



LJMU Research Online

Rogers, H

"Oh, what beautiful books!" Captivated Reading in an Early Victorian Prison.

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/id/eprint/6959/>

Article

Citation (please note it is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work)

Rogers, H (2012) "Oh, what beautiful books!" Captivated Reading in an Early Victorian Prison. *Victorian Studies: a journal of the humanities, arts and sciences*, 55 (1). pp. 57-84. ISSN 0042-5222

LJMU has developed **LJMU Research Online** for users to access the research output of the University more effectively. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LJMU Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain.

The version presented here may differ from the published version or from the version of the record. Please see the repository URL above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information please contact researchonline@ljmu.ac.uk

<http://researchonline.ljmu.ac.uk/>



INDIANA UNIVERSITY PRESS

OFFICE OF SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

“Oh, what beautiful books!” Captivated Reading in an Early Victorian Prison

Author(s): Helen Rogers

Source: *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 1 (Autumn 2012), pp. 57-84

Published by: [Indiana University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2979/victorianstudies.55.1.57>

Accessed: 16/08/2013 11:04

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Indiana University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Victorian Studies*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

“Oh, what beautiful books!” Captivated Reading in an Early Victorian Prison

HELEN ROGERS

On 7 January 1840 the Christian prison visitor Sarah Martin recorded in her *Everyday Book* her lesson with five boys, all serving time for one calendar month in the House of Correction at Great Yarmouth. “Are you all prepared for me?” “Yes, yes,” they eagerly replied. Before the children repeated the scriptural verses they had memorized the previous day, Martin showed them a handful of “little books, such as ‘Short Stories,’ &c., with a picture on every page,” from her supply of religious tracts and fables, promising to read them if they had learned their lessons: “Oh, what beautiful books!” they exclaimed” (Martin 121-23).¹ According to Martin, over the next weeks the boys excitedly awaited her visits, clamoring for books and arguing over the connections between the stories and their lives. Martin eagerly anticipated their lessons, too. What was so enchanting about these books? What effects did this intimate experience of reading have on the participants?

The reactions of working-class readers to didactic stories have eluded historians. Susan Pedersen concludes that “letters of prominent evangelicals are . . . peppered with enthusiastic references to the tracts, although these statements are evidence only that the tracts were distributed to the poor, not that they were read” (112). But what does it mean to read, and what might it have meant for Martin’s captive audience?

ABSTRACT: Despite growing interest in “the reading experience,” most studies examine avid and accomplished readers. We know little of the responses of working-class readers targeted by the Religious Tract Society and other evangelical publishers in their crusade to purify popular literature. Focusing on five barely literate boys taught at Yarmouth Gaol in 1840 by the Christian prison visitor Sarah Martin, this article considers the experience of occasional, easily distracted, or reluctant readers. Examining the titles they read and their behavior inside and outside lessons, it explores the boys’ reactions to didactic fiction and illustration. For these prison readers, the pleasures of reading lay as much in the social and affective relationships surrounding the reading experience as in the meanings of particular texts.

AUTUMN 2012

Scholars have tried to answer this question by deconstructing tract literature to show its potentially progressive and subversive meanings; in this regard, works by Hannah More, whose *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1795–97) shaped the genre, have been especially important (Myers 265–69; Peterson 411–15; Saunders 1–8). Such interpretations, however, may reveal little about the responses of actual readers. The significance of Martin’s books for the boys lay more in their material and aesthetic appeal, and in the experience of sharing stories, than in their didactic content.

Historians of reading have drawn our attention beyond the content of the printed page to reading practices, but their evidence comes mainly from the reminiscences of avid readers who read extensively and intensively. In his survey of autodidacts’ reading habits, Jonathan Rose claims that working people were inspired by “great literature” that ignited their imagination and desire for liberation (7). Yet autobiographers tend to be selective in their recollections of reading, emphasizing books that confer cultural capital and disavowing low-brow literature; they rarely mention tract literature or its pictorial content (Anderson 30–31; Rose 103–04). In his thoughtful response to Rose, Daniel Allington contends that “anecdotal” accounts of reading should be examined “*as writings*, rather than as *records of reading*,” and he urges us to analyze the cultural resources and discursive repertoires employed by authors to lend rhetorical weight to their reading habits (11–12).

As a child, Sarah Martin, born in 1791, was the kind of self-directed reader studied by Rose. Adopting the confessional format, her memoir denounces her early, wayward reading to warn of the perils of secular literature. As a teacher, she rejected all but devotional literature, a policy that determined the circumscribed reading of her jail scholars. But Martin’s *Everyday Books*—where she recorded her classes with prisoners, most of whom possessed only basic literacy skills, if any—cast light on very different and more numerous types of readers. Written hurriedly, her notes track inmates’ responses to Christian instruction and what she saw as their progress and failings. She jotted snatches of conversations with and between prisoners. Occasionally, she reflected on the implications of incidents she reported for prison discipline, but mostly the entries are unselfconscious, although they betray her piety and judgmental attitude toward her charges. However, in contrast to the retrospective accounts of prison reading found in prisoner memoirs (Priestley 106–13), Martin’s journals provide a rare opportunity to gauge the immediate reactions of

prisoners to learning to read and write, especially when we place these alongside the jail's disciplinary papers that report prisoners' conduct outside of class (Rogers 80-96).

Martin's descriptions of the boys' lessons offer contemporaneous, albeit highly mediated, reports of poor children reading. Such accounts have seldom survived. She noted very little about the boys' specific responses to particular titles or narrative content. We can only speculate on what these stories may have meant to the boys by extrapolating from documentation about their lives and by reading this evidence in conjunction with the ways the texts interpellate children as characters and readers. Yet also significant are Martin's comments on the young prisoners' desire for the books themselves and their pleasure in hearing stories. These records suggest that for untrained, occasional, or reluctant readers, the pleasures and pains of reading may have been less dependent on the printed word than on the social and affective elements of the reading experience. As such, the boys had much in common with other young readers. In *The Child Reader, 1700-1840*, Matthew Grenby examines the marks that children from across the social classes scribbled in their stories and primers. These visible traces of reading experiences, he suggests, alert us to the distinctive characteristics of young readers and the ways in which they interacted with books in the period when children's literature emerged. These children were acquisitive consumers, attracted as much by the look of a book as by its content; they were “users” (25) as well as readers, and “volatile users” (10) at that. Such terms are particularly appropriate to the Yarmouth juveniles, who were excitable, demanding, and easily distracted in their consumption of books.

Despite their incarceration, the Yarmouth boys' responses to instruction reveal that they were anything but the “docile” subjects implied by Michel Foucault's disciplinary framework (138). Story reading became the focus of negotiation between teacher and pupils and the locus of intimacy and warmth. As the boys appealed to Martin's affection, she began to question her methods in uncharacteristically contemplative journal entries, adapted her teaching strategies to win their attention, and started to view them as children and not just as offenders. By focusing on the titles they read, and their schooling and behavior in prison, I explore the children's reactions to moralizing literature in light of what can be gleaned of the place of literacy in their homes and among family and friends. First I outline how Martin's

pedagogical approach was shaped by her development as a reader and by evangelical attitudes toward popular reading.

I. The Prison Teacher and Religious Literature

Unlike most penal reformers who came from well-to-do families, Martin was born into humble circumstances; the daughter of a tradesman, she was orphaned by the age of ten. In her short memoir, Martin positions herself as a sinner who had turned like a “reptile” from the word of God. Raised by her grandmother—a glove-maker who taught her to read from scripture—she had acquired by the age of twelve “an indescribable aversion to the Bible.” A school friend showed her how to obtain cheap novels and romances from a circulating library, and Martin “read much trash of this sort with uncommon avidity” (Martin, *Sarah Martin* 5). Later, “sickened” by popular fiction, she devoured works by Shakespeare, Addison, Johnson, and the “British Poets” (6) before a freethinker introduced her to Voltaire’s writings and atheistic interpretations of the Bible (7). Martin’s conversion back to Christianity was protracted as she learned, painfully, to quell her intellectual ardor by finding sustenance in the Gospels (7–12). Throughout adulthood, she shied away from doctrinal debate lest it lure her back into religious controversy and doubt.

