On Liberty’s Birthday
A special issue to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Libertarian Enlightenment
THE GREAT TRADITION
Introducing an issue devoted to the libertarian Enlightenment.

MY COUNTRY IS THE WORLD,
MY RELIGION TO DO GOOD
In a new study of the international free-thinking pioneer, PETER MARSHALL argues that Thomas Paine’s contribution to libertarian thought is generally overlooked.

TWO SEXES, YET ONE TRUTH
Reviled in her own age as a “hyena in petticoats”, revered by modern feminists for her candour, Mary Wollstonecraft’s unconventional life is what invariably dominates attention. LIZ WILLIS sets out to discover what she really stood for.

HAPPINESS IS THE TRUE OBJECT OF EDUCATION
William Godwin’s profound insights into childhood and learning have proved a lifelong influence for COLIN WARD. Here he explains his debt.

ENGLAND! AWAKE! AWAKE! AWAKE!
Peter Marshall’s William Blake, Visionary Anarchist and Kathleen Raine’s Golgonooza, City of Imagination are discussed by CHRISTOPHER SMALL.

COVER PICTURE: Villagers of Ickwell, near Bedford, celebrating May Day according to longstanding local custom. Ickwell has a permanent Maypole, and is one of the few places where Maypole dancing is carried on into adulthood.
Photo: Brian Shuel (Collections)
The Great Tradition

On the 200th anniversary of the English Enlightenment, this issue celebrates four of its most prominent figures, Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin and William Blake. It was an extraordinary moment in the history of the libertarian idea. Paine's 'The Rights of Man' had come out in 1791, Wollstonecraft would publish 'A Vindication of the Rights of Woman' in 1792, and Godwin, 'Political Justice', in 1793. Moreover, all these thinkers were friends, being part of the radical milieu frequenting the house of London publisher Joseph Johnson. Over the next pages, PETER MARSHALL gives Paine an anti-authoritarian estimate; LIZ WILLIS charts Wollstonecraft's intellectual ground; COLIN WARD salutes the educational thought of a mentor, Godwin; and CHRISTOPHER SMALL clarifies Blake's enlarging vision.
THOMAS PAINE

My country is the world, my religion to do good

In an exclusive extract from 'Demanding the Impossible', the first comprehensive survey of the libertarian tradition since George Woodcock's 'Anarchism', PETER MARSHALL examines the case for including Thomas Paine in the libertarian canon.

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 sparked off one of the greatest political debates in British history. Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790) fell as a bombshell amongst radicals like Thomas Paine, Thomas Holcroft, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Blake. Wollstonecraft made one of the first replies to Burke in her Vindication of the Rights of Men (1790) and then went on to write A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), which established her reputation as the first great feminist. She made a powerful plea that mind has no gender and that women should become independent and educated beings. But although she attacked hereditary distinctions and economic inequality, she still locked to a reformed government to protect natural rights.

Paine also used the language of natural rights in his celebrated Rights of Man (1791-92), but his libertarian sensibility took him to the borders of anarchism. The son of a Quaker staymaker of Thetford, Norfolk, he had tried his trade in London before becoming an exciseman in Lewes, Sussex. His Quaker background undoubtedly encouraged his plain style and egalitarian sentiments, as well as his confidence in the 'inner light' of reason and conscience to lead him to truth and virtue. He liked to boast that "I neither read books, nor studied other people's opinions. I thought for myself". He believed that the human individual was fundamentally good, and saw the world as a garden for enjoyment rather than as a valley of tears. Above all he valued personal liberty: "and I view things as they are, without regard to place or person; my country is the world, and my religion is to do good".

Paine was a man of his industrial age. He adopted Newton's view of the world as a machine governed by universal laws. Applying the same analytical method to society and nature, he felt that both could be refashioned according to reason. Just as he spent many years designing an iron bridge, he tried to redesign society on the same simple and rational principles. He was a mechanical and social engineer: "What Archimedes said of the mechanical powers" he wrote, "may be applied to Reason and Liberty: 'Had we', he said, 'a place to stand upon, we might raise the world'.

Dismissed from his service in Lewes, Paine decided to try his luck in the American colonies. On his arrival, he rapidly threw himself into the social and political struggles of the day. He wrote articles in a direct and robust
style which advocated female emancipation and condemned African slavery and cruelty to animals. In 1775, he called eloquently for an end to the legal and social discrimination against women:

Even in countries where they may be esteemed the most happy [women are] constrained in their desires in the disposal of their goods; robbed of freedom and will by the laws; slaves of opinion which rules them with absolute sway and construes the slightest appearance into guilt; surrounded on all sides by judges who are at once tyrants and their seducers... for even with changes in attitudes and laws, deeply engrained and oppressing social prejudices remain which confront women minute by minute, day by day.

It was however only in the following year that Paine came to prominence with his pamphlet Common Sense (1776), the first work to argue for the complete independence of the thirteen colonies from England. He advocated a people's war to throw off the English yoke and hoped America would become a land of freedom, thereby offering an inspiration to the peoples living under European tyrannies. His internationalism and love of freedom come across in his rousing call:

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her. Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

The experience of the American Revolution had a marked effect on Paine. He was deeply impressed by the orderly nature and decorum of American society after the dissolution of the colonial government before the establishment of a new constitution. In his famous opening to Common Sense, Paine, like later anarchists, distinguished between society and government. He felt that they are not only different, but have different origins:

Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affectations, the latter negatively by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is patron, the last a punisher.

Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one; for when we suffer, or are exposed to the same miseries by a government, which we might expect in a country without a government,
our calamities are heightened by reflecting that we furnish the means by which we suffer. Government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence; the palaces of kings are built on the ruins of the bowers of paradise. For were the impulses of conscience clear, uniform and irresistibly obeyed, man would need no other lawgiver.

But despite the example of the American colonists organising their own affairs peacefully without government, Paine believed that it was necessary for the people to make a social contract in order to set up a minimal government on the secure basis of a constitution which would guarantee the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

After the successful outcome of the American War of Independence, Paine returned to England with hopes of building his iron bridge. The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 renewed his revolutionary fervour and Burke's apostasy led him to write his Rights of Man. It was, he recognised, "an age of Revolutions, in which everything may be looked for".

