

## WILLIAM HONE AND THE READING PUBLIC, 1825-26

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### *Abstract*

This article will offer a detailed understanding of the cultural, literary and political space occupied by William Hone's popular anthology *The Every-Day Book* (1825-26) within the literary marketplace of the early nineteenth-century. I will be focusing on aspects of *The Every-Day Book* which contribute to Hone's notion of "the people" as a political and commercial entity, beginning by outlining the diverse literary attitudes towards the growth of the reading public at this time. The article will go on to explain Hone's attempts to combat this tension with his own egalitarian definition of the common readership and its new commercial and political character. I will detail the journalistic methods of compilation and circulation which Hone exploited in order to anchor his anthology within the tradition of print publication. The article also aims to open up a new critical discourse on literary consumption by considering pre-Victorian figures such as Hone alongside later chroniclers of popular culture, whilst also giving credence to the anthology in its own right. Comparing accounts of Greenwich Fair by Hone and Dickens will illuminate a topography of influence across the period. I also address the dearth of material on Hone's antiquarian endeavours. Critical interest in radical literary culture has surged in recent years, but there is little attempt to address the broader implications of the radical underpinnings of Hone's later work. This article aims to elevate *The Every-Day Book* beyond its current status as a footnote in literary history.

William Hone's *The Every-Day Book; or, Everlasting Calendar of Popular Amusements, Sports, Pastimes, Ceremonies, Manners, Customs and Events* (1825-26) was an antiquarian bricolage incorporating 'the manners and customs of ancient and modern times' alongside writers as diverse as Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Clare and Keats. It was structured according to the calendar and documented historical events, feast days, literary extracts, street cries, buildings, hagiography, natural history, pagan customs, fairs, local traditions, urban sports, peculiar news items and 'several seasons of popular pastime'.<sup>1</sup> Hone corresponded with its readers, collating their personal reminiscences and factual snippets to create a collaboratively authored record of popular culture. My purpose here is to offer a detailed understanding of the cultural space occupied by this popular and diverse anthology within the literary marketplace of the early nineteenth century.

The collaborative authorship of *The Every-Day Book* contributed to Hone's notion of "the people" as a political and commercial entity, conditioned by diverse literary attitudes towards the growth of the reading public and anxieties towards the

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<sup>1</sup> William Hone, 'Preface' to *The Every-Day Book* (London: Tegg, 1825), p. vii. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

changing consumption of literature. Responding to these debates, Hone developed his own definition of the common readership in its new commercial and political guise. He exploited the journalistic tools of compilation and circulation to place *The Every-Day Book* within a tradition of print publication. Analysis of these methods will open up the critical discourse on literary consumption to pre-Victorian antecedents such as Hone, who had a formative impact on later concepts of mass culture and readership. A comparison of Hone's archetypal accounts of popular culture at Greenwich Fair with one of Dickens' periodical records of the same event will identify the dynamics of influence between Hone and his successors. This article will also make a claim for Hone's place in current literary criticism. In the twenty-first century, Hone is perhaps best known as a radical publisher and pamphleteer, the author of squibs and a champion of the free press.<sup>2</sup> Critical interest in Hone has surged in the past twenty years in light of renewed interdisciplinary interest in the radical politics and satire of the early nineteenth-century and post-Napoleonic period. A handful of articles have been written concerning Hone's literary interests as a publisher, but critical material on *The Every-Day Book* remains thin on the ground.<sup>3</sup> A few biographical accounts of Hone's life exist. Hackwood's 1912 study, and more recently Ben Wilson's accessible account of Hone's life, offer comprehensive accounts of Hone's career in satire. But *The Every-Day Book* remains a footnote in these studies. Hone's work not only exerted a formative influence over later publishing practices, but was also an innovative project in its own right.

The first three decades of the nineteenth-century saw the rise of a distinctive new reading public which was the product of complex social, technological and economic conditions. The rising standards of literacy and population expansion

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<sup>2</sup> In 1818 Hone published the transcripts of his trial for seditious libel and blasphemy, which demonstrated his emerging celebrity status as a defender of free speech. They remained popular publications throughout the early nineteenth century. He went on to publish a series of satirical pamphlets illustrated with wood engravings created in collaboration with the illustrator George Cruikshank.