Martin’s account of her fall as a reader adopts the evangelical “slippery slope” narrative that viewed secular fiction as inexorably leading to infidelity.² It incorporates the concerns that galvanized promoters of pious literature: the dangers of unsupervised reading; the temptations of popular romances; and the threat of radical literature (Altick 99–108; Vincent, *Bread* 113–16; Webb 25–29). Martin obtained her teaching materials principally from the two major suppliers of books and magazines consumed in nineteenth-century prisons (Martin, *Sarah Martin* 30; Fyfe 1–14, 207–10): the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and the Religious Tract Society, established in 1698 and 1799, respectively, to purify popular literature. The Religious Tract Society became the largest purveyor of Christian literature for the poor at home and overseas, sending out 8,272,408 publications in 1827 alone (Jones 133). By targeting child scholars with simple renditions of gospel stories and moral fables written in “plain language,” it provided the reading fare of Sunday schools and charity schools, as well as prizes to be awarded to diligent pupils. Hawkers shifted countless penny and halfpenny editions,

while philanthropists distributed the society's works freely to the poor (Bratton 32-46; Neuberg 71-75).

Martin's confessions of a sinful reader betray, however, tantalizing glimpses of a more personal history, recording a time in which she managed to persuade someone to look kindly on a poor child, eager for books, and to lend them to her at a discount. Her curiosity and passion had won the attention of an amateur—and dangerous—teacher, making her the object of what she later saw as misguided charity. First at a Sunday school, and then at the workhouse, prison, and an evening school for factory women, the adult Martin became the good teacher: the bountiful provider of devotional books, protecting her scholars from the sin of intellectual ambition, and saving them with the Word (Martin, *Sarah Martin* 12-14, 133-35). Between April and September 1840, she bought six “tract society books for general lending,” twenty-five copies of George Burder's *The Sinner's Friend* to give to her evening girls and “other individuals,” half a dozen of Sarah Trimmer's *Charity School Spelling Book*, six copies of More's *The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain*, the Religious Tract Society periodical *The Monthly Visitor*, which combined devotional and instructive reading, and six penny magazines and “other small books” for children totaling a shilling (Martin, “Donations”).

Since 1818, when she began visiting prisoners, Martin had interpreted her vocation principally as a reader: “I . . . desired of the Lord to open privileges to me of serving my fellow creatures, that happily I might, with my Bible in my hand, point others to those fountains of joy, whence my own so largely flowed” (12). The jail having no regular chaplain, she established a Bible reading group for inmates and took the position of chief reader, which evolved into that of preacher (14-15). Each Sunday of their sentence, the five boys attended prison chapel to hear Martin extemporize from scripture. Her ministry, however, was as practical as it was spiritual. She provided prisoners with work, assisted their families, and helped them secure employment after discharge (110-11). The responsiveness of inmates to her teaching was likely prompted by her close acquaintance with their lives and circumstances. Supporting herself as a dressmaker, Martin rented a two-room apartment in one of the narrow “rows” where most inmates, including all five boys, lived (*Census* HO/107/793/4). In 1838, the jail committee awarded her an annual pension of £12, enabling her to spend most days teaching in the prison (33). When Martin met the boys in 1839, therefore, she was an

experienced teacher who understood the economic and social pressures that led many first-time offenders to return to jail.

Although Martin for the most part treated her jail scholars no differently than her other students, prison reading occupied a central place in contemporary debates over prisoner reform, especially for juvenile offenders.³ Most advocates of rehabilitation through Christian reading insisted that prisoners should have access only to religious material and be supervised by chaplains and schoolteachers in regimented institutions, where all communication between inmates would be prevented by their separate confinement or silent association. Nonetheless, in the 1840s the majority of prisoners were not held in model penitentiaries, such as Pentonville, but in small- to medium-sized prisons such as Yarmouth where approximately thirty to forty inmates were confined. While Yarmouth prisoners were sent to solitary cells for punishment, most spent their days and nights on common wards, where they took lessons. Martin's occasional reflections on prison discipline often record the corrupting influence of prisoners over one another and her desire that they be kept apart. Shortly after she began teaching the five juveniles, for example, she noted: "Happy should I be to teach these boys a few months, and an hour every day, and have them separate the rest of the time" (8 Jan. 1840).

Martin's encounters with the five boys would provoke some of her most anxious and contemplative remarks, for she was compelled to address a dilemma within contemporary discourse on juvenile offenders: should they be treated as criminals or as children? It is telling, therefore, that Martin expressed many of her concerns about the boys in the course of reflecting on her experience of reading with them. Story reading seems to have awakened Martin's desire to protect the boys, a desire that was undoubtedly controlling and yet, I think, increasingly motivated by affection—an affection that developed between storyteller and listeners in the very act of reading.

II. "Idle and Mischievous" Boys

On their admission, all five boys appeared to be resistant learners; story reading would be the means by which Martin would break that resistance. Within twenty-four hours, three of the boys were sent to solitary for twelve hours "for fighting and making use of obscene language" (*Gaol Keeper's Journal, 1836-40*, 3 Dec. 1840). An inmate

informed Martin they had been “very idle”: “they have all got the notion that they are not obliged, to learn or to use their own words ‘not forced to learn,’” she wrote (6 Jan. 1840; *Sarah Martin* 125). In challenging her authority, the boys exposed a contradiction in her reclamation project. She always insisted instruction was voluntary, for improvement depended on the Gospel being freely given and received (26-27). The boys surmised, however, that lessons were not an official part of the correctional regime, even though Martin reported their conduct to the jailer. She admonished them, writing that “‘they were not forced to learn’ if they liked better to be locked up in the cell alone.” Unwilling to have their misdemeanors exposed to the governor, each blamed the others “for preventing his being quick and learning his lessons,” and for luring him into theft. Their alliance broken, Martin changed strategy. If they promised to be “obedient and diligent and orderly,” she would ask the governor to overlook their faults (6 Jan. 1840; *Sarah Martin* 125-26). She then read them stories, promising more if their lessons were learned. Henceforth, she combined threat of punishment with stories as reward for good behavior.

According to a fellow teacher at the women’s evening class, Martin was a charismatic reader: “every countenance was turned towards her, and the whole party riveted with attentive interest” (Martin, *Sarah Martin* 134). Martin related her stories to the girls’ lives, the teacher remembered, by eliciting their personal histories: “The private griefs, the peculiar difficulties and hindrances of these poor young women would be entered into” (138). She employed this strategy with the boys as well. Mindful of their indolence, she selected *The History of Dick Wildgoose, Shewing that Idleness leads to Mischief, and Mischief to Misery* (circa 1839), a typical evangelical narrative recounting the descent of young miscreants into vice and poverty.⁴ Clearly, Martin believed Dick’s story reflected the boys’ characters, circumstances, and prospects, but they too seem to have seen themselves in Dick and his naughty friends: “They all stretched their heads forward, as I pointed, with my pen, to every picture, and made their own observations, which were, to me, full of interest” (7 Jan. 1840; *Sarah Martin* 124).

