



THE COLLECTED WORKS OF  
ANN HAWKSHAW

EDITED BY DEBBIE BARK



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Cover image of Ann Hawkshaw courtesy of Lady Alexandra Wedgwood.

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## Preface and Acknowledgements

In the early 1990s Ann Hawkshaw's poetry was included in the first wave of the critical recovery of Victorian women poets led by Isobel Armstrong. Armstrong included Hawkshaw in her landmark survey of women's poetry of the Victorian period, "A Music of Thine Own": Women's Poetry – An Expressive Tradition?' in *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (1993). Armstrong notes that Hawkshaw was 'an educated poet with strong working-class connections who produced orthodox-seeming work with unusual subtexts', judging Hawkshaw to be 'an impressively strong and independent writer'.<sup>1</sup> She comments on Hawkshaw's long narrative poem 'Dionysius the Areopagite', mentions her sonnet sequence, *Sonnets on Anglo-Saxon History*, and makes brief readings of 'Why am I a Slave?' and 'The Mother to her Starving Child'. She concludes that Hawkshaw's work 'is exceptional' (323). Hawkshaw's short lyric poems 'Why am I a Slave?' and 'The Mother to her Starving Child' are included in *Nineteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology* (1996), co-edited by Armstrong. The entry for Hawkshaw, which begins 'very little is known about Ann Jackson's (later Hawkshaw's) life', goes on to give a brief outline biography, noting her Manchester connections to Elizabeth Gaskell and Samuel Bamford and suggesting that she may have been a Unitarian.<sup>2</sup> The biographical introduction concludes by identifying Hawkshaw as the children's poet, 'Aunt Effie': 'She was best known for the children's poetry that she wrote under the name of 'Aunt Effie', whose two books of nursery rhymes were brought out in 1852 and 1854' (346). The identification of Hawkshaw as 'Aunt Effie', while commonplace, is mistaken. Although several early twentieth-century educational readers and anthologies of children's poetry published in England and the United States include poems from *Aunt Effie's Rhymes for Little Children* (1852) and *Aunt Effie's Gift to the Nursery* (1854) and cite Hawkshaw as the author, or conversely, include Hawkshaw's poems under the name 'Aunt Effie', the connection of Ann Hawkshaw to 'Aunt Effie' is erroneous. The pseudonym is that of Jane Euphemia Browne, who, as Morag Styles notes in her survey of the history of children's poetry, was the 'daughter of a well-to-do landowner in Cumberland', who 'wrote books of verse [...] which were much loved at the time.'<sup>3</sup>

Ann Hawkshaw published three volumes of poetry: *Dionysius the Areopagite*, with *Other Poems* (London: Jackson & Walford; Manchester: Simms & Dinham, 1842); *Poems for My Children* (London: Simpkin & Marshall; Manchester: Simms & Dinham, 1847); and *Sonnets on Anglo-Saxon History* (London: John Chapman, 1854). A fourth volume of poems and short stories, *Cecil's Own Book*, was printed for private circulation in 1871. As the span of three decades between the first and last examples of Hawkshaw's writing suggests, her poetry offers an exceptional insight into the changing political and religious landscape of the mid-nineteenth century. Conveyed through the perspective of a woman who began life in a large family of dissenters working the land in rural Yorkshire, and who, by the time

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1 Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Poetry: Poetry, Poetics and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1993), 322.

2 Isobel Armstrong, Joseph Bristow and Cath Sharrock, eds, *Nineteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 346–8.

3 Morag Styles, *From the Garden to the Street: Three Hundred Years of Poetry for Children* (London: Cassell, 1998), 96. A discussion of the misappropriation of Hawkshaw's work can be found in Appendix B.

of her death, was titled, affluent and moved in the most influential cultural and literary circles of the age, Hawkshaw's poetry is a valuable addition to the field of nineteenth-century literary scholarship. The themes of death, religion, science, history and nation that run through Hawkshaw's poetry demonstrate her capacity for extended critical thought, as she engages with subjects at the heart of nineteenth-century cultural and religious debates whilst challenging the work of established scholars and writers.

*The Collected Works* brings together Hawkshaw's four volumes and reprints them for the first time, whilst the introduction fills in the biographical gaps noted by Isobel Armstrong in order for Hawkshaw and her poetry to be viewed in a literary and cultural context. An appendix of reviews and contemporary criticism of Hawkshaw's work is included, along with details of the republication of individual poems. Headnotes to each of the volumes include the date and place of publication, details of contemporary reviews and further biographical information where appropriate. Footnotes are included where clarification of an event, place, person or source would be useful. Annotations to the poems included in the original text have been reproduced in the footnotes and placed in brackets as [Poet's Note]. All other annotations are my own. In transcribing these poems I have kept the original spelling, punctuation and, indeed, capitalization of the texts, footnoting corrections where an obvious misspelling occurs, in order to remain as faithful as possible to the original publication. I have worked throughout from printed editions rather than authorial manuscripts as these have not yet been recovered and, indeed, may not be extant.