<sup>3</sup> Two projects have begun to address the crucial gaps in Hone scholarship by making his works more accessible to the public. *Regency Radical: Selected Writings of William Hone*, ed. by David A. Kent and D. R. Ewen (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003) is a collection of choice excerpts from Hone's works. The compilation includes essays from *The Every-Day Book* which focus upon Hone's personal concern for the demise of popular culture in its various forms in suburban London. Kyle Grimes has initiated a major online project which incorporates a 'biography, bibliography, and e-text archive' of Hone's works. The project intends to create a digitized archive of Hone's texts, including the entries for *The Every-Day Book*, see <http://honearchive.org/>. Until then, we must rely upon Mina Gorji's essay on *The Every-Day Book*'s contribution to the formation of a vernacular canon of Romantic poetry. See Mina Gorji, 'Every-day Poetry: William Hone, Popular Antiquarianism, and the Literary Anthology', in *Romanticism and Popular Culture in Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Philip Connell and Nigel Leask (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 239-62. Further references are given after quotations in the text.

transformed the social landscape of reading. Literacy among the rural and urban middle classes rose from 75 per cent to 95 per cent between 1775 and 1835, with 60 per cent of the lowest social groups acquiring basic literacy by the early nineteenth century. At the same time the population of Great Britain grew from 7 to 14 million between 1780 and 1830. As a result the reading public ‘quintupled in the whole period from 1780 to 1830, from 1 ½ to 7 million’, in spite of the sustained high prices of books in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> Printers depended upon French paper imports, which ensured a widespread paper shortage during the Napoleonic wars and was later exacerbated by post-war austerity and conservatism in the book trade (p. 3). Most importantly, the period witnessed a fundamental change in the model of cultural production and consumption: the rise of “mass” culture.<sup>5</sup> Philip Connell and Nigel Leask identify this ‘capitalization of popular culture’ as giving birth to fears of the ‘common sort of reader’ and the emergence of a national vernacular canon which was the ‘property of the communal tradition’.<sup>6</sup> By the 1840s, print culture had proliferated to accommodate the new reading public, transforming public readership into a powerful political, social and commercial force. Novels, poetry and periodicals now had the potential to reach thousands of new readers across the country.

Many writers felt threatened and alienated by this new potential and were forced to re-define their relationship with their readers. The Romantic ideal of the ‘sacralization of the author’ was an attempt to resist ‘the consumerism and anonymity which characterized the publishing world’.<sup>7</sup> The population boom and rise in literacy enabled publishers such as Hone to challenge the notion of ‘personal privacy’ in reading and to transform literature into a ‘shared property’.<sup>8</sup> The dismantling of the sacred hierarchy of authorship left the notion of who made up the reading public uncertain and confused:

The eclipse of a writing culture of patronage based on shared humanist values and education by a commercialized, emulative culture of fashionable literary

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<sup>4</sup> Figures from Kathryn Sutherland, “‘Events...have made us a World of Readers’”: Reader Relations 1780-1830’, in *Penguin History of Literature, Volume 5: The Romantic Period*, ed. by David Pirie (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 1-38 (p. 3). Further references are given after quotations in the text.

<sup>5</sup> For detailed analyses of the causes of this process see Leo Lowenthal, *Literature and Mass Culture* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 1984), pp. 153-65.

<sup>6</sup> Philip Connell and Nigel Leask, ‘What is the People?’, in *Romanticism and Popular Culture in Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Philip Connell and Nigel Leask (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 3-49 (p. 38).

<sup>7</sup> Lucy Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism: The Anxiety of Reception* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 14.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982), p. 131.

consumption created new uncertainties, confusions and anxieties about social and institutional control of writing and print and [...] who constituted the “reading public” and what they wanted.<sup>9</sup>

The ‘anxieties’ over the reading public were a fevered topic of debate and presented many interpretative dilemmas during the Romantic period. For William Wordsworth, writing in 1815, the public was the ‘small though loud portion of the community, ever governed by factitious influence, which, under the name of the PUBLIC, passes itself, upon the unthinking, for the PEOPLE’.<sup>10</sup> Wordsworth anticipated Coleridge’s ‘multitudinous PUBLIC’ and both poets experienced a shared revulsion when faced with the perceived threat that mass reading posed to poetry.<sup>11</sup> Wordsworth’s anxieties, in particular, provide an accessible example of how the heterogeneous nature of the mass reading public forced writers to reconsider their relationship with their readers.

This lent a new political quality to reading. Wordsworth struggled to extrapolate an idealized poetic reader from the tangled mass of indifferent and ‘unthinking’ consumers who made up the reading public. He feared poetry was being marginalized by a readership which craved the sort of popular material that was antithetical to his own work. Lucy Newlyn equates Wordsworth’s abhorrence of mass reading with the vulnerability of his work to a readership with a new political agenda: the commodification of literature would cause readers to become ‘progressively desensitized to poetic power’.<sup>12</sup> According to Newlyn, the rise of the reading public imbued Wordsworth with the fear that the ‘apparent democratization of writing might bring with [it], not an enhanced collective access to poetry but the diminishment of shared appreciation’.<sup>13</sup> The new definition of “popular” was a corruption of the aesthetic appreciation of “fine arts” such as poetry and was the result of a homogenized and indiscriminate production and consumption of literature.