What might the boys have recognized of themselves and their world in this story? At the outset, the narrator attributes Dick’s wickedness to his parents’ carelessness: “His father and mother did not teach him to be useful, they were not very industrious themselves” (2; see fig. 1). On their discharge, Martin assessed each boy’s character in her

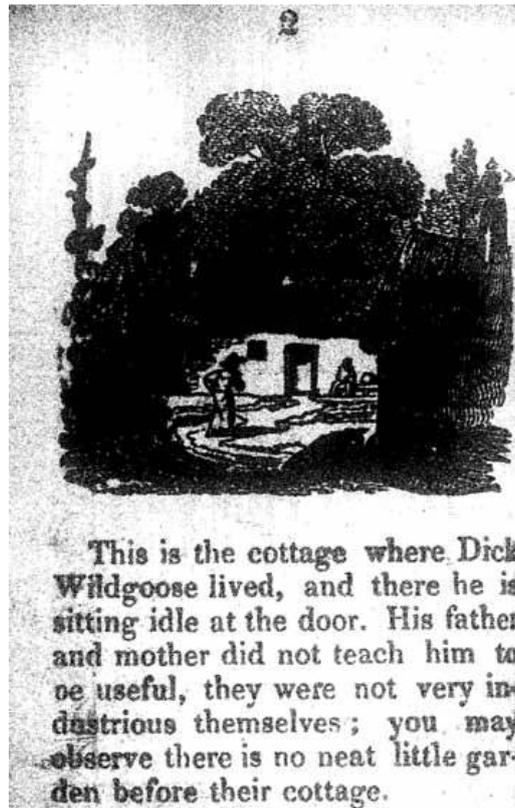


Fig. 1. Anonymous artist, illustration from *The History of Dick Wildgoose, Shewing that Idleness leads to Mischief, and Mischief to Misery* (London: J. Davies, circa 1839): 2. Opie Collection, Bodleian Library. L 301 (11). Permission courtesy of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

register of prisoners, betraying her conviction that their lives were blighted by the inability, or unwillingness, of their parents to provide a well-kept home and moral supervision.⁵ Much of what she wrote was presumably based on what the boys revealed in these story sessions. She repeatedly referred to them as “neglected.” Three had lost one parent. All were picked up as rogues and vagabonds, roaming the streets, unable to give a proper account of themselves.⁶

At ten, the youngest prisoner, Walter Layton, was convicted with Christmas Patterson (age thirteen) of breaking a shop window with intent to steal (*Gaol Register, 1838–50*, 2 Jan. 1840).⁷ Layton was a “neglected child—quite a child—His father a labourer with a large family—his Mother works at a Fish Office. Neglected” (“Successive Names and Numbers,” 1840, no. 39). Layton’s father was a cabinet-maker; his brother would be imprisoned as a refractory apprentice (*Gaol Register, 1838–50*, 7 Apr. 1842). Martin was equally tender about Patterson, whose mother died six months before his arrest: “Mild in manners and temper—affectionate—docile—of very good common capacity. No mother—father absent—at lodgings—left to himself. Nothing to do; Poor. Neglected” (“Successive Names and Numbers,” 1840, no. 38).

Patterson's father worked as a maltster outside Yarmouth, while his children lodged with a prostitute who probably introduced her own daughter and Christmas's sister, a factory worker, into prostitution, and both were imprisoned for disorderly behavior and thieving.⁸

Committed for stealing chickens, Walter Tunmore (age twelve) and William Hickling (age fourteen) may have been struck by two illustrations of the fictional Dick's misdemeanors—cock-fighting and chasing a poor man's geese (7-8). Both boys' families had fallen on the parish. In 1837 Tunmore's father received a quarterly allowance of flour for his family (*Minutes* 4 May 1837). If he struggled to put bread on the table, the laborer failed in the eyes of the law to keep his children at home and out of trouble. A few weeks earlier, Walter, who could not read, had been admitted on suspicion of stealing books from a cart. His siblings came in and out of jail as vagabonds and thieves, while his sisters, who worked as prostitutes, were convicted of disorderly behavior. William Hickling's widowed mother took her three sons to Yarmouth Workhouse in 1838 (*Index of Examined Paupers*, 3 Dec. 1836 and 14 Apr. 1838). Subsequently, William found work in a fish office, and his brother as a mariner (*Census* HO/107/793/4).

Only fifteen-year-old Robert Harrod, according to Martin, came from a respectable family, with “good and careful parents” (“Successive Names and Numbers,” 1841, no. 53). His widowed mother had married a ropemaker, and her son's waywardness was probably related to unhappiness at home. Three years earlier, Robert's mother had committed him to jail for a week for being “idle and disorderly” and wandering from home (*Gaol Register, 1808-38*, 29 Sept. 1837)—an episode demonstrating that the poor had their own expectations of order and conduct, sometimes appealing to the authorities for their enforcement (Philips 125-29). The only boy with an apprenticeship, Robert was convicted of absconding from his master: “He could turn the Twill Spinners wheel well but was wilfully idle. Would escape from his parents and be out whole nights” (Martin, “Successive Names and Numbers,” 1841, no. 53).

If the boys received any formal schooling, it is likely they would have been tempted from their lessons, as they were when they began prison instruction. This was the case with Dick Wildgoose: “he always liked better to idle about the fields, than to learn his book” and attend his Sunday school (3). Nevertheless, each of these boys had literate or semi-literate family members. Maria Hickling read and had probably taught William, the only competent reader in the group. Layton's brother

read and wrote imperfectly. When Patterson's brother was jailed, his wife smuggled to him a newspaper, some songs, and four notes.⁹ Tunmore's brother could not read but, when imprisoned, asked to keep the Bible verses written by his teacher "to show his father" (13 Dec. 1839). This last incident suggests that Tunmore's family was not indifferent to the uses of literacy and attests to the pride prisoners took in their learning.

Although want may have driven the boys to thieving, it is just as likely that their offences arose unpremeditated out of boisterous play. Certainly, in prison their pranks led them into trouble with the jailer: singing raucously (8 Jan. 1840); putting soot in another boy's drinking water (14 Jan. 1840); quarrelling and fighting (20 Jan. 1840). Rather than the depravity of Dick Wildgoose's family or his demise and destitution, it seems that his larks and misdemeanors grabbed the boys' attention. As Martin pointed to Dick Wildgoose and Bob Loiter beating an ass (11; see fig. 2), one lad turned on his cellmate: "That boy is cruel to donkeys," he told Martin; "the other in return attacked him," she recorded. This outburst prompted a series of accusations. "I know one," said Tunmore, "who threw seven cats in a river, from the bridge, in one night." "That was your brother, in the bridewell," taunted Harrod to cries of protest. Martin extracted the name of the culprit, who the boys knew had been transported: "It was then time to dwell on the end of such a course, to warn and instruct them" (8 Jan. 1840).

Martin's recollection of this dispute signals her fervor to save the boys from themselves and each other, but it also prompts an unusually self-conscious moment of reflection on her teaching practice: "One who had read the account I have given of the five boys might ask, why did I suffer them thus to speak to each other in my presence? And why did I not reprove them?" (8 Jan. 1840). Though Martin showed her journal to the jailer and the prison inspector, who recommended her work in his annual reports (Martin, *Sarah Martin* 137-42), her entries never assumed any reader other than herself. In this atypical entry, her question addresses the challenges of Christian rehabilitation. She answers by defending reading and discussion as a way of exposing, understanding, and improving her charges' dispositions: "I suffered it awhile as an observer, as it presented a remarkable disclosure of character, such as can rarely be obtained from older persons who are skilled in the concealment of each other's crimes" (8 Jan. 1840).

While Martin perceived that shared reading constituted a controversial approach to juvenile delinquents, the method was demanded by

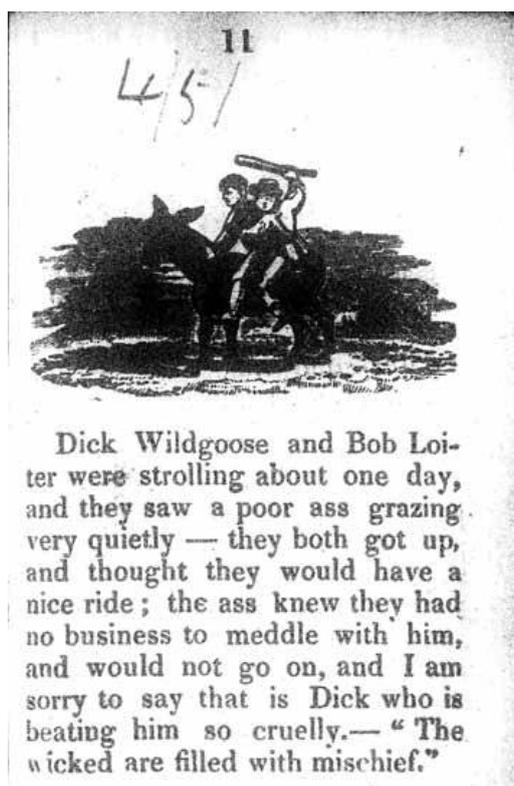


Fig. 2. Anonymous artist, illustration from *The History of Dick Wildgoose, Shewing that Idleness leads to Mischief, and Mischief to Misery* (London: J. Davies, circa 1839): 11. Opie Collection, Bodleian Library. Permission courtesy of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