In piecing together a biography for Ann Hawkshaw I am indebted to her descendants who have offered me every help in accessing family documents from which to tease out the details of her life. My first and warmest thanks are to Lady Sandra Wedgwood, who, with her late husband Sir Martin, welcomed me into their home in the early days of my research, sharing family portraits and providing an introduction to other members of the extended family including James Caulfeild and Diane Whitehead, and Hawkshaw's great-great-grand-daughter Dr Christabel Barran. The primary sources for Hawkshaw's biography comprise the unpublished memoir of John Clarke Hawkshaw, Ann's eldest son, which was compiled in 1913 and later transcribed from the manuscript notebooks by Martin Beaumont with the original retained by Dr Barran, and Ann's brief memoir, 'Memories of My Childhood', which she began writing in Scotland in late 1856, following the death of her eleven-year-old son Oliver. The memoir is written in a bound, hardback, lockable notebook, largely without corrections; I thank Mrs Whitehead for her kind access to this valuable resource. In addition, the Hollycombe House visitors' book, covering the period from 1873 to 1935 and logging the visits of Charles and Emma Darwin, Alfred Tennyson and his son Hallam, and others to the Hawkshaws' Sussex home, was generously shared by Mrs Whitehead.

In addition to the unpublished memoirs, letters written by Ann to Unitarian and educationalist John Relly Beard, dated 1851 and 1862, and to her son Henry, written at various dates in the 1860s and covering mainly family matters, give a voice to Hawkshaw as a friend and mother. I am grateful to the Woodhouse Collection, John Rylands University Library, Manchester, and to the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service, Staffordshire Records Office respectively, for their help in accessing these letters. Thanks also to David Southern at Duke University Press, compilers of the Carlyle Letters Online, who kindly provided a copy of a letter written by Ann's husband, John Hawkshaw, to Thomas Carlyle, dated 22 January 1844, in which he enclosed a copy of Ann's volume

'*Dionysius the Areopagite*', with *Other Poems* for Carlyle's perusal. Carlyle in turn forwarded this to his mother with a covering letter, a transcript of which David kindly supplied.

My warmest thanks are extended to John Holmes at the University of Reading whose support of my work on Hawkshaw has been of immeasurable value. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council for their sponsorship of the initial research into Hawkshaw's work through their doctoral award scheme. Thanks also to Anthem Press for their commitment to republish rare or scarce material; without this vision Hawkshaw's work may have remained unread for another century. Particular thanks to Tej Sood and Rob Reddick at Anthem for their guidance in bringing this project to publication.

A version of Hawkshaw's biography was first published in *British Writers*, supplement 18: my grateful thanks to Gale, Cengage Learning for their generosity in giving kind permission to reproduce the biography, with amendments and additions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Debbie Bark, 'Ann Hawkshaw', *British Writers*, supplement 18 (2012): 127–43. © 2012 Gale, a part of Cengage Learning, Inc. Reproduced by permission. [www.cengage.com/permissions](http://www.cengage.com/permissions).

# Biographical Introduction

On 1 May 1885, the *Manchester Guardian* published the following obituary for Lady Hawkshaw, who had died the previous week at her London home:

Death of Lady Hawkshaw.—We much regret to announce the death, which took place on Wednesday evening, at her residence, Belgrave Mansions, Grosvenor Gardens, London, of Ann, wife of Sir John Hawkshaw, F.R.S. Among many accomplished women who have made their home in Manchester during the past half century, none secured a deeper regard than the gifted lady whose death we now record. Lady Hawkshaw was the daughter of the Rev. James Jackson, of Green Hammerton, Yorkshire, where she was born in 1813 [*sic*]. Soon after her marriage (in 1835) her husband was appointed engineer to the Manchester and Bolton Canal and Railway, and subsequently to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway; and they took up their residence in the first instance in Sandy Lane, Pendleton; afterwards in Islington Square, Salford; and for some years at Broughton Lodge, Higher Broughton. It was during her fifteen to twenty years' residence in Manchester that Mrs Hawkshaw gave to the world strong evidence of being possessed of the poetic gift. If we remember rightly, some of her earliest effusions appeared in the *Manchester Guardian*—a corner of which at that period was supplied by the muse of some of our best-known local poets. In 1842 appeared 'Dionysius the Areopagite, with other Poems. By Ann Hawkshaw'. The little volume, which was issued by a firm of local publishers—Messrs. Simms and Dinham, of Exchange-street,—attracted considerable attention and was very favourably received both in London and the provinces. In 1847 she published another volume of verse, called 'Poems for My Children', which showed much tenderness of feeling and beauty of expression. In 1854 she published a series of 98 'Sonnets on Anglo-Saxon History', and in 1871 a series of prose and poetical sketches for children entitled 'Cecil's Own Book'.<sup>5</sup>

Clearly proud of her association with the city and her contribution to its cultural heritage, the obituary traces Ann Hawkshaw's rise from a clergyman's daughter to a writer who earned the respect of Manchester's literary community. In privileging her talent as a poet over her status as the wife of a leading Victorian engineer, the 1885 obituary acknowledges Hawkshaw as a poet of some note: an accolade not repeated until the recent rediscovery of her work.