William Hazlitt’s celebrated 1817 essay, entitled ‘What is the People?’, complicates the debate in a way which resonates with Hone’s own radical agenda:

For what is the People? Millions of men, like you, with hearts beating in their bosoms, with thoughts stirring in their minds, with the blood circulating in their veins, with wants and appetites, and passions and anxious cares, and busy

<sup>9</sup> Gary Kelly, ‘The Limits of Genre and the Institutions of Literature: Romanticism between Fact and Fiction’, in *Romantic Revolutions: Criticism and Theory*, ed. by K. R. Johnston et al. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), pp. 158-76 (p. 159).

<sup>10</sup> William Wordsworth, ‘An Essay Supplementary to the Preface of 1815,’ in *William Wordsworth: Selected Prose*, ed. by John O. Hayden (London: Penguin, 1988), pp. 387-414 (p. 412).

<sup>11</sup> Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, in *The Major Works*, ed. by H. J. Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 188.

<sup>12</sup> Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism*, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Newlyn, *Reading, Writing, and Romanticism*, p. 16.

purposes and affections for others and a respect for themselves, and a desire for happiness, and a right to freedom, and a will to be free.<sup>14</sup>

Hazlitt's essay addressed the radical readers of periodicals during a time of unparalleled political activism (the essay appeared first in the *Champion* in October 1817, and later in the *Yellow Dwarf* in March 1818). Yet Hazlitt remained acutely aware of not only the textual division between his authorial voice and the uncontainable plurality, but also the singular particularity, of the reading public. The framing prosopopeia of the essay enacts this tension by successively eliding and dividing its object and addressee, 'you' and 'the people', envisioning a corporeal collective reading public who have 'hearts beating in their bosoms, and thoughts stirring in their minds'. The essay conveys a human understanding which escaped Wordsworth. Hazlitt created a more complex definition of the people, whilst Wordsworth characterized the people as the "other" and created 'a certain distance, a position from which the popular can be evaluated, analysed, and perhaps dismissed'.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, Hazlitt considered popular and polite readerships as equal in the new literary marketplace. He paved the way for publishers such as Hone by exploding the distinction between high and low literary cultures which Romantic theory had so enthusiastically celebrated.

Hone fought to combat the widespread anxiety surrounding the common reader at 'the historical brink of the Victorian culture industry'.<sup>16</sup> He accommodated every strata of society in his conception of an egalitarian readership and, in doing so, belied the homogenization of the common reader: 'It is an Every-Day Book of pleasure and business – of Parents and Children – of Teachers and Pupils – of Masters and Servants'.<sup>17</sup> Hone intended *The Every-Day Book* for all members of society and created a product that he thought could transcend the eighteenth-century definition of the public sphere as the exclusively male domain of classical education and private wealth:

The Every-Day Book is for the mansion and the cottage – the parlour – the counting-house – the ladies' work-table – the library-shelf – the school room – the coffee room – the steam-boat – the workman's bench – the traveller's trunk and the voyager's sea-chest. It is a work of general use, and daily reference: in all places it is in place, and at all seasons seasonable. (p. 1)

<sup>14</sup> William Hazlitt, 'What is the People?', in *William Hazlitt Selected Writings*, ed. by Jon Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 3-29 (p. 3).

<sup>15</sup> Morag Shiach, *Discourse on Popular Culture: Class, Gender, and History in Cultural Analysis, 1730 to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 31.

<sup>16</sup> Connell and Leask, 'What is the People?', p. 38.

<sup>17</sup> William Hone, 'Explanatory Address to Readers of the Every-Day Book' (1824).

This outline was circulated in a nationwide advert to ensure the book's appeal to a socially diverse audience. *The Every-Day Book* was at home everywhere. Hone anticipated the social mobility of the book in its physical and portable form: 'in all places it is in place'. The book was promoted as being of common human interest: it was a germane and profitable addition to all social scenarios, from the studious academia of the library shelf to the public debate of the coffee room.

It is clear from Hone's address that he was attempting to redefine the term "popular" in a way which, according to Mina Gorji, offered a 'fundamental challenge to the traditional distinction between commercial popularity and popular tradition' (p. 242). As Gorji outlines, the book was popular in two senses: in concerning itself with the culture of the populace, and in its broad commercial appeal. With his new definition of "popular" literature, Hone demolished the eighteenth-century aspirational model of polite literature and rendered it anachronistic. He recognized that the people were not independent of commercial interest and that they possessed the capacity to embody the commercialization of literature. Hone's readership traversed the traditional boundaries of politeness by creating their own literary product: readers across the country corresponded with Hone to author their own collective record of popular culture.