the books themselves. Even those boys least disposed to their didactic messages appeared to appreciate the aesthetic appeal of the books’ images. Freely given tracts provided the poor a rare glimpse of pictorial decoration. Many among the poor who could not afford to decorate their homes no doubt cut out illustrations from the religious tracts to paste on their walls (Anderson 29-35). The tract societies probably provided some of the prints that were found displayed in twenty-five out of sixty-six laboring homes inspected in a Norfolk village in 1840, for they were all on scriptural themes (Porter 372-73). Such tract illustrations were invariably of inferior quality and often, as in *Dick Wildgoose*, assembled from various publications rather than commissioned for the work. They might only loosely depict the text they were meant to illuminate, requiring the reader to make the connections clear. The murky picture representing Dick’s home might have depicted the “cottager’s return,” a common theme of verse and pictures lauding the industrious, homely virtues of the humble poor (see fig. 2; Maidment 32-42). The narrator, therefore, must spell out its message—“you may observe there is no neat little garden before their cottage” (*History of Dick Wildgoose* 2)—which Martin probably emphasized with the use of her pen and her tone of voice. Likewise, the narrator explains an image of a solitary child so

readers understand that Dick, not just his parents, is responsible for his indigence: “I told you Dick had always been an idle and mischievous boy, so that nobody cared for him or loved him. His father died about this time, and Dick had no friend left, and he was forced to beg his bread. See what a ragged figure he is” (13). Visual and aural instruction, then, was a vital component of the boys’ training, as we see by examining the place that stories held in Martin’s class.

III. Looking, Listening, Learning

For their lesson on 6 January 1840, Martin chose the opening line from the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1.1, King James Version). This was for her a crucial biblical passage, but one that made no allowance for the boys’ rudimentary acquaintance with letters and words or ignorance of scripture. They showed little interest in their primers, and Martin wrote “not perfect” against their names. “Harrod upon the whole behaves best,” Martin wrote; he worked diligently on an “Easy Lesson” from his primer (6 Jan. 1840). Hickling, the reader, studied Luke 15 and spelling. The others toiled over the preliminary pages, Tunmore and Patterson stumbling over two- and three-letter words, Layton knowing only the alphabet.

Without illustrations, the lists of letters and words must have bewildered the barely literate boys. Tunmore “does not like his book,” informed a prisoner: “he likes to play about” (6 Jan. 1840). Almost certainly, they worked through Trimmer’s *Charity School Spelling Book*, first distributed in 1791 and by 1840 one of the most widely used and imitated primers (Heath 385-86). Beginning with the alphabet, then sounds of two and three letters, Trimmer’s text builds to words of one syllable, and next to “Easy Lessons” comprising short phrases—“a bad boy” (15)—and simple sentences—“It is a good thing to learn to read well” (17). The book culminates in “Short Stories of Good and Bad Boys, in Words of One Syllable Only” that hammer home the benefits of Christian schooling. Jack Paine loses his companions by telling tales and fighting, but is shown by another boy how to be good, and all his classmates become friends (35-36). The primer stresses deference to God and the social order: “God loves the poor as well as the rich, if they are good” (19); “Those who are rich will not help those who are poor, if they will not try to be good” (18).

Stories, therefore, were not only rewards for lessons learned but integral to the rote method of education used by Martin. Rote learning—employed from the early nineteenth century by the British and Foreign School Society and the National Schools, and by many Sunday classes—was by the 1840s the dominant mode of instruction for working-class scholars. Contemporary critics lampooned its failure to promote comprehension, and subsequent educationalists have found little to recommend it (Heath 397–98). Yet some children learned effectively from a communal and often animated, if hierarchical, mode of schooling (Burnett 146–49; Robson 152–54; Vincent, *Literacy* 76–80). Many prisoners enjoyed helping each other repeat lessons; others picked up verses by listening to their cellmates (Rogers 85–86). This form of collective learning was encouraged by the tract stories they read, which illustrated the pleasures and rewards of pious reading. Sunday scholars are shown welcoming their friends to school; children read cheerfully to others; diligent scholars become teachers themselves.¹⁰ Such is the case of the industrious servant in *Honesty and Dishonesty* (circa 1830), whose happy fate is contrasted with the purportedly true account of two young men hanged for robbery, a story that Martin read with the boys and “with which they were much delighted” (7 Jan. 1840). There is little plot or pace in either story, however, and their tone is humorless and hectoring, their language more suited to adult readers. If the boys responded as warmly as Martin believed, their enjoyment probably lay in the activity itself—the interaction between the members of the reading group—rather than in the narrative.

By comparison, the eight-page verse story *The Honest Chimney-Sweeper* (n.d.), which Martin read with the boys the same day, speaks to readers as children, fostering an affectionate bond between speaker and listener akin to that between parent and child. By the 1830s, the Religious Tract Society was reaching beyond its original, lowly readership to target children in the affluent classes (Bratton 39–42). The welcoming domestic interior on the frontispiece taps the common, homely values of a cross-class, populist discourse (fig. 3). The little sweep is a familiar, sentimental figure in this literature, appealing to the child reader’s “natural” sense of sympathy and pity (Twells 146–53). The sweep’s “simple tale” (*Honest Chimney-Sweeper* 4) is framed by a lengthy introductory and concluding verse that speaks to children who are comfortable, sent to school, and protected by their parents; the closing illustration depicts a well-dressed schoolboy, reclining easily



Fig. 3. Anonymous artist, title page from *The Honest Chimney-Sweeper*. Bodleian Library. Vet. A6 e.2716. Permission courtesy of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

on his book. At the same time, the little sweep's perspective is foregrounded, and his triumph over temptation sets "the example" for more fortunate readers (8).

The chimney sweep's tale gives voice to those without possessions or privilege and expresses the tremulous longing that the five boys may have felt when they saw riches from afar. The sweep is set "to ply his sooty trade" in "a stately mansion" far grander than the scenes of the Yarmouth lads' crimes, but his wonder at opulent riches and his enticement by a "glittering watch" may have captured the excitement that accompanied their opportunistic thieving:

Ah me! he thought, (as near he drew,
To feast upon a closer view,)
If 'twere mine! that one rich treasure,
So neat and useful; or, if sold,
'Twould fetch almost a mint of gold! (5)

The Honest Chimney-Sweeper deploys the iambic tetrameter (or common meter) that Catherine Robson describes as "the heartbeat of English poetry," the most frequently used meter in children's verse (158). This familiar rhythmic pattern, Robson suggests, pulsated through the body,

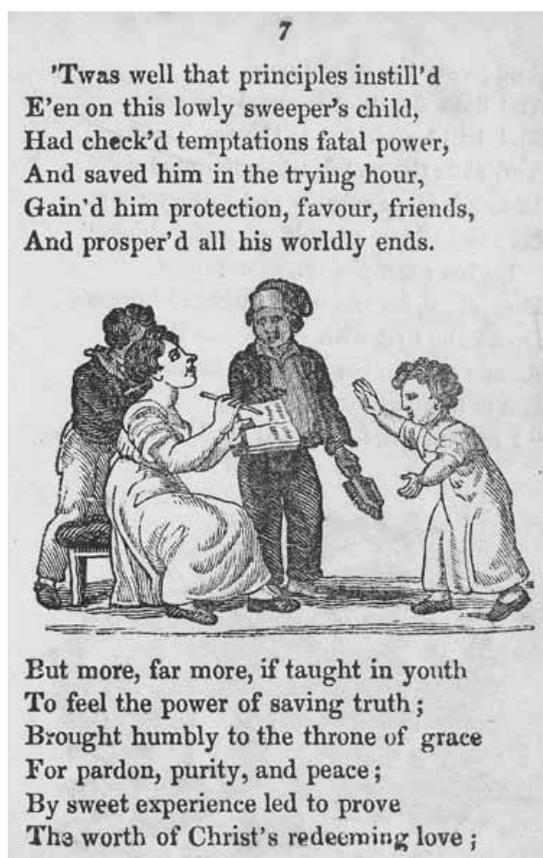


Fig. 4. Anonymous artist, illustration from *The Honest Chimney-Sweeper*: 7. Permission courtesy of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

particularly for children drilled in reciting verse, who felt the joy of galloping through a poem or the heart-beating fear of stumbling and forgetting. More likely for the five boys, familiar with the rhyme and rhythm of song, its thumping pace would have captured the heart-pounding thrill of temptation and the heart-stopping moment of detection.

