in the census (Higgs 1987: 474).

Farr and the medical practitioners of the GRO looked toward environmental causes of social problems, and for this reason the GRO's publications, including the censuses, should be considered key texts in the sanitary movement. Unlike Chadwick's singular 1842 Sanitary Report, which Farr helped compile, and which had a greater and more immediate impact, they provide "the earliest example of institutional continuity for a particular approach to the social scientific study of society in Britain" (Szreter 1991a: 414). The sanitarians leaned heavily (although not exclusively) on remedies that involved state intervention to change the physical environment of the poor. Dirty streets and, especially,

dirty houses fostered (the disease of) bad habits. Kay, in language that would not be out of place in *The Working-man's Companion*, detects

An intimate connection . . . among the poor, between the cleanliness of the street and that of the house and person . . . The first step to recklessness may often be traced in a neglect of the self-respect, and of the love of domestic enjoyments, which are indicated by a personal slovenliness, and discomfort of the habitation. Hence, the importance of providing by police regulation or general enactment, against those fertile sources alike of disease and demoralization presented by the gross neglect of the streets and habitations of the poor.

(Kay 1971 [1832]: 16)

Few sanitarians went so far as to call for a system of medical police along Continental lines (Eyler 1979: 30). Nor did they totally neglect efforts to channel individual desires in favor of projects to direct the flows of waste away from and clean water to whole districts. Most sanitary reports, while attributing the degradation of the poor to environmental reasons, sought to convey to readers their belief that the poor did have agency, and could, given encouragement, change their habits and their households, thus their lives for the better. Whole neighborhoods and individual families were exhorted to adopt the principles of good household management; within families, both women and men were encouraged to subscribe to the household virtue of cleanliness. Like earlier morals and manners literature, the reader is led to believe that the adoption of prudent habits will lead, in turn, to a future of steadily improving choices and living standards. In *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain* (1842), Chadwick cites the testimony of an employer, Mr William Fairbairn, who concurred with his questioner that "Better personal condition leads to better associates, and commonly to better marriage, on which the improved condition of the house is entirely dependent." Fairbairn concluded by relating how he spoke to his male workers of his dislike of slovenly dress on Sundays, and claimed that, "This intimation has generally had the desired effect" (Chadwick [1842]: 323).

Sanitarians often advocated more active interventions by the poor's betters. Chadwick reproduces a letter from Charles Longuet Higgins to one of the assistant poor law commissioners, in which Higgins relates a case where Bedford employers erected "cottages of improved condition" for their workers. The construction produced a "salutary influence on the moral habits of the inmates," and

the improvement has arisen a good deal from the parties feeling that they are somewhat raised in the scale of society. The man sees his wife and family more comfortable than formerly . . . he is stimulated to industry, and as he rises in respectability of station, he *becomes aware* that he has a character to lose. . . . Having acquired certain advantages, he is anxious to retain and improve them; he strives more to preserve his independence. . . .

(Chadwick [1842]: 323–4, emphasis in original)

Again, the language is similar to that of *The Working-man's Companion*. But the audience, hence the message is different. *The Working-man's Companion* presents readers with two types of workers qua workers who choose to live in either of two types of households; Higgins implies that employers must change the environment of their employees in order to change their mental states. Differences between the classes, if not erased, are reduced in Higgins's world. Workers must approximate, in their minds at least, the position of the middle classes, and must "[feel] that they are somewhat raised in the scale of society," in order to even become aware of the moral consequences of their actions for their families, much less act as virtuous subjects.

Many sanitarians, including Farr, stressed that inadequate sanitation and insufficiently moral consciousness and conduct were not the only causes of increased disease and mortality among the poor: lack of money was also responsible. (Indeed, Higgins, in the letter cited above concludes – "give him [the worker] the means of making himself comfortable by his own industry, and I am convinced by experience that, in many cases, he will avail himself of it.") In the lead up to *Sanitary Condition*, Farr sent a letter to *The Times* in August 1840 which highlighted to the public the different points of view held by sanitarians. The resulting controversy, which entangled him in a dispute with Chadwick, centered on the proper classification of a number of deaths recorded in the metropolis. Chadwick, who had helped design the New Poor Law and its workhouse provisions, believed that they were caused solely by complications arising from inadequate external sanitation; Farr, whose appointment to the GRO had been secured with the assistance of Chadwick, and even some poor law physicians, attributed the deaths to economic hardship, and, casting blame on the poor law and the workhouse system, concluded that some Londoners preferred to subsist on too meager sustenance rather than endure the privations of workhouse life (Hamlin 1995). In either case, the result, Farr reasoned, was starvation, broadly understood, and, in correspondence with Chadwick, he cited the authority of Samuel Johnson's definition of "starve" to support his case (reprinted in Glass 1973: 151). This, as Hamlin notes, was sanitary science as politics, as a ruling of death by starvation was tantamount to a charge of wrongful death, given the common understanding of a right to relief on behalf of the indigent. The ensuing struggles were not just over the classification of the poor, and a disagreement over whether they were paupers or were, instead, the innocent indigent, as Martineau might have termed them. The disputants lined up for or against different theories of disease according to whether they were for or against the New Poor Law. If medical doctors had decided to negate the self-acting classification of the principle of less eligibility, and provided, gratis, additional food and bedding to claimants for relief, in order to prevent disease and fever, Chadwick pushed for a narrower definition of individual rights to relief and more responsibility for individuals and families with respect to securing their own health and wealth (Hamlin 1998: 93–5, 143–7).

Again, Farr's stance stood in contrast to the position, pushed by many political economists, that moral transgressions, resulting from individual failing,

caused poverty and human misery, and that state intervention would only exacerbate social problems. Of course, political economists held no monolithic position on the role of the state, such as support for schools (or even the provision of charity) that would address these failings. If we modify Hilton's sparse typology, where moderate evangelicals' belief in natural laws led them to opt for legislative tinkering only to the extent that it would allow those laws to operate, and more radical evangelicals tended to support intervention in order to modify the effects of what they considered arbitrary divine governance (Hilton 1988), we can identify a wide range of views on the proper scope of legislation. Similar tensions arose in the statistical movement, between belief in environmental causality, which sanctioned state intervention, and individual, moral causality, which called for a non-interventionist position (Cullen 1975).

In the GRO, the newly emerging environmental conceptions of cause and effect gave room for experts to discover, and the population and the state to act upon, the causes affecting the increase of population in Great Britain. The overlapping work of supporters of the public health and the statistical movements marks the emergence of a counter in England to the position that assigned blame and amelioration to the individual. The give and take between adherents of the two positions was marked by struggles over meanings and ambivalent attitudes toward remedies for social problems. "Family" was at the center of these struggles as the preferred social unit of analysis and treatment. For Farr, the poor laws and the analogy of the role of the state to the role of the parent represented the textbook case of the tension between individual and environmental models of causality. Farr supported the basic principles of the New Poor Law of 1834 but criticized its operation (Eyler 1979). To Farr, poor relief created two dilemmas. First, providers of relief encountered difficulty in separating the categories of deserving and undeserving poor. The second dilemma was the need to provide relief to the deserving poor, the innocent indigent, without eroding work incentives and creating both a permanent pauper class and an aristocratic, paternalistic government. Farr "never found a solution" to these dilemmas of pauperism (Eyler 1979: 24–5). Farr's impasse is unsurprising, close kin to Martineau's animadversions over types of people, causal mechanisms, and (narrative) outcomes in the administration of poor relief in "Cousin Marshall."

Farr actually did offer a solution, but one we might call no solution at all. Or, more charitably, we might call it one founded on progressive hope. He considered the poor laws temporary, appropriate for a stage of civilization where men were like slaves. In the future, provisions for relief would become unnecessary because the state, forgoing its paternalistic relationship with its subjects, would design measures "to call forth their [the poor's] energies, teach them to provide for their own wants, and to take care of themselves" (Eyler 1979: 24–5).¹² Martineau, in *Illustrations*, promoted education of individuals as the best vehicle for reform, and education was certainly supported by the GRO as a means to prevent poverty and disease. It was best if the poor could learn for themselves the advantages to wealth and health that would accrue from a sanitary lifestyle.

The sanitarians wished to produce a new type of individual, the educated, virtuous, energetic, and thereby self-sufficient poor. But, for the short term, they principally sought to treat population aggregates and geographic spaces, especially local districts. And in the absence of a strong central government, its supporters sought to persuade local government authorities to undertake projects, such as street and house cleaning, to remove contagion-spreading organic material, and prevent the spread of disease. In the *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General* (1843), Farr wrote that

Over the supply of water – the sewerage – the burial places – the width of streets – the removal of public nuisance – the poor can have no command . . . and it is precisely upon those points that the government can interfere with most advantage. The Legislature may enact the removal of known sources of disease, and, if necessary, trench upon the liberty of the subject and the privileges of property . . .

(Farr 1843: 435)

The masses, the experts, and the state all had roles to play in cleaning up “known sources of disease.” But invisible causes, disease mechanisms in this case, could only be made visible by the work of the sanitarians. Farr maintained that, “because the causes of insalubrity are not palpable, cannot be seen, and are only to be discovered by extended observation, calculation, and abstract reasoning,” the GRO’s data gathering and analyses were vital to national health. Still, the poor, through education, and the privileged, by relinquishing selfish property rights to pay for large-scale sanitary projects, were to share the burden of reform.

The 1851 census makes it clear that family was both object and agent of the statist and sanitary aims of the GRO. In the summary section, “Some of the General Results of the Inquiry,” the commentary emphasizes the critical function families play in sustaining a population and race.

Extensive sanitary arrangements, and all the appliances of physical as well as social science, are necessary to preserve the natural vigour of the population, and to develop the inexhaustible resources of the English race. The crowding of the people in houses in close streets, and the consequent dissolution of families – arising out of defective house-accommodation – are evils which demand attentive consideration.

(1851 *Census*: lxxxiv)

The preservation of the English population and race depended upon measures that prevented the “dissolution of families.” The administration and interpretation of the census by the GRO and its efforts toward further sanitary reform were caught up in the debates over central versus local administration. The GRO was, in truth, on a short leash in this period, with sparse statutory authority and little support for its aims, which the public associated with increased power

flowing to the central government. What the GRO could do to promote its goals was to spend, in Szreter's words, "the currency of influence: the persuasive power of the written word and graphical representation," in order to persuade the general public of the merits of preventive sanitary measures (Szreter 1991a: 411). Weekly and quarterly crude death-rate bulletins, in which the GRO provided quickly computable and easily comprehensible basic information and stated its case on the extent of preventable death in individual districts, composed the bulk of this rhetorical work (Szreter 1991b). Though some groused about their accuracy (Farr had his doubts, too), they were constantly before the public eye.

The development and release of technically rigorous longer-term publications, including the census and reports that combined vital registration data with census numbers on those at risk, composed a second aspect of the GRO's "currency of influence." This constituted a form of indirect intervention – the GRO published data and, in the commentaries, encourage localities to act upon them. Both short-and long-term reports could surprise local districts and goad them into action, even given the serious impediments to reform posed by the overlapping boundaries of various administrative districts (Lewes 1991). Farr's 1843 life tables, for example, revealed the appalling state of health in Liverpool: nearly half of all persons born there died before age six, whereas its rapid population growth between 1801 and 1831 had led observers to infer that the city was a particularly healthy one. In response, the city took its own Public Health Act through parliament in 1846, prior to the national act of 1848. And in 1891, again in Liverpool, the municipal authority reacted with dismay when population returned for the city in the census was 517,116 rather than 617, 116, "for the figures [made a] vast difference to the rate of mortality per thousand – making it over 27 instead of 23" according to *The Times*.¹³

We can actually see some advantages accrue to the scientific community that was the GRO (if, following Szreter, we can call the statisticians of the GRO a scientific community) performing a straddle between scientific and popular political discourse about family facts. While the GRO lacked a solid purchase on disease mechanisms, and thus lacked the public's confidence in its proposed solutions to social problems, the public work of the census was certainly an advance over the minimal information, vital as it was, supplied under the guidance of Rickman.¹⁴ The data facilitated correct actuarial calculations and the operation of friendly societies. The GRO's registration lists also allowed it to claim a closer approach to universality and reliability in numbering the population, and boosted public confidence in the census count. Although the problem of missing infants in the registration data remained a continuing sore point for the GRO, the record of births and deaths in civil registration rather than the baptisms and burials kept in the parish registers allowed a more accurate measure of population.

The new census procedures were also designed to increase the accuracy of the count. The censuses of 1801–31 called for a head count in each locality, without using addresses as a check. The enumerator could return to a district as

often as he saw fit in order to complete the count. For the 1841 census, however, administrators oversaw the distribution of a schedule to each individual household, to be filled out and returned on the same date. The civil registration link, which served as a check, served to bolster confidence in the comprehensiveness and thoroughness of the census. Problems persisted: conservatives and radicals carped about enumerators' lack of familiarity with their districts, and the census administrators acknowledged undercounts of transient populations. Familiarity of enumerators with a district could also be a problem, as they often used their discretionary powers to guide individuals through the census instructions or, in the case of householders in poorer districts, actually filled out the schedules themselves (Higgs 1987). And the GRO had to retreat when it conducted two special censuses, on education and religion, to accompany the population census of 1851. The sensitive nature of the religious census led the census office to detach the two special censuses from the population census and make participation strictly voluntary (Goldstrom 1978; Thompson 1978). In general, however, the methods and widespread dissemination of the enumeration procedures themselves along with the results beginning in 1851, the census going "public," served to inoculate the GRO from criticism that dogged the more politically controversial pronouncements of public health reformers, such as John Simon, who were less fettered by statutory strictures.

Proper record-keeping and classification of families, not just individuals, also served a vital political function. Defining the boundaries of family was crucial for legal recognition of the transmission of property, and by extension, political identity, as we saw in the case with the debates over the Marriage Act of 1753 and the Marriage Act Amendment of 1822. Again, for dissenters, the legal recognition of marriages and family status conferred by civil registration legitimated their property claims, which had been hobbled by the strictures of the Marriage Act of 1753, and thus legitimated their civic and political identities and status. Not only did the civil registration of births, marriages, and deaths ensure that more people would be counted in the census, it ensured that more people would count as legitimate political participants in the life of the nation. By supplanting parish registers as proof of (family) identity, which formed the bases of an individual's rights to fully participate in civil life, they legitimated dissenters' civic rights, political access, and participation.

Although the GRO did not entirely avoid issues of reform, even the touchy subject of political reform, it broached such topics with discretion. The section on "English House and Hearth" in the 1851 census, for instance, acknowledges the kinship between census classifications designed to aid enumeration and those categories, including the ownership of property, used to legitimate political participation:

The character of the houses, the nature of their tenure, or the extent of house accommodation in Great Britain, did not form parts of the Census inquiry; but it was necessary, in order to secure uniformity in the returns, to take into account the great difference in these structures. And this difference is

important in many points of view; for on the question of whether the owner of a flat is the owner of a house, or whether the occupier of a part of a house is a householder, the possession of the electoral franchise, or the exemption from the house or from other taxes, may depend. The definition of “house” in the Census Abstracts was laid down, it is perhaps scarcely necessary to say, only for the guidance of the enumerators, and had no reference to objects in which other elements should probably be taken into account.

(1851 Census: xxxvii)

The text reassures the reader that, though the census delves into areas of family and household character that are the building blocks of political participation and fiscal policy, this prying is harmless, without political purpose or utility. The implied reader already knew that, because “it is perhaps scarcely necessary” to relate this aside on the apolitical nature of the inquiry.

The census commentaries reflect the lengths to which the bureaucrats would go to persuade the public that its assumptions and methods were objective. Peruse the shuffling about of classifications and the increasing specificity of procedures in the census reports, and you’ll note the sprinkling of other forms of persuasive representation accessible to the non-statist – travelers’ reports, scraps of poetry, and classical references – amid the statistical matters. For Rickman, this was not simply a matter of personal taste. He supplied Coleridge, as well as Southey, with official information, which they could use in their attacks on Malthus. The copy of the 1831 census, published in 1832 by the London publisher Edward Moxon for distribution to members of the House of Commons, sandwiches the report between two pages of advertisements for recently published works by Southey, Wordsworth, and Samuel Rogers, and, in an apparent reference to the cholera epidemic then gripping England, an appendix, “Account of the Spasmodic Cholera of the Fourteenth Century,” extracted from *History of Edward III*, by Joshua Barnes.