By the time of her death Ann Hawkshaw had been granted an honorific title and was well positioned in late-Victorian society, yet her start in life was somewhat more modest. She was born on 14 October 1812, the second daughter of the Reverend James Jackson (1776–1849), dissenting minister of the Green Hammerton Independent Chapel in the West Riding of Yorkshire, and his wife Mary (née Clarke). Ann, their third child (Jane had been born in 1806 and James in 1809), would be followed by a further eleven children, although by the time Ann left home to be married in 1835, seven of these children had died, including Ann's beloved elder sister Jane. James Jackson had come to Green Hammerton from Allerton Mauleverer, near Knaresborough, in 1794. He was ordained on

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<sup>5</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 1 May 1885, 8.



5 November 1801 and would go on to enjoy a 40-year tenure as congregational minister of the parish. At the vanguard of a religious revolution, Jackson and his fellow clergymen offered rural Yorkshire an alternative to the established church and oversaw the building of independent chapels in Green Hammerton and surrounding villages.

In the spring of 1806, the Reverend Jackson married Mary Clarke, the daughter of an agricultural family who had owned land in Green Hammerton for over three hundred years. With Mary's parents living close by, the young Jackson children revelled in the attention of their grandparents, and were free to explore the rural landscape during frequent walks and visits to neighbours. Ann's descriptions of Green Hammerton, recorded in later life in her short manuscript memoir, 'Memories of My Childhood', resonate with nostalgia for the rural idyll. 'My native village', she recalls, 'was one of the prettiest in the north of England', a 'perfect picture of rural comfort and country beauty' – especially on those fine afternoons in summer or early autumn 'when the heavy laden wagons were slowly coming up the road and the well-fed cows were returning to their pastures after milking-time'.<sup>6</sup> In this large clergyman's family, blessed with an abundance of life and yet touched by the reality of early death, Ann was raised under the strong and principled religious and moral influence of her father and grandfather, and the nurturing and encouraging eyes of a mother and grandmother who inspired Ann's love of reading, learning and nature. In her memoir, Ann remembers her maternal grandmother with fondness, describing her as 'a beautiful character' and admits to feeling for her 'a love scarcely second to that I felt for my mother'. With her elder sister Jane, Ann would sit sewing with her grandmother, listening attentively to her stories. Although their grandmother tended to 'dwell on her long rambles over wild heaths and moors on a horse that no one but herself would mount', the girls would steer her towards their favourite subjects, for she 'had a strong and energetic mind and could make clear and just views of life and duty'. Ann grew to admire her grandmother's free-thinking and religious independence, hearing how she 'left the Church of England in whose communion she had been brought up, and joined the dissenters', because her 'free mind turned with disgust from clergymen stained with vice of the most odious kinds, and her soul revolted at men who in meanness and dishonesty were below the peasants they professed to instruct'. Ann recalls her grandmother's small bookcase, 'filled with devotional books of that severe theology taught by the dissenters and the Evangelical clergy aroused from their lethargy by the preaching of Whitefield, Wesley, and Rowland Hill',<sup>7</sup> but goes on to suggest that 'Calvin's stern creed could never affect her heart, filled as it was with the gentlest of womanly affections'.<sup>8</sup>

'I was a very happy but a very idle child', recalls Hawkshaw. 'At six years old I could not read, nay did not know my letters and the only tears I remember to have shed were shed over the "Reading Made Easy"<sup>9</sup> – oh sad misnomer.' Although slow to read, Ann nevertheless took great pleasure in listening to the rhymes and rhythms of Ann and Jane

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6 Ann Hawkshaw, 'Memories of my Childhood' (1856), unpublished. Original manuscript viewed with the kind permission of Mrs Diane Whitehead.

7 George Whitefield (1714–70): English evangelical preacher and evangelist, founder of Calvinistic Methodism; John Wesley (1703–91): English theologian and evangelist, founder of the Methodist movement; Rowland Hill (1744–1833): English preacher and evangelical.

8 John Calvin (1509–64): Christian reformer and theologian, principal figure in the development of Calvinism.

9 A reference to one of the many early nineteenth-century educational readers comprising exercises in reading and spelling, often based around stories from the scriptures.

Taylor's recently published poetry for children. Under the guidance of her mother, Ann became part of that first generation of children to learn by rote the work of the Taylor sisters. 'In my worst dunce days I could learn hymns and pieces of poetry from hearing them read over a few times', Ann recalls, 'and never thought it a hardship to stand by my Mother's knee and while she plied her needle with a book open before her taught me one of Jane Taylor's little hymns for infant minds, or one of her "Original Poems"'.<sup>10</sup> Before long, Ann became a competent, then voracious, independent reader: 'When I did acquire the art of reading all my other amusements appeared tame in comparison [...]. I became a devourer of books; suitable ones if they were to be had, unsuitable if no others were to be got.' Her access to books was limited by circumstance; as she observes, 'The price of books at that time placed good libraries beyond the reach of persons of moderate income and reading societies had not sprung into being. However life is full of compensations, and if I had not many books to read those I had were well studied and highly prized; nature was more loved and admired perhaps than it is by young people of these novel reading days.'