The poem works to re-channel that excitement by arresting the sweep with the “gleam of conscience” that “stole / Across the young transgressor’s soul” (*Honest Chimney-Sweeper* 6). Replacing the watch, he resigns himself, “content” with poverty. His resolution is rewarded by the lady of the house: “She gave him learning, clothes and food, / And he turned out a servant good” (6). Thus child readers are reminded of the paternalist care of the rich for the dutiful poor, while exhilaration in wrongdoing is redirected into learning. The kindly relationships between the sweep and the lady’s children, portrayed in the illustration of the domestic reading circle, should have mirrored the little assembly of readers in the jail, reflecting back to them the obedience and affection they ought to show their nurturing teacher (see fig. 4). The tale of

the “little chimney-sweeper lad” (4) seems to have resonated with Martin, for the following day she began to refer to her young scholars as “little boys,” remarking with evident satisfaction, “The little boys knew their lessons today” (8 Jan. 1840). Martin’s use of the term may have been prompted by their height (ranging from four feet two and a half to four feet eight inches tall) but the word “little” likely also connoted her moral estimation of their character and vulnerability.

In contemporary discourse on juvenile offenders, the term “little” was used pejoratively and sympathetically to differentiate sturdy young offenders, confirmed in criminal habits, from neglected waifs, susceptible to but not yet tainted by “evil associations.” In *Oliver Twist* (1837-39), the parish boy’s defenselessness and natural honesty—“I am a very little boy, sir” (30)—is signaled by his standoff with the corpulent, self-aggrandizing beadle. By maligning the foundling’s character and “little history” (136), Bumble convinces the benevolent Mr. Brownlow that Oliver “has been a thorough-paced little villain all his life” (137). Tellingly, the Artful Dodger is “short” rather than “little.” In his oversized man’s coat and officer’s boots, he seems larger than he is, “altogether, as roistering and swaggering a young gentleman as ever stood four feet six, or something less, in his bluchers” (57). The same contrary uses of the term “little” are found in Martin’s assessments of young offenders. When admitted at age fourteen as a rogue and vagabond, Charles Tunmore (Walter’s younger brother) displayed a precocity that belied his years: “A most flattering pretending little fellow. Following the example of his brothers. A child in age and manners—not in evil and depravity” (“Successive Names and Numbers,” 1841, no. 65). Committed for fighting with three other prostitutes in a “riotous and indecent manner” (*Gaol Register, 1838-50*, 24 Aug. 1841), Eleanor Vincent, age fifteen, was “younger even in appearance than she is. A most abandoned little creature. . . . It would have been well had it been possible to place a child like this in a Refuge” (“Successive Names and Numbers,” 1841, no. 100).¹¹ By comparison, the tractable Benjamin Taylor, age fifteen, was a “very pleasant little boy. When I asked—‘Why he came to prison’ he said for ‘robbing the rope’. He promised not to be dishonest any more. . . . Is by no means hardened” (“Successive Names and Numbers,” 1842, no. 141).

Presumably because of his willingness to repent and earnestness to learn, Taylor convinced Martin that she could think him a “pleasant little boy.” However, her journal entries suggest that the five

boys' enthusiasm for her stories, not their scholarly perseverance or piety, prompted her to view them more as children than criminals. “They always ask to have the little books I read to them left till the next day,” Martin wrote on 12 January: “It seems positively necessary that I should devote more time to these little boys—Their attention is easily caught—is arrested in a moment,—but no improvement is yet evident.—A month for them is short indeed. I shall be sorry to resign them.”

By conflating “the little books” with “the little boys,” Martin appropriated the affectionate mode of address used by the tract narrators: “My dear little children.” In so doing, she adopted the story-reading technique advocated by educationalists—and by the books themselves—who urged adult readers (commonly assumed to be mothers) to invite children to their lap and use a pin or pen to point out words and pictures (Grenby 194–96). To see the tiny illustrations to which Martin gestured (*The Honest Chimney-Sweeper* is under 10 centimeters in size) the boys must have gathered closely around their teacher. When they talked about the “beautiful books,” they drew her into their world. She might have been alarmed by their talk of fighting and poaching, but increasingly she seems to have enjoyed their book chatter. But they would not be like the meek and malleable scholar portrayed in their book. Instead, they proved volatile readers, and stories stood at the center of transactions between pupils and teacher.

IV. Volatile Readers

The promise of picture books, if they learned scripture, won the boys' attention. Outside class, however, they struggled to maintain the good conduct depicted in their books. Martin writes that she told them “it made me very unhappy every day I came to find either one or other had been put into the cell for behaving ill this way or that—and if they wished me to teach them they must act up to what I said” (12 Jan. 1840). Consciously or not, they knew how to break through her outward severity and appeal to her attachment to them: “Tunmore said he was sure he wished to be a good boy—and knew he had been very naughty—but cried because I always thought him the worst” (13 Jan. 1840). They inverted Martin's policy of refusing to teach those who would not follow her direction: “Each said—he wished to be a good boy—and that if I did not care for them I should not go and teach them” (14 Jan. 1840).

Rather than punish errant behavior, Martin paid the boys more attention. “If they wished to see me every day they must prove it, and make my visit happy by trying to observe a few rules which I would write on paper and read, and let each boy who was in earnest to practice, sign his name or his approval of each by a mark.” Thus they acknowledged their failings as “wicked and naughty boys” and consented to discipline, aiming to become better boys—to learn good long lessons; cease quarrelling, fighting, stealing, and swearing; be good-tempered; find fault in themselves rather than others; mind the governor and not compel him to punish them. “If the rules were kept,” she promised them, “each should have a present of a grey cotton shirt when he left the prison. ‘I should like a grey cotton shirt said Harrod, it would be so warm’—He seemed highly pleased” (13 Jan. 1840). When they broke the rules, Martin ostentatiously tore up their pledges, then calmed them by fixing their attention on the story of Christ forgiving his murderers on the cross (Luke 23.33-34). They persuaded her to redraft the list: “After each rule had been proposed, written & read to them and each boy said he liked that rule—They were allowed in turn each to make his mark” (14 Jan. 1840). When Tunmore was ill in the infirmary, the others pleaded with Martin to visit the sick boy, “saying if they were there they would like it” (15 Jan. 1840). In the teacher’s desire to meet their needs, they seem to have sensed they had some power. When she told them she wished to leave for a few days, but could not, “Tunmore with his usual quickness replied—‘Ma’am ’tis because you cannot leave us’” (23 Jan. 1840).

While guided by the Benthamite pain-pleasure maxim, Martin opted for positive encouragement more than punitive discipline in ways akin to associationist understandings of child development. With clear guidelines on conduct her unruly scholars settled with evident pleasure into being “good boys”: “Each boy was delighted to see me write the word ‘Improved’ . . . Tunmore said ‘The Governor will be finely pleased when he sees that.’” They showed some gallantry toward their teacher, carrying her books as they escorted her to the prison gate. She allowed them to mend books for workhouse children, an activity designed to keep them quiet and busy, give them experience of doing good for others, and instill respect for books. They were rewarded with more stories, read by Hickling to his mates, who were “much interested in looking at the pictures—which alone give some good lessons” (16 Jan. 1840).