Farr carried on this tradition. He did write to Florence Nightingale as late as 1861, however, that,

We do not want impressions. We want facts . . . Again I must repeat my objections to intermingling Causation with Statistics. . . . The statistician has nothing to do with causation; he is almost certain in the present state of knowledge to err . . . You complain that your report would be dry. The dryer the better. Statistics should be the driest of all reading.

(quoted in Diamond and Stone 1981: 70)

Farr was reacting to Nightingale’s penchant for spicing up her presentations with illustrations and individual examples, in order to hold the reader’s attention. This quote also reflected Farr’s caution on the issue of causes; he believed it was too difficult to determine their strength and interaction. In the *Eighth Annual Report of the Registrar-General* (1848) Farr issued a warning, in terms, much like those discussed in the previous chapter, which tied this uncertainty to

questions of classification. On the causes of marriages, he noted that, “The causes that increase, and the causes that diminish marriage differ in energy; they admit of various combinations; they sometimes neutralize each other; and the marriages express the result of all those forces on the public conduct of the people.” In a footnote to his comment he calculates that, given just six factors (“peace, abundance, high wages; and their three opposites, war, dearth, low wages”), sixty-four combinations of causes would result. Farr concludes: “These factors themselves would vary, and it is evident that the subject does not admit at present of strict mathematical treatment” (Farr 1848: xxiii–xxiv).

The public response to the census and the work of the Registrar General suggests another definition for statistics: just another commodity, literature fitted for cutting, shaping, repackaging, and marketing to fit particular tastes. One such publication, compiled “By Authority of the Registrar-General,” *The Census of Great Britain in 1851*, appeared in 1854. The editor, “T.M.,” touted the condensation of the results, “in a convenient form, and at a moderate price,” as a “work of utility,” which would bring the information to the general public (T.M. 1854: preface). The text focused on the census commentary; it omitted much of the supporting facts and footnotes, “to adapt the book for popular reading” (T.M. 1854: preface). In like fashion, it restated “per-centages and proportions . . . in whole numbers.” The narrative condensation highlights the more piquant facts and conjectures in the commentary. The debate leading up to the 1753 Marriage Act, for instance, is cited as evidence of the improvement in manners – a move away from licentiousness – throughout the eighteenth century. The act itself is promoted as a contributing factor in the subsequent rapid growth in population. And population growth accompanied by a rise in living standards demonstrated the “fallacy” of the Malthusian principle of population (T.M. 1854: 44–56).

Edward Cheshire, a member of the Statistical Society of London and one of the secretaries to Section F, published his own popularization of the census in 1854, *The Results of the Census of Great Britain in 1851. With a Description of the Machinery and Processes Employed to Obtain the Returns. Also an Appendix of Tables of Reference*. Cheshire hoped that the “digest will lead a larger portion of the British population to a knowledge of the subject, and to a more adequate appreciation of its importance” (Cheshire 1854: preface). He sought to unearth the “more interesting details, and many very important results, results [which] lie buried in such a mass of statistics, that it is extremely doubtful whether one person in a *million* takes the trouble to become acquainted with the contents of the Census” (Cheshire 1854: preface, emphasis in original). As indicated in the title, Cheshire’s abridgement of the lengthy but already condensed three-volume folio of the census, which ran some 2,000 pages, emphasized the importance of publicizing and explaining its complicated yet orderly procedures. These were designed to ensure the accuracy of the enumeration, and Cheshire’s work, as an endorsement of these efforts, implicitly sought to assure readers that his interpretations were accurate, too. Thus the very first sentence of Cheshire’s preface informs the reader that the text is composed, in part, of a paper Cheshire

delivered on the topic to Section F at the BAAS meeting in Hull, in September 1853. (No mention is made, however, of the fact that an abstract of the BAAS paper had been published in the *Statistical Journal* in March 1854.) And, while Cheshire may not have expected the average reader to have acquired the census publications, much less dig out the relevant facts and important results from the tables, he assured his readers, in the manner of Quetelet, that one could discern regularities in the numbers: “however violent may be the fluctuations in a small number of observed facts, the average is not disturbed if the area of observation is sufficiently extended” (Cheshire 1854: 24). But Cheshire also took advantage of the longer and looser format of the book to try to draw his audience in, appealing to the reader, directly, in the preface, for instance. He was able to highlight the imaginative possibilities embodied in the census enumerations, placing the heading “Curious calculations to illustrate numbers” at the top of one page. The *Statistical Journal*, by way of contrast, allowed no such liberties to guide the reader to specific topics in any of its articles: each page repeated the article title.

Other popularizations of the census, which sought to convince readers that statistical facts could be both informative and enjoyable, focused more readily on the unusual facts and the fantastic speculations about the future contained in the GRO reports. A case in point is the three-volume *Census of the British Empire with Its Colonies and Foreign Possessions 1861* (1863), compiled by Charles Anthony Coke. The title sounds official. In fact, the first volume of the work, dedicated to Major George Graham, the Registrar General, resides snugly among the British census publications in one of the government documents rooms of the Harvard University libraries. But the text is actually an abridged popularization of the census, the purpose of which was to drum up support for “Statistics.”

There is not only interest, but instruction, in the perusal of the records of the past. . . . “Statistics” open out before us the solution of many a social problem – they tell us, in the language of fact, what otherwise must be at least a philosophical speculation; and they furnish us with the experience of ages, in a manner which could not otherwise be obtained.

(Coke 1863, I: iv)

Coke invites the reader to participate in a process of discovery and action. He simply assumes that statistics are of “interest.” Further, “Statistics” offer instruction to the reader, an education in useful knowledge, and the materials for social reform. They substitute “the language of fact” for “speculation”; yet they derive from “experience,” albeit in a form otherwise unobtainable. The volumes were designed to rely on “the most authentic sources of information,” but were also tailored, down to the design of the publication, to “make each paragraph a source of pleasurable reading – intelligible – instructive – and entertaining,” and the work as whole “*useful and acceptable to the public*” (Coke 1863, I: v, viii, emphasis in original). The text combines Biblical passages, stanzas of poetry,

newspaper accounts, “a short treatise on Ethnography and the diversity of Languages,” and other observations on Great Britain, past, present, and future in an eye-catching assortment of fonts. The “figures of speech” are not, however, just to be put to use for the “language of fact.” They are in some instances indistinguishable: “The mere lovers of the marvellous will find in the history of nations that sometimes facts appear more strange than fiction” (Coke 1863, I: iv). One of the strange facts garnered from the census returns is the case of a woman giving birth to seventeen children in twelve years, in eleven confinements. The extraordinary nature of this “family fact” merits its inclusion in the table of contents.

The census, breeding ground for the facts cited by Coke, was a more sober document than his popular edition, despite what Small calls Farr’s “lyrical style” (Small 1998: 75). The relative technical rigor of the GRO’s annual and decennial publications stood in contrast to the persuasive power of simple, raw (unadjusted) mortality data in the weekly and quarterly reports. Even the longer-term reports, however, attempted to render statistics comprehensible and persuasive to the layperson, as in the case of the narrative on population density and proximity, key words in the sanitary lexicon of the 1851 census. The latter was a new term, and Farr saw fit to explain it in ordinary language:

The population may be looked at in another point of view. Every person is in direct or indirect communication with other persons surrounding him; and the extent, intimacy, and number of the relations between people depend very much upon their degree of proximity. If the persons, houses, villagers, towns, are twice as far apart from each other in one country as they are in another, the force and interaction of the two communities will differ to an inconceivable extent.

(1851 *Census*: li)

The relations between people are analogous to relations to bodies in space. But this passage indicates that statistical measurement based on analogies to physics, such as those offered by Quetelet, would inadequately describe relations between people, the “force and interaction” of which vary to “an inconceivable extent” according to distance.

Population density and proximity are, in fact, technical terms with specific scientific meanings. If a district’s population were evenly distributed over its surface area, population density would equal the number of persons per square mile, and population proximity the mean distance between residents. Yet the census names and welcomes the implied reader as a non-scientist by translating these definitions into everyday terms: “In statistical inquiries it is usual to compare the numbers of population with the area of the soil, in order to determine what is called the *density of the population*.” The text continues in the same vein by denoting “specific population” (acres to each person), as a term proposed by a French writer . . . after the analogy of “specific gravity,” which is in use in scientific works.” The commentary also describes, in the same passage,

population proximity as the distance it takes a messenger (“a doctor, clergyman, registrar”) to deliver 1,000 letters to 1,000 houses. In the end, the text assures the reader that the census results admit of scientific, not just colloquial interpretation. Terms such as proximity, density, distribution, and “specific population” have scientific meanings more precise than “terms in common use, [such as] ‘thinly peopled,’ ‘populous,’ and ‘populousness’” (1851 *Census*: xlix, l, li, l, emphasis in original).

Family and the state: “a thousand ties of blood and affection”

These scientific terms operate in a law-like fashion in populations. These laws are themselves derived from the activities of families.

The location of families is irregular; and is modified by the occupations, the manner of life, the soil, the configuration of the country, and the course of the rivers. But two general laws appear to operate very constantly: the one tending to the equable diffusion of the population, the other tending to its condensation round (1) centres, at which men, women, and children can assemble weekly (villages). In conformity with these same laws, there is an arrangement of the villages (2) around other centres, at which the men can meet weekly and return home in a day (market towns); of these centres again separated by wider intervals, around other centres, where the heads of the chief families can readily congregate periodically (county-towns); and finally, of the large towns around the capital, which would naturally find its place in the centre of the kingdom, and is only drawn from it by commercial exigencies, and the necessity of communication with other states.

(1851 *Census*: xlv)

Farr held a rather loose conception of the term “law.” His use of “law” in social statistics derived from Thomas Rowe Edmonds’s work on life tables and the law of mortality in the 1830s, and he denoted regularities, including many straightforward numerical relations such as averages, “laws” (Eyler 1979: 76, 34). Thus, “laws” of diffusion and condensation governed the location of families. Farr, who remained an optimist about the chances of improving the conditions of the poor, felt that reformers could act on these laws, even change these laws (within limits), to promote the health of the social state. The passage also indicates that the underlying, law-like behavior of population density is derived from the behavior of families. The family is the homeostatic regulator for population growth and location: stabilize the family and, *ceteris paribus*, you stabilize population.

The status of family, and of married couples specifically, lies at the heart of the efforts to answer the “two questions of great importance” – can population be sustained, and can it be employed? – the text assures the reader, arise from the results of the 1851 census. These are Malthusian questions. Yet Farr

proceeds to an analysis of family structure and housing density with only a side-long glance at Malthus. Rather than engage in polemic, Farr resorts to the rhetoric that science will ultimately settle the question of the operation of the law of population.

It is not intended to discuss here what has sometimes been called the *Law of Population*, further than to briefly state how the increase of population depends on many elements, which vary and produce various results – sometimes identical in the mere numbers which they present at the Census, but different under all other aspects. . . . All these causes affecting the increase of the population of Great Britain, and the precise extent to which each operates, will ultimately be known by means of a continuous series of such observations as have been commenced at the Census.

(1851 Census: xxxi, emphasis in original)

Here, at least, Farr refused to speculate on the workings of the law of population. He acknowledged, however, that it was an important question – the commentary elsewhere claimed that “the most important production of a country is its population” (1851 Census: lxxxviii) – and an answer to it required more observations of the type carried out by the census. The commentary thus justifies the work of the census as neither mere “discussion” nor “mere numbers” but as scientific labor.

Farr answered in the affirmative to the “two questions of great importance,” and developed new measures to document the capacity of England to sustain a growing population. The new measure of “matrimonial condition” was asked in order to help answer the first question, and the new, age-specific occupational classification was designed to answer the second. Yet the population question generated a further question which opponents and even many supporters of sanitarians were quick to pose: if more infants were preserved through preventive health measures, how could they all be fed? In *Treatise*, for example, Quetelet expressed the standard Malthusian view that children saved from one set of catastrophic illnesses would only be carried off by another (*TREATISE*: 57). In the 1851 census commentaries, Farr lodged two objections to this pessimism. He critiques the quasi-Physiocratic viewpoint that

confounds the yield of the untilled earth with the *produce of human industry*; which increases at least as rapidly as the numbers of civilized men, and will increase until the resources of science are exhausted and the world is peopled. The *population* that a country sustains does not depend exclusively on the amount of *subsistence existing* at any one time.

(*Census Report 1851. Occupations I*, emphasis in original. Cited in Humphreys 1885: 14)

Farr reasoned that Malthus had his arithmetic wrong. Subsistence increased not at an arithmetical rate, an assumption which he asserted “rests on no authentic

observations,” but at a rate equivalent to the increase of capital. The answer to the second question also served to solve the Malthusian question. Farr believed that population growth, far from being uncontrolled, was already subject to effective regulation, and that, in reality, population was not “redundant” or in excess, but scarce. Population was governed by two factors, economic conditions and national need, which led to growth rates much lower than the physiological limit. The former factor reads like moral restraint, although Farr did not say so in so many words in the census commentaries. The passage cited above continues: “The produce of a country is limited chiefly by the character of the inhabitants . . . The character of every race of men is the real limit to its numbers in the world, if allowance be made for accidents of position and time” (*Census Report 1851. Occupations I*: 15). Individual men controlled the means to increase or decrease the population of their race through their decisions to proceed with, postpone, or entirely forgo marriages.

Farr concluded that the facts of family formation would confirm that population growth in England was already effectively controlled. This led Farr to investigate the relationship between the self-equilibrating nature of the population, fertility and mortality rates, and population densities. To do so, he examined census and registration data, and calculated the percentage of the population married, average age at marriage, and the average fertility of marriages (Eyler 1979: 151). In the 1851 census he used the measures of population proximity and density, as well as the data collected by his friend Tulloch – the source of the data Knox employed to derive his gloomy conclusions in the translator’s appendix to *Treatise* – to develop laws of population density, mortality, and fertility. Farr, lacking data on the average length of life in individual registration districts in England, employed the more easily obtained mortality rate as a proxy measure of well-being and happiness. In the 1850s he calculated the crude annual mortality rates of sixty-three “healthy districts” (which composed one-tenth of the total registration districts) at no greater than 17/1,000. This was a rate Farr considered a good estimate of the natural mortality of the English and was a rate well below the national average of 23/1,000 measured by the GRO at the time of the Public Health Act of 1848 (Eyler 1979: 140–1). That act, at the instigation of the GRO, mandated the formation of local health boards to undertake sanitary measures if their annual mortality rates rose above this national average. The concept of the healthy districts put even greater pressure on local authorities. They now had a norm of a *better* than average mortality rate, a norm that changed over time, to live up to (Szreter 1991b: 438–9).

Farr’s construction of a new category, “healthy districts,” captures some of the flavor of Quetelet’s call for promiscuous measurement, and his (implied) quest for novel classifications. Farr agreed with the view expressed by Quetelet in *Treatise* that one needed to define the mean, the center of gravity of the social state, in order to move and improve it. But with his healthy districts Farr emphasized the positive value of deviations from this mean. Healthy districts, a macrocosmic analogue to the microcosmic healthy household, weren’t to be squelched: they represented an ideal. But, unlike average man or great man,

healthy districts also described a real, already attained portion of the social state, which Farr believed could be readily attained by the rest of society.