Ann took great delight in her ability to read and was keen to demonstrate her skill at every opportunity. She recalls her visits to neighbouring agricultural workers Fanny and Thomas, 'a humble honest couple' who 'brought up a family of seven or eight children without any aid from the Parish though they never could have had more than twelve shillings a month'. Fanny's 'desire for information on subjects beyond the narrow sphere of her own observation was intense', remembers Hawkshaw, 'and her memory wonderfully retentive; she read well, which I believe she learned to do after she became an adult, her husband could not, but would gladly listen to her'. She continues:

I was a great favourite with this good pair and often in my walks up and down the village called to see them; I was a prodigy of learning in their eyes, for climbing on Fanny's knee I poured out all my stories of Knowledge into her attentive ears, scraps from newspapers, anecdotes from biographies I heard my father relate at table, old tales found in some of the first numbers of 'The Lady's Magazine' some odd volumes of which I used to pour over at my Grandfather's [...], adventures of shipwrecked mariners, descriptions of volcanoes and whirlpools and monsters of the sea: my information was of the most heterogeneous sort but its truth was never questioned: 'She read it out of a book' was thought enough to silence all sceptics to the correctness of my stories, and Fanny's 'Thank you honey for coming to see us' and Thomas's aside of 'What a bairn it is' sent me home quite happy for the rest of the evening.

Looking back on these visits, Hawkshaw wryly observes that her 'vanity was often too much flattered by poor Thomas, who had less judgement than his wife'.

Whilst the value of reading and learning was instilled in Ann at home, at the age of fourteen she was sent away to school. She recalls that 'the first real sorrow I ever had, at

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<sup>10</sup> Ann and Jane Taylor published a number of volumes of poetry for children: *Original Poems for Infant Minds* was first issued in two volumes in 1804 and 1805, *Rhymes for the Nursery* followed in 1806, and *Hymns for Infant Minds* in 1808. Jane Taylor's poem 'The Star' from *Rhymes for the Nursery* is better known as 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'. In her memoir Hawkshaw quotes lines from 'A Child's Hymn of Praise' (*Hymns for Infant Minds*): 'I thank the goodness and the grace / Which on my birth have smiled, / And made me in these Christian days, / A happy English child.'

least so I judge now, as it remains imprinted on my memory after thirty years have gone by [...], was leaving home for school – I was sent into the neighbourhood of Gomersal amidst the scenes of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*.' From 1826, Ann was a boarder at the Moravian School in Little Gomersal, about forty miles distant from Green Hammerton; the Moravian Church had opened a day school for girls there in 1758, converting to a girls' boarding school in 1792. This connection of landscape to literary markers is a feature of Hawkshaw's memoir: old willow trees stretching across the river where she played as a child are recalled in terms of 'poor Ophelia' in an allusion to the death of Ophelia in *Hamlet*; when describing the neighbourhood of Thorp Green, one of her favourite childhood haunts, Hawkshaw remarks: 'I think some of the scenes described in Anne Brontë's *Agnes Grey* refer to scenes she witnessed at Thorp Green; certainly the descriptions of the lanes with primrose-covered banks, or the plantation thicketed fields were taken from it.' Details of Hawkshaw's formal education are scant. However, through the thematic concerns of her poetry it is clear that she was widely read in all manner of topics and a competent researcher. The allusions to classical and biblical history in the long narrative poem 'Dionysius the Areopagite', the engagement with religious and scientific debates in 'The Past' and 'The Future' and the extensive and heavily researched *Sonnets on Anglo-Saxon History* suggest a remarkable depth of knowledge and a keen intellectual curiosity that extended beyond her school years.

At some time during the late 1820s, Ann met her future husband, John Hawkshaw. John had been born on 9 April 1811, the fifth child of Leeds publican Henry Hawkshaw (1774–1813) and his wife Sarah Carrington. Ann and John's paths most likely crossed during family visits to the village of Hampsthwaite, some fifteen miles west of Green Hammerton. Here, John's uncle on his mother's side and Ann's uncle on her father's were in business: Peter Carrington as a blacksmith, William Jackson as a farmer. Having left Leeds Grammar School at 13 to take up a local engineering apprenticeship as pupil of road surveyor Charles Fowler, John Hawkshaw had spent five years working on local turnpike schemes. In 1830, John moved to Liverpool as assistant to Alexander Nimmo, surveying a proposed railway connection from Liverpool to the Humber via Leeds. When Nimmo died in 1832, John decided to travel to South America, as engineer to the Bolivar Mining Association's copper mines at Aroa, Venezuela. By September 1834, John was forced to return from Venezuela through ill health, and on 20 March 1835 he and Ann were married, in the parish of Whixley, close to Green Hammerton.