Burke, in his Reflections, had maintained that government and society are complex, fragile and organic entities based on the wisdom of ancestors, and could only be interfered with at great peril. He dismissed the "clumsy subtlety" of a priori political theorising (which he had indulged in in his A Vindication of Natural Society) and suggested that if scholars no longer enjoyed the patronage of the nobility and clergy, learning would be "trodden down under the hoofs of the swinish multitude".

Paine spoke on behalf of and to the swinish multitude, rejecting Burke's apology for "the authority of the dead over the rights and freedom of the living". He was not a particularly original thinker and adopted the liberal commonplaces of eighteenth-century political theory developed from Locke. But he developed them in a more libertarian and democratic direction. If what he said was not particularly new, how he said it undoubtedly was. Where the accepted language of political discourse was elegant and refined, Paine chose to write in a direct, robust, and simple style which all educated working people could understand. He refused to be "immured in the Bastille of a word" and threatened the dominant culture by his style, as well as the ruling powers by his arguments.

The First Part of the Rights of Man principally consists of a history of the French Revolution and of a comparison between the French and British constitutions. Paine is mainly concerned here to assert the rights of mankind against arbitrary and hereditary power. He bases his doctrine of natural rights on the alleged original equality and unity of humanity and argues that they include "intellectual rights" and "all those rights of acting as an individual for his own comfort and happiness". But Paine suggests like Locke that in the state of nature the individual does not have the power to enjoy these rights in security.

He therefore recommends that individuals deposit their natural rights in the "common stock" of civil society and set up a government that will protect them. The government itself has no rights as such and must be considered only as a delegated "trust" which the citizens can always dissolve or resume for themselves. The only authority on which a government has a right to exist is on the authority of the people. The end of government is to ensure "the good of all" or "general happiness". As for engendering the Church with the State, as Burke recommended, Paine dismisses such a connection as "a sort of mule-animal, capable only of destroying and not of breeding up".
While these arguments were part of the common eighteenth-century liberal defence of government, in Part Two of the Rights of Man Paine broke new theoretical ground which brought him to the verge of anarchism. At the end of Part One he acknowledged "man is not the enemy of man, but through the medium of a false system of government". He now returned to his distinction between society and government made at the opening of Common Sense and insists that:

Great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government. It has its origin in the principles of society and the natural constitution of man. It existed prior to government, and would exist if the formality of government was abolished. The mutual dependence and reciprocal interest which man has upon man, and all the parts of a civilised community upon each other, create that great chain of connexion which holds it together... Common interest regulates their concerns, and forms their law; and the laws which common usage ordains, have a greater influence than the laws of government. In fine, society performs for itself almost everything which is ascribed to government.

In a Rousseauist vein, Paine further maintains that man is naturally good but depraved by governments: "man, were he not corrupted by governments, is naturally the friend of man". Human nature is not therefore itself vicious.

Not only is a great part of what is called government "mere imposition", but everything that governments can usefully do has been performed by the common consent of society without government. Indeed, "the instant formal government is abolished, society begins to act. A general association takes place, and common interest produces common security". Looking back on the riots and tumult in English

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history, Paine argued, like modern anarchists, that they had not proceeded from the want of government, but that government was itself the generating cause; instead of consolidating society it divided it... "and engendered discontents which otherwise would not have existed".

But Paine does not look backward to some mythical golden age of social harmony, rather forward to a more civilised society. He suggests as a general principle that "the more perfect civilisation is, the less occasion has it for government, because the more does it regulate its own affairs, and govern itself". Since all the great laws of society are laws of nature, it follows for Paine that civilised life requires few laws.

But unlike his contemporary William Godwin, Paine did not carry his bold reasoning to the anarchist conclusion that government is an unnecessary evil. He felt that as long as our natural wants were greater than our individual powers government would be necessary to ensure freedom and security. He therefore proposed a minimal government no more than a "national association" with a few general laws to protect the natural rights of humanity. Its end is limited and simple, to secure "the good of all, as well individually as collectively". Paine had a definite preference for republican and representative government based on majority rule, and he wished to anchor it firmly in a constitution. He even praised the American Constitution as "the political bible of the state".

By calling on the British people to follow the American and French to form a new social contract and set up a limited government based on a constitution, Paine ultimately departs from the anarchist tradition. At the end of the Rights of Man, he even gives a distributive role to government by proposing that it helps to educate the young and support the old through a progressive inheritance tax.

While Paine has been called the father of English socialism, he was in fact a staunch advocate of business enterprise: universal and free commerce would extirpate war. He never advocated economic equality and thought private property would always remain unequal. His capitalist way of thinking led him to defend representative government in terms of a limited company with citizen shareholders: "Every man is a proprietor in government, and considers it a necessary part of his business to understand. It concerns his interest, because it affects his property".

In his last major work, Agrarian Justice (1797) he did not call, like his contemporary Thomas Spence, for the nationalisation and common ownership of land, but for a society of small landowners, to be achieved through a land tax of ten-per-cent. Paine's final vision was of a representative and republican democracy of independent property owners in which every citizen has an equal opportunity to develop their talents.

Paine developed liberal theory to the threshold of anarchism but he did not cross over. In fact, he was the greatest spokesman for bourgeois radicalism, exhorting the rising middle class to take over the State from the monarchy and aristocracy. But, inspired by the American and French Revolutions, he recognised the ability of people to govern themselves and thereby contributed to the pool of ideas and values out of which anarchism and socialism were to SPRING.


A review by George Woodcock will appear in the next issue.
MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT
(1759-97), rejected both marriage and the available 'suitable' jobs for women, to earn her living by writing and win fame or notoriety in her public and private life as "English miscellaneous writer", "hyena in petticoats", pioneer of sexual liberation, champion of women's rights, wife to William Godwin, and mother of Mary Shelley. While Godwin has always had a secure place in the history of (pre-) anarchist political thought, libertarians have tended to neglect or be ambivalent towards Wollstonecraft.

In recent years, the women's movement has accorded her a deserved revival of attention, and done much to counter the more negative, grudging, patronising and romanticising tendencies of earlier commentators. But in-depth analyses of what she actually said have remained fairly thin on the ground. There are still aspects of her work and thought to which her numerous friends and critics have done less than justice, including some of particular interest to libertarians - rejection of authority and received opinions, insistence on individual autonomy, and the recognition that the liberation of women had to be an integral part of an enlightened outlook. These are illustrated in A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792), the first feminist manifesto and her best known book.