In the *Supplement to the Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar-General* (1875), Farr ranked registration districts by their general mortality rate and noted that both population density and the birth rate increased with increasing mortality. Farr observed that until the death rate increased to 26/1,000 the annual excess of births over deaths remained almost constant, at approximately 13/1,000. As a corollary, it was evident that a decreasing death rate did not lead to an increase in population, as the Malthusian pessimists had feared; rather, it led to a decrease in the birth rate. The healthy districts had not only the lowest death rates, they had the lowest birth rates. The healthy districts are thus the domestic equivalent to the high point in the “scale of population” and the “scale of civilisation” derived by Quetelet in *Treatise*. The healthy districts also tended to have the lowest density rates, a fact which led Farr to coin the term “density law,” which showed how life expectancy in districts varied with the mean proximity between residents. But, as with all Farr’s laws, there were exceptions to the density law, with some particularly dense urban areas being particularly salubrious. Farr maintained that it was not increased density per surface area per se but the increased amount of airborne organic material that gave rise to the illnesses responsible for the increased mortality of urban districts. Districts that were well drained, had adequate ventilation and so forth, could be densely populated yet still healthy. These exceptions underlined the need for remedial sanitary measures. Rather than concede that increases in mortality rates were the inevitable cost of urbanization, Farr emphasized the possibility of bringing the death rates of all urban districts in line with the “healthy districts”: change the material conditions of a district and you could change the “law” under which it operated.

Family regulates population, according to the census commentary; it stands at the center of a series of circles that eventually envelops the whole of a people. If you improved the condition of the districts in which families resided, you’d reduce the risk individuals were subject to (see Choi 2001), improve their health and increase the size of the nation’s population. Family also stands at the center of political communities.

In returning the numbers and the increase of the population, we have hitherto considered individuals; it will now be necessary to examine aggregations of individuals in communities. The first, most intimate, and perhaps most important community, is the FAMILY, not considered as the children of one parent, but as persons under one head; who is the occupier of the house, the householder, master, husband, or father; while the other members of the family are the wife, children, servants, relatives, visitors, and persons constantly or accidentally in the house. The head of the family supports and rules the family, – occupies the house. “Family,” in the sense which it has acquired in England, may be considered the *social unit* of which parishes, towns, counties, and the nation, are composed . . . Can a single person con-

stitute a family, and thus “be head and members at once?” may be asked as well as the other questions: – “Can a single family constitute a “town?” “can a single town constitute a state?”

(Census of Great Britain, 1851. Population Tables I. Report and Summary Tables: xxxiv, xxxv, emphasis in original)

The census answered in the affirmative to the questions in the passage. Theoretically, a single family could constitute a state. The more likely case was that the family was a problematic metonym for the state. Farr was to note in 1858 that, “The family is the social unit; and it is founded in its perfect state by marriage. The influence of this form of existence is therefore one of the fundamental problems of social science” (Farr 1859: 505). In the Queen Caroline affair, the dissolution of the marriage of the royal family threatened not only the symbolic order of the nation, it fomented a full-blown political crisis. In patriarchal theories of the origin of states where kinship in blood was the sole original basis of political community, a series of concentric circles emanating from family to house, to tribe, and to commonwealth described the formation of states. Country towns, for instance, are “where heads of the chief families can readily congregate periodically” (*1851 Census*: xlv). When you stabilize the family, you not only stabilize population, you also stabilize the state.

Farr and other English sanitarians promoted cleanliness and orderly living arrangements as the best means to sustain the family. The general consensus, noted in the 1851 census commentary, and shared by natives and foreigners alike, was that, on the whole, English families preferred distance from their neighbors – separate entrances and separate houses – more so than other Europeans. To consider family to be equivalent with house, a conflation common in many languages, would therefore obscure important differences in international comparisons of statistics on families and households. In the 1851 census different, commonly accepted definitions of “house” in England and Scotland generated uncertainty over the counting and interpretation of the Scottish returns. Farr, looking back at the previous censuses from the vantage point of the 1851 enumeration, recounts how Rickman had wavered at the threshold of a definition for “house”:

In enumerating the houses, some definition of the term was required. In the great majority of instances no difficulty is presented, yet, in certain exceptional cases, the difficulty of defining “what constitutes a distinct house,” was considered as insuperable by Mr. Rickman, and in the earlier Censuses it was left to “those who made the Return,” to decide “whether a college, or inn of court, or a town-house in Scotland, containing as many separate habitations as stories or ‘flats,’ was to be deemed one house or many.” In the revision of the previous Censuses it appeared that “house,” in different towns in Scotland, had been so variously understood, that the result of the enumeration of houses is of little value.

(1851 Census: xxxvii)

The occupant of a flat in Scotland was unlike your average Continental apartment-dweller; she or he held very much the same position as the holder of a house in England, save for the absence of party walls, separate entrance(s) and stairs. Flats were returned as “houses” in the 1801–31 censuses for Glasgow. The returns for Edinburgh, however, were consistent with the English definition, which excluded flats, until 1841, when they too were counted as separate houses. The count of houses for Scotland mixed two different definitions. Either choice of classification, theoretically, is acceptable as a standard, though the mix of the two is not.

The enumeration of houses was placed on a uniform basis in the 1851 census, with separate external and party-walls the key features that denoted a house. As Farr noted in the 1861 census,

What is a house? Appears to be a question admitting of an explicit answer. And the enumerators of the United Kingdom were instructed to class under that category every habitation; each separate house comprising by definition all the space within the external and party walls of the building.

Farr reports that in fact it constituted a common standard, one, however, that took work to achieve: “official delegates of the various Governments of the world,” at the International Statistical Congress of 1860, held in London, agreed to adopt the English definition as the standard for statistical office classification of “house.” Scotland still stood out, though, as it was “the only country of Europe in which the definition of ‘house’ has hitherto offered insuperable difficulties.” An international standard could not bring the Scottish results to heel. Neither could local knowledge and expertise:

[T]he Scottish Commissioners, who possessed many local advantages, do not appear to have been more successful in 1861 than we were in 1851, in getting the actual number of houses in Scotland. This must be borne in mind in comparing the houses of Scotland with those of England and other countries.

The Scottish mode of existence had sanitary consequences. Though Scotland offered space enough that each family could comfortably reside uncrowded, “on the earth in pure air, with the sky over their dwellings,” many chose instead to live “lying stratum over stratum in flats,” subject to “the organic emanations of the families on each floor.”

Farr’s discussion and warning over the inability of analysts to compare Scottish houses to those in other countries led him to admit that the English “house” was itself a mixed category:

We have, in conformity with the practice since 1801, for the sake of uniformity, enumerated as houses all the distinct buildings which were inhabited, as well as uninhabited houses, and houses building; and after thus avoiding the inextricable difficulties of the “flats,” we have still many heterogeneous

structures mixed up with houses in the ordinary sense of the word. The house is a variable unit; it includes in the Census the hut on the moor, the castle on the hill, and the palace; so that every one of these structures, and of the intermediate mansions and cottages, is reckoned as a house. The ordinary house varies in size and structure in town and country,- in its cubical contents, in its hearths, in its doors, and in its windows; so that, to give a correct view of the accommodation which houses afford the population, and of their value, and of their sanitary influences, a special inquiry is indispensable.

(Census Report 1861: 7-8)

In the absence of official enquiries by the GRO on the types of housing in the kingdom and their relation to the sanitary condition of the population, others, sanitarians and non-sanitarians alike, made their own observations. Friedrich Engels, in *Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), was moved to draw simple sketches to accompany his descriptions of the crowded, disorderly, and unhealthy housing arrangements in the poorer working-class districts in Manchester, apartment buildings whose “totally planless construction” he decried (Engels [1845] 1981: 88-96).

The differences between England and other nations in the layout of households ran deeper than those expressed as “sanitary influences.” They reflected a different dynamic governing the relationship between the various parts of the social and political body. To Farr, writing in the 1851 census, English towns and the countryside were not only equal in population, but equal partners in the life of the nation: they were bound by the same cords of blood and relationships that bind together families. Increasing proximity between town and country in England actually promoted salubrious moral, economic, and political effects. The commentary likened an increase in population to a chemical reaction in which the stimulus provided by increased contact between people produces positive intellectual, hence, moral effects: “One of the moral effects of the increase in people is an increase in their mental activity; as the aggregation in towns brings them oftener into combination and collision” (*1851 Census*: lxxxiii). English travelers on the Continent immediately noticed that the free movement of people within England produced town and country relations radically different from those in the rest of Europe. English travelers caught in the revolutionary upheavals of 1848, for instance, drew some commonplace conclusions as to what these differences entailed for the health of the social body. The census quotes from *Observation on the State of the European People in 1848-9* on the deleterious effects for nation and civilization of the “estrangement” between city and country in Europe:

Every traveller on the Continent must have observed, that the town and city population live much more apart and separate from the country population than with us. Each city or town is like a distinct island, or small nation, with its own way of living, ideas, laws, and interests, and having little or nothing

in common with the country population around it[R]estrictions and town dues raise a spirit of antagonism between the two populations. The towns and cities, in consequence of this estrangement, have less influence on the civilization of the country, on the manners, ideas, and condition of the mass of the population than with us. Our town or city population form no mass so distinct in privileges, intelligence, and interest, from the rest of the community, as the two populations are abroad.

(1851 Census: lxxxiii)

In contrast to the rest of Europe, separate living spaces promote the spirit of independence among English men. Yet the English are connected by sameness, not riven by difference: close proximity promotes the spirit of union between town and country. For good or (revolutionary) ill, closer proximity also diffuses the influences of commerce and taste from towns into the surrounding countryside.

The intermixing of families forms a crucial link in the exchanges between town and country in England, according to the census.

At the same time, too, that the populations of the towns and of the country have become so equally balanced in number – *ten millions* against *ten millions* – the union between them has become, by the circumstance that has led to the increase of the towns, more intimate than it was before; for they are now bound together by innumerable relationships, as well as by the associations of trade[A] large proportion of the population in the market towns, the country-towns, the manufacturing towns, and the metropolis, was born in the country; and . . . in England, town and country are bound together . . . by a thousand ties of blood and affection.

(1851 Census: lxxxiv, emphasis in original)

Families are dispersed throughout the country. But this dispersion, paradoxically, brings people closer together because they can and do come together again. The free circulation of people, like the free trade in goods produces a healthy social body. The nation is truly one large family.

Family defined? Limits to reform by statistics

Mr. Rickman adverts to the difficulty of defining, in an Act of Parliament, the degree of connection between the head of a family and the lodgers who reside under the same roof; and states that the overseers or schoolmasters who took the Censuses (1801–11–21–31) were informed “that those who use the same kitchen and board together, are to be deemed members of the same family.” “But,” he proceeds to say, “even then remains the question whether a single person inhabiting a house solely, or lodging, but not boarding, in another man’s house, is to be deemed a family. This admits only of an unsatisfactory reply, ‘that it cannot be otherwise,’ and by this negative paralogism, is decided in the affirmative.” A lodger, then, who did not

board in the house in which he lived, was by this decision “a family.” Whether a family can be constituted by a person who lives alone in a house, or a lodger who either boards in a family, or only occupies a chamber in which he sleeps, and, as in Paris or London lives in the day-time at coffee-houses, clubs, or other places, may be disputed.

(1851 Census: xxxiv–xxxv)

This chapter ends where it began, with census definitions of “family.” We’ve seen what the family *does* according to the census commentary. Stable families lie at the heart of stable populations and politics; a healthy family ensures a healthy social body and a healthy body politic. But what family *is* and what it *should be* take on multiple meanings in the 1851 census and the public responses to it. “The number of ‘Family,’” in fact, is employed as a free-floating signifier in the census. It’s attached to or detached from social situations and populations, and is defined not by an “Act of Parliament,” but by an act of the analyst’s will:

Another analysis has been attempted . . . of the Families in connection with the Houses which they occupy; reckoning here, for the occasion, single lodgers, and widowers or widows *without children*, as constituents of other Families, or as not themselves constituting separate Families.

(1851 Census: xl, emphasis in original)

If the definition of family “may be disputed,” the census can include whole classes of individuals in families or exclude them, all at the stroke of a pen. The purpose of such demonstrations may be to generate Farr’s “useful results.” At the least, the classifications in the census, which experiments with the category family, take us a fair distance from the writings of those political economists who define family as a single ideal family structure, the Malthusian couple, or as deviations from this ideal. (See Table 6.1).

Family manifests itself as a classification applicable to a multitude of social relations. The 1851 census lists five classes of what it designates as the “natural family,” which the text acknowledges is subject to a “great variety of combinations.” Thus the language of the “natural” is inconsistent in the census: the “natural family” comprises husband and wife with children in some instances, and applies at other times to any of its five different classes. The census defines the family as the following:

The *family* consists of a head and of dependent members, living together in the same dwelling. The head of the family may either be husband-and-wife, a widower, a widow, a bachelor, or a spinster; the chief members on any given day, may be children, relatives, visitors, assistants and apprentices in the trade of the head, and servants. The type of family is the community in a house, consisting of the husband, wife, children, and servants; but the most common of all particular cases is that of husband, wife, and children.

(1851 Census: xli, emphasis in original)

Table 6.1 Number of families and persons to a house, persons to a family

<i>1851</i>	<i>Inhabited houses</i>	<i>Families</i>	<i>Persons</i>	<i>Families to each inhabited house</i>	<i>Persons to each inhabited house</i>	<i>Persons to a family</i>
Great Britain and Islands in the British Seas	3,670,192	4,342,226	20,959,477	1.183	5.710	4.826
Institutions, with persons in them, in ships, and out of doors	2,017	2,017	378,777	—	—	—
Great Britain, exclusive of institutions	3,668,175	4,340,209	20,580,700	1.183	5.611	4.742

One table, “Analysis of the family in fourteen subdistricts” (Table 6.2), encompasses 128 “family” types, of four principal classes, with thirty-two possible permutations of each.

The commentary makes no claim as to whether the sample covered in the table is representative of England as a whole. It is not. But the table is objective in its coverage. The inclusion and enumeration of every possible permutation of the natural family – combinations of head of family present or absent with child, relative, visitor, servant, trade (“person engaged in the trade of the head”) – apparently exhausts the range of classifications.¹⁵

Contemporary reaction to the table and its classifications is instructive. Commentators found the breadth simply exhausting: Edward Cheshire mentions a few results, then concludes, “A number of other combinations are given, far too numerous to mention” (Cheshire 1854: 23). The reviewer in *The Westminster* produces a version of the table, consisting of the middle three cells of the first row, and creates another category, calling the first cell (“Husband and Wife”) “genuine families.” (Anon 1854: 350).

Of genuine families, husbands and wives, there were	41,916
Of households of widowers or widows	10, 854
Of bachelors or spinsters	14,399
	(Anon 1854: 350)

The label “genuine” is intentionally normative. The essayist, an optimist on the population question, designates economic factors, specifically, free trade and the repeal of corn laws, as responsible for recent population growth (Anon 1854: 347–8). The plentiful supply of food, not space, marks the possible limit to population growth; it will also make the high rate of celibacy (that is, the low rate of marriage), what the essayist calls “this strange, and painful, and demoralizing state of things,” “a brief phase of social change, almost gone by already” (Anon 1854: 350). The essayist attributes the change in “denomination” in the census from families to households, “under a head, or occupier,” to this “great number of single persons keeping house” (Anon 1854: 350). Thus, the essayist interprets the change not as a pragmatic move by the statisticians of the GRO, derived from the difficulty of defining family and the greater stability of places as opposed to people, but one driven by a shift in the relative proportions of family types, or what we would term the composition of households.

We know what the reviewer deems an unhappy household; what would qualify as a “happy” household? The *Westminster Review* states that “A happy household is considered to be that where there are parents, children, and servants; yet, only 5 percent were made up of those elements” (Anon 1854: 351). Cheshire, too, writes that a family composed of husband, wife, children, and servants contained the elements “generally considered the requisites of domestic felicity” (Cheshire 1854: 23), even as he indicates that very few of the families in the sample conform to this ideal. Perhaps, too, the commentators were simply puzzled by the relative absence of large numbers of servants in the sample.