At the time of their marriage, John was living in Liverpool, but by 1836, the Hawkshaws had relocated to Salford, where John took up an appointment with the Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal Company. Having been invalided home from Venezuela, John continued to suffer from ill health. As John Clarke notes in his diary, the first doctor his father consulted in Manchester 'told him he had cancer of the liver', but 'not satisfied that his was such a hopeless case, he consulted another physician who told him to go home and live well, which he did, and ever after enjoyed excellent health, with one exception, that for many years he had a slight recurrence of ague once a year'.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, John Hawkshaw flourished in Manchester as engineer to the Manchester and Leeds Railway, capitalising on the expansion of the railway network across the North West. Aside from his considerable contribution to civil engineering, John made a valuable contribution to the field of nineteenth-century

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11 'The Diary of John Clarke Hawkshaw of Hollycombe', vol. 1 (1913), unpublished. Transcribed from the manuscript notebooks by Martin Beaumont, original notebooks retained by John Clarke Hawkshaw's great-grand-daughter, Dr Christabel Barran.

travel writing by publishing a memoir of his trip to Venezuela. Published in London in 1838 by Jackson & Walford, the official publisher for the Congregational Union, *Reminiscences of South America: From Two and a Half Years' Residence in Venezuela* was inspired by the earlier work of German naturalist and explorer Alexander von Humboldt, whose *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent* (1814), detailing his South American exploration, had been an influential text for Charles Darwin on the *Beagle*. Yet as John Hawkshaw notes in the preface to *Reminiscences*, von Humboldt's account of Venezuela had been written 'when the country was a Spanish colony, and when the population was nearly double of what it is now, when there was a far greater proportion of Europeans resident there, and when the social system [...] differed much from its present state'.<sup>12</sup> In writing his memoir, John Hawkshaw sets out to update the 'valuable work of Baron Humboldt' and to 'afford some little information to the next inquirer' as to the 'state of the country and of society there at that time', for in 'respecting a country of which so little is known, everyone who had something to communicate should contribute his mite' (v–vii).

The personal, reflective response to the Venezuelan landscape in *Reminiscences* has much in common with Darwin's style in *Voyage of the Beagle* (1839). Rather than producing a methodical record of geological observations, John uses a proliferation of metaphors and similes to convey the unfamiliar landscape in terms that would be familiar to his English readers. The account is often humorous, and yet interwoven with a concern for social justice in the Americas and at home. For instance, he criticises the United States' continued reliance on compulsory labour, pointing to the 'strange anomaly of a people with many free institutions, and professing above all other countries to be free, dwelling with slavery at their very doors, nay, within their homes, and around their social hearths' (52). He rounds off his critique of America with a couplet from Ann's then unpublished 'Sonnet—To America':

and hence it will be affirmed of this country, as it has been written,—  
 'Future ages on one page shall see  
 The Slave's unheeded prayer—the *song of Liberty*'. (52)

The sonnet was published in full in 1842 in Ann's first collection '*Dionysius the Areopagite*', with *Other Poems*. The 22 poems which make up the collection were crafted during the 1830s and early 1840s, during which time the first three of the Hawkshaws' six children were born: Mary Jane Jackson in 1838, Ada in 1840 and John Clarke in 1841. Using the same London publisher as her husband, and Simms and Dinham in Manchester, Hawkshaw's debut onto the Manchester poetic scene coincided with a resurgence of poetic interest in Manchester; a revival energised by writers who sought to dispel the widely held assumption that artistic expression had succumbed to a preoccupation with free enterprise and trade. James Wheeler acknowledges this perception of Manchester as a literary wasteland in the preface to an early anthology:

'Manchester Poetry!' exclaim doubtless the majority of those who may chance to  
 bestow a passing glance upon the book—  
 'Bless us! what a word on

<sup>12</sup> John Hawkshaw, *Reminiscences of South America: From Two and a Half Years' Residence in Venezuela* (London: Jackson & Walford, 1838), vii.

A title-page is this!—

and, as if satisfied in their own minds that this same town cannot produce any good thing save only such as emanates from the spindle or the power-loom, they indulge, it may be, in a slight laugh at the presumption of the editor, and go on their way rejoicing.<sup>13</sup>

In highlighting the presupposed antithesis between art and industry, Wheeler engages with the opposition of imaginative thought and reason, inspiration and craft that had so energised the Romantic movement; yet Wheeler suggests a flaw in the commonly held presumption that one should preclude the other. ‘Perhaps of the Poetry of Manchester, until these later years, little that is favourable could be said’ (xii), continues Wheeler, as ‘it is only in the nineteenth century, within some dozen or twenty years of the present time, that any pretensions have been made by Manchester writers to rank among the gifted of the earth’ (xiii). And yet, finds Wheeler, ‘even those claims—modest and well-founded as it is conceived they have been—are met at this day [...] only with a contemptuous smile, by most of the crowd of gentlemen whose genius lies rather in the detection of an imperfect fabric than in the right appreciation of perfect poetry’ (xiii). In bringing together a collection of poems from 16 Manchester-based writers, including the poetical works of a number of divines, such as the Reverend William Gaskell, husband of Elizabeth, and notable poets of the moment, such as Charles Swain and Samuel Bamford, Wheeler’s *Manchester Poetry* prompted the repositioning of poetry in the city at the turn of the decade.