This was not her first venture into the contemporary political fray. In 1790, her Vindication of the Rights of Men, was one of the first published ripostes to Burke's notorious attack on the principles of the French Revolution, and she now proceeded to expound her conviction that "The rights of humanity have thus been confined to the male sex from Adam". She saw the logical and moral necessity of rounding out the concept of full human emancipation, "to be free in a physical, moral and social sense".

She undertook this new championship thoroughly and conscientiously, aware of its audacity and significance in "representing the whole sex... one half of mankind", and also with passion against injustice, anger at suffering, and humour - at the many absurdities she exposed. These qualities, and her unwavering commitment, make her still worth reading and eminently quotable. Confronting the question of what was wrong and why, and what could be done to put it right, she proceeded to develop a detailed critique of existing society and its coercion and/or persuasion of female children into the acceptance of traditional sex roles and values - the art of 'pleasing'.

"Asserting the rights which women, in common with men, ought to contend for" she wrote, "I have not attempted to extenuate their faults; but to prove them to be the natural consequence of their education and station in society".
Education was thus the key to improvement, not only for the good of their souls but to break the chains of economic dependence. She outlined a system to replace the confinement, ignorance and affectation imposed on girls (and the differently pernicious alternative imposed on boys), which would have gone a long way to undermine the dominant ideology. At the same time, she recognised the importance of external restrictions, and intended to deal with the matter of legal disabilities in a second volume, which never appeared — although it has been observed that her unfinished novel The Wrongs of Woman (1797) effectively fills the place of such a work by illustrating the fate of women in different classes in society.

She did not, however, regard women either with indulgence or despair as inevitably helpless, passive victims of circumstances; they had to take responsibility for their own behaviour, even granting that they were in many ways up against it from their earliest days, beset by double-think and double-binds at every turn. Wishing "to see women neither heroines nor brutes, but reasonable creatures" who did not "have power over men, but over themselves", she addressed them directly and uncompromisingly. She pointed out the fallacies and dangers of prevailing attitudes towards them, however hypocritically flattering in appearance — as long as they fulfilled the desired stereotypical roles — but covering hostility and contempt: "This separate interest — this insidious state of warfare...".

Her project involved demolishing many prestigious theories of education and infant management as expounded by such luminaries as Rousseau, whose more absurd fantasies about female character she was ready to dismiss with a brisk "What nonsense!", despite admiration for some of his other ideas. Her style was normally forthright — "What she thought, she scorned to qualify", as Godwin observed — but always based on reasoned argument, reason being in her view a chief good and guiding principle, its exercise a right and duty for both sexes.

For modern readers, the placing of these concepts in the context of an overall deistic philosophy may be off-putting, but the point is that whatever the framework, men and women must be equally free to confront and come to terms with their own reality, and factors impeding their doing so must not be tolerated. Her religion was rationalist too; the admittedly paternalistic God was expected to act in a reasonable and humane manner — practically a mandated deity subject to recall. She had no time for the barbaric notions of eternal punishment of the hellfire brigade and rejected the fall-of-man creation myth as an excuse for denigrating women.

Demonstrating how women were moulded into being "insignificant objects of desire — mere propagators of fools!", she was ready to take on just about anyone, male or female, obscure or famous for "the books of instruction, written by men of genius, have had the same tendency as more frivolous productions... Viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone". Such a view could be deeply internalised, and was all too often reinforced by women themselves imposing it on each other, as Mary well realised, understanding but pleading for rejection of the psychological mechanisms and motives involved.

She knew she was asking women to embark on what could be a painful process, but saw it as inevitable as well as ultimately desirable. "Why have we implanted in us an irresistible desire to think?" she expressed in her early letters, declaring that women should "struggle with any obstacles rather than go into a state of dependence". She spoke from hard-won experience as well as observation.
and conviction - "The world cannot be seen by an unmoved spectator, we must mix in the throng". Her personal antipathy to her conventional role comes out more than once. "On many accounts I am averse to any matrimonial tie", she explained:

It is a happy thing to be a mere blank, and to be able to pursue one's own whims, where they lead, without having a husband and half a hundred children at hand to tease and controul a poor woman who wishes to be free.

This did not indicate a dislike of children or disregard for their interests; on the contrary, their welfare was central to her emphasis on (conditional) duties and responsibilities of women as mothers:

Make women rational creatures, and free citizens, and they will quickly become good wives, and mothers; that is - if men do not neglect the duties of husbands and fathers.

For even in its own terms, she pointed out, the existing system of female education was riddled with contradictions, and militated against "domestic virtue". She insisted that men should also take responsibility for the children they propagated and relationships they undertook outside marriage - "When a man seduces a woman, it should, I think, be termed a left-handed marriage", arguing cogently against the unfairness of the prevailing double standards of sexual morality (from which she herself was to suffer): "I here throw down my gauntlet, and deny the existence of sexual [pertaining to one sex] virtues... For men and women, truth... must be the same".

In the public sphere likewise, she illustrated the evils of "blind obedience" and its corrupting effects in creating chains of despotism and debasing its victims. She can be said to have made some sort of connection between sexual repression, authoritarian conditioning and the irrational in politics. She takes an integrated view, trying to understand what is happening throughout society and why. Her themes include fear of freedom, authority relations, repression:

The being who patiently endures injustice, and silently bears insults, will soon become unjust, and unable to discern right from wrong,

and the refusal to think:

Men, in general seem to employ their reason to justify prejudices, which they have imbibed, they know not how, rather than to root them out. The mind must be strong that resolutely forms its own principles; for a kind of intellectual cowardice prevails which makes many men shrink from the task, or only do it by halves.

There is quite a lot in this vein, its implications largely unremarked by successive editors.
Our more class-conscious comrades may wonder whether her theories are mere bourgeois(e) complaints. It is true that Rights of Woman is addressed to the 'middle' sort, but by contrast with the hopelessly effete aristocracy rather than in order to exclude the lower orders, who for practical reasons she evidently did not see as the agents of the sort of change she advocated, although according respect and consideration to working class women as individuals - 'with respect to virtue... I have seen most in low life...'. Later, her *Historical and Moral View of the French Revolution* (1794) illustrated sympathy with and understanding of the revolutionary cause in spite of her profound misgivings about the turn events had taken. Realism did not make her pessimistic or reactionary, but she saw more clearly what preconditions were required:

People thinking for themselves have more energy in their voice, than any government which it is possible for human wisdom to invent, and every government not aware of this sacred truth will, at some period, be suddenly overturned.