This new collaborative authorship was underpinned by Hone's demotic political concept of the people. Readers of *The Every-Day Book* were not passive consumers of literature. They contributed to the construction of their own popular culture and were unimpeded by archaic constraints upon expressions of their cultural heritage. Hone's anthology adhered to the definition of truly popular literature which would later be outlined by Arnold Kettle:

An attitude to art in which the audience is seen neither purely as consumer (the commercial relationship) nor as a superior group of like-minded spirits (the highbrow relationship) but in some sense as collaborator.<sup>18</sup>

Hone did not consider the people to be 'something amorphous and indistinguishable' but a specific cultural force which created literature from its own point of view.<sup>19</sup>

Hone gave a forum and a voice to the people's point of view by filling *The Every-Day Book* with first-hand accounts of popular customs which he had gleaned from readers across the country. Letters published during Christmas 1825 described observances in Queen's College Oxford, the Scottish Highlands, Durham, Suffolk, York and London. John Clare corresponded with Hone in 1825, describing the festivities of St Mark's Eve in his own village of Helpstone, Northamptonshire.

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<sup>18</sup> Arnold Kettle, 'Dickens and the Popular Tradition', in *Marxists on Literature: An Anthology*, ed. by David Craig (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 214-44 (p. 220).

<sup>19</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p. 194.

Hone encouraged and relied upon these first-hand accounts and contributions from his readership in order to facilitate ‘the attainment of additional particulars during its progress’.<sup>20</sup> He requested this from his readers:

Communications of local Usages or Customs, or other useful Facts, are earnestly and respectfully solicited. Extracts, or permission to extract, from scarce books and original MSS. will be highly esteemed. (p. 1)

Hone did not compromise the effectiveness of the material for the sake of adhering to a sociable model of collaborative authorship. Clear guidelines were laid down to ensure accurate and reliable content for the anthology: ‘Statements cannot be inserted without authority. Anonymous Contributors will please to accompany theirs by reference to sources of easy access, through which they may be verified’ (p. 1). Hone solicited material which was not exclusively academic and gave equal precedence to personal anecdotes and localized traditions alongside antiquarian material and national feast days. He appealed to the plethora of ‘curious’ and incidental details which formed the collected personal histories and interests of the people:

Scarcely an individual is without a scrap-book, or a portfolio, or a collection of some sort; and whatever a kind-hearted reader may deem curious or interesting, and can conveniently spare, I earnestly hope and solicit to be favoured with, addressed to me at Messrs. Hunt and Clarke’s, Tavistock-street, who receive communications for the work, and publish it in weekly sheets, and monthly parts, as usual. (p. vii)

Louis James’s short article on *The Every-Day Book* emphasizes how Hone exploited cheap printed media as a means of circulating these personal scrap-book accounts. He argues that these ‘curious or interesting’ snippets enabled the ‘recovery of an earlier England whose pastoral customs and values were becoming destroyed by an industrial and urban age’.<sup>21</sup> James’s valuable observations highlight how Hone considered popular printing as a gateway to reviving and exploring the everyday history of the people. Hone unlocked the political potential of personal accounts by placing them in a forum to which the reading public had access, allowing them to partake in the formation of their own cultural history. Habermas describes how in antecedents such as the *Tatler*, *Spectator* and the *Guardian*, ‘the public held up a mirror to itself’ and came ‘to a self-understanding’ by ‘entering itself into “literature” as an object’.<sup>22</sup> Hone achieved the same effect, not through ‘the detour of a reflection

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<sup>20</sup> Hone, ‘Explanatory Address’.

<sup>21</sup> Louis James, “‘A Storehouse of Past and Present Manners and Customs’: The Private Scrapbook becomes a Communal Record in the Journals of William Hone”, *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth-Century*, 5 (2007), pp. 1-6 (p. 4).

<sup>22</sup> Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 43.

on works of philosophy and literature, art and science' but by bringing the individual experiences of the people into the public sphere (p. 43). He constructed a definition of popular culture and an equivalent print identity which maintained both the particularized and universalized character of the reading public and rendered it in a textually commoditized form.

Contributors to the anthology shared its authorship. This collaboration fed a collective sense of civic duty and an imagined form of community which pervaded all classes of readers. For Benedict Anderson, newspapers represent 'the kind of imagined community that is the nation', a solidarity of the populace which Hone's anthology was crucial in generating.<sup>23</sup> Hone safeguarded the new sense of literary community through distribution of the anthology, ensuring that *The Every-Day Book* was ubiquitous and accessible to all. Even isolated rural readers were catered for. They could buy the book 'by ordering it of any Bookseller, Postmaster, Newsman, or Vender of Periodical Works, in any of the towns or villages throughout the United Kingdom' (p. 1). Each weekly number was published on a Saturday and cost merely three pence and a further monthly part was published at a price of one shilling.<sup>24</sup> Each sheet of thirty two columns was designed to be bound into a book, ensuring the preservation of individual numbers. It also created a product which could later be re-circulated back into the literary marketplace as a reputable anthology. A collected two-volume edition was reissued throughout the nineteenth century. Hone made sure the storehouse of knowledge could be accessed well beyond 1826 and he was successful in securing this legacy. A copy of this 'very scarce book' was put up for sale in Middlesbrough in 1897 and copies can still be procured today.<sup>25</sup>

Hone had already set himself a precedent for this nationwide network of distribution. His popular political pamphlet, *The Political House that Jack Built* (1819), sold a total of 100,000 copies and 47 editions in one year.<sup>26</sup> The total sales for all five of Hone's political squibs illustrated by George Cruikshank exceeded 250,000.<sup>27</sup> Hone perfected a model for a cheap serially published weekly that cumulated both monthly and annually and drew upon an eighteenth-century precedent:

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<sup>23</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 24. David Vincent argues that mass literacy enabled an 'enhanced consciousness of the national culture', breaching the 'isolation of the uneducated community'. Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 186.