By the early 1840s a distinct poetic community had been established in the city. The self-styled ‘Manchester Poets’, or ‘Bards of Cottonopolis’ as they were latterly termed,<sup>14</sup> met at the Sun Inn, Long Millgate, locally designated as ‘Poets’ Corner’, ‘for the purpose of advancing their common interests, and creating kind and reciprocal feelings’, with those gathered promoting ‘the cause of literature generally, and diffus[ing] amongst its contributors and admirers mutual sympathy and respect’.<sup>15</sup> The first formal meeting of the Manchester Poets, on 7 January 1842, was reported locally as a ‘Poetical Soiree’, ‘a friendly meeting of poets and friends of poetry, representing Manchester and its neighbourhood’.<sup>16</sup> This was followed on the evening of 24 March 1842 by a ‘Poetic Festival’ held at the Sun Inn and attended by some forty literary men.<sup>17</sup> Songs were sung, and messages read from well-wishers. Many of the poetical works had been written especially for the event, and

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13 James Wheeler, *Manchester Poetry* (London: Charles Tilt, 1838), v–vi.

14 A term used by Thomas Swindells to describe the Manchester poets in *Manchester Streets and Manchester Men* (Manchester: J. E. Cornish, 1908), 75. For discussions of Manchester poetry see Martha Vicinus, ‘Literary Voices of an Industrial Town: Manchester, 1810–1870’, in *The Victorian City: Images and Realities*, vol. 2, ed. H. J. Dyos and Michael Wolff (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 739–61; Brian Maidment, ‘Class and Cultural Production in the Industrial City: Poetry in Victorian Manchester’, in *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Victorian Manchester*, ed. Alan J. Kidd and K. W. Roberts (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), 148–66; Debbie Bark, ‘Manchester and Early Victorian Literary Culture’, *Literature Compass* 8, no. 6 (2011): 404–14.

15 John Bolton Rogerson’s preface to *The Festive Wreath: A Collection of Original Contributions Read at a Literary Meeting Held in Manchester March 24th 1842* (Manchester: Bradshaw and Blacklock, 1842), iv.

16 *Manchester Guardian*, 12 January 1842.

17 As reported in the *Manchester Guardian*, 30 March 1842.

were published after as *The Festive Wreath: A Collection of Original Contributions Read at a Literary Meeting, Held in Manchester March 24th 1842*. The importance of the Sun Inn group to Ann Hawkshaw's work is twofold. First, the 'Introductory Stanzas' to Hawkshaw's first published collection are dated 'Manchester, March 25, 1842'—just one day after the widely publicised 'Poetic Festival'. It is highly likely that Hawkshaw would have read the articles in the *Manchester Guardian* advertising the event. In debuting at this moment, Hawkshaw positions herself as part of the poetic momentum of Manchester at this time. Second, poets from the Sun Inn group were familiar with Hawkshaw's work and referred to it in their own. In the preface to his *Poems* of 1843, Samuel Bamford cites a number of poets whose work was enjoyed by the 'literati' of Manchester in the early 1840s:

Since his last volume of poetry was published,—which is about eight years ago—the attention of the literati of Manchester, and its neighbourhood, has been justly claimed by the productions of a Swain, a Prince, a Rogerson, inhabitants of the town—of a Festus, the circumstances of whose first surprising essay in poetry, having been printed at Manchester, will one day be esteemed an honour to the town<sup>18</sup>—and of Mrs. Hawkshaw, whose interesting poem, 'The Areopagite' has added another name to those destined for immortality.<sup>19</sup>

This brief but complimentary appraisal indicates that Hawkshaw's poetry had come to the 'attention of the literati of Manchester' by the early 1840s. Another of the Sun Inn group, George Richardson, quotes Hawkshaw twice in his collection *Patriotism*, published in 1844. In each instance, Hawkshaw's poetry is included alongside other prominent contributors to Manchester's poetic scene. Using extracts from the poetry of Samuel Bamford, John Critchley Prince and Ann Hawkshaw, Richardson sets up the argument of canto 2 of the title poem, 'Patriotism', in which he addresses social injustice, the education of the poor, temperance and Christian faith. Selecting lines from Hawkshaw's poem 'The Past', Richardson draws on her invocation of poetry to rouse a sense of patriotism, countering the threat of revolutionary uprisings with the glories of England's past:

For in the crowded street, the voice of woe,  
The low faint cry of poverty opprest,  
Sounds like the requiem of my country's peace,  
The dirge for her long day of glory fled;  
Harp of my country, waken ere it cease,  
And the last spirit of the land be dead!<sup>20</sup>

Later in the collection Richardson uses a couplet from Hawkshaw's 'Dionysius the Areopagite' ('Weeks sped their flight, and left a trace, / A withering touch on one young

18 Bamford refers to Manchester poets Charles Swain (1801–74), John Critchley Prince (1808–66) and John Bolton Rogerson (1809–59), and to Philip James Bailey (1816–1902), whose poem *Festus* (1839) was printed in Manchester by Wilmot Henry Jones.