And not only self-managed autonomy, but mutual aid:

Till men learn mutually to assist without governing each other, little can be done by political associations towards perfecting the condition of mankind.

Although her 'class politics' were inevitably circumscribed by her historical situation her perceptions were often strikingly sound:

But one power should not be thrown down to exalt another - for all power inebriates weak man; and its abuse proves that the more equality there is established among men, the more virtue and happiness will reign in society.

Of course this must all be seen in its historical context, but it seems to have more to do with a libertarian tradition than either bourgeois liberalism or the authoritarian Left.

She would not necessarily make an automatic or comfortable conscript into some sections of the modern feminist movement, either. One factor is her consistent denial of biological determinism/sexual dimorphism ('Mind has no sex'). Rather than wallowing in imposed and alien 'feminine' attributes, and abdicating from whole swathes of human activity, or alternatively aping 'masculine' patterns, she saw the arrogance of certain qualities and propensities to the dominant sex as wholly unacceptable and at variance with reality.

Rejecting inhibiting assumptions, she asserted that the basic premise should be of equal potential, deserving and requiring equal opportunity to develop. Rather than branding females as by definition weak, illogical, childish, incompetent, and thereby preventing them from every being anything else, both their minds and their bodies should be encouraged and preserved in health and knowledge. If they then turned out not to be able to attain the same heights as their male companions, then so be it; but the experiment had never been tried, so the case was unproved - it was mere prejudice. Likewise they should not be confined to the domestic zone, but take their places in professional and public life:

I may excite laughter, by dropping an hint... that women ought to have representatives, instead of being arbitrarily governed.

Her methods would, she argued, have the effect of making better wives and mothers, but this was not the primary aim: "The great end of their exertions should be to unfold their own faculties and acquire the dignity of conscious virtue".
There are many digressions and repetitions in Rights of Woman, as well as some engaging sidelights, such as concern for animal welfare and a recurrent antimilitarism. She was aware of its faults: "dissatisfied with myself for not having done justice to the subject - had I allowed myself more time I could have written a better book...". But she didn't do so badly, religion, middle-class origins and bees-in-the bonnet not notwithstanding. It is altogether a remarkable production, and many of her observations are highly relevant today.

Rather unfortunately, the book ends with an appeal to (enlightened) men to see the sense of what is being argued, and act on it, and is prefaced by an address to Talleyrand, the French politician whom she thought had the power and capacity to introduce principles to sound education in revolutionary France. The idea, however, was to remove the multitudinous massive obstacles in the way of women's autonomous action, rather than to substitute for it. She was not exactly pessimistic about what women could achieve, even though she took a dim view of what in the present state of society most of them had become. There were examples, including her own, to demonstrate an alternative, but she knew there was a long way to go:

And who can tell, how many generations may be necessary to give vigour to the virtue and talents of the freed posterity of abject slaves?

Mary's eventual decision to marry seems to have been a rational though reluctant adaptation to circumstances and recognition of the realities of a social life from which she did not wish to be totally excluded - "The odium of society impedes usefulness". (Ironically it did lead to a measure of ostracism, by spelling out the fact that she had not been married to Gilbert Imlay, the father of Fanny, her first child).

It is certainly unfair to blame her for Godwin's apparent abandonment of long-held principles; they were both in the same boat, and acknowledged as much, even if society would not have penalised Godwin in the same way for defying its conventions.

Some censorious commentators have maintained that it was the 'scandalous' dimension which 'set back' the cause of women's emancipation; but the times had grown increasingly reactionary, and theirs was not the only good cause to suffer; in any case, the principle (that she should have modified her behaviour for the sake of public relations) as well as the fact is dubious. Conversely, modern feminists may see the 'romantic' view of the relationship as somewhat detracting from Mary's character and principles. This would be to ignore the context, and the innovative attempt to forge an equal partnership based on mutual respect, even if it did not work perfectly in practice every day; for example, Mary had occasion to point out that Godwin continued to assume priority for his sacrosanct 'work', while hers was supposed to be shelved in order to deal with domestic matters as required.

The events of her life have always been difficult for observers to view in detachment from her writings, and many of the unreasoned critiques published in her lifetime and shortly after her death were frankly ad feminam attacks. Another effect of this was that her writings have seldom if ever been given due consideration. Even many comparatively favourable write-ups have an apologetic tone, while recent feminist commentators often tend to overlook her more generally political (libertarian) significance. In any case, she acted in accordance with her ideals in difficult circumstances with courage and honesty, and provided an example and inspiration, rather than an awful warning, to others in the next and subsequent GENERATIONS.
Happiness is the true object of education

'Ifluences: Voices of Creative Dissent' is COLIN WARD's tribute to those thinkers who shaped his own thought. In the field of education his debts of honour are to William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. In an exclusive extract from his new book, he recounts Godwin's impact.

PLenty of people are influenced by some inspiring teacher they themselves encountered, or else by one of the great educators they have learned and read about: Pestalozzi or Froebel, or the nursery education pioneer Margaret McMillan, or a more recent educational experimenter like A S Neill. I met and relished Neill, like everyone else, but for my choice of educational influences I have to go back to the eighteenth century, to select William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft. You can search the histories of education for their names and you won't very often find them.

Both my educational thinkers were vilified for a century. Their works were unread. Character assassination is nothing new, but I had the luck to be introduced to them both by H N Brailsford's brilliant little book Shelley, Godwin and their Circle, first published in 1913, and long out of print. I can remember my excitement when George Woodcock's William Godwin: A Biographical Study appeared in 1946.

When I was finally able to borrow and copy passages from Godwin's school prospectus and to read beyond the opening sentence of his educational essays The Enquirer, "The true object of education, like that of every other moral process, is the generation of happiness", I felt that I had come across an approach to childhood that I could agree with. I found that the same intense empathy with the child permeates Mary Wollstonecraft's writings. She was, as her editor Janet Todd stresses, "first and last a writer on education".

William Godwin was born at Wisbech in Cambridgeshire in 1756, the son and grandson of dissenting ministers. His grandfather and his tutors at the Dissenting Academy at Hoxton, are buried at Bunhill Fields, and he himself became a dissenting minister until 1782, when he left his ministry at Stowmarket after a dispute with his congregation. When Godwin lost his religious faith he returned to London to earn a precarious living as a political journalist. But first he tried unsuccessfully to start a school.