<sup>24</sup> In contrast, the quarterly *Edinburgh Review* cost six shillings. Hone's publication had more in common with John Limbird's *Mirror of Literature, Amusement, and Instruction* (1822-47) which cost two pence for sixteen pages of 'reprinted miscellaneous contents'. See Sutherland, "Events...have made us a World of Readers", p. 28.

<sup>25</sup> *The North Eastern Daily Gazette* (24<sup>th</sup> June 1897), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), p. 382.

<sup>27</sup> Altick, *The English Common Reader*, p. 382.

The *Grub Street Journal* said of serial publication on 26 October 1732: ‘This method of weekly Publication allows Multitudes to peruse Books in which they would otherwise never have looked’.<sup>28</sup>

The longevity of the project was important to Hone. He conceived a product which was ideologically self-sustaining. The success of the anthology relied upon three factors: the availability of suitable anthology material, the continued interest of the reading public and the funds which were generated through purchasing. Hone encouraged the populace to invest in their popular culture. The public contributed to, and funded, the circulation of cultural material which endorsed Hone’s notion of a shared popular culture, the relevance of which was commensurate with the reading public’s interest in preserving it. The reading public were not independent of commercial interest but propelled by it. Habermas claimed that the public sphere descended into a two-tier system of production and consumption. I argue that Hone saw the potential for an anti-hierarchical model of publication which created and sustained its own supply and demand.

Hone ensured this demand through marketing ploys. He maximized the impact of *The Every-Day Book*’s initial publication by keeping it a secret until the end of December 1824, at which point he unleashed a series of adverts across the national press:

The Every-Day Book was not announced in London, or anywhere else, nor was it known to any one, either publicly or privately, until three days before the publication of the First Number, on the 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1825. Its immediately great sale, and its rapidly increasing circulation, fully justify the expectation that it will become one of the most popular publications ever issued from the press. (pp. 1-2)

Hone utilized a short term tactic to ensure the immediate impact and long lasting popularity of *The Every-Day Book*. Although the book relied upon a number of traditional journalistic conventions, his decision to minimise the build-up of anticipation or hype surrounding the book imbued it with a sense of newness. This initial shock to the literary marketplace, combined with a regular publication, ensured a unique combination of modernity and longevity for the anthology’s readers. It also enabled Hone to predict the book’s success in rather optimistic terms: ‘it will become one of the most popular publications ever issued from the press’ (p. 2).

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<sup>28</sup> Joss Marsh, *Word Crimes: Blasphemy, Culture, and Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 335. According to Marsh, approximately one hundred and fifty works were published in numbers before 1750, including *Robinson Crusoe* and the works of Shakespeare. Prior to *The Every-Day Book*, the most memorable serially published works were Pierce Egan’s *Life in London* (1820-21) and Thomas Rowlandson and Charles Pugin’s collaborative effort, *Microcosm of London* (1808-10).

Hone exploited the periodicity of newspapers and the predictability of regular accounts of news published and distributed in print form.<sup>29</sup> This regularity allowed readers to anticipate the arrival of *The Every-Day Book* as they would a newspaper, which enabled them to structure their 'reactions to the changes in the world'.<sup>30</sup> The newspaper's periodicity was 'a mechanism for structuring the flow of time, which thus became broken into predictable segments', making the reportage of threatening events a 'comforting' and 'manageable' framework through which to view the world.<sup>31</sup> Hone added an extra dimension to the temporal character of *The Every-Day Book*. Whilst numbers were published both weekly and monthly, the content of each issue was a combination of historical and contemporary events and practices. Some entries were more general accounts of traditions from 'ancient times', such as the making of straw figures symbolizing the death of winter and the triumph of spring on the fourth Sunday of Lent (p. 179). These practices did not belong to a particular historical narrative. Newspapers provided highly regularized and stereotypical frameworks through which readers could apprehend the world. Hone's book offered a similar periodical structure that provided the same opportunity to read the world through a simultaneously retrospective and contemporary format. The fluid timeframe of the book, combined with its periodicity, enabled readers to apprehend both the past and present: to consider the present through the lens of the past, or vice versa.