Martin’s journal betrays her pleasure in satisfying their desires:

As soon as I appeared this morning the boys rushed forward to take my Paper Case &&. “Ma’am, we have been waiting for you” they exclaimed. Are your lessons then perfectly learned, and have you been keeping the Rules? Of course they replied in the affirmative—“Have you brought the Pictures which you promised to show us?” (Some pictures on Scripture characters & subjects) yes I have. And have you brought the combs?—I have, I replied, but not having seen the Governor, hope he has nothing to say about you that would prevent your having them. (21 Jan. 1840)

The acquisitive boys constantly pressed for more, but despite incentives they struggled to restrain their behavior. Sewing shirts and mending books promoted a very different kind of boyhood from the one they knew. Christian boys were kind to animals and little girls; they took pleasure helping in the home and reading their books. They did not play aggressive sports, take bets, torture God’s creatures, or fight, and they grew up to be sober, hard-working husbands and fathers, as committed as their wives to their homes and families. But the rivalries the boys experienced outside jail pressed on them as they strove to assert masculine prowess. Patterson was “unkind” to point out Tunmore’s torn spelling book (20 Jan. 1840). They fought over who had the prettiest comb (22 Jan. 1840). Layton laughed at Tunmore for crying over a story about a shipwreck (14 Jan. 1840), a favorite sentimental theme of evangelical tracts and popular melodrama (Lincoln 155-61). For Martin, these disputes revealed the boys’ characters, enabling her to direct their moral progress more effectively: “These little storms are productive of great advantage—they afford occasions for Instruction of the most essential values” (20 Jan. 1840). Martin now considered their “little storms” childish rather than sinister, like the boys themselves.

The teacher was reluctant to release the boys from her care and sought to extend her influence beyond the prison: “How are you to conduct yourselves so that when you meet me I may not feel ashamed to speak to you—Tunmore with the others joining him said ‘We must not swear—We must not steal—We must not lie—We must not break the Sabbath’” (24 Jan. 1840). Would Patterson be glad to leave, she asked. “‘No.’ he replied. . . . I asked will you not be glad to go out? ‘Yes’ he answered—colouring deeply and ready to cry.” An inmate explained that the boy wished to leave, “but he says he likes to have you teach him

every day.” Since Patterson was now in tears, Martin directed him to visit her weekly to repeat his lessons: “Would that I had the time to instruct him every day—and to take care of him” (30–31 Jan. 1840). The boy’s embarrassment and tears suggest that he was torn between what faced him outside jail and the loss of his teacher’s attention. How might we interpret this emotional exchange? What might it tell us about the affective power of reading, and what, if anything, can we learn of the lasting effects of the intensive reading experience that took place within the prison walls in January 1840?

V. Reading and Affect

Allington cautions that anecdotal evidence about reading cannot do the work of interpretation; rather, making use of such sources requires “theorizing the stories as cultural products in their own right—in other words, as texts” (13). This approach can be highly suggestive when we investigate the symbolic and ideological work that texts perform. Yet to appreciate the affective power of reading practices involves more than theorizing textual materials as cultural products. Martin’s mediating voice—with its tender, shifting resonances—provides evidence of the tenor and fragility of the emotional ties between teacher and scholars. Filled with anecdotes preserved solely for their significance to herself, Martin’s *Everyday Book* points to the profound investment that she and her captive readers had in works whose ostensible moral instructiveness might otherwise appear to impose strict discipline on her imprisoned pupils.

Part of the difficulty in comprehending such interactions lies in the enduring influence of Foucauldian approaches to disciplinary power, which tend to obscure the affective dynamics between the convicted and those charged with their correction (McGowen 333–34). Despite its many claims about the circularity of power, the Foucauldian model does little to illuminate the agency, however circumscribed, of the convicted. We need to look again at the conception of Christianity that animated reformers and, in particular, at their compulsion to love the sinner though not the sin, for this underlies Martin’s tenderness and severity toward her charges. We should also ask what happened when this affection was reciprocated, as it seems to have been by the boys.

Changes in Martin’s tone indicate the deeply affective nature of the reading experience she recounted and how this altered her

relationship with her pupils. Unlike most women who participated in charitable work in nineteenth-century Britain, Martin never drew upon the maternalist rhetoric of "woman's mission" and "female influence" (Caine 82-87) to justify her work with prisoners and the poor. Enchanted by the boys, however, the teacher softened, and they became her metaphorical children. She yearned not just to instruct Christmas Patterson but "to take care of him." The parental role she adopted was inspired by the gentle, if badgering, tone of the evangelical books ("dear little children"), but it also stemmed from the boys' enthusiastic responses to the stories and the storyteller.

For all of its emotional intensity, however, the reading practice that Martin so keenly recorded could not save her charges. As she feared, the month proved too short to "reclaim" them, and all the boys became persistent offenders. Their subsequent convictions demonstrate that the strengths of male friendships and pursuits operated more forcibly on their behavior than any discipline afforded by prison, employment, education, or improving books. They were repeatedly convicted of pilfering and disorderly behavior with an extended circle of juvenile offenders. In prison, they were punished for the same infractions: fighting, swearing, calling to female inmates, insolence to the guards. Harrod and Tunmore were punished for misbehaving in lessons and divine service; as the boys' defiance escalated, they became more challenging to Martin.¹²

On their initial returns, Martin continued to empathize with the boys' vulnerability and to help them find work on release (Martin 128-29). But she no longer recalled their lessons or story reading in any detail; nor did she relate their conversations and antics with the same mix of fondness and concern. As they slipped beyond her control, her disappointment showed in her retreat back to the language of prison discipline, as she no longer referred to them together as "little boys." "Naturally an agreeable boy of good common capacity," she wrote of Patterson. "He has been in prison before and in returning this time betrayed a descent in character, distinctly lower than when he first came. Firm authority, strong reproach and faithful instruction seem to be not lost upon him but he returns to the home of Mrs. Baldrell with whom his father lives" ("Successive Names and Numbers," 1840, no. 179). When the boys had been first-time offenders, she had wielded the carrot more than the stick; now that they seemed to be "hardening," she was quick to cast aside incentives in favor of punishment. Martin prepared to give

Hickling a basket of herrings to hawk, but abandoned the plan when she saw him join his “old companions” at the prison gate (“Successive Names and Numbers,” 1841, no. 52). When he came back to jail she was unable to reach him: “This boy discovers increasing depravity: bad as he was he used to be humble, now he discovers a recklessness, which cannot be concealed” (6 Jun. 1841).

Within a year, Hickling was sentenced to transportation. After twelve stints in jail, Harrod was transported in 1845.¹³ During nine imprisonments, Tunmore was disciplined more than any prisoner, while his behavior inside and outside jail grew more violent. Their tattoos, described in the penal records, reveal the young men’s rejection of the sober, Christian masculinity advocated by Martin and her books. Three wore blue dots denoting gang membership, while Layton sported a drinking cup over a pair of crossed pipes, probably a coming-of-age symbol, commemorating initiation into the tavern world of adult men.¹⁴ Although prison records suggest the boys’ growing indifference to moral instruction, they highlight their varied responses to acquiring literacy. In January 1840, none could sign his name, as their shaky marks assenting to Martin’s rules confirm. Outside jail, Harrod seems not to have continued study, for on each admission he had forgotten much of what he had learned (“Successive Names and Numbers,” 1841, no. 53). With intermittent prison education, however, he and Patterson made progress and both could read and write by their final admissions, though imperfectly in Patterson’s case.¹⁵ Hickling was writing imperfectly by 1841, and proficiently on arrival in Van Diemen’s Land in 1842.¹⁶ By 1841, Layton read imperfectly but, staying out of jail, his progress faltered and he still read imperfectly when he returned at age twenty-two. Subsequently, he made time to learn, for by 1858, when he assaulted a police officer, he could read and write, perhaps taught by the woman he had married in the interim.¹⁷ Tunmore remained illiterate (*Gaol Register, 1838–50*, 21 Jun. 1844).

Without their own testimony, we cannot know if the young men’s experience of working with Martin influenced their willingness to settle down, though evidence suggests that those who acquired literacy prospered the most. While Tunmore and Layton remained unskilled laborers, in Van Diemen’s Land Harrod ran a boat business and managed a store and public house. Patterson became master of a small ship before joining the navy and then working as a coastguard. All ceased offending—or avoided conviction—and, except for Layton,

this outcome coincided with entry into regular adult employment, marriage, and starting a family—factors promoting desistance more generally (Godfrey, Cox, and Farrall 107–08).