Mary Wollstonecraft, born at Hoxton, London in 1759, came from a quite different background. His family were sober non-conformists, frugal and reverencing moral probity and education. Her father had "the tastes and vices of a country squire without acreage or capital; he loved both horse and bottle but proved impatient and incompetent as a farmer" (Claire Tomalin, The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft).
1974). The grammar school was for her brother, but not for Mary and her sisters. She went to the village school.

It was the French Revolution that profoundly changed the lives of both William and Mary. In 1789, at the Meeting House in Old Jewry, Dr. Richard Price, Unitarian minister and scientist, preached his sermon congratulating the French on "the Revolution in that country and on the prospect it gives to the two first kingdoms in the world of a common participation in the blessings of civil and religious liberty". Price's sermon was answered by Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, defending the established order, and this in turn evoked several radical counterblasts.

Mary wrote a Vindication of the Rights of Men, which was soon overshadowed by Tom Paine's magnificent The Rights of Man. And William set about his monumental An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice, and its Influence upon General Virtue and Happiness, which he intended should "by its inherent energy and weight... place the principles of politics on an immovable basis". William and Mary first met at a dinner party of Joseph Johnson's in 1791, invited to meet Paine. Wollstonecraft's best biographer, Claire Tomalin suggests that "it is possible that Paine dropped into Mary's mind at about this moment the idea of a book on Women's rights... why should Mary not produce a second Vindication for her own sex". She wrote A Vindication of the Rights of Woman, in six weeks.

Godwin, meanwhile, was labouring methodically on his Political Justice, arguing every point from first principles, in stately eighteenth-century prose, sending each section to the printers while working on the next. The book appeared in February 1793, two months after Tom Paine had been sentenced to death in his absence on a charge of high treason for writing The Rights of Man. The response was immediate. William and Mary had both become famous overnight. It was, as William Hazlitt put it acutely, "the very zenith of a sultry and unwholesome popularity"; certainly it was too good to last, and was the prelude to years of calumnies and neglect.

Godwin set out to write a philosophy of politics, ("a science" he says in his preface, "which may be said to be yet in its infancy"), and since such a comprehensive programme must start from first principles and must rest on moral and psychological foundations, it is natural that his educational philosophy should find a place in his exposition. Education, he says, happens in three different ways. It happens by accident, it happens deliberately, and it happens because our ideas are modified by "the form of government under which we live". As long as parents and teachers in general shall fall under the established rule, he declares, "It is clear that politics and modes of government will educate and infect us all".

It is here that Godwin diverges sharply from the philosophers of the French Enlightenment. Rousseau, Helvétius, Diderot and Condorcet all put forward schemes for national systems of education, postulating of course, an ideal state. But for Godwin an ideal state was a contradiction in terms, and his starting point was the distinction between society and government, felicitously phrased by Tom Paine:

Society is produced by our wants and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections; the latter negatively by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other creates distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher. Society in every state is a blessing; but government even in
its best state is a necessary evil" (Common Sense, 1776).

For Godwin it was an unnecessary evil, and his whole book was an elaborate argument for a non-governmental society. The major educational text of the day was Rousseau's Emile. Although Rousseau postulates a completely individual education, he did, nevertheless, concern himself with the social aspect of educational organisation, arguing in his Discourse on Political Economy for public education "under regulation prescribed by the government", since "if children are brought up in common in the bosom of equality; if they are imbued with the laws of the state and the precepts of the general will... we cannot doubt that they will cherish one and other mutually as brothers... to become in time defenders and fathers of the country of which they will have been so long the children".

Godwin's answer is to put forward, in his chapter 'Of National Education', three cogent objections to such schemes:

The injuries that result from a system of national education are, in the first place, that all public establishments include in them the idea of [their own] permanence... even in the petty institutions of Sunday schools, the chief lessons that are taught are a superstitious veneration for the Church of England, and how to bow to every man in a handsome coat...

Secondly, the idea of national education is founded in an inattention to the nature of the mind. Whatever each man does for himself is done well; whatever his neighbours or his country undertake to do for him is done ill...

Thirdly, the project of a national education ought uniformly to be discouraged on account of its obvious alliance with national government...

Before we put so powerful a machine under the direction of so ambitious an agent, it behoves us to consider well what we do.

Now why, at the end of the twentieth century do I stress these theoretical objections from the eighteenth century? For the sound and simple reason that Godwin was unique among the philosophers of education in warning us against them. But the most devastating support for Godwin's warnings of the dangers of a "national system" came as late as the 1980s, when the British government, despite its rhetoric about 'rolling back the frontiers of the state', decided to impose on all schools under local authority control a National Curriculum.

In 1796 came the improbable romance, the unusual mix, people said, of "fire and ice". The passionate, tempestuous Mary and the restrained, logical William fell in love. But in 1797 Mary died after the birth of their daughter Mary. What Richard Holmes calls a significant new marriage between Imagination and Reason ended in personal tragedy. Godwin wrote a tender Memoir to her life and to his mortification, readers found it shocking and disgusting. The rest of the family story is well known. Mary Godwin grew up to be Mary Shelley, wife of the poet and author of Frankenstein. Godwin married again and spent the rest of his life as an inepted educational publisher, supporting a large brood of other people's children, and "was in practice the most careful, considerate, and loving of fathers".

He went on writing about education for the whole of his life, but the most absorbing of his reflections on education were published in his book The Enquirer, written during the months of his growing friendship with Mary. The tone is set by the first essay 'Of Awakening the
Happiness of Youth’. Of all the sources of unhappiness for the young, the greatest, he says, is a sense of slavery:

How grievous the insult, or how contemptible the ignorance, that tells a child that youth is the true season of felicity, when he feels himself checked, controlled, and tyrannised over in a thousand ways... There is no equality, no reasoning between me and my task-master. If I attempt it, it is considered a mutiny. If it be seemingly conceded, it is only the more cutting mockery. He is always in the right; right and power in these trials are found to be inseparable companions.

There is a reverence, Godwin argues, "that we owe to every thing in human shape. I do not say that a child is in the image of God. But I do affirm that he is an individual being, with powers of reasoning, with sensations of pleasure and pain, and with principles of morality; and that in this description is contained abundant cause for the exercise of reverence and forbearance". And he argues that violence towards children is a mirror of violence in society between nations:

Violate not thine own image in the person of thy offspring. That image is sacred. He that does violence to it is the genuine blasphemer. The most fundamental of all the principles of morality is the consideration and deference that man owes to man; nor is the helplessness of childhood by any means unentitled to the benefit of this principle.