Because *The Every-Day Book* was a retrospective take on the newspaper form, and did not rely upon a constant stream of news for its content, the publication was reminiscent of the 'spotty, eccentric, and discontinuous flying sheet of the seventeenth century'.<sup>32</sup> The book's collaborative authorship reflected the cultural memory of the public from various angles. Individual entries were decontextualized views of isolated events, in which traditions were sometimes generalized without reference to specific historical instances. A few entries were records of individual occurrences from that day in history. Some were sensational anecdotes such as the Somerstown Miracle, in which a crippled man miraculously summoned the strength to leap from the path of a ferocious bull, or the mysterious winter rainbow in Ireland (pp. 237, 54). Others were historical records of battles such as Waterloo, or moments extrapolated from literature and attributed to the event they referenced, such as Hone's invocation of Shakespeare's *Henry V* for the entry of 25<sup>th</sup> October, St. Crispin's Day (p. 700). Hone's book did not reflect the 'distinct journalistic sense of time' characteristic of newspapers, but rather the eclectic and fragmented

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<sup>29</sup> Jeremy D. Popkin, *News and Politics in the Age of Revolution: Jean Luzac and the 'Gazette de Leyde'* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1989), p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Popkin, *News and Politics in the Age of Revolution*, p. 7.

<sup>31</sup> Popkin, *News and Politics in the Age of Revolution*, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Leonard J. Davis, *Factual Fictions: The Origins of the English Novel* (New York: Columbia Press, 1983), p. 71.

accumulation of memories from various sources which made up the cultural history of the reading public.<sup>33</sup>

The layout of *The Every-Day Book* followed the predetermined narrative of the Gregorian calendar, but its content was arbitrary and decontextualized. It adhered to what Richard Terdiman later described as organicism, a mode of thought which 'sought the forms which might accommodate within imaginative representation growing experiences of dissonance in social and political existence' but also 'sanctioned expression of those experiences', whilst prescribing their 'containment and reharmonization'.<sup>34</sup> Hone's book revelled in its multifarious content, which could be reorganized and contained within the calendar system. But Terdiman's description of newspaper articles as 'detached, independent, reified, decontextualized' pieces of text presents something of a challenge to my conception of Hone's project. Terdiman highlights the ambiguity of the term 'article'. The term might refer to an 'element of newspaper format', in other words a 'news item'. It might also refer to 'an element of commercial transaction', or a 'commodity'. These two aspects of a newspaper's functionality, imparting information, selling goods, cannot be disengaged. In this sense, the newspaper can be considered 'the first culturally influential *anti-organicist* mode of modern discursive construction'.<sup>35</sup> The newspaper is built with 'discrete, theoretically disconnected elements which juxtapose themselves only in response to the abstract requirements of "layout", thus of a disposition of space whose logic, ultimately, is commercial'.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps Hone could be accused of the commodification of culture. It could be suggested that Hone's anthology was an artificial and illustrative account of popular culture which reduced experiences into readable and marketable extracts adhering to a homogenized print form, with a disregard for the origin and context of these records. On the contrary, Hone exploited print circulation to comment upon and form a concept of popular culture, which came directly and organically from its authorship: the people. It was not merely the kind of commercial venture Terdiman describes, but an egalitarian project which utilized print circulation to reinforce its collaborative ethos. Hone exposed the broad capacity of the calendar format, and created a levelling structure which anchored popular observances in the quotidian everyday world.

Having addressed the political agenda of Hone's new definition of the reading public, it is important to consider the content of the anthology alongside later works which share a seemingly similar concern for popular culture. Critics including Joss Marsh and Sally Ledger have mapped the influence of Hone's *The Every-Day Book*

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<sup>33</sup> Davis, *Factual Fictions*, p. 72.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 122.

<sup>35</sup> Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse*, p. 122.

<sup>36</sup> Terdiman, *Discourse/Counter-Discourse*, p. 122.

essays onto the periodical works of Charles Dickens.<sup>37</sup> Hone's diverse accounts of popular urban pastimes anticipated Dickens's own urban sketches, particularly in *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-41), *Household Words* (1850-59) and *All the Year Round* (1859-95). The final section of this article will set Hone's account of Greenwich Fair against a later account in *Sketches by Boz* (1836). Greenwich Fair was a traditional leisure event for the migrating urban working classes, a paradigm of the notion of popular culture propagated by Hone and crucial to his concept of a living tradition of the culture of the populace. Juxtaposing two accounts of the same phenomenon illuminates the dynamics of influence between the instinctively Romantic mode of Hone's work and a later Victorian formulation of the reading public.

At first glance, there are many similarities between Hone's and Dickens's notions of the reading public. Ledger and Marsh consider Hone to have been part of Dickens's 'popular radical genealogy', his forgotten 'subliterary father'.<sup>38</sup> Dickens was the 'beneficiary' of an egalitarian urban 'literary inheritance' and had perfected Hone's model of a cheap weekly serial publication.<sup>39</sup> This success rested upon Dickens's 'persistence of 'the People' as a social and political category', much in the same vein as Hone's appeal to the new reading public in its new political and commercial character.<sup>40</sup> Ledger notes that, like Hone, Dickens focused on the notion of democracy as opposed to class conflict in his depictions of the lower urban classes, a throwback to the popular radicalism of the early 1800s.<sup>41</sup> Hone engaged more directly with the welfare of popular culture, as opposed to Dickens's passive attitude to change.