Table 6.2 Analysis of the family in fourteen subdistricts

	<i>Total</i>	<i>H and W</i>	<i>W^r or W^w</i>	<i>B or S</i>		<i>Head absent</i>
				<i>Class 1</i> <i>Husband</i> <i>and wife</i>	<i>Class 2, 3</i> <i>Widower</i> <i>or widow</i>	
<i>Total families</i>	67,609	41,915	10,854	14,399	440?	
<i>Head of family sole</i>	24,180	8,610	3,264	12,306	?	
C*	26,309	21,413	4,642	226	28	
R	2,435	1,292	477	666	—	
V	794	494	122	176	2	
S	1,837	808	317	472	240	
T	167	51	14	33	9	
Trade (person engaged in the trade of the hand)						
CR*	3,913	3,132	774	3	4	
CV	1,695	1,421	269	4	1	
CS	2,735	2,269	425	3	38	
CT	163	149	14	—	—	
RV	169	99	33	37	—	
RS	610	250	105	244	11	
RT	45	18	16	10	1	
VS	306	145	55	72	34	
VT	17	10	—	1	6	
ST	164	58	14	68	24	

CR V*	Child	Relative	Visitor	286	245	41	—	—
CR S	Child	Relative	Servant	673	550	120	—	—
CR T	Child	Relative	Trade	36	33	3	—	—
CV S	Child	Visitor	Servant	440	360	66	1	13
C V T	Child	Visitor	Trade	72	65	6	—	1
C S T	Child	Servant	Trade	196	166	18	—	12
R V S	Relative	Visitor	Servant	118	60	20	36	2
R V T	Relative	Visitor	Trade	8	5	2	1	—
R S T	Relative	Servant	Trade	79	35	8	33	3
V S T	Visitor	Servant	Trade	13	9	1	2	1
CR V S*	Child	Relative	Visitor	89	69	20	—	—
CR V T	Child	Relative	Visitor	5	5	—	—	—
CR S T	Child	Relative	Servant	57	50	4	—	3
C V S T	Child	Visitor	Servant	38	34	—	—	4
RR S T	Relative	Visitor	Servant	8	3	1	4	—
CR V S T*	Child	Relative	Visitor	12	8	3	1	—
			Servant					
			Trade					

Notes

* The letters indicating combinations are completed by adding, as the case may be, (H and W), (W^r or W^w), (B or S), to the letters in this column.

The table may be read thus: 26,309 families, each having a man and wife at its head, had their children (one or more) with them when the census was taken, but neither servants, other relatives, visitors, or trade assistants, 2,435 had relatives (alone). The following are the subdistricts from which the facts are taken:

42; 1 Hambleton	Witley	320; 2 Hull	St Mary
45; 1 Godstone	Godstone	360; 2 Shrewsbury	St Chad
522; 1 Skirlaugh	Skirlaugh	7; 3 Marylebone	Rectory
552; 4 Newcastle-upon-Tyne	All Saints	329; 2 Bristol	Castle Precincts
568; 3 Carlisle	St Mary	3; 2 Hanover Square	May Fair
501; 2 Leeds	North Leeds	473; 2 Manchester	Deansgate
394; 3 Birmingham	St Martins	461; 2 Liverpool	Howard-street.

But we should ask for whom this household type constituted a happy home life, or even a sphere of repose. In truth, home was the place of paid work for many: some 750,000 women and 75,000 men were counted as servants in the 1851 census, and this was probably an undercount of the heterogeneous category. With service, questions arose over the issue of where to draw the line in the household between political and domestic economy. Martineau, for instance, rejoiced at the prospect of service “becoming a mere contract for wages.” Yet, like many others, she also emphasized paternalist and maternalist aspects of service, and stressed that servants should be treated not simply as wage labor but with the kindness and respect due members of the “family organisation” ([Martineau] 1862: 415, 438–9). Putting aside the issue of wages, tension also arose over the conduct of domestic economy itself, and what occupational positions women and servants filled, when service was involved. At the turn of the century, with the new emphasis on education in and of the family, advice literature warned of a struggle between mothers (and, to the extent they were present at home, fathers), and servants and tutors over governance of the family. Mothers were both “employees,” subordinate to their husbands, and “employers” or “agents” tasked with the hiring and supervision of the domestic help (Colomina 1992: 82). Servants reproduced this ambiguity as they assisted in the care and feeding of their young charges. Who was to take on the role of primary instructor or instructress of children? As educational manuals and morals and manners texts made clear, the ignorant and often superstitious prattle of servants tarnished the ideal of moral and rational pedagogy. Short of a total separation of servants from children, a position advocated by Maria Edgeworth in *Practical Education*, the texts tended to restate the problem as a positive struggle. Employers were exhorted to diffuse useful knowledge and moral and religious principles to servants who were in part responsible, through the same operation of influence that women exercised, for the education of the children in the family. If servants were potential corrupters of children’s minds, they also represented a threat to their bodies. Mid-eighteenth-century parliamentarians, as we’ve seen, believed sexual desires could be curbed by legislation, and real-life versions of Moll Flanders could be prevented from becoming wives of their employers. Another class of servants, female relatives, who belonged to both the family and the household, introduced a potentially more volatile sexual dynamic into the household. The category “servant,” in sum, embraced a wide set of social relations and varying degrees of drudgery, happiness, and anxiety rather than a single occupational, familial, or household type.

Still, unlike Martineau’s proliferation of metaphoric families and household spaces, the complicated relations that define family and household, even between servants and other members of the household, do not defy classification or overwhelm analysis in the census. The table reduces those relations to a grid marking an individual’s presence or absence at a given time and place. The census’s accuracy as a guide to family dynamics, however, is less certain. Family forms are a fluid medium in this period, due not least to the high fertility and mortality regimes (Kane 1995: 1). The high mobility of labor, with family

members often away in other communities, contributed to this fluidity as well. Yet the plenitude of categories enables the census statisticians to both capture a sense of the diversity of family types and conform to the necessity for the census to impose spatial and temporal stability. The category “visitor,” for example, covers all possible meanings of fictive family membership for an individual not of the immediate family who happened to be present in a given household on March 30, 1851. And the table also makes apparent the possibility of overlooking or ignoring those family forms that, while theoretically possible, were either nonexistent in real life or negligible in number.

Independent status counts in the enumerations, too. Consequently, initially at least, the census defined both the homeless, outcasts from the social body, and the population of public institutions, who lacked a space to call their own, as not belonging to families:

Besides that large proportion of the population in families, some fractions of the people are for various reasons lodged in detached large buildings, under the rule of one or more men or governing bodies. In the barracks, in prisons, workhouses, lunatic asylums, hospitals, and other institutions of the same kind, the family organization is broken up Finally, there is the population sleeping in barns, in tents, and in the open air; comprising with some honest, unfortunate people out of employment or temporarily employed, gipseys, beggars, strollers, vagabonds, vagrants, outcasts, criminals. The enumeration of the houseless population, unsettled in families, is necessarily imperfect

(1851 Census: xlv)

This definition of family, which includes the settled, those who govern themselves or are in institutions easily governed, and excludes the unsettled and ungovernable, fulfills an obvious normative purpose. But it serves a technical imperative as well. Bodies in motion, including those afloat and at sea in barges and vessels, are hard to count and reform. Sometimes they don’t want to be counted: “It is mentioned in one instance that a tribe of gipseys struck their tents and passed into another parish to escape enumeration” (*1851 Census: xlv*). And, similar to the questions raised about the territorial status of Guanaxuato in the previous chapter, the tendency for families to move across various administrative districts represented a serious impediment to local action in response to GRO reports.

In fact, both the terms “broken up” and “unsettled”, applied to the institutionalized and homeless populations in the above passage, have meanings, not mutually exclusive, consistent with either the absence or presence of family. “Broken up” indicates either that an object’s parts have been dispersed to the point of physical dissolution or that those parts have fragmented yet still retain underlying bonds. A marriage “broken up,” for instance, is no longer a marriage but may still constitute a relationship. “Unsettled” indicates both a physical state, lack of residence in a fixed abode, or a family in a state of psychological flux.

The census commentary plays on this ambiguity in meaning. The summary includes a table in which the homeless and institutional populations are first included, and then deducted from calculations on the numbers of families and persons to each inhabited house, and the number of persons to a family (see Table 6.3).

Family is a term one could attach to or detach from numbers in the census commentary and tables. This table suggests that, if counted as individuals, even the unfortunate could conceivably belong to a family. Even they were within reach of reform if classified as members of a family.

Farr also recognized that the British could reform themselves through their choice of marriage partners. This process operated on all individuals, and it served, ultimately, to perfect the human species. Farr, in an address to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in 1858 on the effect of marriage on mortality in France, reminded his listeners that selective breeding in Europe in cultivated plants and domestic animals led to improvement due mainly to “the constant elimination of imperfect types, and to the skillful selection of the finest individuals out of each successive generation.” Selection occurs among humans, too, in the marriage market:

Now the same principle evidently regulates to a certain extent the marriages in France. Cretins do not marry; idiots do not marry; idle vagrants herd together, but rarely marry. Criminals by birth and education do not marry to any great extent. . . . The beautiful, the good, and the healthy are mutually attractive; and their unions are promoted by the parents of France, who are usually on very friendly terms with their children, and often decide the choice of their daughters too absolutely and with too little reference to the affections. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, in one of his delightful romances, tells us that falling in love at first sight is the only genuine way in which people do fall in love. But this is not opposed to the theory of selection; for it happens, as we see in the most authentic stories, that the lovers at first sight are invariably full of irresistible charms. Selection then . . . does reduce, to some extent, the mortality of the married. And, upon the other hand, we shall be justified by our medical friends in admitting that a certain number of young women, and young men also, die directly or indirectly of disappointed affection- die of love, in fact. Some destroy themselves; others pine away most piteously; and others register secret vows in heaven never to marry.

(Farr 1859: 508–9).

Malthus feared that the production of people was subject to perversity: those who had ample means to raise children would take measures to avoid having them, while the poor, who could ill afford them, would continue to do so. To Farr, however, speaking a quarter century after Malthus’s death, the evidence of the marriage market suggested that people acted in exactly the opposite fashion. Social evolution was indistinguishable from a form of natural evolution, and, people did, in fact, behave as they “ought” to in the marriage market. Marriages

Table 6.3 Total number of families to a house in fourteen subdistricts in England

Population 1851	Houses with families absent	Inhabited houses with	Total number of inhabited houses										Widowers			Widows			Single lodgers			Total number of families
			One family	Two families	Three families	Four families	Five families	Six families	Seven families	Eight families	Nine families	Ten families and upwards	Total	With children	Without children	Total	With children	Without children	Total	Male	Female	
242,164	1,608	26,309	4,789	1,523	748	425	224	118	62	32	38	35,876	3,901	1,955	1,946	10,473	6,656	4,117	14,315	9,434	4,881	48,985

Note

Widowers and widows *with children* are included in the column headed "Total number of families." Many of the "Single lodgers" and "Widowers" or "Widows" are occupiers of parts of houses, and are classed as families in the subsequent tables.

and the natural selection by individuals and their parents of partners of specific (family) types, including “the beautiful, the good, and the healthy,” all operate to winnow the imperfect and increase the viability of the human race. And, if this constitutes scientific knowledge, it is common knowledge, too; it is even available in the facts of “authentic [fictional] stories.”

Farr expressed the desire to gather facts in order to do the same analysis of the effects of selection in the marriage market for Britain. He did introduce new classifications in the 1851 census in order to decrease mortality in Britain, and in its overseas possessions. Farr had detailed how population proximity, of houses and families, played a role similar to that of population density in determining mortality rates for a district and a nation. Farr suggested that these new statistical categories be deployed to measure and preserve the lives of British troops overseas. To that end Farr used the same type of diagrams on density and proximity employed in the 1851 census as a tool in the Army Sanitary Commission of 1857 (Eyler 1979: 170–1). The royal commission, put together at the behest of Florence Nightingale in the wake of the disastrous experience of the Crimean War, was charged with determining causes and possible remedies for the appalling death rate of British and native troops. Measures to preserve the lives of soldiers overseas were necessary for the preservation of the British race and the British empire.

The question of military hygiene is rapidly becoming a question of vital importance to the interests of the empire. Upon the British race alone the integrity of that empire at this moment appears to depend. The conquering race must retain possession. Experience has shown that without special information and skillful application of the resources of science in preserving health, the drain on our home population must exhaust our means. The introduction, therefore, of a proper sanitary system into the British army is of essential importance to the public interests.

(Report 1858: 520, quoted in Eyler 1979: 171)

The commission had neither Nightingale nor Farr as official members (Small 1998: 93). Nightingale put together her own report, which utilized information collected by Tulloch and analyzed by Farr. Farr compared the density and proximity of army encampments to the metropolis as a whole, and to East London, the most densely populated district in England, as determined in the 1851 census. The least crowded camp allotted each soldier only one-twentieth the area allotted the residents of London and one half the area allotted the residents of East London. If, on the other hand, the metropolis were as densely settled as the most crowded camp, it would contain eighty-one million residents (Eyler 1979: 171). No wonder the troops died at such an alarming rate. Farr’s proposed remedy was simple and persuasive: provide more room and sanitary measures for the individual soldiers.

East London and British footholds overseas could be described by identical indexes of well-being. Farr presumed that sanitary measures would allow British

troops to take, and then British families to “retain possession” of, overseas territories. Emigration, and colonial and imperial expansion would then take their places alongside eugenics as reliable factors in the self-regulation of population.¹⁶ Farr’s recommendations stand as a possible solution to Knox’s conundrum, alluded to in the conclusion of the previous chapter, of how temperate races could occupy tropical spaces. Farr plumped for sanitary, hygienic and medical reforms, which, along with self-selection in the marriage market, would lead to more and healthier English bodies and families. England could avoid the Malthusian dilemma. If applied overseas, reforms would allow emigration to drain off excess population and thus further the interests of empire. Surplus population was no burden in Farr’s view, but a sign of national vigor. Again, it formed part of a steady state system whose reach encompassed the entire earth. Farr believed that population regulated itself in the civilized nations of Europe, without the disastrous consequences implied by Malthus; in England population expansion was “natural,” fitted exactly by society for its imperial needs.

Farr had characterized the sanitarians’ struggle to save lives both at home and abroad in Darwinian terms. In 1858 he had focused on the preservation of (potential) parents, and the positive role of eugenics in human reproduction; in 1866, explicitly invoking Darwin, he argued forcefully for the preservation of children:

By the law of natural selection, you could only generate a low short-lived type of humanity in bad hygienic conditions. What have we to say when we are told that Europe will be over-run with population if fewer children are destroyed in infancy? England answers for me: over-run the world. There is room for all the European types in the other quarters of the globe, and Europe itself is still only half peopled. It is certainly in conformity with Darwin’s law, that in the struggle for existence, out of which the improvement of the species springs, the race which breeds and educates the greatest number of vigorous, intelligent children, has the best chance of winning and of holding its own. Let all Europe, then, strive for the prize: the English race in these islands, in the northern provinces of America, as well as in the United States, has a firm hold on the earth, and welcomes them as generous rivals in common efforts for the elevation and development of humanity.

(Farr 1866: 12).

Emigration needed to be coupled with eugenic measures, in order that long-lived as opposed to “short-lived” types of the English and European races could populate the entire world. Farr simply assumed the (already selected) families of England and Europe would win the competition with what he called “unsettled unproductive savages” (Farr 1868–9: 210).

Farr cited Darwin’s work as proof that struggle produced not misery but ever greater perfection, and thus took the side of Condorcet against Malthus on the question of the perfectibility of man (Farr 1875: xix–xx). He allowed a conspicuous place for human agency in the (marriage) selection process, and, in an

address to Section F in 1877, claimed priority for eugenic measures over sanitary and hygienic ones: “While sustaining and increasing the number of men on the earth is laudable, the policy of perfecting their nature is of still greater importance” (Farr 1877: 577). Again, despite Farr’s express belief that “The unity of the human family is an accepted scientific truth” (Farr 1877: 568), some human families counted more than others. To ensure success of his vision of perfectibility, Farr advocated state restrictions on reproduction by undesirable types, “confirmed criminals, who breed and educate successive waves of degenerate men,” at home (Farr 1877: 578).

We should remind ourselves of the distance between Farr’s words and the actual practice of the government by numbers either of the British or their overseas subjects. The passage of time produced problems familiar to anyone using census data. As the years from a baseline decennial census increased, numbers calculated through imputations or on the basis of trends became increasingly inaccurate. And the geographical boundaries of census, registration and health districts were not precisely aligned with political districts. There were other factors. Farr himself, in a July 1857 letter to Nightingale, admitted that sanitary reform was limited by human biology (Eyler 1979: 188). Human agency limits reform, too. The GRO was a bureaucracy, and could only prod political elites. As for “public opinion,” Farr pursued the task of appealing to the general reader in the reports of the GRO with varying degrees of intensity. Cullen argues that, by the appearance of the GRO’s fifth annual report, the space devoted to more technical analyses of the GRO’s statistics had already begun to crowd out the portions devoted to a general discussion of the results (Cullen 1975: 40–1).