The object of harshness is intended to be "to bring the delinquent to a sense of his error". But, says Godwin, "it has no such tendency. It simply proves to him that he has something else to encounter, beside the genuine consequence of his mistake; and that is that there are men, who, when they cannot convince by reason, will not hesitate to overbear by force".

WILLIAM GODWIN: Founding father

Mind’, which, as we have seen, begins with a resounding affirmation:

The true object of education, like that of every other moral process, is the generation of happiness. Happiness to the individual in the first place. If individuals were universally happy, the species would be happy. Man is a social being. In society the interests of individuals are intertissued with one and other, and cannot be separated. Men should be taught to assist each other. The first object should be to train a man to be happy; the second to train him to be useful, that is to be virtuous.

As an educational thinker Godwin is whole-heartedly "on the side of the child", but his feeling for childhood is completely untouched by Rousseau’s sentimental nostalgia. The key to his attitude is to be found in a striking essay ‘Of the
Let it be supposed, Godwin urges us in another essay, 'Of Reasoning and Contention', that a parent accustomed to exercise a high authority over his children, and to require from them the most uncontradicted submission, has recently been convinced of the impropriety of his conduct. He calls them together, and confesses his error. He has now discovered that they are rational beings as well as himself, that he ought to act the part of the friend, and not of their master; and he encourages them, when they differ from him in opinion with his as to the conduct they ought to pursue, to state their reasons, and proceed to a fair and equal examination of the subject.

If this is to be of any use, he argues, it must be to a real discussion "that they are invited, and not to the humiliating scene of a mock discussion. The terms must be just and impartial". But what usually happens is for the parent to say "No, I have heard you out; you have not convinced me; and therefore nothing remains for you but to submit". He concludes that "where the parent is not prepared to grant a real and bona fide equality, it is of the first importance that he should avoid the semblance of it... The situation I deplore is that of a slave, who is endowed with a show and appearance of freedom". Here he is speaking the language, not of a disingenuous eighteenth-century theorist like Rousseau, but of a twentieth-century practitioner like David Wills. He was a Quaker I knew and respected, who spent his working lifetime in the trouble-laden task of running residential homes for delinquent boys and girls, sent to him by the courts. David wrote in his book *Throw Away Thy Rod* (1960),

I have frequently referred with contempt to the arrangement whereby some well-meaning adult (I think such people are well-meaning) will say, 'Now then, children. Let's all have a meeting and decide to do so-and-so'. I call that bogus and dishonest, because the adult does not really intend to permit free discussion and a free decision.

Godwin's comment on this issue is that the way to avoid this error in the treatment of youth is to fix in our mind those points from which we may perceive that we shall not ultimately recede, and whenever they occur, to prescribe them with mildness of behaviour, but with firmness of decision. It is not necessary that in doing so we should really subtract anything from the independence of youth. They should no doubt have a large portion of independence; it should be restricted only in cases of extraordinary emergency; but the boundaries should be clear, evident and unequivocal.

David Wills again, with a similar intellectual honesty, makes the same point in his account of *The Barns Experiment* (1945):

It is better to limit the sphere of the children's responsibilities to something very small, if that authority is absolute, than to give them a vague sphere of control with the danger that you might step in one day and veto a decision that they have made. But you will find, if you have confidence in them, that you are repeatedly being astonished by their wisdom.

Godwin concludes his approach to this theme with the thought that "it is not necessary that, like some foolish parents, we should tenaciously adhere to every thing that we have once laid down, and prefer that heaven should perish rather than we stand convicted of error. We should acknowledge ourselves fallible; we should retract unaffectedly and with grace whenever we find that we have fallen into mistake". Once again, the sentiment, if not the language, has
a modern ring. Paul and Jean Ritter, in their book *The Free Family* (1959), remark on how much simpler and friendlier relations are when we admit frankly that we are just as prone to error as they are:

Children who have long known that everybody is silly sometimes, that others have reasons for being silly as they have themselves, can understand the difficulties of a teacher surprisingly well. The result we have found, is a degree of cooperation in class which is normally only associated with that bred by great fear of punishment. That this is the outcome of self-regulation never ceases to surprise people.

As a final sample of Godwin's vision, one which completely contradicts current educational wisdom, reflect on this conclusion:

According to the received modes of education, the master goes first, and the pupil follows. According to the method here recommended it is probable that the pupil should go first, and the master follow... The first object of a system of instructing, is to give the pupil a motive to learn. We have seen how far the established systems fail in this office. The second object is to smooth the difficulties which present themselves in the acquisition of knowledge...

This plan is calculated entirely to change the face of education. The whole formidable apparatus which has hitherto attended it, is swept away. Strictly speaking, no such characters are left upon the scene such as preceptor or pupil. The boy, like the man, studies, because he desires it. He proceeds upon a plan of his own invention, or which by adopting he has made his own. Everything bespeaks independence and equality. The man, as well as the boy, would be glad in cases of difficulty to consult a person more informed that himself. That the boy is almost always to consult the man, and not the man the boy, is to be regarded rather as an accident, than anything essential. Much even of this would be removed, if we remembered that the most inferior judge, may often by the varieties of his apprehension, give valuable information to the most enlightened.

I have quoted at length from the *Enquirer* for the very good reason that its educational essays are the most radical ever written. They make nonsense of the notion that child-centred schooling and the appreciation of children as persons in their own right and for their own sake are twentieth-century inventions. Don't read too much into Godwin's use of male nouns and pronouns throughout: it was, like his language, the habit of the time. The warmth of these essays owes much to Mary. They were written in that happy year when "as they were both writing for a living, they regularly exchanged manuscripts for criticism".

Now we live in a time of immense scepticism and uncertainty about education. For decades, education was overstated. Every increase in student numbers at the upper and more expensive end of the system, every new development in educational technology, was a step towards some great social goal. There was an inevitable backlash which blamed the education system for the decline of British manufacturing industry and sought to turn the school system into a nursery of market entrepreneurialism. I rejoice in having discovered long ago my major educational influences, William and Mary, whose approaches to the child and to the school belong to a different style of educational ASPIRATIONS.

WILLIAM BLAKE

England! Awake! Awake! Awake!