Hone's account of Greenwich Fair in the suburbs of London foreshadowed Dickens's 'knowledge of the expanding city' which 'was never confined'.<sup>42</sup> Greenwich Fair began on Easter Monday each year and was visited by 'thousands and tens of thousands from London and the vicinity' (p. 218). 'Working men and their wives; 'prentices and their sweet-hearts; blackguards and bullies; make their way to this fair. Pickpockets and their female companions go later' (p. 218). The spectacle of the unruly urban multitude was a cause for governmental concern: 'Frequently of late this place has been a scene of rude disorder' (p. 218). The Fair was closed down in 1857 after a petition to the Home Secretary, complaining about the swarming crowds of in excess of 200,000 Easter revellers.<sup>43</sup> But to Hone, and to later authors too,

<sup>37</sup> Joss Marsh, *Word Crimes*; Sally Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 2; Marsh, *Word Crimes*, p. 51.

<sup>39</sup> Marsh, *Word Crimes*, p. 51.

<sup>40</sup> Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Dennis Walder, 'Introduction to Charles Dickens', *Sketches by Boz* (London: Penguin, 1995), p. xxi.

<sup>43</sup> It was resurrected in June 2011. See Dominic Cavendish, 'Greenwich Fair: Where Dickens Let

Greenwich Fair encapsulated a microcosm of urban life, a living tradition of working-class leisure in line with the agenda of Hone's *The Every-Day Book*. The event was defined by the lifeblood of the populace: 'Greenwich fair, of itself, is nothing; the congregated throngs are everything' (p. 219).

The superficially similar tone of Hone and Dickens's accounts of Greenwich Fair highlights a class division, but also masks an underlying variance in the writers' attitude to popular culture. Hone describes the cross-London migration of holiday makers making their cultural pilgrimage to Greenwich, communing in an act of worship:

The greater part of the sojourns are on foot, but the vehicles for conveyance are innumerable. The regular and irregular stages are, of course, full inside and outside. Hackney-coaches are equally well filled; gigs carry three, not including the driver; and there are countless private chaise-carts, public pony-chaises and open accommodations. Intermingled with these, town-carts, usually employed in carrying goods, are now fitted up, with board for seats; hereon are seated men, women, and children, till the complement is complete, which is seldom deemed the case till the horses are overloaded. (pp. 218-19)

Hone's description is a close precursor of Dickens's account, just over ten years later, of a similar phenomenon of urban migration via 'Cabs, hackney-coaches, "shay" carts, coal-waggons, stages, omnibuses, sociable, gigs, donkey-chaises'.<sup>44</sup> The very act of travelling from the inner city of London to Greenwich symbolizes the mercurial nature of the urban populace: a mobile body of workers and thrill seekers who seemingly posed a threat to order in their state of leisure and abandon: 'this turmoil, commonly called pleasure-taking'.<sup>45</sup>

The conflict at the heart of these early nineteenth-century depictions of Greenwich Fair is the highly problematic relation between elite and popular cultures. Peter Burke's influential study *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (1978) identifies the split in the social body of the people: a 'little tradition' of the people 'disseminated in marketplaces, taverns, and other places of popular assembly' and the scholarly and learned 'great tradition'.<sup>46</sup> 'There were two cultural traditions [...] but they did not correspond symmetrically [...] The elite participated in the little

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His Hair Down', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2011

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/8581929/Greenwich-Fair-Where-Dickens-let-his-hair-down.html> [accessed 14 February 2012].

<sup>44</sup> Charles Dickens, 'Greenwich Fair', in *Sketches by Boz*, ed. by Dennis Walder (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 135-45 (p. 137).

<sup>45</sup> Pierce Egan, *The Pilgrims of the Thames in Search of the National!* (London: W. Strange, 1828), p. 219.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994), p. 28.

tradition, but the common people did not participate in the great tradition'.<sup>47</sup> In the case of Greenwich Fair, the main point of conflict was to position the polite notion of etiquette: '*etiquette* is entirely lost sight of – and *character* not an object of enquiry!'<sup>48</sup> Class difference was used to navigate between leisure and etiquette, and to suppress urban unruliness. Dickens characterizes the revelry of Greenwich Fair as an irrational and uncontrollable urge for debauchery: 'a sort of spring-rash: a three days' fever, which cools the blood for six months afterwards'.<sup>49</sup> 'The hill of the Observatory, and two or three other eminences in the park, are the chief resort of the less experienced and the vicious. But these soon tire' (p. 62) notes Hone. Dickens recounts the most popular pastime of 'tumbling', a sport which flies in the face of more respectable pleasures:

The principal amusement is to drag young ladies up the steep hill which leads to the Observatory, and then drag them down again, at the very top of their speed, greatly to the derangement of their curls and bonnet-caps, and much to the edification of lookers-on from below.<sup>50</sup>

Hone describes a similarly disrespectable race:

the dishonesty of the stakeholder, who, as the parties had just reached the goal, scampered off with the stakes, amidst the shouts of the by-standers, and the ill-concealed chagrin of the two gentlemen who had foolishly committed their money to the hands of a stranger. (p. 221)

Hone's accounts reflect the general anxiety towards the segregation of class-distinct practices. The curtailment of working-class leisure customs was considered a result of the dual definitions of polite and plebeian behaviour. But as we have seen, his solution was to preserve the spirit and ethos of the Fair, rather than the event itself.

Hone's main concern was for the sanctity of popular culture. As Walter Bagehot once claimed, Dickens recorded London life 'like a special correspondent for posterity'.<sup>51</sup> Hone, conversely, wrote to keep the ethos of popular traditions alive, even if the events themselves faded into obscurity. While Dickens sought to preserve his speculative perspective as an urban observer, Hone struggled to keep the last vestige of a dying urban spectacle alive. Wary of its imminent demise at the hands of conservatism, Hone captured the ennobling spirit of a popular custom which imbued

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<sup>47</sup> Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. 28.

<sup>48</sup> Egan, *The Pilgrims of the Thames*, p. 73.

<sup>49</sup> Dickens, 'Greenwich Fair', p. 135.

<sup>50</sup> Dickens, 'Greenwich Fair', p. 138.

<sup>51</sup> Walter Bagehot, 'Charles Dickens', *National Review*, 7 (October 1858), pp. 390-401 (p. 394).

the urban London landscape with its character:

Greenwich, however, will always have a charm; the fine park remains – trees, glades, turf, and the view from the observatory, one of the noblest in the world – before you the towers of these palaces built for a monarch’s residence, now ennobled into a refuge from life’s storms for the gallant defenders of their country, after their long and toilsome pilgrimage – then the noble river; and in the distance, amidst the din and smoke, appears the ‘mighty heart’ of this mighty empire; these are views worth purchasing at the expense of being obliged to visit Greenwich fair in this day of its decline. (p. 221)

Hone may have bemoaned the premature decline of Greenwich Fair, and the concern for popular urban culture which this entailed, but he was still willing to accept the inevitability of change within tradition. The documentation of the fair was not a cursory act of posterity, but an attempt to situate the event within an entire national narrative of change, as part of a living history and tradition of popular culture. Within *The Every-Day Book*, Greenwich Fair took on a renewed relevance. Hone recognised that the material deterioration of the Fair as an event was a separate phenomenon to the decline of its egalitarian ethos. Greenwich Fair had a seismic impact upon the nature of London popular culture and was a landmark event for the urban populace. The spirit of a Fair which provided a site of cultural commune amongst the lower classes was captured in Hone’s depictions of the multifarious populace. While he could not prevent the eventual closure of the fair, Hone could keep the ennobling effects of it alive within the pages of his book. Greenwich Fair is the perfect emblem of *The Every-Day Book*: an event which, although declining, still held monumental relevance to the nature of popular culture, imprinting its impact of change upon the ‘mighty’ and ‘ennobled’ landscape of urban London.

My discussion here raises several important points that enable us to situate Hone within the critical debates of the early nineteenth century. Firstly, it is clear from Hone’s compilation and marketing of *The Every-Day Book* that he was addressing the emerging reading public in radically new terms. Hone exploited his experience as a publisher, and the tradition of print publications, to create a commoditized record of popular culture. He was able to negotiate between an older eighteenth-century political conception of “the People” as a class-category, while anticipating a ‘distinctly mid-nineteenth century modern conception of a mass-market “populace”’ which foreshadowed later writers, including Dickens.<sup>52</sup> In addition to this, we can see that *The Every-Day Book* was a complex model of self-sustaining popular culture, which in turn revealed the dynamics of the role of the people in creating this culture. Hone’s reliance upon readers’ contributions, and the continuing interest of the public, to create his shared archive of everyday customs is new

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<sup>52</sup> Ledger, *Dickens and the Popular Radical Imagination*, p. 3.

evidence to support Gramsci's notion of 'a system of shared meanings, attitudes and values' presented in 'the symbolic forms (performances, artefacts) in which they are expressed'.<sup>53</sup> The egalitarian framework underpinning Hone's notion of an enveloping popular culture privileged the communal customs of the masses and individualized personal recollections. In doing so, Hone resisted the influence of pedagogy. *The Every-Day Book* has been woefully neglected in debates on literary consumption and production in the long nineteenth century. New appraisal of his work offers a radical turn to this crucial discourse which can no longer be overlooked.

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<sup>53</sup> Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, p. xi.

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