Nor should we neglect the limits to self-regulation. Farr noted that, “Where public hygiene stops, private hygiene takes its start. . . . And it must begin at the beginning, with parents and children. The results of wiser selection in marriage will become evident” (Farr 1877: 578). Yet people refuse to behave in ways consistent with “private hygiene”; they often even refuse to fall into categories designed by bureaucrats and used by policymakers to further the interests of “public hygiene.” Thus, in India for example, despite Farr’s praise of the 1871 census as “The most remarkable recent statistical operation” (Farr 1877: 569), census-takers encountered difficulties when they tried to use classifications similar to those they had developed for the British census. Bureaucrats found themselves unable to gather trustworthy data on the category “age”; the inability or unwillingness of Indian subjects to provide their ages produced spikes in the age distribution data at five-year intervals (Alborn 1999). Paired with a lack of vital statistics on births and deaths, the faulty age data made judging whether Indian life expectancy was increasing or not a hazardous enterprise. Actuaries involved in the census developed novel techniques to adjust the raw data. Their difficulties spawned a series of technical disputes, which present-day readers of Indian census data ignore at their peril. But the difficulties also generated political debate among supporters and critics of colonialism about the ability of the British to govern a people with traditions – including an indifference to keeping

track of one's age (or reticence to reveal it) – that made certain facts suspect (Alborn 1999).

The incomplete state of Indian statistics stood in apparent contrast with the British experience. True, it wasn't until the 1851 census that enumerators sought to determine the exact age of individuals, and the 1841 census had rounded down to the nearest five years the age of anyone over fifteen years. By 1871, however, census-takers considered the age data reliable and stable. Yet, as Noel A. Humphreys pointed out in the memorial volume for Farr, significant numbers of British themselves were happy to exploit legal loopholes in the registration provisions in a way that produced worrisome lacunae in the age data for married persons:

One of the most unsatisfactory features in the marriage statistics published by the Registrar-General is the still incomplete return of the ages of persons married. In 1883 14.3 percent. of the 206,834 marriages recorded during that year the age of one or both of the persons was omitted from the register by the officiating minister, the information in the age column being only "minor," or "full age," as the case might be. Such a description of the age is unfortunately indirectly sanctioned by the Registration Act, and so long as this is the case it is to be feared that the return of the ages will be incomplete.
(Humphreys 1885: 68)

This was not the only nettlesome family fact the GRO had to contend with when considering the condition of Britain. Even people who were settled in households tended to move in ways that cast doubt on the accuracy and comparability of certain key family facts. As noted in Chapter 2, the Marriage Act of 1753 did not apply in Scotland and thereby created a class of marriages, divorces, and people whose legal status and national identity as family members were ambiguous. Scottish border towns such as Gretna Green had long witnessed a steady traffic of couples who, for the sake of convenience or privacy, crossed over from England in order to marry. Passage of the act simply spurred more to head north to take advantage of Scotland's laws, which continued to recognize weddings by simple consent. This marriage trade skewed census returns on marriages: the minister from the English border town of Berwick confided to Rickman as he compiled his *Parish Register Abstracts* in 1811–12 that the numbers returned, while accurate as to the marriages within the parish, omitted the greatest number of couples in his parish, those who "retire to Scotland, and are there Married by a person at a Toll gate" (cited in Outhwaite 1995: 131).¹⁷

Enforcement of provisions of the Marriage Act of 1836 helped cut the flow of couples across parish and national borders, and reduced the number of irregular marriages. But the persistence of different definitions of marriage in England and Scotland cast light on another class of problematic family facts. In Scotland, as in almost all other countries in Europe, marriage legitimated all children born to the partners prior to the marriage, while in England only those born after the marriage were considered legitimate under the law. To Farr, legitimacy

is generally stated in Scotch authorities to rest on a presumption or fiction, by which it is held *that there was from the beginning of the intercourse of the parties, or at least at the time when the child was begotten, a consent to matrimonial union interposed, notwithstanding that the contract was not formally completed or avowed to the world* [at the Census, for example] *until a later period.*

(Farr 1867: xx–xxiv)¹⁸

As Farr notes, the legal fiction results in a number of women classified as unmarried (“spinsters”) actually occupying a category not included in the census statistics. They live “in a state of quasi-marriage . . . hovering between concubinage and marriage to which there is nothing corresponding in England” (Farr 1867: xx–xxiv). Comparisons between England and Scotland proved tricky: the under-registration of births in England, the greater portion of which were most likely illegitimate, form a constant refrain in the *Annual Reports*. Farr does assume there is no essential difference between English and Scottish women in their fertility, virtue, or social life, save the laws that they are accountable to. He is no relativist, however, and concludes that the English marriage law is preferable. Scottish law benefits illegitimate children if the couple marry, but only at considerable cost, which includes the multiplication of their numbers, and an increase in the uncertain “connexions between the sexes, [which lead to] extensive disorganization of family life” (Farr 1867: xx–xxiv).

While inspired by Quetelet, Farr recognized that facts and classifications could not underwrite an exact enumeration of populations and foreclosed as well, for the time being, a probabilistic social science, both goals desired by the Belgian. Instead, Farr privileged useful facts and classifications over the program of all-seeing and all-knowing social sciences proposed by Quetelet. Farr did seek to help realize a universal vision of a sort, one in which British and other European families would successfully populate the world. His was a Darwinian vision of selection in the marriage market: family types channeled their desires and produced an ever more perfect social body. It stood in contrast to the dystopias suggested by Martineau’s reflections on the relationship of the family to the nation in *Illustrations*; it stood in contrast as well with the epistemological tensions produced by her attempt to reduce humanity to two types in her tales. But Farr encountered resistance to government by statistics for reasons Martineau and other political economists would recognize and sympathize with. They sought knowledge about family desires in order to make political and domestic economy work smoothly together; sanitarians sought to establish the same relationship between “public” and “private” hygiene. To further these ends each group strove to educate readers, to shape and enhance their agency. Such agency, though, could also thwart the measurement and classification of family facts. Thus, the GRO and the international statistical congresses failed to suppress persistent differences in the common understandings of “family” and “household.” Instead, their work highlighted and diffused knowledge of these differences, and exposed the government by numbers as very much a work in progress, one fraught with unforeseen and unintended consequences.

7 However you define family

We have met so many different families, and yet they really aren't so very different. As in our own family, as in American families everywhere, the parents we've met are determined to teach their children integrity, strength, responsibility, courage, sharing, love of God and pride in being an American. However you define family, that's what we mean by family values.

(Barbara Bush, in her address before the 1992 US Republican national convention)¹

Contemporaries fiercely contested Malthus's visions of human history, and for good reason. He saw an unceasing tension between reason and sexual desires that, in his most dire narratives, added up to constant material deprivation for the bulk of mankind. Malthus suggested that not even the reform of charity could alleviate the misery – it could even make it worse. The “literary storm” against Malthus constitutes an important set of histories. Yet Romantic poets and Victorian novelists, while typical protagonists in stories about reactions to Malthus, make only brief appearances in the previous pages. They vent their spleen against Malthus and what they saw as an unhealthy preoccupation with sex and numbers that followed in his wake, and, just as quickly, depart. Instead, I've charted how Martineau, Quetelet, and Farr, and the responses to their responses to Malthus, illuminate efforts by the British to define family and classify its various types in the first half of the nineteenth century. These struggles over meaning were not just a necessary condition for getting on with the debates about population, they were important and vexing subjects in their own right. They were integral to the delineation of private relationships and public policies – between individuals and families, family and population, and self-government and government.

These histories on the idea of family, what it is and what it does, form an important if neglected part of the history of economics. Readers greeted with varying degrees of indifference, alarm, or celebration the classifications of family types in these texts; as a result, they also debated the boundaries of political economy. Individuals who did not necessarily describe themselves as political economists circulated competing views of political economy through

universities, various societies (statistical, scientific, and mechanic), periodical reviews, and parliamentary debates. They sought both to popularize new sciences to lay audiences and to define science to newly denominated “scientists.” While those who did term themselves political economists (as well as others who toiled in related social sciences) struggled to develop vocabularies and expertise that would distinguish their work from common knowledge, they incorporated or only slightly modified folk taxonomies of family. This is stating, even belaboring, the obvious. We all belong to families and know or profess to know their boundaries. More to the point, when Malthus emphasized the role of family in regulating population, he helped hobble political economists’ efforts to characterize the discipline as a science. Skeptics could and did maintain that the knowledge political economists possessed was not any different in kind than what they themselves knew about family in general, and that they and everyone else except the economists possessed specialized knowledge about their own particular family behavior.

Nor could political economists and other social scientists assert that the regularities revealed by statistical aggregation did anything more than, at best, reveal averages. Averages did have a useful part to play in Victorian England, as the publication of registration district mortality rates by the GRO moved local authorities to enact public health measures. But lack of consensus on the homogeneity of samples and of aggregates, and uncertainty as to the direction and intensity of causes, both manifestations of problems in classification, reduced speculations about facts, causes, effects, and notably, possible reforms of the social state, to mere conjectures. In addition, political economists’ grand theories on the laws governing society were not marked off from public view: precisely the opposite. The push by political economists to educate the population in the principles of political economy, as a means of more quickly bringing to fruition a self-regulated and well-ordered social state, meant that many knew, or fancied they knew, the outlines of the science, even if they lacked knowledge of its arcana. The cliché that, with respect to Malthus, never had so many had a negative opinion of a work they had never read, while just, misses the point. Critics didn’t have to read Malthus to claim expert knowledge of the family; even political economists acknowledged as much. Hence, the book outlines a history not just of those judged, after the fact, as social scientists.

This is also a history of technologies. Classification is a tool whose value lies in its users’ ability to generate useful knowledge. Social statistics use quantification, itself a social technology (Porter 1995: chapter three), to summarize aspects of a designated group and space. The place of family, domestic economy, and population in the controversies of the 1830s on deductive versus inductive philosophies of science was just as much about who was to do social science as over what objects were proper to it. Amid the proliferation of new techniques of observation and representation of the social state, both Whewell and Martineau, while suspicious of common knowledge, ceded a place to non-specialists as observers and classifiers in political economy. In *Illustrations*, Martineau suggests that women may, in fact, be more objective than men when

it comes to divining the general principles governing the relationships between individuals, family, and population. Her virtuous heroines of Garveloch are not disinterested, but Martineau asserts, despite textual evidence to the contrary, that their own (family) interests coincide with the national interest. As a result, the Garveloch tales claim that Katie and Ella achieve what Nassau Senior, and, later, Marx deemed impossible: the ability to observe phenomena associated with domestic and political economy without prejudice, to see social relations, not as things, but as they really were.²

When, in the same period, J.S. Mill sparred with Whewell over the philosophy and methodology of the sciences, he acknowledged the importance of Malthus's population principle to political economy, but barely alludes to the fact that this implied that women too possessed the requisites of disciplinary expertise. In *Illustrations* Martineau asserts that women are able to observe and represent, that is act, without prejudice, with women's agency including publishing guides to domestic and political economy. If Mill grudgingly admitted economy into political economy, by way of its relation to population and family, however, the most salient feature of this presence was that it contaminated the science of political economy with its didactic arts. Yet, if women's work somehow tainted the science, the labors of Martineau, Marcet, and others indicated that women could claim that they were peculiarly equipped to cleanse the population of its bad habits. They could do so by teaching the purifying principles of political economy.

Their didactic efforts were part of an outpouring of educational literature by women in this period that assumed women acted not only as idealized moral guardians within the household, but also as "economists." I've emphasized the permeability between the family facts and theories of the social sciences and the representations of family in other literary genres in the first decades of the century. This is particularly true of efforts by the British to work out the meaning of the analogy between domestic and political economy in terms of the relationship between individual subjectivity and virtuous action in commercial society. By way of contrast, Garnett detects a shift in the Victorian conception of the connection between domestic and political economy only at mid-century, a change prompted by a new appreciation, especially on the part of Ruskin, for the *Oeconomicus* of Xenophon. Where Aristotle relegated household to a minor role, merely an analogue to political society, where true power lay, Xenophon characterized domestic economy as differing from the polis only in degree rather than kind (Garnett 2000: 206–7). Yet, as Searle indicates, not only did Victorian advice manuals promote a domestic economy that resembled political economy – "The perfect housewife, after all, was supposed to be *businesslike*," – but Georgian writers on political economy such as Marcet had already suggested that political economy, in Searle's words, "was essentially the precepts of 'household economy' applied more widely" (Searle 1998: 161, emphasis in original).

Historians have noted how poets, novelists, and others helped sketch the outlines of economic subjectivity and rationality in this period; here, I also trace the

borrowings of literary conceits by political economists. If morals and manners literature helped elevate the status of certain types of women and certain forms of domesticity, so too did works in political economy. Malthus's own writings on population, and the importance of the literary motif of virtuous love to his concept of moral restraint, are unexceptional in this regard. They were descended from seventeenth- and eighteenth-century debates in political and moral philosophy, and discussions in parliament, in fictions, and in conduct books on the simultaneous need for individuals, the family, and the state to manage the desire for property and the desire for sex. Political economists simply waded into a set of arguments already in place on political and commercial virtue when they wrote down their thoughts on who the women, men, and, to a lesser extent, children, of Britain were, and who they could and should become. Certainly many political economists described the family principally in terms of individual male subjectivity and agency, and the limits of state responsibility, with only a cursory mention of women and their paid and unpaid labor. But all but a few political economists also promoted, as an ideal, some form of the Malthusian couple, where both adult females and males were imagined as prudent and virtuous. If adopted as a universal model, the Malthusian couple would serve as both the analytical object and as (the least invasive) means and end of policy, a neat twinning of the science and the art of political economy.

This representative family represented art of another kind. The Malthusian couple not only exercised good sense, they had good taste. That is, the classifications are aesthetic, and not just in the terms of distinguishing between dirt and cleanliness in household management, an obsession of the sanitarians. Whately, in *Easy Lessons on Money Matters*, warns about the seductions and consequences of the wrong kinds of self-fashioning:

Many people will work hard to earn enough money to buy, not only food and necessary clothing, but also lace and jewels, and other articles of finery. And they desire these things the more, because, besides being beautiful to the eye, they are reckoned a *sign of wealth* in the person who wears them. A bunch of wild flowers will often be a prettier adornment than a fine riband, or jewel: but a woman likes better to wear these last, to show that she can afford the cost of them: whereas the wild flowers may be had for the picking. There is no harm in people's desiring to be well dressed, according to their station in life; but it is a pity that so many should be fond of expensive finery, above their station; which often brings them to poverty. And often they spend money in ornaments, which would be better laid out in buying useful clothes and furniture, and in keeping them clean. A mixture of finery with rags and dirt is a most disgusting sight.

(Whately 1837: 28–9, emphasis in original)

Whately's censorious remarks hearken back to Smith, who had decried the tendency for onlookers to be much more willing to upbraid a fashion mistake by the

poor than the rich – “The profligacy of a man of fashion is looked upon with much less contempt and aversion, than that of a man of meaner condition” (*TMS* I, iii, 3: 4–6). A “mixture of finery with rags and dirt” points to improper desire, and evokes disgust among onlookers, rather than sympathy. Whately’s lesson is aimed at young readers, and his judgment is an easy one to follow: dirt and finery don’t add up. Whately’s distaste is directed principally at an unnamed “people” or “they.” When he chooses to assign frivolous consumption to a particular group, however, it becomes a trait of females of the lower classes, the moral, economic, and aesthetic counterpoints to the women illustrated in the chapter “Of Value.” As in the *Working-Man’s Companion’s* recipe for the good working-class life, however, Whately’s distress against the fashion mistakes of the poor was charged with greater significance than that of simple bad taste (see chapter three). The fear of revolutionary upheaval by the lower orders dictated an active education of the poor in the basic points of how to consume, that is, how to cultivate taste and comfort.