Anecdotal evidence from prisoners elsewhere confirms the affective power of reading for the incarcerated, even if its ideological effects are hard to discern. Though central policy lurched between prohibitive and more permissive attitudes toward reading, from the 1850s onward most prison libraries expanded; many included the fiction and novels savored by inmates (Fyfe 175–87). According to Jenny Hartley, it was not just the literary content that touched these readers, but also the human connections promoted by shared reading. A prison matron recalled a female inmate who “was partial” to reading Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852) to illiterate prisoners, narrating “with such animation . . . that considerable virtuous indignation would be aroused in the breasts of her listeners” (qtd. in Hartley 98–99). When the governor of Reading Gaol offered Oscar Wilde the book he had just read, the imprisoned author “melted into tears” (qtd. in Hartley 99), an incident signaling “the gestural power of books.” Exchanging book talk with his visitors and correspondents, Hartley concludes, became one of Wilde’s chief consolations (100). Wilde was a very different kind of reader than the five boys or the female prisoners who relished *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, yet each valued the fellowship found in sharing books. The gestural and affective power of books, the giving and receiving of stories, secured the intimate bond between Sarah Martin and the five boys, however strained the bond became.

The boys’ voracious consumption of Martin’s books compels us to reconsider how other lower-class readers responded to didactic literature. Though they took place in a prison ward, the boys’ lessons differed little from the classes attended by children of the poor in workhouse, monitorial, and Sunday schools. These young scholars collaborated with each other, practicing the communal approach to reading and learning fostered by tract literature. Just as the five boys gathered around their teacher, many would have knelt at the knees of relatives and friends to enjoy the closeness of sharing little picture books, no matter how indifferent they might be to their moral messages. In this way, they were similar to more privileged children who “were not cowed by a book’s didacticism, but enjoyed their books despite it” (Grenby 286).

We might be tempted to view Martin’s pupils as “resistant readers,” but this characterization is too strong, implying their conscious

rejection of the ideological values the books conveyed. They are better identified, to borrow Grenby's term, as volatile readers who opportunistically used the cultural resources that came their way, but whose responses were excitable, unpredictable, and unruly. At one moment they were touched by a story; in the next, it was forgotten. While the boys appear to have recognized themselves in Martin's stories, they were acquisitive, anarchic consumers. "Bad Boy," Martin wrote of Tunmore. "I have found it quite impossible to get him to remember the Alphabet. Yet after having been very frequently told he remembered a short sentence, part of a verse from the Scriptures daily. He likes to have a Spelling Book, which he only spoils." The illiterate boy, imprisoned for stealing books he could not read, continued to enjoy the sociable and transgressive opportunities afforded by books. "When he sits next to a prisoner in the Chapel who cannot find the prayers he takes the book, pretending to find the place, and sometimes succeeds." Does Martin's frustration inadvertently disclose a boy still trying, however incompetently, to please his teacher? Her exasperation betrays a note of sympathy and pragmatic recognition of the forces that took Tunmore from her: "He is an annoyance to the neighbourhood by his pilfering and mischievous habits—Will not get improvement from his parents—and doubtless will soon be in Prison again" ("Successive Names and Numbers," 1840, no. 81).

Though the literature Martin gave the boys was designed to break the "contaminating influences" of family and friends that prison reformers so feared, the boys' shared reading appears to have tightened the bonds of friendship and codes of youthful masculinity that bound them. Their repeated offenses, committed with other juveniles, suggest that these ties sustained them when they exited the prison gates. They had claims on their attention stronger than any influences exerted in the jail: their reputation among peers, the jostle for recognition, the bravado of boys becoming men. The boys could not meet these pressures and their teacher's approval. But the boys' initial eagerness for, and delight in, Martin's story reading suggests that they craved something more from their teacher: affection, tenderness, a little quiet, and attention, qualities so often absent in their chaotic lives. These captivated readers wanted her, not just her books. And, as Martin regretted, they had to give her up.

Liverpool John Moores University

NOTES

I would like to thank Daniel Allington, Joseph Bristow, James Friel, Matthew Grenby, Jenny Hartley, Ruth Livesey, Glenda Norquay, and the readers at *Victorian Studies* for insightful and encouraging responses to versions of this article.

¹I use Martin’s spelling and punctuation throughout. Unless otherwise stated, all dates cited in the body of this essay are to Martin’s *Everyday Books*, covering the period 1836–41, held by Great Yarmouth Museums at the Tolhouse. Excerpts from her *Everyday Books* were published in Martin’s short memoir in 1844. Page references are to the expanded edition of the memoir, *Sarah Martin, the Prison Visitor of Great Yarmouth, with extracts from her Writings and Prison Journals*, probably published in 1847.

²Thanks to Daniel Allington for pointing out this trope.

³For the importance of reading in prison reform, see Bell 151; Crone, “Attempts” 8–9 and “Great” 49–51; Hartley 89–90; and Fyfe 212–15. For reading and juvenile offenders, see Shore 37–39.

⁴*The History of Dick Wildgoose* may have been an evangelical reworking of Oliver Goldsmith’s jest about Dick Wild-goose, a story without any clear moral point (Goldsmith 336–37). My thanks to Matthew Grenby for this reference. The story may also have been influenced by the lengthier Religious Tract Society tale *Idle Dick* (n.d.), translated from French.

⁵The register of prisoners, “Successive Names and Numbers from November 7th 1839–1842,” is included in Martin, “Everyday Book from November 7 1839–April 6 1840.” Each admitted prisoner was assigned a number, which I provide with the prisoner’s year of entry.

⁶The boys were among the growing number of children brought before the magistrates under the Vagrancy Act of 1824 and the Malicious Trespass Act of 1827, which dramatically increased the conviction of juveniles (Magarey 20–21).

⁷There are differences between the ages recorded in the *Census Returns*, the *Gaol Registers*, and Martin’s register. I cite Martin’s record of the boys’ ages in her register, “Successive Names and Numbers from November 7th 1839–1842.”

⁸See *Gaol Register, 1838–50* for 17 Dec. 1839, 2 Jan. 1840, and 15 Dec. 1840.

⁹See *Gaol Register, 1838–50*, 3 Mar. 1842 and 7 Apr. 1842; Martin, “Successive Names and Numbers” 144–45; *Gaol Keeper’s Journal, 1841–45*, 11 May 1842.

¹⁰Examples of industrious scholars appear in other tracts bound with *Honesty and Dishonesty* in the British Library: *Scripture Knowledge; How to Enlarge a Sunday School; and Duty to Teachers*.

¹¹Reformers called for reformatories to cater to the distinctive needs of young offenders and protect them from contamination by their families at home and by older prisoners in jail—a sentiment clearly shared by Martin. See May 7–8; King 142–61.

¹²See *Gaol Keeper’s Journal, 1841–45* for 9 Jun. 1841, 23 Jun. 1842, 7 Jul. 1842, and 27 Jul. 1842.

¹³See William Hickling, 6511 (Convict Department, *CON33/1/27 Surrey [4]*); Robert Harrod, 15914 (Convict Department, *CON33/1/67 Theresa*).

¹⁴See William Hickling, 6511 (Convict Department, *CON33/1/27 Surrey [4]*); Robert Harrod, 15914 (Convict Department, *CON33/1/67 Theresa*); *Gaol Register, 1838–50*, 10 Jun. 1850.

¹⁵See *Gaol Register, 1838–50*, 30 Jul. 1844 and 7 Sept. 1844.

¹⁶See William Hickling, 6511 (Convict Department, *CON33/1/27 Surrey [4]*).

¹⁷See *Gaol Register, 1855–60*. Book 2. 25 Jan. 1858.