PETER MARSHALL
William Blake, Visionary Anarchist
Freedom Press, £2.00

KATHLEEN RAINE
Golgonooza, City of Imagination:
Last Studies in William Blake
Golgonooza Press, £7.95

Here are two books, published within six months of one another, about the extraordinary English poet and painter William Blake. If nothing else, they are further evidence that Blake, who died in 1827 known only to a small circle of friends, remains one of the most passionately argued-about artists and thinkers of the modern world. (This description is deliberately loaded: I'll return to this brief but question-begging formula in due course).

Whole libraries of Blake books have piled up, especially in the half-century since the complete text of all his known but often extremely obscure writings became generally available. These new additions, both quite short, may not be expected to bring much more to the existing accumulation of commentary, evaluation, and exegesis. In fact they are interesting individually for several reasons; but it is their arrival together that is most striking, representing as they do two views of Blake seemingly quite different and even opposed to one another.

One is by the most revered of Blake scholars, herself a poet, now in her eighties, and gathering up in eight overlapping essays the sum of half a lifetime's work: the announcement in her subtitle, 'Last Studies in William Blake', suggests a certain magisterial finality. The other is by a writer of the post-war generation who comes fresh to the subject. The authors start from different premises and have different aims. One is concerned with Blake's philosophical, psychological and religious significance, and pursues this through all manner of recondite allusions and connections; the other is out to write a popular, easily accessible introduction.

Peter Marshall's approach is avowedly political, to claim Blake as one of the 'founding fathers' - the other being William Godwin - of British anarchism. Kathleen Raine steadfastly sets her face against such interpretation and has indeed been engaged in all her writing about Blake in a effort to detach him from the gross and impure world of political struggle and polemic. How successful she has been is one of the points of interest; but neither she nor Peter Marshall would claim personal detachment. Both writers, poles apart as they may be, join in the vehement conviction of what they say; or, to put it more accurately, each is convinced that Blake himself has something to say of absolutely vital importance.

For Marshall Blake is the "visionary anarchist", the inspired radical thinker whose life-span included the American and French Revolutions and in Britain "the revolution that never happened", but in the view of many then and since ought to have done; who was stirred by these events and non-events as much as any of his contemporaries and, unlike some of them, did not renge; but who also,
while remaining faithful to "the good old Cause" of radical republicanism, saw more deeply than most into all human causes and potentialities.

He was no political activist in the ordinary sense, though he was associated with plenty who were, writers, talkers, movers and doers in revolutionary movements; perhaps the only direct actions of his own life were the crucial warning he is said to have given Tom Paine that government agents were about to arrest him, and later his own brush with a drunken soldier which brought him, in those times of ferocious reaction and repression, within brief reach of a charge of treason. No more than episodes, but perfectly consistent with a whole life, outwardly quiet, of "mental fight", wielding the sword, spear and arrows of the mind.

Those who think politically find political meanings in pretty well everything he wrote, from the deceptively simple lyrics by now almost as familiar as Shakespeare's, to the 'Prophetic Books' in all their mythological disguises. Peter Marshall makes effective use of a wide range of the texts, and though his quotation is selective, the case for political interpretation is convincing, so far as it goes. There can't be any doubt about the passionate indignation of songs like Holy Thursday or The Chimney Sweeper, and the direct connection made there between poverty and the cold hypocrisies of those who create and benefit by it and "make up a heaven of our misery" may well be called political. Nor can there be any mistaking the direct exhortation to "Rouze Up, O Young Men of the New Age!" which precedes (in the preface to Milton, 1804) the song now known, rather confusingly, as 'Jerusalem'.

It is true that about the same time Blake, in deep disgust, also said "I am really sorry to see my Countrymen trouble themselves about Politics". But what he was talking about was Parliament, the ins-and-outs of party politics, and Marshall has no difficulty in agreeing with him. Indeed, Blake's next sentence, that "If Men were Wise, the most arbitrary Princes could not hurt them", might have been taken straight from Godwin and his elevation of an educated 'opinion' to be supreme arbiter of political affairs. Jumping on from the early nineteenth century to the late twentieth, and watching Lords and Commons still at it, you don't even have to be an anarchist to say with Blake that "they seem to me to be something else besides Human Life".

How do you decide what is human life? This is the point where the real differences between Raine and Marshall emerge. She understands the question as fundamentally religious, the "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" of the psalmist addressing God which Blake engraved in the margin of his designs for the Book of Job. She sees Blake receiving his answer from the same source, mediated.
chiefly though voices from the past; in all her Blake studies she has been concerned to relate his thought to 'tradition'.

Her main contribution to our knowledge of him has been to alter the received idea of a spontaneous unlearned genius (after all, like Shakespeare, he never went to a university!) to one of extraordinarily wide and deep reading, who drew his inspiration not only from contemporary philosophers and savants like Berkeley and Swedenborg, but from the whole body of classical and medieval philosophy and theology. For her it is innovation that Blake chiefly set himself against, the mechanical rationalism of Cartesian and Newtonian systems and their Deist adherents. She sees in him a rebel against prevailing "materialism", but would like rebellion to stop there; her Blake accepts "the orthodoxy (so to say) of the Perennial Philosophy".

Marshall also speaks of Blake's intellectual forebears, but the tradition he emphasises is that of radical dissent, the 'counter-culture' of non-conformity and heresy which included not only the far-Left of the English Revolution in the previous century, the Diggers and Ranters and others whose memory was still green in his own day, but a strand of free religious questioning as old as - or, if we allow Gautama the Buddha to have been a questioner, older than - Christianity. He finds as a consistent principle Blake's rejection of authority, human or divine, kings and priests here below or "old Nobodaddy aloft", the moral virtues codified and turned into instruments of oppression, the 'laws' of science that cut and dry an alien universe; human reason ('Urizen' of his punning private mythology) self-exalted to isolated tyranny over the whole of life.

His Blake would certainly agree with Noam Chomsky that "there is a kind of instinct for freedom, that people have an instinctive right to enquire and create and control their own lives, and therefore any form of authority is basically illegitimate". He is the forerunner of every kind of liberation movement, with supporting quotation to make links with today's Greens, Women's Lib, Children's and even Animal Rights ("A Robin Redbreast in a cage / Puts all Heaven in a rage").