Whately’s warning reflected a long-standing belief that the anonymity of cities allowed urban dwellers to dress and act so as to avoid easy identification and classification. If observers of the social state evinced contrary sentiments in the 1830s as to what to classify, how to classify, and who was to classify, the rise of social statistics introduced additional complications. By the time of Whately’s commentary, average man had joined mechanical men, Malthusian couples, Romantic heroes, great men and other types, including Christian businessmen and businesswomen, as fitting candidates to represent real and ideal elements of society. Quetelet’s anti-hero, both statistical aggregate and representative type, who Quetelet had pronounced, to the dismay of many, the height of aesthetic perfection, appeared to embody no heroic, virtuous, or even interesting characteristics himself. Instead, he is what Farr anointed “the typical human unit . . . the ‘living soul’ of popular statistics” (Farr 1877: 568), inscribed with the characteristics of his time, people, and place, a perfect representation of his race.

Many readers embraced the ideals of individual and familial self-regulation. When coupled with judicious legislation that curbed individual appetites, self-government would lead to a well-ordered society, where good morals and good breeding, in both senses of the term, prevailed. But questions of just where the limits of legislation lay, as well as the proper scope of statistical and other forms of observation and representation meant to guide government, prompted vituperative commentary. To many contemporaries, who counted among themselves advocates of new and old forms of paternalism, too many of the types and behaviors depicted by political economists fell short of the ideals of Christian morality. And, though the facts of the Malthusian couple may have been borne out by Quetelet’s succinct, hierarchical summary of similarity and difference – the statistics on marriages, births, and deaths, cited in his equation of the “scale of population” with the “scale of civilisation” – they could not speak to causes. Farr’s narrative of the history of the selection of family types, however, did just that. To Farr, selection among human families led to the greater perfection of the

human race in general, and sanctioned the colonial and imperial supremacy of the European races in particular.

Contemporaries used both family facts and family fictions as instruments of social reform, despite their suspect status, to educate and change readers' behavior in the first half of the nineteenth century in Great Britain. Historians have moved away from the cruder assertions of the efficacy of social control of the lower orders in this period, and acknowledge that the immediate targets of social reform were often the social reformers themselves. Still, it's clear that many of those who fanned the "rage for political economy" came to support education for all in order to make intelligible the commercial changes transforming society. They hoped to change society for the better, or at least forestall revolution in England. Contemporaries believed education was a means not only to disseminate, but also to generate facts – more prudent and foresighted minds and bodies. And banishing ignorance also helped individuals to interpret facts, in order that they could change social conditions.

Farr rewrote Malthus to add a happy ending to the story of population. Selection in the marriage market, an analogue to the selective breeding of animals, treated by Malthus as an example of the ultimate imperfectibility of the human species in *Essay on Population*, instead caused the perfectibility of the human race. For Farr, the allure of Darwin's theory of selection, combined with this revised Malthusian narrative of the family – an application Darwin himself pursued – proved irresistible. Farr's Darwinian reflections on family types bring us past the endpoint signaled in the title of this book. If we leap forward to the present day, and shift our gaze from Great Britain to the U.S., my home country, what lessons might we draw from the efforts of Malthus and his contemporaries to discern the principles behind population growth, and the wealth and health of nations? Malthus is in vogue again, even if his proto-eugenic musings are out of fashion. His insights have been useful to economists attempting to explain why growth rates across countries have diverged rather than converged over the past century and a half. These efforts represent an attempt to place macroeconomics on a foundation of microeconomics, with family as the basic unit that aggregates to the nation. Lucas, for instance, draws on Gary Becker's work on the economics of the family (Lucas 2002: chapter 5). Looking back in time, Becker writes of the importance of Malthus's work on population for contemporary economics:

families are still much less prominent in economic analysis than in reality. Although the major economists have claimed that families are a foundation of economic life, neither Marshall's *Principles of Economics*, Mill's *Principles of Political Economy*, Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, nor any of the other great works in economics have made more than casual remarks about the operation of families. One significant exception is Malthus's model of population growth. Malthus was concerned with the relation between fertility, family earnings, and age at marriage, and he argued that when economic circumstances are less favorable couples usually do (or should) marry later.

However, this important insight . . . had no cumulative effect on the treatment of the family by economists.

(Becker 1987: 281)

Then, as now (as hinted at in Becker's parenthetical aside), categories employed in economic analyses of the family both describe and prescribe. Endogenous growth theories pair increasing returns to technological change with Malthus's insights on the choices families and households make, especially the number of children they decide to have. For Lucas, these decisions determine whether households raise the return on their human capital investments, and, consequently, their living standards. As families choose to invest in the quality rather than the quantity of their offspring, fertility declines, and mass education increases. This all smacks of the flavor of a back-to-the future story, as economists revisit and elaborate upon themes crystallized by Malthus, even to the point of including his insights, updated, into introductory economic texts. Yet important differences remain: in contemporary academic economics, the representation and management of unruly, potentially ungovernable passions and desires has been reduced to the well-ordered ranking of preferences and consumption decisions over goods and children, constrained by limited income or wealth. Here is moral restraint, consistent with self-love, writ large, and legibly, in mathematics and statistics.

Lucas essentially reduces the factors responsible for growth to two: the (self-)regulation of population, and technology. Though the secret of economic growth is no secret at all – “Full participation in the economic benefits of the industrial revolution is open to countries of all races and cultural backgrounds” – Lucas fails to specify the institutions and mechanisms that determine technology choices, and choices by families (Skidelsky 2003: 31). He describes, for example, the process by which groups of different races and cultural backgrounds embrace the new possibilities in “the stock of useful knowledge” as mysterious, left to “the nature of society” (Lucas 2002: 17). Some economic historians credit (or blame) cultural differences for the differences in growth rates in different nations (Landes 1998: 516ff). Most economic historians, however, like their colleagues among the new growth theorists (and sometimes working in tandem with them), have located the source of these differences in the family, through their rediscovery of the value of useful knowledge for households. Mokyr defines “useful knowledge” as knowledge, techniques, even (incorrect) states of belief that produce better satisfaction and enhanced chances of survival in households (Mokyr 2002: chapter five). Key factors in his model of the transmission of useful knowledge and its adoption by households include the interaction of private and public knowledge by and about the household, especially the relationship between sanitary science and domestic hygiene (for a later period, see also Tomes 1990). If “[c]hanges in useful knowledge were . . . responsible for many of the changes in household behavior in the period between 1815 and 1945” (Mokyr 2002: 167–79, 181), the resultant changes in household behavior, such as the increased use of soap and more careful attention

to personal hygiene, stand too, Mokyr conjectures, as additional factors to consider in the dispute over whether advances in medical science, public health measures, or increases in income (leading to improved nutritional status) account for the decrease in infectious diseases and rise in longevity in Western nations since 1870.³

Academic economists have also recently paid renewed interest to the importance of pedagogy, and what they see as the necessity to produce and promote more knowledge of economics for people of all ages. Schools in the U.S., for instance, have introduced instruction on economics for pupils as young as five years old. But, as is clear from the preceding chapters, students do not necessarily learn their economic lessons, or, at least not in the manner economists imagine. This serves as a caution, too, for all those who seek to use fictions to teach the principles of economics, a respectable vocation once again.⁴ Contemporary authors and users have noted that, though fictions make economics more accessible, it's hard to get both economic and literary quality simultaneously (Cohen 2002: A19). But they rarely investigate how the formal properties of economics and novels can muddle the lessons, and they tend to ignore or oversimplify the historical contexts when invoking a figure like Robinson Crusoe as the epitome of economic man, or Gradgrind as the embodiment of a critique of political economy (Winch 2000). Thus, for example, Martineau's inconclusive narratives on population, combined with the open-ended nature of fictions, produce uncertainty in *Illustrations*, despite the tales' apparently tightly plotted structures, and the framing device of a summary of principles for each volume. Those who attacked *Illustrations* cited both their lack of literary realism and the tales' (unintentional) revelation of real-life methodological conundrums in political economy, including questions of exactly what elements of domestic economy were proper to study as political economy. When she avoided the subject of birth control in the Garveloch tales, radicals like Francis Place felt that Martineau did not go far enough; Tory opponents in the periodical press felt that she went too far (Pichanick 1980: 64–6). Critics complained that a reader could scarcely be expected to believe that women in a fishing village would have access to the bodies of knowledge that constituted political economy. Further, they claimed that Martineau's ignorance of the known facts of human reproduction – as a single woman, she lacked real-life, body-based knowledge of the experience – rendered her less than objective on questions of family and population. The very fact that Martineau broached (or appeared to broach) a subject which many felt should best be left to the intimacy of the family circle raised questions about her aesthetic, moral, and scientific judgment.

Now, as then, family and household are susceptible to a host of possible classifications and meanings. To construct an economics of household behavior, according to Bryant, it is necessary to begin with a proper sense of what household is, and how it stands in relationship to “family”:

Like all terms that do double duty in scholarly and common parlance, the term *household* has a multiplicity of meanings. In common speech, *house-*

hold means “those who dwell under the same roof and compose a family.” . . . We seek, however, to explicate its meaning as used by economists. . . . The U.S. Bureau of the Census defines a household as “all persons who occupy . . . separate living quarters. . . . A household includes related family members and all the unrelated persons who share the separate living quarters.” . . . Although this definition includes groups of unrelated individuals who share an apartment and no other resources (eg., students) and, thus, is somewhat broader than we intend, it is the best current empirical definition of a household.

(Bryant 1990: 1, 3)

Social statistics continue to play a role in defining family and household. They also help determine what we consider average or normal in family or household matters. Still, there is a gap between theoretical or ideal classification and “empirical” as defined by statistical agencies. As Scott notes, “Statistical reports are neither totally neutral collections of facts nor simply ideological impositions. Rather they are ways of establishing the authority of certain visions of social order, of organizing perceptions of ‘experience’ (Scott 1988: 115). In addition, any reduction of the term household to a single meaning as “used by economists,” distinct from the many used in “common parlance,” is itself an ideal. Neither economists nor statistical agencies have settled on a single, consistent definition of family.

Everyone else struggles to define family too, of course. Barbara Bush’s homily, which opens this chapter, implicitly defines family as parents with children. Despite this, her “However you define family” reads as an invitation to endless classification, hence meaninglessness: elsewhere in her speech she includes whole communities as falling under the category. Some, dismayed by the normative associations and policies that value “ideal” families, and neglect or punish those who deviate from the ideal – fears Bush sought to assuage in her address – would discard the category altogether. Household seems a natural alternative, but its meaning remains only partially detached from that of family. Besides, “household values” lacks the bracing bite of “family values.” “Work and household” and “household and work” institutes have a similarly funny ring to them. And the continued viability of “family” receives official sanction in government surveys and policies. Again, these same statistical categories and policies also reaffirm a distinction between household and family, between “families” and “non-family households.” Such distinctions mean that the doom-sayers who forecast the imminent extinction of the American family in the early 1990s, and the dire consequences thereof, made a claim which, while silly, has a basis in “fact”: the pronounced shift in composition among American households from “families” to “non-family households” does indeed mark the “disappearance” of the American family. In truth, there are plenty of Americans around, more than ever, and, if we broaden the statistical agencies’ definition of “family,” more families, too. Maintaining the narrower definition in official measures and policies results in more mundane if more immediately tangible

effects, too, because government policies and benefits are based on certain ways of classifying family. An acquaintance recalls receiving a fine for claiming, in innocent ignorance, to be the head of a household on his U.S. tax returns. Unfortunately for him, the category, in tax law, if not in everyday interpretation, excludes single individuals.

Debates about marriage, family, and family policies have roiled the American scene of late. What is marriage and who can be married? These are quintessentially questions about classification, knowledge, and authority. They would be recognizable to eighteenth-century parliamentarians and political arithmeticians, as well as to Martineau, Quetelet, and Farr. To take another example, the U.S. Census Bureau came under pressure in the mid-1990s from groups that called for the addition of a “multiracial” category to the 2000 population census. The addition of the category would allow children of mixed-race families to self-identify as “multiracial.” Though official numbers indicate that they are a tiny minority, some of them worried about the status of their children. Their official recognition as “multiracial,” in one of the key documents that binds the nation together, would confer, at a stroke, a legitimacy they’d heretofore lacked. They would count.

Some expressed concerns over the cost of implementing the proposed change. Others fought the proposal because the new category would be inconsistent with categories in previous censuses: in the words of one U.S. legislator, the change would represent “toying with categories that we’ve used for years” (Schmitt 1997: A27). The proposal also set off alarm bells among groups who feared that a small segment of the population might drive large, complicated, and unnecessary changes in measurement and policy. These groups were also afraid that many African-Americans might opt to choose “mixed” as a less pejorative label in the census; such choices would put funding for the many government programs that are based on racial percentages at risk. The bureau conducted a series of trial surveys to see what changes the new category might work. Aside from the occasional respondents who equated ethnicity (Irish, Polish heritage, and so on) with race, the only group to suffer a significant decline in the count was Native Americans.

When we discussed this in a course I taught at the time, my German exchange students saw the “mixed-race” debate as absurd, but for a different reason. The German census, they said, does not contain questions about race: who ever heard of such queries? The census categories produce knowledge that may well be peculiarly local. The race question in the U.S. is a historical residue of a political decision in 1790 to count slaves in the United States. But presences or absences in classifications may also efface history. The German census formerly gathered information on race. Though the Final Solution put an end to that practice, the country only recently moved to amend the requirement that German citizenship be based on “blood,” a standard impossible for most immigrants and many of their German-born descendants to meet.

The U.S. Census Bureau decided to forgo the “mixed-race” category. But, for the first time, it allowed respondents to self-identify as belonging to more than

one race. The change has been hailed as an improvement over the 1990 census, since it allows Americans greater choice and voice in identifying themselves. The idea then, that official usage of the term “family” can be detached from everyday, colloquial uses is a polite fiction. Genealogical studies serve as a case in point. They provide an empirical basis for determining the “real” extent of race-mixing in the U.S., and prove the obvious point that there are in fact many more people than suspected, who consider themselves black or white, who might count as being of “mixed” heritage. But, as one of its leading experts admits, genealogy is underutilized by academics because it is not an academic discipline (Owens 2004: 4). These are social categories, thus subject to public debate, transformation, and amendment in conversations and all the other arbiters of social existence, newspapers, journals, novels, and stories, just as the nineteenth-century social statistics were. As an expert with the American budget office noted during the debate, the office “will need to balance the statistical issues that relate to the quality and utility of data, the Federal needs for data on race and ethnicity, including statutory requirements, and social concerns” (Schmitt 1997: A27).

The new categories do come at a cost. Researchers ponder how they and policymakers will assimilate the resulting sixty-three categories into coherent empirical work and policy, given the multiple categories chosen by some respondents. As with Farr’s “Analysis of the family in fourteen Subdistricts,” in the 1851 census, however, classification and reclassification do not necessarily produce excess, or the analytical breakdowns occasioned by the category “race” in *Treatise*. For the moment, the low number who actually chose multiple categories in the 2000 census makes this a problem in theory rather than in fact. A more immediate concern to those, including census enumerators, who like people to fall into (supposedly) well-defined categories lies in the large and growing number of respondents who refuse to pick a category and who choose, instead, to identify themselves as “other.”⁵ But this concern about the “other” and the potential for people to evade measurement on the scales of similarity and difference ignores the fact that the history of racial and ethnic classification in the U.S. census seems to be defined by its consistent lack of taxonomic consistency: definitions of racial and ethnic difference in the census have remained unchanged only across the censuses for 1800 and 1810, 1830 and 1840, and 1870 and 1880 (Nobles 2000: 28, 44 (Tables 1 and 2)).