19 Samuel Bamford, preface to *Poems* (Manchester: published by the author, 1843).

20 Ll. 139–44 of Hawkshaw's 'The Past', epigram to canto 2 of 'Patriotism'. George Richardson, *Patriotism, in Three Cantos, and Other Poems* (London: W. J. Adams; Manchester: G. & A. Falkner, 1844), 36.

face”) as an epigram to his poem ‘The Forsaken One’, alongside lines from John Critchley Prince’s poem ‘There’s Falsehood’ (*Hours with the Muses*, 1842).

The publication of the *Dionysius* volume, and the favourable reviews that followed, positioned Hawkshaw locally as a poet of some note. During 1843, Hawkshaw’s uncollected poem ‘Life’s Dull Reality’ was included in a ‘little volume of original poems entitled the “Athenæum Souvenir”’: a compilation of poetry by Manchester poets on sale at the Manchester Athenæum Bazaar on 2 October 1843.<sup>21</sup> The bazaar had been ‘instituted in aid of the funds of “the Manchester Athenæum for the advancement and diffusion of knowledge”’, and the *Manchester Guardian* review of the event highlights Hawkshaw’s ‘Life’s Dull Reality’ as one of the poems in the volume that ‘seem to us to be amongst the gems of the book’.<sup>22</sup> The poem was printed in full in the *Manchester Guardian* on 11 October 1843. Other Hawkshaw poems were republished in a variety of regional newspapers; Appendix B gives full details. In *Lancashire Authors and Orators* (1850), John Evans writes extensively on Hawkshaw’s poetry and ‘safely assign[s] Mrs Hawkshaw the chief seat among our present line of Lancashire poetesses’.<sup>23</sup>

John Hawkshaw was clearly proud and supportive of his wife’s work. On 22 January 1844, he sent a copy of ‘*Dionysius the Areopagite*’, with *Other Poems* to Thomas Carlyle, with the following covering letter, transcribed from the Carlyle papers:

Islington, Salford  
22nd January 1844

Sir,

I beg to forward you a small volume of poems, which I do on the part of the authoress, as some acknowledgement of the deep gratification that has been afforded to her, by reading your own writings, which, as proof perhaps, that neither have a very extensive acquaintance with the realms of literature, have only lately come into our hands.

The whole have been, to both of us, as a new land, wonderful as the New World to Cortez, and are calculated, we think, to work a great change in the literature of this England of the 19th century, where more writers have been diligent, out of mud and straw, to erect all manner of grotesque images, that should attract, if by no other marks, at least by those of their frightfulness, like the gods of the East.

I may add that the writer of the small volume truly feels, what is expressed in the last two lines of the sonnet written on its first leaf [★], and if you will allow it to be so presented, you will oblige her, and her husband—

I am sir,  
Yours very faithfully  
John Hawkshaw

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21 ‘Life’s Dull Reality’, in *Athenæum Souvenir; original Poems, &c., contributed by various Authors, in aid of the Funds of the Athenæum Bazaar, held in the Town Hall, MANCHESTER, October 1843* (Manchester: J. Gadsby, 1843), 3.

22 *Manchester Guardian*, 4 October 1843, 3.

23 John Evans, *Lancashire Authors and Orators: A series of literary sketches of some of the principle authors, divines, members of Parliament, etc, connected with the county of Lancaster* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1850), 127–32; see Appendix A for the full review.

The asterisk after 'first leaf' was inserted by Carlyle, who then enters the last two lines from the dedicatory sonnet in the bottom margin: 'Accept this gift, for at the costliest shrine / The poor may lay their gifts, and thus I offer mine.—AH.' The sonnet would appear to have been written by Ann expressly for Carlyle, but has not yet been recovered in its entirety. In a letter to his mother dated 24 January 1844, Carlyle refers to the Hawkshaws' communication and forwards Ann's book for his mother's perusal. It is unclear whether he had read the book, or simply the dedicatory sonnet: 'This morning I received by Post a very agreeable gift from a Manchester Poetess and her Husband; a book inscribed to me in really an elegant and intelligent manner.'<sup>24</sup> With a copy of '*Dionysius the Areopagite*', with *Other Poems* listed in an 1859 catalogue of Wordsworth's library at Rydal Mount, it is possible that John distributed his wife's work to other writers admired by the Hawkshaws. From John's letter to Carlyle, it is evident that the experience of reading Carlyle's works had been profound and that he and Ann were keen to read more widely. In his diary, John Clarke remembers book club meetings held at the Hawkshaws' home between 1845 and 1850: 'The meetings of a book club held at our house from time to time made an impression on me, and I can recall the gatherings now, and the books which were bought and circulated among the members and were afterwards disposed of when they had gone the round.' Regrettably John Clarke records nothing of the members or the books that they read.