WORKS CITED

- Allington, Daniel. "On the Use of Anecdotal Evidence in Reception Study and the History of Reading." Ed. Bonnie Gunzenhauser. *Reading in History: New Methodologies from the Anglo-American Tradition*. London: Pickering and Chatto, 2010: 11–28.
- Altick, Richard D. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800–1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1957.
- Anderson, Patricia. *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture 1790–1860*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1994.
- Bell, Bill. "Bound for Botany Bay; or, What Did the Nineteenth-Century Convict Read?" *Against the Law: Crime, Sharp Practice and the Control of Print*. Ed. Robin Myers, Michael Harris, and Giles Mandelbrote. London: British Library, 2004. 151–75.
- Bratton, J. S. *The Impact of Victorian Children's Literature*. London: Croom Helm, 1981.
- Burnett, John. *Destiny Obscure: Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984.
- Caine, Barbara. *English Feminism 1780–1980*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997.
- Census Returns of England and Wales, 1841*. Public Record Office, 1841. Provo: Ancestry.com Operations, 2010. <www.ancestry.com>
- Convict Department. *CON33/1/27 Surrey (4)*. 1842. *Conduct Registers of Male Convicts Arriving in the Period of the Probation System. 1 Jan. 1840–31 Dec. 1853*. Hobart: State Archives Office of Tasmania. <<http://search.archives.tas.gov.au/default.aspx?detail=1&type=S&id=CON33>>
- . *CON33/1/67 Theresa*. 1845. *Conduct Registers of Male Convicts Arriving in the Period of the Probation System. 1 Jan. 1840–31 Dec. 1853*. Hobart: State Archives Office of Tasmania. <<http://search.archives.tas.gov.au/default.aspx?detail=1&type=S&id=CON33>>
- Crone, Rosalind. "Attempts to (Re)shape Common Reading Habits: Bible Reading on the Nineteenth-Century Convict Ship." *Palmer and Buckland* 103–20.
- . "The Great 'Reading' Experiment: An Examination of the Role of Education in the Nineteenth-Century Gaol." *Crime, History & Societies* 16.1 (2012): 47–74.
- Dickens, Charles. *Oliver Twist*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1999.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991.
- Fyfe, Janet. *Books Behind Bars: The Role of Books, Reading, and Libraries in British Prison Reform, 1701–1911*. Westport: Greenwood, 1992.
- Gaol Keeper's Journal, 1836–40*. Great Yarmouth Borough Gaol. Norwich: Norfolk Record Office. Y/L2/47.
- Gaol Keeper's Journal, 1841–45*. Great Yarmouth Borough Gaol. Norwich: Norfolk Record Office. Y/L2/48.

- Gaol Register, 1808–38*. Great Yarmouth Borough Gaol. Norwich: Norfolk Record Office. Y/L2/8.
- Gaol Register, 1838–50*. Great Yarmouth Borough Gaol. Norwich: Norfolk Record Office. Y/L2/9.
- Gaol Register, 1855–60*. Book 2. Great Yarmouth Borough Gaol. Norwich: Norfolk Record Office. Y/L2/11.
- Godfrey, Barry S., David J. Cox, and Stephen D. Farrall. *Criminal Lives: Family Life, Employment and Offending*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007.
- Goldsmith, Oliver. *Works*. Ed. J. W. M. Gibbs. Vol. 2. London: n.p., 1885–86.
- Grenby, Matthew O. *The Child Reader, 1700–1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011.
- Hartley, Jenny. "Reading in Gaol." Palmer and Buckland 87–102.
- Heath, Pauline. "Mrs Trimmer's Plan of Appropriate Instruction: A Revisionist View of her Textbooks." *History of Education* 32.3 (2003): 385–400.
- The History of Dick Wildgoose, Shewing that Idleness leads to Mischief, and Mischief to Misery*. London: J. Davies, [1839].
- The Honest Chimney-Sweeper*. n.p.: n.d.
- Honesty and Dishonesty*. London: Religious Tract Society, 1830.
- Idle Dick, Or the History of Richard Watson*. London: Religious Tract Society, n.d.
- Index of Examined Paupers, 1756–1844*. Norwich: Norfolk Record Office. Y/L16/8.
- Jones, William. *Jubilee Memorial of the Religious Tract Society: Containing a Record of its Origin, Proceedings, and Results, 1799–1849*. London: Religious Tract Society, 1850.
- King, Peter. *Crime and Law in England, 1750–1840*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006.
- Lincoln, Margarette. "Shipwreck Narratives of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries: Indicators of Culture and Identity." *Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies* 20.2 (1997): 155–72.
- McGowen, Randall. "A Powerful Sympathy: Terror, the Prison, and Humanitarian Reform in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain." *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986): 312–34.
- Magarey, Susan. "The Invention of Juvenile Delinquency in Early Nineteenth-Century England." *Labour History* 34 (1978): 11–27.
- Maidment, Brian. "Domestic Ideology and its Industrial Enemies: The Title Page of the *Family Economist*, 1848–1850." Ed. Christopher Parker. *Gender Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Literature*. Aldershot: Scolar, 1995. 25–56.
- Martin, Sarah. "Copy Books written by prisoners under tuition of Sarah Martin. From April 12 1840 to August 12 1840." Everyday Books. MS. Great Yarmouth Museums at the Tolhouse, Great Yarmouth.
- . "Donations for General Purposes, 1824–1841." Sarah Martin's Account Book. MS. Great Yarmouth Museums at the Tolhouse, Great Yarmouth.
- . "Everyday Book from November 7 1839–April 6 1840." Everyday Books. MS. Great Yarmouth Museums at the Tolhouse, Great Yarmouth.
- . "Prison School Journal 1836–1838." Everyday Books. MS. Great Yarmouth Museums at the Tolhouse, Great Yarmouth.
- . *Sarah Martin, the Prison Visitor of Great Yarmouth, with extracts from her Writings and Prison Journals, a New Edition with Additions*. London: Religious Tract Society, [1847].
- . "Successive Names and Numbers from November 7th 1839–1842." MS. Included in "Everyday Book from November 7 1839." Great Yarmouth Museums at the Tolhouse, Great Yarmouth.

AUTUMN 2012

- May, Margaret. "Innocence and Experience: The Evolution of the Concept of Juvenile Delinquency in the Mid-Nineteenth Century." *Victorian Studies* 17.1 (1973): 7-29.
- Minutes of Board of Guardian Great Yarmouth, April 1837-September 1840*. Norwich: Norfolk Record Office. Y/WE/69.
- Myers, Mitzi. "Hannah More's Tracts for the Times: Social Fiction and Female Ideology." Ed. Mary Anne Schofield and Cecilia Macheski. *Fetter'd or Free? British Women Novelists, 1670-1815*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1986. 264-84.
- Neuberg, Victor. *The Penny Histories: A Study of Chapbooks for Young Readers over Two Centuries*. New York: Harcourt, 1968.
- Palmer, Beth, and Adelene Buckland, eds. *A Return to the Common Reader: Print Culture and the Novel, 1850-1900*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011.
- Pedersen, Susan. "Hannah More Meets Simple Simon: Tracts, Chapbooks, and Popular Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century England." *Journal of British Studies* 25.1 (1986): 84-113.
- Peterson, Linda H. "From French Revolution to English Reform: Hannah More, Harriet Martineau, and the 'Little Book.'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 6.4 (2006): 409-50.
- Philips, David. *Crime and Authority in Victorian England: The Black Country 1835-60*. London: Croom Helm, 1977.
- Porter, G. R. "Results of an Enquiry into the Condition of the Labouring Classes in five parishes in the County of Norfolk." *Central Society of Education, Third Publication*. London: Taylor, 1839. 368-74.
- Priestley, Philip. *Victorian Prison Lives: English Prison Biography 1830-1914*. London: Pimlico, 1999.
- Robson, Catherine. "Standing on the Burning Deck: Poetry, Performance, History." *PMLA* 120.1 (2005): 148-62.
- Rogers, Helen. "The Way to Jerusalem: Reading, Writing and Reform in an Early Victorian Gaol." *Past and Present* 205 (2009): 71-104.
- Rose, Jonathan. *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2001.
- Saunders, Julia. "Putting the Reader Right: Reassessing Hannah More's *Cheap Repository Tracts*." *Romanticism on the Net* 16 (1999). <<http://www.erudit.org/revue/ron/1999/v/n16/005881ar.html>>
- Shore, Heather. *Artful Dodgers: Youth and Crime in Early Nineteenth-Century London*. Woodbridge: Boydell, 2002.
- Trimmer, Mrs. [Sarah]. *The Charity School Spelling Book. Containing the alphabet, spelling lessons, and short stories of good and bad boys*. London: Printed for F. and C. Rivington, 1799. *Eighteenth-Century Collections Online*.
- Twells, Alison. *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class, 1792-1850*. Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2000.
- Vincent, David. *Bread, Knowledge, and Freedom: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working Class Autobiography*. London: Methuen, 1981.
- . *Literacy and Popular Culture in England 1750-1914*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Webb, R. K. *The British Working-Class Reader*. London: Allen, 1938.