Can we rethink the category “family”? Certainly. But what happens if we do? Some may find the possible options available under the new census categories unusable for purposes of research and policy. But there are others who may find the information useful, for purposes of self-identification. The question here is, classification for whom? A change in classifications that represents greater accuracy and precision for some users may create logistical nightmares for others. Understanding this fact will allow us to avoid errors such as unquestioningly using Booth’s revisions of the census classifications and data on occupations as measures of the number of women who worked for pay in Great Britain in the nineteenth century. This also sanctions the search for alternative, more accurate

measures of women's paid labor-market participation in this period, such as family budget studies, whose compilers tried to include all sources of a family's income, not just a male's wage (Humphries and Horrell 1995).⁶ The value in understanding the cultural context of classifications of family goes beyond issues of methodological precision and accuracy. Their histories blur the boundaries between lay knowledge, social scientific theories, bureaucratic practices, and public policy.

There are moral consequences to categorization, too. If folk taxonomies overlap with classification schemes in the social sciences, they nevertheless often delineate competing visions of (economic) subjectivity and agency, as well as different visions of the means and ends of social analysis. Taking these into account gives us a keener appreciation of what is at stake in measuring "family" in economics, the roles social scientific theories play both in making up these classifications, and our ability to act on them. Classifications in social statistics condition our imaginative possibilities for our identities and actions, and our attitudes towards others, as individuals and groups, and towards our environments. Since representative types and statistical aggregates help guide private behavior and public policy, understanding how classifications work allows us to better understand the limits to our ability to describe what "is." This, in turn, allows us to better understand how those descriptions are also prescriptions, visions of "what should be."

Notes

1 Classification comes home to the family

- 1 *Illustrations* was first published in twenty-five monthly installments, with the twenty-fifth being a reprint of the summaries of the preceding twenty-four. References hereafter are to the collected reprint of the series published in nine volumes in 1834 (Martineau 1834), given by title (with original date in parentheses), volume, and installment number.
- 2 The observed birthrate rose 14 percent between *c.*1780 and *c.*1820, and Boyer estimates that the rate would actually have declined by 6.4–9.2 percent in the absence of child allowances (Boyer 1990: 170). Without the allowances, population would apparently have still increased during the period, but at a much slower rate. Spending on poor relief fell from over 2 percent of national income to about 1 percent with the New Poor Law of 1834 (Lindert 1994: 386), which would have reduced the income per capita of the bottom 40 percent of the income distribution, the very poor, by “something between 7 and 10 percent” (Mokyr 1993: note, 130–1).
- 3 For provincial bankers there was tension between the rhetoric of democratic banking, based in part on the desire and need for public information about customers’ accounts, in order to conduct bank policy, and the desire and need for privacy about those accounts, in order for the bank to better compete.
- 4 I do not examine family’s role in regulating speculative desire – such as the South Sea Bubble of the 1720s – or its role in securing credit, and in absorbing debts contracted by its members.
- 5 This caution also applies to classification schemes applied, retroactively, to the past. As Tadmor notes, the conjugal-based categories of household and family types developed by Laslett and Wall as an aid to historical and cross-cultural studies have themselves come under criticism (Tadmor 1996: 112–13).
- 6 When computers were introduced in 1961 to facilitate processing of the British census, the consequent explosion of numbers (from 8,000 pages of tables in 1951 to over 1.5 million for the 1971 census) literally squeezed out the census commentaries. The 1971 census was issued without accompanying narrative save the (unacknowledged) ordering principles for the tables. The silencing of narrative by the excess of printed numbers was only temporary. Users clamored for and received simple summaries and explanations of results for the 1981 census. As Hakim suggests, the reordering of the relationship between numbers and commentary in the British census signals a continuation of the splintering of the single, official, authoritative, interpretive voice of the census (Hakim 1980): it both produces and is a product of statistical excess.
- 7 A short list of recent controversies: (1) Are gay couples eligible for state-sanctioned marriage, with its legal responsibilities, tax benefits and disabilities? (2) What forms of legally recognized family relationship between adults, such as domestic partnership, fall between being married and unmarried? (3) Who is a parent and who is a child?

Adoption and custody disputes between biological and non-biological parents, gay and lesbian parents and partners, children divorcing parents, grandparents asserting visitation rights, and ethical and legal questions involving new reproductive technologies come to mind here. (4) The relationship between family policy and national health and strength. China's "one-child" policy is a notorious recent example.

2 Family and the domestication of passions

- 1 Sir J. Mackintosh, July 12, 1822, in the House of Commons, defining the terms of the debate on the Marriage Act Amendment of 1822 (Hansard 1822, VII: col. 1647).
- 2 Attempting to gain an annulment or judicial separation through church courts was also prohibitively expensive.
- 3 Outhwaite, who lists seven forms of clandestine marriages in order to generate rough estimates of their geographic scope and magnitude over time, suggests that one should consider "irregular" and "clandestine" synonymous terms (Outhwaite 1995: chapter 2; 20).
- 4 Supporters of the bill lumped together two categories of marriages: so-called "improper" or "inconvenient" marriages – secret marriages between members of the propertied classes and those who were poor but respectable, or had money but no title – with "infamous" or "scandalous" marriages – those that involved the propertied classes and those who were neither monied nor respectable.
- 5 The citations from the parliamentary debates refer to the column numbers from William Cobbett's partial reconstruction.
- 6 Illegitimacy rates rose throughout the eighteenth century. For a summary of the debate on the possible effects of the marriage act on illegitimacy rates, see Outhwaite (1995: 142–4). Outhwaite concludes that, though the act may have contributed to the problem, it was not a significant factor. Schellekens, however, estimates that over one-third of the rise in illegitimate fertility in the second half of the eighteenth century was due to the change in definition, with another third attributable to a rise in nuptiality, and approximately 10 percent to the decline in real wages in this period (Schellekens 1995: 442–3).
- 7 All the provisions of the 1822 act, save those that limited the dissolution of marriages by minors, were repealed in 1823, thus effectively restoring many of the procedures of Hardwicke's Act. But the 1753 act survived only a dozen more years, to be supplanted by the Marriage Act of 1836, which set up mechanisms for civil marriages in England (see Chapter 6).
- 8 Citations are from the debate in the House of Lords as recorded in Hansard (1822).
- 9 At this time Scots could get their divorces through court proceedings. An English man or woman could evade costly and cumbersome English divorce proceedings by going to Scotland, receiving a divorce there, and, if they wanted, remarrying there. Or, so it appeared. As Brougham noted, a potential problem lay in the following conundrum:

The courts of England . . . have held, at once, that an English marriage cannot be dissolved by a Scotch divorce, and that a marriage is valid in England if good in Scotland, where it was contracted; and that, whether it was contracted in fraud of English law, or *bona fide* between parties domiciled in Scotland, cannot make any difference. Then, can the former state of the parties, the *vinculum* under which they left England, be taken notice of, when there has been a good Scotch marriage contracted? That the Scotch law regards the divorce as good, no man doubts. In Scotland, therefore, the parties are free to remarry with others, and their second marriage is good there; consequently it is good in England. . . .

([Brougham] 1828: 114)

Each step was legal under English law, yet it led to a logical and legal contradiction. Another wrinkle in the joint application of the two systems lay in the fact that it was

- an open question whether the English Ecclesiastical Courts had jurisdiction for a marriage in Scotland perpetrated by fraud in England, or whether one had to obtain redress through a private divorce bill in Parliament. At any rate, Lord Brougham's Act of 1856 sharply reduced the cross-border trade in marriages.
- 10 Joseph von Sonnenfel's *Foundations of Police, Commerce, and Finance* (1765–7), for example, "remained the official textbook [of administrative practice] of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy until 1848" (Schumpeter 1986: 171).
 - 11 Critics also cited the expense and difficulty of the census, since local administrators would be charged with carrying out the provisions of the bill, including its elaborate set of incentives and penalties. Nonetheless, opponents thought information and power would inevitably leach away from local to central authorities.
 - 12 Price, writing on insurance and annuities in *Observations on Reversary Payments* (1771: he also published in *An Essay on the Population of England*, 1780), drew on a range of sources in his estimate that the burden of the national debt on the poor and the growth of cities, with its attendant evils, had combined to lead to a decline in population on the order of 20 percent in the previous seventy years. Contemporaries contested Price's conclusion that population in England had fallen since the Glorious Revolution. Many reversed the population equation, and cited changes in prosperity and general happiness as evidence of population growth rather than decline.
 - 13 Groups of merchants who argued for free trade in the seventeenth century in England had developed analyses that separated economic activities from the realm of princely authority and order (Appleby 1978). For Edward Misselden, writing in the 1620s, order resulted not from royal decree, but from natural laws, the uniformity of human responses in systems of commercial exchange between merchants. The role of individuals, moreover, was to maximize their wealth, which would increase the wealth and health of the state. For merchant writers such as Misselden, the example of their own acquisitive energies, desires unbound yet focused on wealth, if followed by all classes and ranks of people, would serve to enrich the nation and its peoples. This challenged the ethical stance of civic humanism in two ways. First, social virtue resided in the unintended consequences of actions by individuals. Further, the agent of virtuous action was no longer the landed aristocrat but the merchant, since expert knowledge about just how to maximize wealth was vested in the businessman. Not only did the fluidity of commercial relations lie beyond the control, even the sight, of the sovereign, but "to operate in such a system requires the special talents and information of the man on the spot," the calculating merchant himself. The merchant "could now be advanced as the specialist whose information and experience could unlock the secrets of this new field of learning" and enhance the power of the state (Appleby 1978: 44, 47).
 - 14 A "right" to happiness and other needs construed as "rights" could conflict with "perfect" rights, those without which society could not function – "life, chastity, good name, liberty, and private judgment." Though perfect rights, which secured property and were enforced by the state, were subject to laws, and imperfect rights were governed by individual subjective judgment, theorists agreed that the boundary between the two was imprecise (Kaufmann 1995: 45–6). Smith reinstated the boundaries between the realms of commutative and distributive justice in moral philosophy by shifting matters of distributional ethics from law to personal relations (in markets) and personal justice (ethics) (Kaufmann 1995: 49). In Smith's conception, precise, general rules of property guarantee commutative justice, while particular, indeterminate sympathy determines distributive ethics.
 - 15 The question of "British" identities remained quite complicated through the nineteenth century. Victorian travelers from England, Scotland, and Wales tended to identify themselves as "British" when traveling on the continent of Europe and reverted to their national identities when at home. Yet the Scots and Welsh just as often called themselves "English" when traveling abroad (Morgan 2001: 205).

- 16 In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries Londoners more often employed older usages like ranks, stations, and orders, and, more specifically, terms such as “gentleman,” “tradesman,” and “mechanicks” to distinguish between types of people. Only in the late eighteenth century did they start typically referring to people as belonging to one or another of the “sorts.” And, in references to sorts earlier in the century, the middling sort actually implied a substantial amount of wealth, a sum beyond the reach of many tradesmen and shopkeepers (Earle 1994: 141, 143–5).
- 17 Estimates (see Langford 1992: 62–3).
- 18 D’Cruze defines the middling sort as “independent trading households.” In the “business household,” which characterized the middling sort in Colchester through most of the eighteenth century, “the divide between working and domestic arrangements was minimal and the skills and the labour of all household members contributed to both the economic and domestic enterprise” (d’Cruze 1994: 181).
- 19 Women actively partook of the expansion of the entertainment portion of the public sphere(s) in late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries – attending concerts, theater performances, enjoying walks and new public gardens, joining circulating libraries, clubs, and the like.
- 20 In the 1803 edition Malthus does cite a number of authorities, travelers and missionaries, by name (especially William Robertson), to the effect that the “apathy of the Americans” is due to “the hardships and dangers of savage life,” rather than “any absolute constitutional defect,” or “natural defect in the bodily frame” (*EPP* 2, I, IV, 3: 31).
- 21 In the 1803 edition the indulgence of momentary desires in the lower ranks threatened a man’s ability to procure necessities for his family. Awareness of this produced moral restraint, which involved both self-denial, and self-interested behavior:

The period of delayed gratification would be passed in saving the earnings which were above the wants of a single man, and in acquiring habits of sobriety, industry and economy, which would enable him, in a few years, to enter into the matrimonial contract without fear of its consequences.

(*EPP* 2, IV, II, 3: 97)

3 Family, the manners of the people, and political economy

- 1 James Mill and Ricardo fashioned a methodology of political economy that lacked “an extensive consciousness of the empirical conduct of human agents” (Oakley 1994: 129).
- 2 He conflated morals and political economy, for instance, in his famous Bridgewater Treatise of 1833, *On the Power, Wisdom and Goodness of God as Manifested in the Adaptation of External Nature to the Moral and Intellectual Constitution of Man*.
- 3 The section draws heavily on Armstrong’s *Desire and Domestic Fiction* (1987).
- 4 This number is a mistake.
- 5 In this vein, see also such later works as J.H. Walsh’s *A Manual of Domestic Economy: Suited to Families from £100 to £1000 a Year* (1856).
- 6 Most scholars agree that Maria wrote “Prudence and Economy.”
- 7 James Mill had earlier decried “the great difficulty with which the salutary doctrines of political economy are propagated in this country” (Mill 1808: 35).
- 8 Likewise, in 1829, J.R. McCulloch, in the *Edinburgh Review*, bemoaned the fact that the education of English gentlemen did not include “an acquaintance with the principles of political arithmetic and statistics” ([McCulloch] 1829: 33).
- 9 Knight dilutes the status of the working man as a “double character” when he de-emphasizes consumption as opposed to production: “But we will be bold to say that the question of cheapness of production is a much more important question to be decided in his favor as a consumer, than the question of dearness of production is to be decided in his favor as a producer” ([Knight] 1831: 186).

4 Harriet Martineau's "embodied principles" of political economy: whose bodies, what principles?

- 1 Though the term "realism" as applied to literature entered the English language in the 1850s, the relation of the real to the represented in literature was obviously debated much earlier. There are similar problems with the all-embracing term "political economy." The tales present only one of a number of competing versions of English political economy present both within and without the classical political economy camp.
- 2 Biographies include (Webb 1960; Pichanick 1980; Thomas 1985; and Sanders 1986), all of which consider the intellectual and social background to Martineau's works. David (1987) examines her work in the context of Victorian patriarchy.
- 3 Michel de Certeau writes on fictional narratives and univocal meaning:

Fiction is accused . . . of not being a "univocal" discourse, or, to put it another way, of lacking scientific "univocity." In effect, fiction plays on the stratification of meaning: it narrates one thing in order to tell something else; it delineates itself in language from which it continuously draws effects of meaning which cannot be circumscribed or checked. . . . It is "metaphoric." . . . Knowledge is insecure when dealing with the problem of fiction: consequently, its effort consists in analysis (of a sort) that reduces or translates the elusive language of fiction into stable or easily combined elements. From this point of view, fiction violates one of the rules of scientificity. . . . It is only a drifting meaning.

(de Certeau 1986: 202)

- 4 He sold camlets and bombazine, the silk and woolen cloth traditionally used in mourning dress.
- 5 Laplace is the author of the classical statement on the doctrine of necessity. He writes in 1815: "All events, even those which on account of their insignificance do not seem to follow the great laws of nature, are a result of it just as necessarily as the revolutions of the sun" (quoted in Hacking 1990: 11).
- 6 From a review of *Essays on the Pursuit of Truth, the Progress of Knowledge, and on the Fundamental Principle of All Evidence and Expectations*, by Samuel A. Bailey. Reprinted in *Miscellanies* (Boston, 1836, II: 174–96).
- 7 See Daston on "good sense" (Daston 1988: 300). Martineau's work was only one of many attempts to modify or reconstitute social ideals after the French Revolution and the following events upset everyone's notions of who possessed "good sense." (See also Sanders 1986: chapter 1, for more on the literary sources of Martineau's realism.)
- 8 *The Absentee* was originally a series of unstaged plays, and was first published in prose in *Tales of Fashionable Life* (1812).
- 9 Martineau wrote two essays on Scott which originally appeared in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*: "Characteristics of the Genius of Scott", 2 (December 1832), 301–14; and "The Achievements of the Genius of Scott", 2 (January 1833), 445–60. Both were reprinted in *Miscellanies*.
- 10 She writes

why not now take the magnificent subject, the birth of political principle, whose advent has been heralded so long? What can afford finer moral scenery than the transition state in which society now is! Where are nobler heroes to be found than those who sustain society in the struggle; and what catastrophe so grand as the downfall of bad institutions, and the issues of a process of renovation?