With John Hawkshaw at the forefront of industrial innovation in Manchester and the surrounding area, the Hawkshaws thrived in the city, and whilst not exclusively wealthy, were certainly well positioned in society. John's election to the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society in 1839 would have brought him into contact with many of Manchester's prominent names. John Clarke's diary notes his father's connection to scientist John Dalton, 'a friend of my father's' who 'gave him copies of his works', to cotton merchant John Kennedy and to Samuel Dukinfield Darbishire, solicitor to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway and a leading Unitarian. The Darbishires became close family friends of the Hawkshaws, who often holidayed at the Darbishires' home at Pendyffryn.<sup>25</sup> As the Darbishires were great friends of the Gaskells, it is likely that John and Ann were likewise acquainted. Although there is no extant correspondence between either Elizabeth or William Gaskell and the Hawkshaws to suggest the extent of their association, correspondence between the Winkworth sisters from 1847 shows that they met socially in Manchester. In a letter to her sister Susanna, dated 16 November 1847, Catherine Winkworth describes an afternoon tea meeting with the 'Cobdens, Leislars, Hawkshaws, Gaskells' in which, 'the principle gentlemen [...] before tea was half over [...] were deep in a discussion on the present state of the commercial world, which lasted a great part of the evening'.<sup>26</sup> Richard Cobden and John Hawkshaw, she notes,

24 A copy of Hawkshaw's letter to Carlyle, and a transcript of Carlyle's letter to his mother were kindly provided by David Southern at Duke University Press, compilers of the Carlyle Letters Online, <http://carlyleletters.dukejournals.org/> (accessed 22 July 2013).

25 John Clarke's diary makes reference to 'many happy visits to the Darbishires' pleasant home at Pendyffryn', whilst Ann's letter to her son Henry, dated 27 April 1863 refers to the Darbishires accommodating Henry at Pendyffryn. The letter is part of an original bundle of letters written to Henry Hawkshaw by Ann Hawkshaw, held at the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Archive Service, Staffordshire Records Office, reference D4347.

26 Margaret J. Shaen, ed., *Memorials of Two Sisters: Susanna and Catherine Winkworth* (London: Longman, Green, 1908), 26.



were engaged in a 'regular pitched battle [...], the latter representing the railway interest, and maintaining that Parliament should never have interfered with railways at all. [...] Mr Cobden of course took exactly the opposite view' (26–7). From Elizabeth Gaskell's letters it is evident that the Gaskells' connection with the Hawkshaws continued after John and Ann had moved to London in 1850. A letter dated 26 May 1860 is addressed to Gaskell's eldest daughter Marianne, care of 'John Hawkshaw Esq, 43 Eaton Place, Belgrave Sq, London';<sup>27</sup> in another, written to her publisher Edward Chapman from the same address on 9 June 1860, Gaskell explains that she 'came up here suddenly on Wednesday, on account of my daughter's illness', suggesting that Marianne was staying with the Hawkshaws when she became unwell with suspected smallpox.<sup>28</sup> A letter to Gaskell's longstanding friend Mary Green is similarly addressed from the Hawkshaws' Eaton Place residence, dated 14 June 1860.<sup>29</sup> Gaskell writes again from the Hawkshaws' address on 6 June 1862, accepting an invitation to share breakfast with Lord and Lady Stanhope.<sup>30</sup>

The extent of the friendship between the Hawkshaws and Gaskells can only be surmised, but intriguingly, in her unpublished 'Memories of My Childhood', written between December 1856 and the first months of 1857, Ann reveals antipathy towards Gaskell as a writer – particularly with regards to *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, first published at this time. Her initial allusion to Gaskell is indirect. In calling to mind a local farming family from her childhood, where the youngest of three sisters to have inherited their father's small estate 'had married, or rather had taken a husband to assist in the farm', Hawkshaw likens the ineffectual husband, whose 'existence as a master was [...] completely ignored by the servants and labourers', to the 'husband of a landlady or lodging-house help' or even, she concludes with a flourish, 'the husband of a literary woman!'

The context for this comment becomes clear later in the memoir after Hawkshaw's specific references to *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. She begins by linking Gaskell's biography of Brontë to her own recollections of a childhood spent exploring the countryside around Green Hammerton: 'One of our favourite haunts was the neighbourhood of Thorp Green, then the residence of the Robinson family, one of whose members, a Lady Scott, has since obtained incredible fame by the publication of Mrs Gaskell's *Life of Charlotte Brontë*.' Hawkshaw's comment reflects the reception of the first edition of the *Life*, which was published in March 1857 and sold well enough for a second edition to be published in the April. Although initially attracting favourable reviews and publicity for its author, Gaskell's book became caught in an undercurrent of unease regarding the thinly veiled accusation of impropriety between Charlotte's brother Branwell and Mrs Robinson, the mistress of Thorp Green. On 26 May 1857 all copies were recalled under threat of legal action after Lady Scott (formerly Mrs Robinson) demanded a revision of chapter 13 of the first volume, removing all references to her alleged seduction of Branwell Brontë. Branwell had been employed as a tutor to the Robinsons' young son Edmund, and according to the first edition of the *Life*, the unnamed Mrs Robinson took a strong hold of the 'pitiable'

27 J. A. V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, ed., *The Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966), 619.

28 Chapple and Pollard, *Letters*, 622.

29 John Chapple and Alan Shelston, ed., *Further Letters of Mrs Gaskell* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 209.

30 Chapple and Shelston, *Further Letters*, 242.