Raine would perhaps not deny any of this; she may quote the same passages, but she wants us to see something else in them. No one knew better than Blake himself how readily interpretation becomes projection, and how apparently futile it is to attempt shifting disputants from their entrenched positions: "Both read the Bible day and night / But thou read'st black where I read white". He could not be surprised to see the same fate overtaking his teaching, but he would be vexed at any judging; he abominated nothing more than fuzziness, in graphics or ideas. Raine, adopting him as champion against 'materialism', is not always sure whether it is the matter of old-fashioned physics that is the enemy or the addiction to laying up treasures on earth of "this materialistic age".

And Marshall has trouble with this treacherous word as well. It is all very well, and may be helpful, to assert that "The social and spiritual aspects of Blake are not... exclusive". But to say further that because Blake had his feet "firmly on the ground" the way he regarded it - that for him the ground was "organised spirit" rather than "dead matter" - "makes no difference" is merely preposterous, and it doesn't clear up the muddle to claim that nowadays we call this sort of confusion ecological. Again, to conclude that Blake's metaphysical system "may best be described as a sort of pantheistic idealism" is throwing words around almost with contempt; one thing Blake certainly had no use for was pantheism.

Such objections are not just niggling. Blake took his philosophy
seriously (more seriously than many professional philosophers take theirs), and the question, how a thorough-going solipsism such as he professed can be combined with radiant apprehension of other existences, is a serious one to consider. But it is not examined in either of these books, and it wouldn't be appropriate to pursue it here. The answer, if there is one, is in Blake's work, neither as esoteric psychological formula nor as restatement of traditional mysticism (though it is these as well) but as creative vision; one, that is, that appeals to and stimulates whatever creative faculties are in ourselves.

It is in this sense (to return to the assertion made at the beginning) that Blake belongs to 'the modern world', and it is certainly in this sense that both these writers take him. The effect of the books, despite what's been said already, is more complementary than contradictory (except as example of his own dictum that 'without contraries is no progression'). It seems that people who love William Blake, study and ponder about him, are drawn together despite themselves.

Blake's hold upon us rests upon several things, among them the directness and simplicity of his language (whatever the convolutions of his allegories) and their root- edness in popular poetry; the fearless openness of his speech, the quality which caused his friend and disciple Samuel Palmer to describe him as 'a man without a mask'. But most of all, I think, it is the tremendous, exhilarating dynamism of all his poetry, the joyful affirmation that 'energy is eternal delight', the warning to 'expect poison from standing water'. This is his answer to the psalmist's question: man is what he does, or more truly what Imagination, as the essence of humanity, does in and through him. It is an answer acceptable from both Kathleen Raine's and Peter Marshall's points of view, because it adds something to both of them.

Blake was no mediator, and tolerance was certainly not one of his virtues. Not the merging but the acknowledgement of differences was what he preached; to the intense consciousness of individual worth which he proclaimed, and which is (as I take it) an essential component of anarchism, he added not the liberal idea of mutual tolerance but the Christian one of forgiveness - which, as he did not fail to point out, is practised by very few who call themselves Christians. "Mutual forgiveness of each vice / Such are the Gates of Paradise" - and it is a very different Paradise from that of Godwin's perfectly virtuous, perfectly autonomous individuals, or the warring atomised egos of Stirner. Against "the Ego and its own" you must place Blake's simple formula, which says more the more you think about it, that "The most sublime act is to set another before you".

To those who, like Raine, wish to receive all he said as addressed to the 'inner life', he also has something more to say, not in denial but enlargement. 'Inner' and 'outer' are unreal distinctions, the "body is a portion of Soul discorn'd by the Five Senses", and - as he asked many years later, in his last great poem, - "Are not Religion and Politics the same thing?". The empirical world is one of illusion and impermanence, "made up of contradiction" but Imagination endows it with reality and meaning. What has Imagination, which dwells in eternity, to do with politics? Just that (to quote once again from The Marriage of Heaven and Hell) "Eternity is in love with the productions of time".

Both these books have been written in acute awareness of dark times, at least as dark as Blake himself lived through, and after several more blissful advents of human emancipation have proved false dawns. Both offer images of hope, albeit of no easy kind. Marshall has chosen for his front cover a reproduction of the design
"Creative marxism, feminism, anti-racism, ecology and other progressive traditions".

NINA TEMPLE
Communist Party Secretary, outlining the party's new policies, as it voted to change its name to Democratic Left.

"Solidarity... originated in a 1960 split in the Socialist Labour League (ironically its leading members had been arch-disciplinarians when they were inside the SLL). Despite its rejection of leninism, the language in which it expresses that rejection, indeed the rest of its theoretical framework, inevitably reflects that leninist heritage".

LAURENS OTTER
Discussion Bulletin

"Socialism began life (at least in Britain) as a literary movement. Its great appeal seems to have been to those who, whatever their particular walk in life, regarded themselves, or were regarded by others, as 'artistic'."

Raphael Samuel
History Workshop 25, Oxford

"I belong to that Jesuitical group the Socialist Party of Great Britain. They have the bridle and tack, but they haven't got a horse. The anarchists, of course, have got the horse. But they can't bloody well catch it".

KEN SMITH
History Workshop 25, Oxford

known as 'Glad Day' [see elsewhere in this issue] or 'The Dance of Albion': Albion, the "Giant" spirit of Britain, is seen as a naked youth, standing above an abyss and against a resplendent rainbow sky, his arms outstretched in a gesture at once of universal welcome and crucifixion. The inscription (which unfortunately Marshall does not give in full) runs: "Albion rose from where he labour'd at the Mill with Slaves: / Giving himself for the Nations he danc'd the dance of Eternal Death".

The 'Golsonooza' of Raine's title is the mythological city which for Blake was not only London and all other cities, chartered and degraded, but the human condition itself in all its contrarieties, "ever building, ever falling". It is not Jerusalem, which for Blake (as also for the author of Revelations) is not a place but a person, the Bride of God. But it is the dwelling of Jerusalem being prepared, by the labours of all, "terrible, eternal labour". "Go on, builders in hope", says Blake. Kathleen Raine's gloss is that, in this, the "City of Imagination", we are builders of ourselves.

Simone Weil, another Christian as unorthodox as Blake, said of the hopes of the Spanish anarchists she met during the Civil War, that "a future which is completely impossible... degrades us far less and differs far less from the eternal than a possible future. It does not even degrade us at all, except through the illusion of its possibility. If it is conceived of as impossible, it transports us to the eternal". If that is incompatible with the politics of 'the real world', so be it. But as to what the world really is there is more than one OPINION.

CHRISTOPHER SMALL

Because of limited space Correspondence is held over to the next issue.