(Martineau 1836, I: 54)

- 11 The next section borrows heavily from Himmelfarb 1985: chapter 6.
- 12 The control exercised by parish authorities within the confines of the workhouse would ensure that the provision of relief was based on less eligibility.

- 13 It was first published in English in 1887.
- 14 The second essay in the series appeared in September 1832 ([Maginn?]1832b).
- 15 The facts in dispute were the growth of Norway's population, supposedly slower than that of England due to later and fewer marriages. The reviewer cited the statistics gathered by Malthus's traveling companion in Scandinavia, E.D. Clarke, which contradicted Malthus's data. The supposed absence of poor relief in Holland, a determinant of its slow population growth according to Chalmers, ignored the expenditures cited in Dutch official statistics. The "great governing fact, or fiction, of all," according to the review was the doubling of population in fifteen years in the absence of checks ([Maginn?] 1832a: 116).
- 16 Likewise, she recounts a conversation about the writing of "The Hamlets," one of her *Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated*:

I was closely questioned by Miss Berry, one day when dining there, about the sources of my draughts of character,- especially of children,- and above all, of Harriet and Ben in "The Hamlets." I acknowledged that these last were more like myself and my brother than any body else. Whereupon the lively old lady exclaimed, loud enough to be heard by the whole party, 'My God! did you go out shrimping?' "No," I replied; "nor were we workhouse children. What you asked me about was the characters."

(*Auto* I: 229)

- 17 Martineau cites the Manchester operatives as the source of the materials "which qualified me to write 'A Manchester Strike'," just a page earlier in *Autobiography*. Martineau indicates that one of her purposes in writing *Autobiography* is to clear up this problem of misrepresentation: "I hope this memoir will discredit all the absurd reports which may yet be connected with my station and my doings in life, in the minds of those who know me only from rumour" (*Auto* I: 216).
- 18 Houghton attributes the review to George Poulett Scrope (Houghton 1966–89, I: 713). The personal attack on Martineau, however, has generally been identified as the work of the contributor John Wilson Croker, who was known for his invective.

5 There is no place for such a family

- 1 *Sur l'homme* consists of three memoirs previously published in *Nouveaux memoires de l'academie royale des sciences et belles-lettres de Bruxelles* 7 (1832): *Recherches sur la loi de la croissance de l'homme* (on physical dimensions); *Recherches sur le penchant au crime aux differens ages* (on crime); *Recherches sur le poids de l'homme aux differens ages* (on weight). Quetelet added an appendix for the 1838 German edition, and a preface to the first English edition (1842).
- 2 The "Publisher's Notice" to the 1842 translation of *Treatise* notes that "the present translation has been effected under the able superintendence of Dr R. Knox . . ." and that Thomas Smibert translated the preface.
- 3 In 1803 Malthus postulated that, in theory, there was no aggregation problem, at least for the operation of the principle of population, if not population itself: one could extrapolate from the experience of a parish to that of a nation without a loss of meaning. Based on his observations of the checks to population in Norway, and his observation of Norwegian observers on population, a parish *could* stand in for a nation. At the parish level, even "the most careless observer could not fail to remark that if all married at twenty, it would be perfectly impossible for the farmers, . . . to find employment and food for those that would grow up." It is only

when a great number of these parishes are added together in a populous kingdom, the largeness of the subject, and the power of moving from place to place, obscure and confuse our view. We lose sight of a truth which before

appeared completely obvious; and, in a most unaccountable manner, attribute to the aggregate quantity of land a power of supporting people beyond comparison greater than the sum of all its parts.

(*EPP* 2, II, I, 25: 157)

The Norwegians, by dint of the small population of their land, had escaped this blindness. That is, they had, “in some degree, seen and understood,” the threat of “redundant” population.

- 4 For a mathematical discussion on Cournot’s work see Stigler (1986: 195–201). See also Desrosières (1998: 91–4) for a discussion of the philosophical issues involved.
- 5 Quetelet’s creative statistics appeared in a co-authored essay, “Recherches sur la Reproduction et sur la Mortalité de l’Homme aux différens Ages, &c.” (Quetelet and Smits 1832: 43).
- 6 Jones’s glacial pace in publishing, the result of too carefully following his own counsel, continually frustrated Whewell (Porter 1995: 51–4; Henderson 1990; Hollander 1983).
- 7 Quetelet considered the scope of Section F too narrowly limited by the rules of BAAS. “He accordingly suggested to M. Babbage, from whom we have the statement, the formation of a statistical society in London,” which was founded March 15, 1834 (Mouat 1885: 14–15).
- 8 Section F was continuously embroiled in controversy throughout the rest of the century over the partisan and controversial nature of the research done under its auspices, research that imperiled efforts to present the BAAS as objective and scientific (Henderson 1994; Morrell and Thackray 1981).
- 9 The pooled results are reproduced, for instance, in an article by W.R. Greg on the Children’s Employment Commission Reports and the Physical and Moral Condition of Children and Young Persons Employed in Mines and Manufactures Report of 1842 and 1843 (Greg 1844: note, 135). The essayist, who twits the English for misdirecting philanthropy toward the regulation of cotton and woolen manufactures, compares the stunted growth of collier children to the apparently innocuous effects of factory work in the following table:

Boys <i>not</i> in factories averaged 55.56 in.	Girls not in factories 54.979 in.
Boys in factories <u>55.28</u>	Girls in factories <u>54.951</u>
Difference 0.28!	Difference 0.028!!

The added exclamation marks obviously emphasize the “fact” of no substantive difference between the two groups. The note, curiously enough, repeats the very tendency the reviewer decried a page earlier when considering the rhetoric of the first 1842 report, and the question of the representation of facts: “It is, however, but fair to state, that many competent and most respectable observers declare, that though the *facts* stated by the Commissioners may be perfectly true, yet that the tone and the spirit of the Report bears token of material exaggeration” (Greg 1844: note, 134).

- 10 From the evidence in one of the few tables presented in *Treatise* on occupations, average woman is subject to some of the same influences of profession upon health as males because, apparently, she does some of the same work and is exposed to similar disease-causing materials. She may even work alongside man. I say “apparently” and “may,” because the text reproduces a table on the relationship between professions and average cases of phthisis (pulmonary tuberculosis) which mixes classes, as it combines data from five lists covering four cities: Paris, Hamburg, Vienna, and Geneva (*TREATISE*: 39–40). The lists, while separated by sex, contain a large number of occupations common to both women and men. The tables also mix occupations of intellectual and manual labor. One list, for example, includes Protestant ministers, iron merchants and teachers of arithmetic with ironmongers, street-sweepers and basket-makers.

- 11 Richard Puller objected to the facile acceptance by European analysts of these accounts of China. European observations of China were too limited and not representative:

I cannot help thinking the belief of Chinese wretchedness has been admitted without any sufficient proof. The shores of its waters are the only parts of China which have yet been accessible to the curiosity of Europeans. . . . None has yet penetrated into the country, to observe the mode of living of the peasantry. . . . We may confidently reject the theories of those who would induce as to form a judgment of the civil polity of a great nation, from the manners of its boatmen, or the condition of the outcasts of society in a seaport town.

(Ravenstone 1998 [Puller 1821]: 23–4)

Malthus himself pointed out that vital statistics “will, in many important respects, give us more information respecting . . . [the] internal economies [of countries] than we could receive from the most observing traveler” (*EPP* 2, II, V, 1: 193).

- 12 Quoted in Hankins (1908: 87). See also *TREATISE*: 143.
- 13 Prichard’s principal work was *Researches into the Physical History of Man*, first published in 1813, with a greatly expanded third edition, consisting of five volumes, published 1836–47.
- 14 Taylor uses barbarism and savagery interchangeably in the text.
- 15 William Burke and William Hare supplied their murder victims to the unwitting Knox and his students for dissection.
- 16 Richards details Knox’s emphasis on the moral as opposed to physical differences between the races (Richards 1989: 393ff). These innate moral differences would inevitably lead to conflict.
- 17 Knox had been blackballed from the Ethnological Society in 1855, but was reinstated as an honorary fellow in 1858 (Stocking 1987: 246). Under Hunt’s leadership he gave papers before the society and promised to help coordinate the production of a new quarterly journal for the organization (Ellingson 2001: 247–8, 258, 282). When Hunt decamped from the society in 1863, he had already organized a competing organization, the Anthropological Society: Hunt defined anthropology as constituting “the science of the whole nature of man” (Stocking 1987: 247). Knox was a member of this new society for only a few short months before his death.
- 18 Dostoevsky, who, according to his notebook, “Read and reread Buckle” (Proffer, ed. 1973, 1: 32), has his underground man complain about statistics and Buckle (Dostoevsky 1960 [1864]: 196–201). The narrator, echoing Malthus, regards the “compound personality” as one who acts independently, of free will, contrary to “all his [economic] interests” or “rationally advantageous choice” (Dostoevsky (1960) [1864]: 201), simply because he can, as a human being. This is precisely what escapes and will always escape classification. So-called “irrational” choice, in fact “breaks down all our classifications, and continually shatters every system constructed by lovers of mankind for the benefit of mankind” and the reckoning of “averages of statistical figures and politico-economic formulas” (Dostoevsky (1960) [1864]: 197).

6 What is to be deemed a family?

- 1 The substitution of “occupier” for “family” did not always hold in practice:

In the Act for taking the Census of 1851, “occupier” is substituted for “family;” and the occupier, with whom the enumerator was to leave a separate schedule, is defined in the instructions to be “(1) a resident owner, or (2), a person who paid rent, whether as a tenant, for the whole of the house, or (3), as a *lodger*, for any distinct floor or apartment.” The return of 1851, agreeably to this instruction,

where this instruction has been carried out, includes all “heads of families” in the specific sense of the word, and all who held the whole, or any separate portion of the house, so as to be responsible for rent. Upon examining the enumerators’ books, it was found that the practice had not always been uniform; but that any attempt to correct, at the Census Office, the statements of the enumerators on this point would be futile. The numbers returned by them, and revised by the Registrars, have therefore been adopted. “Occupiers,” so defined, represents the “Families” of the Previous Censuses; and the results, from the first Census of 1801 to the last in 1851, may be compared.

(1851 Census: xxxv, emphasis in original)

On the problems this presents for users of the enumerators’ books for the 1841, 1851, 1861, and 1871 censuses, see Armstrong (1978).

- 2 The standard reference for his work is Eyler (1979)
- 3 Farr was to serve, at various points, as treasurer, vice president and president of the society.
- 4 Nightingale was inspired by and maintained an extensive correspondence with Quetelet (Diamond and Stone 1981), and optimistically sought to divine “law” in order to improve mankind (Small 1998: 189–91).
- 5 Ireland was not covered, and Scotland did not have civil registration until 1855.
- 6 There were now at least eight possible ways to get legally married, as opposed to three (banns, license, or special license) under the provisions of the 1753 act (Anderson 1975: 50).
- 7 The essayist exclaimed, “Had accurately classified censuses been taken every ten years from the accession of his late Majesty, what a flood of light would they have thrown on many most interesting subjects!” ([McCulloch] 1829: 10).
- 8 The GRO extensively refined its detailed occupational categories in the 1851 and 1881 censuses. The classification of occupational data for the 1801 census was inconsistent. Some women, children, and servants were included under the occupation of the male householder while others were not.
- 9 Higgs trots out several instances in which the census data conform to a medical model of society: data on population per district formed the basis of the GRO’s calculation of death rates for administrative districts; the textual preoccupation given to data on the number of blind, deaf and dumb, and insane becomes more explicable in terms of a medical investigation; and data on population and housing density and proximity form the foundation for indices of overcrowding which, in turn, are correlated with incidences of morbidity and mortality (Higgs 1991).
- 10 Malthus either manipulated the “facts” to provide support for his theory (Drake 1966; Rashid 1987), or he was particularly sloppy in his citations (see Patricia James’s notes to the 1803 edition).
- 11 The materials Farr considered included such broad items as “peace” (for those working in the defense industries), and “health” (for medical workers).
- 12 Quoting [William Farr], “Medical Relief of Paupers,” *British Annals of Medicine, Pharmacy, Vital Statistics, and General Science*, 1 (1837): 244. Farr ran and edited *Annals*, a weekly journal, from January to August 1837.
- 13 June 13, 1891 (quoted in Drake 1972).
- 14 In a letter from Rickman to his friend Thomas Poole in 1803, it is apparent that Rickman’s low estimation of the skills of the overseers of the poor led him to limit the amount of information put on the census schedule:

You know, I have some experience in the gross amount of the dullness of all probable overseers and can the better provide accordingly; I wrote the schedule and questions at some length and have promised to superintend the printing upon which much depends.

(quoted in Drake 1972: 11)

- 15 The table combines the classes “widow” and “widower” and “bachelor” and “spinster” (which includes “redundant women”). As a result, there are 128 cells (4×32) rather than 192 (6×32) in the table. The commentary admits faulty execution of the census instructions:

The Table is framed to exhibit, as nearly as it is possible from the materials, the constituents of Families, in the sense of the previous definition; but it is evident that the enumerators sometimes took lodgers as part of families; the practice, in despite [*sic*] of an explicit instruction, not having been uniform.

(1851 Census: xliii)

- 16 There remained the problem of immigration. Farr, like many others, blamed the Irish for the spread of a host of social contagions in England.
- 17 Travel by couples within England, in order to have banns published in parishes where they did not reside (that is, where they were unknown and thus could marry without objection), also created problems for enumeration. Rickman reported to parliament, in 1814, that abuse of the marriage act was the source of serious defects in the marriage registers.
- 18 Quoting Shelford, *Law of Marriage*. Emphasis and brackets in original.

7 However you define family

- 1 [Bush] 1992: 2551.
- 2 Martineau pursued this tack in *How to Observe. Morals and Manners* (1838). Often described as the first methodological treatise in sociology, *How to Observe* was also the first, and as it turned out, the only volume of a series on observation in the sciences that the publisher Charles Knight, of SDUK fame, sought to present to the public. The text was to serve as a guide for what we might call the average traveler, and was designed to equip him – Martineau referred to her hypothetical travelers as “he” throughout – with the means, the disposition of mind and body, that would allow him to contribute to the truthful observation and representation of foreign places. Little read at the time, the book received, unsurprisingly, a hostile reception, complete with personal attacks, from Croker in *Quarterly Review* (Cooper and Murphy 2000: 14–18).
- 3 Understanding the classification of diseases has important consequences for the debate about the causes of mortality decline in the second half of the nineteenth century in Great Britain. To Szreter and Mooney, the decrease did not come about due to increases in the standard of living, a view championed by laissez-faire economists who decried the burdens imposed by state expenditures on health; nor did it come about because of new, germ-based, understandings of disease formation and new forms of treatment for disease (especially tuberculosis) formulated by medical specialists. New forms of medical treatment developed after, not before the drop in mortality. Rather, the lion’s share of credit should go to local public health measures. Yet these measures were based on an incorrect understanding of disease formation shared by Farr and other sanitarians (Szreter 1988; Szreter and Mooney 1998). Even when we have past events – facts – that we can place in a stable and universally accepted category, like “death,” understanding the meaning and use of classifications can help us avoid misinterpretation of its causes.
- 4 See, for example, *The Invisible Heart: An Economic Romance* (Roberts 2001). Lucas cites V.S. Naipaul’s *A House for Mr. Biswas*, which he labels Naipaul’s “great novel of economic development” (Lucas 2002: 16). To Lucas the tale typifies the familiar narrative of immigrants striving and achieving economic success – it follows the family across generations, from rural poverty in India and Trinidad to studies of the oldest son at Oxford, England. Skidelsky abjures, and points out that the rise of Mr Biswas and his family is hardly representative: “most families remain stuck where they started” (Skidelsky 2003: 31).

- 5 More than fifteen million respondents, some 5.5 percent of those counted, chose the category “other.”
- 6 Likewise, in the absence of statistics on contraceptive behavior, autobiographies, diaries and novels – containing facts about individual as opposed to aggregate behavior – help us understand why, for example, fertility declined in Britain from around 1870 (Kane 1995).

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